

An Analysis of the Similarities and Differences Between the Spanish and Portuguese Multi-party Systems

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Abstract: Spain and Portugal, as the model and the beginning of the third wave of democratization, in order to consolidate the hard-won democracy, both countries have adopted a party system that can maximize the expression of public opinion: the multi-party system. This paper analyzes and compares the development trend of party patterns in Spain and Portugal since democratization through the laws, electoral systems and the number of effective parties after improvement.

Keywords: Multi-party system; Spain; Portugal; Number of effective political parties

1. Definition of the concept

1.1 Conceptualization of the elements of the electoral system

Closed list proportional representation

The list proportional representation system, also known as “party list proportional representation system”, is divided into free list, open list and closedlist. The closed list proportional representation system used in Portugal and Spain means that each constituency produces N ($N > 1$) seats, and each political party proposes a sequential list of candidates, and then the legal voters in the constituency vote for the party, and finally the seats are allocated according to the proportion of votes received by each party, and the seats allocated to the parties should be elected in accordance with the sequential list of candidates. Under the closed-list system, each party’s proposed list generally includes as many candidates as possible, sometimes up to the total number of seats in the constituency, in order to avoid the emergence of an underhang seat.

1.2 D’Hondt method

The Dehonte method refers to the use of the highest equalizer for the allocation of parliamentary seats under the proportional representation system. The rule is to divide the number of votes each party receives in the constituency by one, two, three straight to N (the total number of seats in the constituency), and then allocate the resulting number to the first candidate on the party’s list, the second candidate, and so on, and then compare the numbers received by each party’s candidates, with the higher number being the winner.

1.3 Definition of the concept of the effective number of political parties

Sartori argues that the distribution of strength should be taken into account for intelligent counting when categorizing and classifying political parties. Following this, Sartori classified political parties into one-party system, hegemonic party system, dominant party system, two-party system, moderate multi-party system, and polarized multi-party system. Similarly the small parties involved in the coalition and those in opposition cannot be counted in the ratio of one to one. Instead, R. Taagepera and M. Laakso created the indicator “number of effective political parties”, which makes the calculation of effective political parties more precise. This makes it possible to analyze the indicator of the number of effective parties from a quantitative point of view. First of all, parties that did not win seats are excluded, and only parties that won seats are included in the calculation.

2. The Shaping of Law for Multi-Party Politics in Spain and Portugal

2.1 The tone of political pluralism set by the Constitution

The French author Maurice Duverger makes two points in Theory of Political Parties: first, the simple-majority single ballot

system favours the two-party system; second, the simple-majority system with second ballot and proportional representation favours multi-partyism. In contrast to the Portuguese Constitution's heavy-handed approach to party politics, the Spanish Constitution is more reflective of the Constitution's role as a superior law, more concise and clear, and focuses on emphasizing principles.

A comparison of the sections on party politics in the Constitutions of Spain and Portugal shows that both countries have special legal provisions in their fundamental laws emphasizing political pluralism and favoring a multi-party system in terms of party patterns.

2.2 The law on political parties further regulates party politics and strengthens the protection against the resurgence of fascist parties.

In Portugal, there is a specialized Constitutional Court, which adjudicates on the incorporation and judicial banning of political parties. For example, the Portuguese Law on Political Parties provides for the judicial banning of political parties: political parties considered to be armed, militarized or substantially paramilitary, or with a racist or ideology shall be banned by the Constitutional Court in accordance with the law. Similarly, the Spanish law on political parties provides for the criminalization of explicit or implicit political support for terrorism, justification of terrorism, involvement in violence and so forth.

In contrast to Portugal's relatively law approach to the establishment of political parties, the Spanish law on political parties places greater emphasis on the examination of the legal qualifications of the founders and on the normative nature of the creation of political parties. In terms of legal status, for example, it is explicitly stipulated that the name of a new party cannot be similar to the name, logo, acronym or pronunciation of a registered party or a party that has been recognized as illegal, in order to prevent the resurgence of fascist parties and terrorism.

2.3 The party charters of the main political parties in both countries have a greater degree of control over party members

The statutes of the main political parties in Portugal and Spain are based on their respective party laws, which are organizational in form. In addition to declaring their own ideology, the statutes of the parties have clear requirements for the control of the members of the party. As can be judged from the above excerpts from the party charters of the main political parties in both countries, the main parties in Spain and Portugal are strong control parties, with a strong centripetal force within the party, and have their own discipline in parliamentary voting, where MPs are required to vote in accordance with the will of their party.

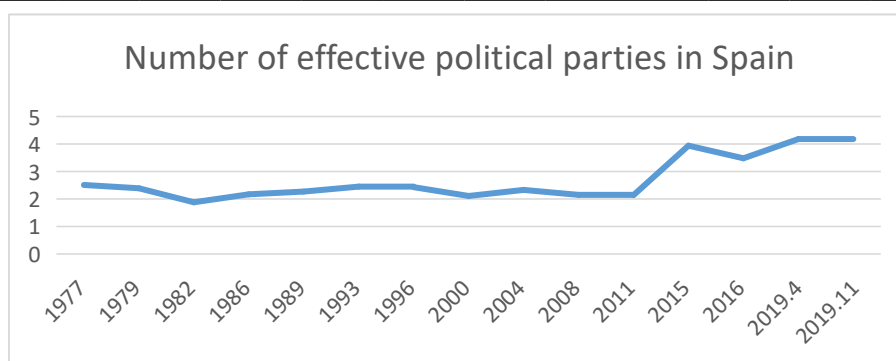
3. Analysis of trends in the evolution of the multi-party system in the West and Portugal through the calculation of the number of effective parties

3.1 The development trend of the Spanish party system from a relatively stable bipolar multi-party system to an extremely pluralistic multi-party system

The following data were calculated from the effective number of political parties in Spain (1977-2019.11) using a modified formula.

(Table I)

1977-2019.11 Number of active political parties in Spain															
Years	1977	1979	1982	1986	1989	1993	1996	2000	2004	2008	2011	2015	2016	2019.4	2019.11
Active political parties	2.51	2.39	1.88	2.17	2.27	2.45	2.43	2.11	2.33	2.15	2.14	3.94	3.48	4.18	4.18



(Table II)

From Table I, Table II, it can be concluded that the number of effective parties in the Spanish Chamber of Deputies between 1977

and November 2019 ranged from a low of 1.88 in 1982 to a high of 4.18 in April 2019 and November 2019, respectively.

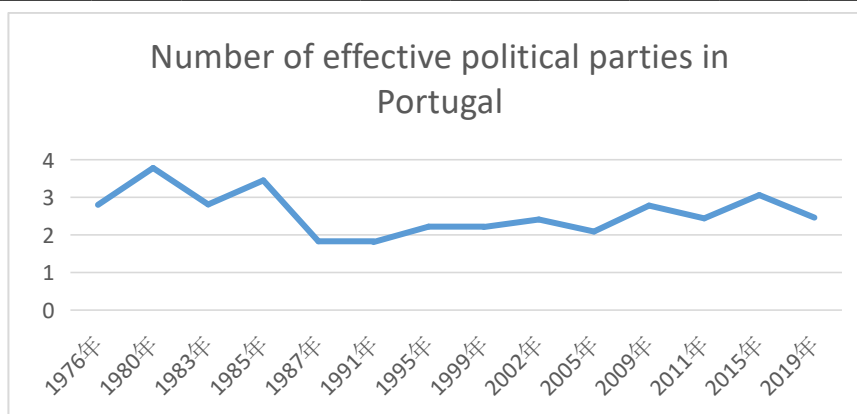
Specifically the evolution of the Spanish political system can be seen in two periods

3.2 Transformation of the Portuguese political system from a period of oscillation between a moderate pluralistic multi-party system and an extreme pluralistic multi-party system to a bipolar multi-party system

The following data were obtained by means of a modified formula for the effective number of political parties in Portugal (1976-2019).

(Table III)

1976-2019 Number of active political parties in the Portuguese Parliament														
Years	1976	1980	1983	1985	1987	1991	1995	1999	2002	2005	2009	2011	2015	2019
active political parties	2.8	3.78	2.81	3.45	1.83	1.81	2.22	2.21	2.41	2.09	2.78	2.44	3.06	2.46



(Table IV)

From Table III and Table IV, it can be seen that the number of effective political parties in the Portuguese Parliament from 1976-2019 ranged from a high of 3.78 in 1980 to a low of 1.81 in 1991. Specifically, it can be divided into two periods

To sum up, both Spain and Portugal have adopted the Constitution and the Political Parties Act to provide institutional safeguards for pluralistic politics and multi-party system in their countries; and they have used the closed-list representation system and the De-honte Act for the allocation of seats in the design and selection of the electoral system, which both reflect the tendency to protect the big parties. From the comparison of these two major points can be clearly seen, in the prevention of authoritarianism and extremism, as well as to defend and deepen the hard-won democracy, Spain and Portugal's starting point is surprisingly consistent.

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