

## TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY IN SPAIN

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### ABSTRACT

The history of democracy in Spain includes bloody wars and great struggles. The traditionalist forces that emerged victorious from the Spanish Civil War established a dictatorship that would last almost four decades under the leadership of General Francisco Franco. With the death of the dictator Franco, the transition to democracy was experienced. While analysing this process, it is seen that many theoretical approaches have been developed. This study was based on the approach of Nicos Poulantzas, who undertook his theory in his book, *The Crisis of Dictatorships*, published in the mid-1970s. Nevertheless, this study was not limited to Poulantzas's approach. In this study, the events during the transition to democracy were evaluated. In addition, the democratisation process was also examined in the context of institutions that had important effects and reflections on Spanish politics.

**Keywords:** Spain, democratisation, transition to democracy, dictatorship, Franco regime

### INTRODUCTION

Spain is one of the most cited examples of transition to democracy in the recent history of Western Europe. This paper aims at providing an explanation of the Spanish transition to democracy after the death of Dictator Franco. In the first part, there is an exploration of the theoretical framework in relation to regime change. In the second part, we touch upon the significant events that occurred after the transition. The third part looks at the transition from the perspective provided by major Spanish institutions. It should be necessary to indicate the fact that the significant motive during the preparation of this paper was to understand rather than to describe. In this sense, we tried to account for what we understood. Trying to look from different angles and different theoretical outlooks provided us with a broad perspective concerning transition.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF TRANSITION

The transition to democracy in Spain has been a very crucial case concerning the subject matter of comparative politics. There are various and fruitful theoretical frameworks in the analysis of this transition. We prefer to follow up with Nicos Poulantzas, who undertook his theory in his book, *The Crisis of Dictatorships*, published in the mid-1970s. However, we are aware of the fact that there are some deficiencies and failures in his theory. Thus, we try to analyse his approach without getting stuck in it.

Before elaborating on Poulantzas's theory in detail, to make the picture seem more encompassing, introducing three major approaches summed up by José Casanova (1983, p. 941) would be helpful: The Marxist structuralist analysis, the rational choice explanations, and the leadership explanations.

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The basic argument of the Marxist structuralist analysis is that the officeholders are “servants of the ruling class.” In this highly reductionist and instrumentalist assertion, “transition is usually analysed in terms of the composition or decomposition of a dominant faction or class coalition within the hegemonic bloc” (Casanova, 1983, p. 941). For Casanova, there are two mutually exclusive versions of this analysis: That of Poulantzas and Salvador Giner and Eduardo Sevilla. Leaving aside Poulantzas’s argument aside, for now, Giner and Sevilla see Francoism as “reactionary despotism –a mode of class domination brought by a reactionary coalition” (Casanova, 1983, p. 942). If the regime enters its final crisis, the liberal factions within the bourgeoisie choose to abandon the regime and give way to political liberalisation. Casanova (1983, p. 943) criticises the Marxist structuralist analysis in a way that:

This theory is unable to offer a valid interpretation of Francoism as a system of class rule. This theory also offers no evidence in support of the contention that the bourgeoisie, either as a class or as a dominant faction within it, played a leading role in the transition. At most, one could argue that it played a “permissive” role. An analysis of the Spanish transition and of the resulting party system can hardly be used to prove the political power of the Spanish bourgeoisie. On the contrary, what it shows is its chronic political weakness and its inability to organise itself politically as a national class.

The second analysis to be mentioned is the rational choice. According to this explanation, the officeholders chose what they did “rationally” to maintain their office or to prevent civil war. However, for Casanova (1983, p. 944), this “presupposes a completely unrealistic scenario.” He (1983, p. 945) also claims that what seems rational to a person may be illogical to others. Thus, there has to be “a concrete historical, phenomenological analysis to explain social action.”

Thirdly, Rustow’s leadership theory is based on the evaluation of the leaders’ role in transitions. Following this line of analysis, the role played by Suarez and King Juan Carlos. Also, the leaders of the opposition were crucial. Casanova illustrates this point by referring to Navarro’s inability to transform the regime while Suarez could successfully do so. However, this approach is inadequate in considering the social-economic climate in which the transition takes place.

### **Poulantzas’s Typology**

Turning back to the Marxist structuralist analysis of Poulantzas, we have to focus on his typology of state. This typology indicates three levels: the type of state, form of state and form of regime. In his theory, he perceives the state as a form of social relations of production. In this sense, there can be several forms of production, but the dominant one determines the type of state. Thus, if the capitalist mode of production is the dominant one, then the type of state is conceptualised by Poulantzas as “the capitalist state”. According to him, there cannot be one encompassing theory of the state. That is why he develops the theory of the capitalist state as a distinct one.

“Form of state” has two dimensions: state/economy relations and state/society relations. Concerning state/economy relations, there are two kinds of forms: “liberal” and “interventionist”. The liberal state promotes a free-market economy while the interventionist state strictly regulates economic activity. State/society relations put forth “normal” and “exceptional” forms of state. A normal state is identified with liberal democracy. On the other hand, the exceptional state may have different kinds, namely, “Bonapartist states”,<sup>i</sup> “military dictatorships”, and “fascist states”.

### **Analysing the Francoist State**

At this point, it is necessary to indicate that this paper attempts to test how much Poulantzas's argument fits into Spain. This attempt accounts for the transition; it is relevant to account for the social-economic-political base within which this transition took place. In this sense, analysis of the Francoist state is crucial.

It is evident that by following Poulantzas's categorisation, we can easily insert the Francoist state into the picture as an exceptional state. However, such insertion in social sciences is not the appropriate way always. For example, Poulantzas (2004, p. 414) also admits the picture's complexity, and he says that despite the more affinity to the military dictatorship, the Francoist state is somewhere in-between the fascist state and military dictatorship. Casanova's analysis illustrates the ambiguity clearly.

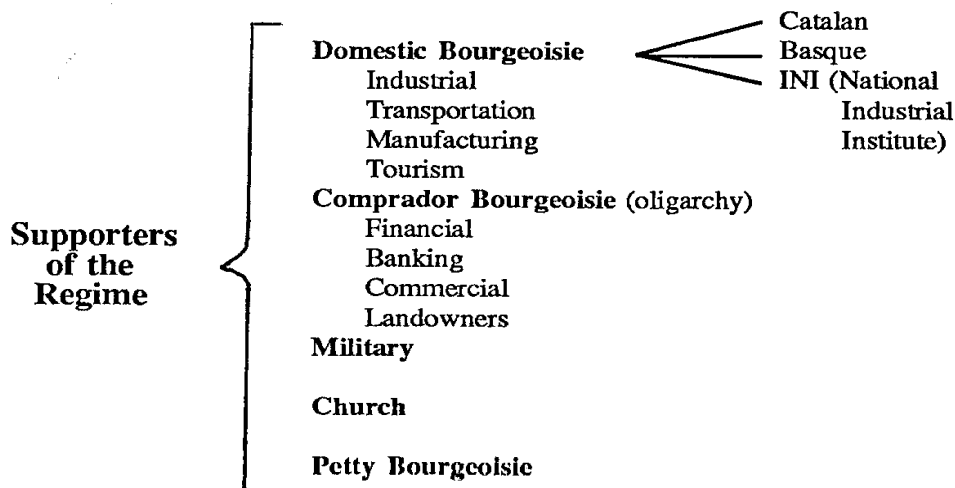
Casanova (1983, p. 947) refers to Philip Schmitter's perception that "the sources of contradiction necessary if not sufficient for the overthrow of authoritarian rule, lie within the regime itself, within the apparatus of the state, not outside it in its relation with civil society." Hence, analysing the nature of Francoism and "the inner contradictions which make possible its self-transformation" should be understood. In doing so, Casanova puts forward three theories: fascism, authoritarian regime and system of dictatorial class rule.

In the case of fascism, he points out that while there were many similar ideological components of fascism in Francoism, the essential structural characteristics, such as lack of mass party or movement before the military uprising, were missing. After the victory of the military, the one-party system was established by a decree. Nevertheless, there was no control of the party over the repressive or ideological apparatus of the state. On the other hand, the Church was the prominent ideological supporter of the regime. When the social base of Francoism is compared with that of fascism, the similarity stands out: "the agrarian land owning and traditionalist peasant interests predominated over the urban-industrial bourgeois or petit-bourgeois interests, all mediated by traditional financial oligarchy" (Casanova, 1983, p. 949). Also, the corporatism of Francoism has some similarities with that of fascism, while the Spanish case is predominated by "Catholic traditionalist elements" (Casanova, 1983, p. 950). He (1983, p. 950) concludes that "... though it had some fascist properties, Francoism can hardly be called a fascist regime, nor was the Francoist state or the party "totalitarian" in any meaningful sense of the term."

Casanova (1983, p. 950) notes that Linz's "ideal-type" of authoritarian regimes derived from an empirical analysis of Francoism. The characteristics of these regimes are limited pluralism, the absence of a systematised ideology, and depoliticisation and demobilisation of the population. Casanova (1983, p. 951) rightfully counts the shortcomings of this model: Firstly, it has a purely political character and, thus, does not explain the socioeconomic base of the regime. Secondly, it is a purely static model since it stresses the regime's permanent and "stable character rather than its tensions, problems or crisis." Unless it incorporates into the analysis the possible internal contradictions within the political structure and the possible tensions and contradictions between the political and the social and economic structures, the model cannot explain the transformations of authoritarian regimes (Casanova, 1983, p. 952).

The third theory to be explained perceives Francoism as a system of class domination. While Linz's theory is regarded as purely political, this third theory suffers from an opposite drawback: an analysis of "the state and political structure solely as reflections or instruments or the socioeconomic structure" (Casanova, 1983, p. 952). In this kind of analysis, the internal changes of the regime are seen as a "reflection of changes in the relations of production within

the hegemonic bloc” (Casanova, 1983, p. 952). Recalling Poulantzas, the theoretical framework he draws is about the conflict within the “power bloc”.<sup>ii</sup> Figure 1 shows how Poulantzas view the power bloc under the Francoist state.



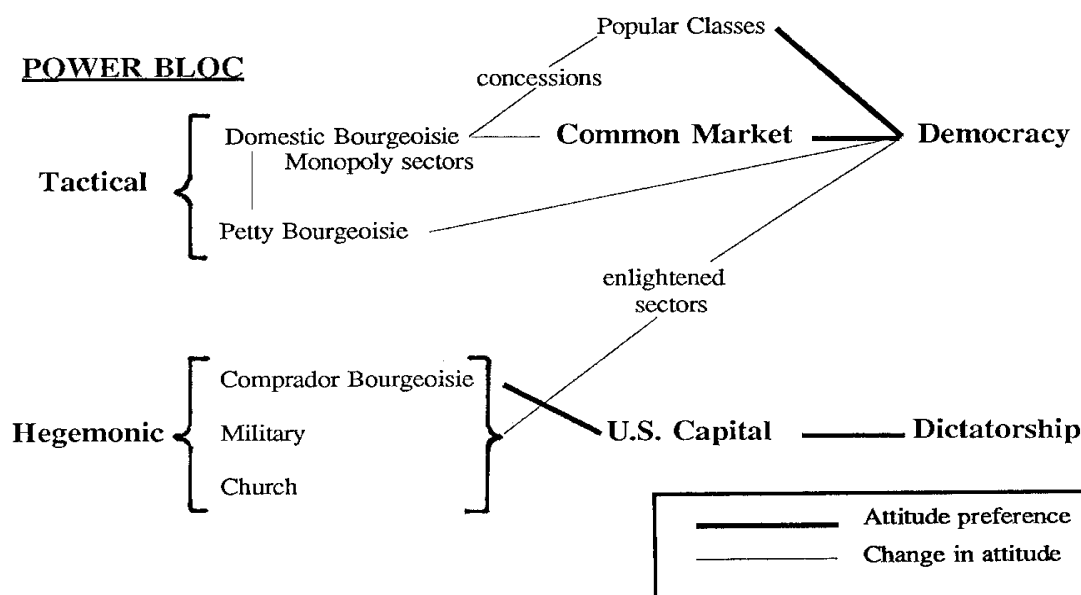
**Figure 1.** The Poulantzian schematisation of the power bloc in the Francoist state (Lopez III, 1990, p. 19).

According to the argument raised by Poulantzas (1976, p. 10), the industrialisation of Spain is characterised as “dependent industrialisation.” The dependence results from the primitive accumulation of capital deriving from the exploitation of colonies and uneven and late industrialisation. In this context, there is a dependence on foreign capital and exogenous sources of capital accumulation. For Poulantzas, the comprador-agrarian bloc (oligarchy), the interest of which is represented by Francoism, benefited from this situation (Lopez III, 1990, p. 20).

On the other side, the “domestic bourgeoisie” believed that the Francoist state, together with the comprador bourgeoisie, was causing the exploitation of the country at a high level. Thus, for it, transition to democracy, its interests would be represented more easily. It had a certain degree of autonomy from foreign capital but not in a total sense. That is why it was not strong enough to have an anti-imperialist struggle.

As a result, the domestic bourgeoisie opted for a strategy of shifting the weight of dependence toward the European Economic Community (EEC) to readjust the balance of forces to their advantage. Part of this strategy included a new partial alliance with the subordinated classes. Poulantzas noted that the general policy of the Spanish domestic bourgeoisie toward the popular masses, and the working class, in particular, evolved into a more open and conciliatory position with regard to their demands. In Spain, this took the form of acceptance of trade unionism as a necessary evil by the domestic bourgeoisie, precisely recognition of two institutions: show steward committees and a system of collective bargaining (Lopez III, p. 23).

In this sense, for Poulantzas, the domestic bourgeoisie triggered the struggle for democratisation through the support of the popular masses and the EEC. Figure 2 schematises the strategy of the domestic bourgeoisie.



**Figure 2.** The schematisation of the bourgeoisie's strategy (Lopez III, 1990, p. 25).

Regarding the shift in the source or origin of foreign capital, the statistical information that Poulantzas lies on is striking. To show the shift from the USA capital to EEC capital, while the percentage of US capital between 1961 and 1965 had risen from 27.8 to 48.3, in 1970, with the effect of EEC capital, this percentage had fallen back to 29.2. For Poulantzas, this indicates the contradiction between the two sets of foreign capital and led to a polarisation within ruling classes; thus, the situation of destabilised hegemony and the crisis of the dictatorship within the power bloc (Lopez III, 1990, p. 20). In this sense, for Poulantzas, the distortion of the Francoist state is all about the redistribution of class forces.

However, there are bouncing criticisms raised upon this highly schematic and mechanical interpretation of Poulantzas. For Maravall (1982, pp. 7-8), the division between comprador and domestic bourgeoisie does not fit into Spain. He denies that the economic development of Spain after 1957 was a result of the promotion of foreign capital. On the contrary, the growth was due to an alliance of financial aristocracy and the state benefiting from the weakness of the bourgeoisie (Maravall, 1982, p. 7). Lopez III (1990, p. 27) argues that “denials of the existence of a dichotomous comprador and domestic bourgeoisie and Maraval's assertion that a financial oligarchy wields economic power in Spain were supported by many facts that Poulantzas seems to have overlooked.”

Moreover, Giner and Salcedo (1976, p. 362) argue that the duality of comprador and domestic bourgeoisie may be applicable to Greece and Portugal, but not Spain. They suggest that the comprador bourgeoisie was actually “internal” (oriented toward internal development) and the “internal” or domestic bourgeoisie was actually external (oriented toward external demand), and Spain then finally possessed a single and unified upper class, in contrast with its structures of pluralism in other respects.

Aramberri, too, calls into question Poulantzas' distinction between comprador and domestic bourgeoisie as being artificial and not corresponding to the reality by asking the question that

Poulantzas (1979, p. 175) does not explain why banking capital supported Suarez, but not right-wing *Alianza Popular*.

Casanova rejects the class-reductionist approach that interprets the rising power of technocrats in terms of the rising power of the comprador bourgeoisie raised by Poulantzas. For Casanova, technocrats were not representatives of comprador bourgeoisie. They only wanted capitalist rationalisation through integrating Spain into the world economy (p. 956).<sup>iii</sup> He (1983, p. 957) puts forward the argument that “technocratic rationalisation and the transformation of Francoist state it entailed may have created some of the conditions of possibility or, at least, facilitated the later democratisation of the state.”

## EVENTS AFTER THE TRANSITION

It would not be a mistake to assert that the indications of transition were seen in Franco’s term. For example, there were attempts of liberalisation, King Juan Carlos was called back. Moreover, attempts to open the way to the external world made it possible for internal and external dynamics to come together to make up the base for transition. To illustrate, Magone states that due to the relations of Spanish originated European workers with their home country, partial liberalisation of the press, industrialisation and modernisation of the social structure and formation on which Francoism relied had been transformed. Thus, with tourism, immigration, the rise of living standards, the social support of the regime had been eroded (Magone, 2006, p. 15).

In other words, economic and social transformation necessitated political transformation as well (Magone, 2006, p. 16). The oil crisis in 1973, the rise in the number of political demonstrations led by workers and students in the last years of Franco strengthened regional movements after Franco in Basque and Catalonia invited political instability (Magone, 2006, p. 16). With the dictator’s death in November 1975, the transition to democracy became inevitable, as in Greece and Portugal. For Magone, the transition process was affected by Portugal since the Spanish political elite observed the turbulence in Portugal and opted for an evolutionary process of cooperation.

During the first year after Franco, there was an ambiguity about initiating a successful transition to democracy. There was not an agreement whether to realise an evolutionary “reforma” or revolutionary “rupture”.

On the one side, there was a possibility of polarisation of society as the sudden-revolutionary break in Portugal. On the other side, there was a peaceful, evolutionary transformation of the Francoist state by supporting a moderate democratisation policy (Gunther, 1988, p. 34). With demands like “rupture”, general amnesty, legalisation of all political parties, radicals initiated demonstrations and strikes. The choice in this process would determine the political plane of Spain from then on. In July 1976, the Navarro government was replaced by the Adolfo Suarez government, and the reform process accelerated. With this choice, “reforma” became the only prevailing way to democracy. Suarez was “Movimiento”, originated general director and minister.<sup>iv</sup> He was not a much-known figure of the Francoist regime. His cooperation with the King and speaker of the Cortes made him a successful reformer.<sup>v</sup> With the approval of the October 1976 Reform Bill, his persuasion of Cortes to suicide is the indicator of this. This bill introduced first, a way for a new and democratically elected constituent assembly to shape new political reforms and second, new Cortes is designed as a bicameral assembly. The people ratified this bill in December 1976 with 94 %. These followed this bill: hundreds of convicts gained their freedom, Movimiento was dissolved, vertical syndicalism was replaced with free

trade unions, negotiation of new electoral law with the opposition, legalisation of Spanish Communist Party (PCE) in April 1977 despite the strong opposition of the military. With the success of “reforma”, the new regime was legitimised before the Francoistas and opposition of the Francoist state.

Suarez’s Union of Democratic Centre (UCD) won the 15 June 1977 elections for the constituent assembly with 40%. Socialists (PSOE) got 29%, and the most substantial organisation –PCE– could only get 9%. AP (Popular Alliance), which is more conservative than UCD, was able to get 8%. Besides these parties, regional parties were able to be represented. These results show that moderate parties were favoured.

Contrary to the past, “consensualism” and harmony prevailed during the preparation of the new constitution. Thus, harmony became one of the primary motives of the new political culture in Spain. There were two critical issues to be solved in the new constitution: the country’s form of regime and organisation.

The form of the regime was identified as “republican monarchy”, with which legitimacy was transferred to the Cortes and thus sovereignty based totally on the people. Decentralisation became the most important principle concerning the organisation of the country. As a result, the “state of autonomies” (*estado autonomias*) was established.

With the economic policy of the Suarez government, the rise of workers’ wages was delimited, the growth rate decreased from 3% to 1.5%, unemployment rose. Despite this economic picture, Suarez could get 35% of the votes while PSOE remained 30. However, economic problems intensified. Unemployment rose although trade unions –UGT and CCOO– accepted a rise in wages under inflation. Moreover, Basque terrorism increased. The most reactive and anti-democratic element of repressive state apparatus, civil guard, took advantage of the instability and broke into the Cortes in Tajero’s leadership.<sup>vi</sup> This coup attempt was suppressed successfully.

Some within the party harmed Suárez’s authority and his role as leader. The tension exploded in 1981: Suárez resigned as the head of government, and Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo was appointed to lead the new cabinet and the UCD. Sotelo dissolved parliament and called elections for October 1982. In the 1979 election, the UCD had achieved a majority, but in 1982 they suffered a spectacular defeat. The elections gave an absolute majority to the PSOE.

In the 28<sup>th</sup> Congress of the PSOE (May 1979), Felipe González, the party’s secretary general, resigned rather than ally with the radicals in the party. In the Congress held in September 1979, there was the realignment in the party along more moderate lines allowing González to take charge once more. He entered the elections with the political program called “el cambio” (the change). Winning an absolute majority in parliament in two consecutive elections (1982 and 1986) and exactly half the seats in 1989 allowed the PSOE to legislate and govern without establishing pacts with the other parliamentary political forces.

With Gonzalez, the PSOE abandoned dogmatic Marxism and reached the middle class. During the 80s, they continued their reforms. Their strategy was to open the Spanish market to competition and to restructure some sectors. They took into account the rising importance of neo-liberalism and left Franco’s protectionism. The membership in the EEC motivated their reforms as well. However, unemployment remained very high between 17 to 23%. Reform of higher education, expansion of health system and some regulations regarding improvement of

the position of women furthered democratisation. On 12 June 1985, Spain became a member of the EEC.

Despite its anti-NATO attitude during the 1986 election campaigns, the PSOE took the issue to the referendum, and the people favoured membership. In the election, while AP/CD could get 26 %, they won 44 %. In 1989, PSOE degraded to 40 %, while PP got 26 %. Between 1989 and 1996, PSOE could no more get the absolute majority in the Cortes. With José Maria Aznar's presidency in PP, the party increased its votes significantly, and in 1996, it exceeded PSOE's votes by 1%.

The reasons for the decline of PSOE are multifaceted. In its long government years, the party was remembered for the exploitation of office, corruption, clientelism and scandals. Some political scientists entitled these years "patrimonial socialism" since socialists opted to develop close relations with financial oligarchy rather than improve the social conditions of the masses (Magone, 2006 p. 20). Due to their obsession with holding power, they fell into scandals. Moreover, the fundamental problem of Spain, that is, unemployment, could not be solved, and this intensified the loss of prestige.

With the end of support provided by the regional party of Catalonia (CiU), Gonzalez was forced to hand over the office to Aznar. Aznar, too, formed the government with the support of some regional parties. Due to the demands of delegation of authority coming from regional parties, "decentralisation" increased in Aznar's term of office. With him, liberalisation of the economy furthered, and there were some positive indicators in the economy. Thanks to the positive results of his first term, Aznar could win the absolute majority with 2000 elections. With the support of Zapatero, the leader of PSOE, he attempted a struggle with the terrorist organisation ETA. However, providing support for the USA in Iraq caused a reaction of Spanish people, and in March 2004 Elections, the PSOE came to power.

## **TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY AND THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK**

The *Cortes Generales* approved the constitution on 31 October 1978, and by the Spanish people in a referendum on 6 December 1978, before being promulgated by King Juan Carlos on 27 December. It came into effect on 29 December, the day it was published in the *Official Gazette*. The constitution, which established a democratic constitutional monarchy, was the first Spanish constitution that was not imposed by a party but represented a negotiated compromise among all the major parties (Carr, p. 177).

At this point, explaining the roles of the primary Spanish institutions, namely the Church, Military, the Crown, and executive-legislative bodies, and the constitution would help clarify the scene in which transition to democracy took place. Afterwards, we will mention the importance of NATO and the European Union membership for the democratic transition. Finally, we will focus on the change in the regional policy with democratic transition

### **Basic Institutions of Spain**

#### ***Church***

As the principal legitimiser of the Francoist state, eliminating the Church's power was crucial for the settlement of democracy. 1978 Constitution changed the state-church relations ultimately, such that the Constitution draft did not even mention the Church. If we look back at the Church during the Francoist state, we would see a moral and cultural mesogovernment in



the hands of the Church, which would share in the decision making and execution of policies on moral education, backed up by an explicit legal framework (Pérez-Díaz, p.133). At that time, the state also contributed all sorts of material resources to the Church.

However, a rupture from the Francoist regime was carried out despite the resistance from the conservative sectors of the Church. It is also remarkable that, in the final analysis, the Catholic Church is mentioned in the constitution (Article 16), which led to a contradiction in the constitution that a Spanish state claimed to have no official religion with freedom of ideology and religion but mentions about Catholic Church in its constitution.

According to some, this change in the state-church relations took place smoothly mostly because of the internal conflicts of the Church. For example, Pérez-Díaz (1993, p.172) puts it like that “During the 1960s and 1970s the church had used up all its energies absorbing internal conflicts and ensuring for itself a dignified way out of Francoism”. On the other hand, according to some scholars like McDonough, Shin, Moisés (1998, p. 929), the cracking the direct influence of the Church from the politics also stemmed from the consent of the Church for integration to the new system because even after the transition to democracy religious affiliation was closely related to political participation. Therefore, either with the consent of the Church or with the pressure inside or outside of the Church, with the transition to democracy, the Spanish Church lost most of its direct and formal power on politics and civil life.

However, it would be too naïve to think that Church does no longer have any influence on politics. As put by Anderson (2003, p. 142), “whilst abstaining from overt political involvement, the Church had no intention of keeping silence on issues relating to core values or institutional interests.” Therefore, despite its formal status, the Catholic Church still exerted so much influence on Spanish political and civil life by indirect means.

### *Military*

One of the most important elements of the transition to the democratic state is the construction of a civilian government without any links to the military. As mentioned in the 8<sup>th</sup> article of the Spanish Constitution, the responsibility of the military is confined to the guarantee of the sovereignty and independence of Spain, the defence of its territorial integrity and constitutional order. Its mission as a guardian against internal threats had changed to one as a protector against external threats. Besides, further articles in the constitution guaranteed the removal of the military from politics. For example, according to the 97<sup>th</sup> article, “government” directs the defence policy and military administration. Therefore, even in the defence policy military is not a policymaker but a tool of state for its implementation.

Moreover, Spain’s military regions were re-drawn and reduced from nine on the mainland to six, plus the Balearic and Canary Islands (Heywood, 1995, p. 63). Besides, further attempts were made for professionalism. Resources have been shifted from ground to air and the naval. During this period, although the military expenditure grew in real terms, it declined as a proportion of the state’s central budget (Heywood, 1995, p. 63)

### *The Crown*

The formal position of the Crown is set out in Articles 56-65 of the constitution. The monarch is the head of the state but remains at the margins politically. The constitution outlines a series of functions, as opposed to powers; the head of state sanctions and promulgates laws, issues decrees approved by the Council of Ministers, is supreme Commander of the armed forces, represents Spain in its relations with other states.

If we look carefully, these are all duty acts in the sense that they are constitutionally required of the monarch, who has left no discretion over their fulfilment (Carr, 2002). Therefore, the Crown is also bound to the constitution by fulfilling the required tasks.

### ***Executive-Legislative Relations***

In constitutional terms, there is no “Prime Minister” post that exists in Spain but rather “President of the Government” and the “President of the Council of Minister” is referred to. Actually, this amendment in the name of this post also serves the purpose of protecting democracy and preventing authoritarian regimes. As Heywood (1995, p.88) states, the country’s long tradition of authoritarian intervention has been reflected in the dominance of heads of state vis-à-vis heads of government. Therefore, the creation of a more assertive executive and the head of government was the objective. Moreover, the legislative is set in a position subordinate to the executive. Furthermore, as articulated in the constitution (Art 87, 109-11), there is no clear separation of powers. Instead, there exists a deliberate integration of executive and legislative via government.

The creation of a strong executive is also reflected in the powers granted to the president of the government such that he has a virtually free hand over the structure of and appointments to Cabinet members, the number of vice-presidents, and so forth. Cabinet members do not have to be either deputies or members of the party in power.

The reason for the creation of a strong executive was for the protection of democracy. However, the relative decreased role of the legislative undermined democracy. Parliamentary rules also encouraged a “pactist” style of decision making: the minimum size of parliamentary groups was set at 15, only parliamentary groups were allowed to introduce legislation. Consequently, all these regulations resulted in creating a weak parliament and the domination of the policymaking process by the government.

This is clearly indicated by the statistics carried out between 1977-2004 (Field, 2005, p. 1084). According to those statistics, 86% of laws began as government bills, and only 20% of these government bills did not become law. However, when we look at the reasons behind this 20% of rejection, we could see that the parliament is not very powerful even in the decline of these governmental bills because in 90% of these bills expired when the parliamentary elections were called, and 8% is withdrawn, and just 2% is rejected.

Therefore, parliament does not have enough tools to check and control the government. Actually, these regulations are pretty similar to the ones that are implemented in Turkey with the 1982 Constitution. Just like Spain, in Turkey, all parliamentary rules and regulations served to eliminate political cleavages. The closed-list system for elections in Spain was also intended to diminish traditional ideological conflicts as well as centre-periphery tensions.

### ***NATO Membership***

The PSOE owes its victory in the 1982 elections primarily to its anti-NATO stance such that its slogan was “OTAN, de entrada, no”. However, soon after the elections, the PSOE changed its attitude towards NATO. Under considerable international pressure and with the NATO issue increasingly linked to Spain’s application for EC membership, the Socialists, once in government, shifted positions and then had to convince the public, which (according to public opinion polls) was opposed to the membership to the NATO (Maxwell, 1991, p. 40). There are several reasons behind this change; however, after all, the NATO membership had a fundamental importance for Spain during the transition period to democracy.

As we have already mentioned, there was a shift in the mission of the military. Contrary to the Francoist state where the military had a paramount value, in democratic Spain, this military ended up with an ambiguous role such that the military was neither granted so much power nor needed as before. Hence, to avoid this potential idle military and locate it to a beneficial function, the NATO membership was priceless such that it could guarantee the rule of the civilian government. In this way, the military would have given a new role as the guardian against external threats rather than the internal ones.

On the other hand, another view from within the military was that if Spain becomes a member of NATO, that will provide Spain with a fully equipped and professional army, which is essential for protecting democratic Spain against internal threats (Heywood, 1995, p. 265). Therefore, the NATO membership served well to Spain in many ways during its transition to democracy.

### ***European Union***

In 1986, Spain joined the European Community (EC). According to the political leaders, the European engagement was essential to ensure the successful consolidation of a European-style democracy, an essential concern after the failed coup of 1981 (Maxwell, 1991, p. 37). The prospect of joining the European Union played an essential role in the consolidation of democracy. Spain's first formal application for membership to the EC was made in February 1962. According to *Birkelbach Report* (Thomas, 2006, p. 1198) promulgated in 1962, "States whose governments do not have democratic legitimacy and whose people do not participate in the decisions of the government, neither directly nor indirectly by freely-elected representatives, cannot expect to be admitted in the circle of peoples who form the European Communities." Moreover, according to the report, "this involves above all recognition of the principles of the rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms." Therefore, to adjust those political criteria, Spain has taken significant steps towards the consolidation of its democracy. As Conversi (2002, p. 231) puts it, "this worked as a lever for increasing Madrid's commitment to the protection of human rights in all their aspects."

In the second application, in 1977, this time economic rather than political issues were concerned. For ten years period, Spain undertook significant economic reforms for its integration with the European Union. Finally, the accession treaty was signed in Madrid on 12 March 1985, and Spain formally became a member of the EC on 1 January 1986.

### ***Regional Policy***

Regionalised state model introduced by the new constitution is a unique way that contributed to the democratisation process of Spain (Konuralp, 2019). Nearly one-tenth of the constitution was devoted to regional matters. However, there is considerable ambiguity in the constitution regarding the territorial organisation. For example, Article 2, which is on national unity and regional autonomy, writes: "The constitution is based on the indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation, the common and indivisible homeland of all Spaniards, *and recognises and guarantees the right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions which make it up and the solidarity among all of them.*"

This article both rule out the regional autonomy, as indicated in the first part and specifically rule it in, as suggested by the italicised section. However, this ambiguity was a planned one such that the sensitive issues like regional autonomy are left aside to be solved later. Therefore, in order to reconcile both centralists and regional autonomy seekers, vague language is used in the constitution. However, as compared to the past, the 1978 constitution, emphasising

subsidiarity and decentralisation, gave local governments much more responsibilities and authority. Hence, the governance became more democratic.

The constitution established three levels for 17 autonomous communities shown in Figure 3:

- (1) Privileged regions: These are historic regions-Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia-which had been granted the right to autonomous government during the II Republic. They do not need any formal application to the state regarding their status. They would enjoy full autonomous powers, entailing a high level of responsibilities.
- (2) Grade 1 regions (Article 151): Any region could apply to receive the same high level of autonomy as the privileged regions, provided that a series of conditions were first satisfied, and the draft autonomy statute was endorsed in a referendum.
- (3) Grade 2 regions (Article 143): required regions to follow a lengthy consultation process before making a formal application for autonomy. Once granted, their autonomous status will be low and subject to five years prior to their being granted similar autonomy as privileged regions.



**Figure 3.** Political Map of Spain (Maps of World, 2014).

All 17 communities have a president, an executive, a unicameral parliament, together with their administrative organs and the High Court of Justice. While ordinary laws passed at the central and regional level have equal standing, the central government sets primary legislation which ranks above regional law in such areas as education, health, law and order and civil service. Several areas, such as defence, foreign affairs, economic stabilisation, pensions and unemployment legislation, remain the exclusive preserve of central government (Articles, 149-150).

### *Financial Structure of the Regions*

In terms of control over expenditure, seven autonomous communities were granted a high level of responsibility. The only taxes allocated explicitly to the central government are the customs duties. All remaining tax fields can be assigned to any level of government. However, regional and local powers cannot levy a particular tax without the transfer by the central government; tax assignments depend on Madrid's decisions.

### *Provincial and Municipal Government*

Spain's 17 autonomous communities were further divided into 50 separate provinces and over 8,000 municipalities. As the Spanish state was being decentralised through the establishment of autonomous communities, local government was firmly being re-centralised. Control over municipalities was passed mainly to regional governments, which are reluctant to cede the power to the local level.

Whereas in the early 1980s, many Basque and Catalan nationalists declared outright independence to be their ultimate aim, in the 1990s, they tended to adopt a somewhat vaguer attitude. As in "Europe of the regions", the role of national states would become secondary, and as decision making power moved both upwards to the supra-national level and downwards to the regional level, independence claims of the communities no longer constitutes their ultimate aim.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Poulantzian framework provides that the type of state need not be changed with the change in the form of state. In Spain, this is the case too. After the transition, the type of state continued to be a capitalist one while the form of state moved from exceptional to normal (democratic). The form of the regime after the transition became a republican monarchy. However, such a schematisation may not always be valid in studying social phenomena. In this sense, the uniqueness of the Spanish case has its merits too. This paper showed such an attitude.

Concerning Spanish institutions, there is a significant transformation in all of the primary institutions of Spain with the transition to democracy. However, there is still ambiguity in the new role of these institutions. First, with the transition to democracy, while the Catholic Church had been deprived of most of its privileges formally, the Catholic Church kept exerting great influence on politics and civil life informally.

Secondly, the role of the military in democratic Spain also created big debates. Nonetheless, the military proved its commitment to the civil government and targeted external threats as a professional defence organ. Except for the attempted military coup of 1981, the military internalised its new role and operated accordingly.

The Spanish Constitution of 1978 also dealt with legislative-executive relations. However, to protect democracy, the constitution created such a powerful executive that one could hardly claim that there is a democratic decision-making process in the parliament. As a consequence of the dominant executive, the role of the legislative turned out to be a symbolic one. There have also been two critical international dimensions of Spain's transition to democracy; NATO and EU membership. NATO membership played an essential role in creating a new function to the military, consequently securing the civilian government. On the other hand, to adapt the criteria set by the EC, Spain took significant steps towards democracy.

The last issue that we dealt with was the regional policy. The regional policy had always been a controversial issue in Spain, and such a contentious issue was left to be solved later. Therefore, as we have shown, there are ambiguities in the constitution regarding regional autonomy and sovereignty. However, despite these uncertainties in the constitution, the regions had been given much more powers and responsibilities, so the decision-making process attempted to be made more democratic.

However, this time another obstacle occurred in front of the democratic decision making. As the control over municipalities was primarily passed to regional governments, regional governments were reluctant to give the power to the local level. With the membership to the EU, the regional governments also become more satisfied as living in the “Europe of the regions”, consequently forsaking the desires for independence.

<sup>i</sup> “Bonapartist state” is derived from Marx’s works. The argument is as follows: While Marx saw the state as largely derivative of the economic forces and class interests, he did at times allow it a substantial degree of political autonomy. His work *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) describes a *coup d’état* in France in 1851, in which state forces led by Louis Bonaparte seized absolute power, achieving not only a considerable degree of independence from the bourgeoisie, but often acting directly against its immediate interests. According to Marx, however, the Bonapartist state still served the long-term interests of the capitalist system, even if it often acted against the immediate interests and will of the bourgeoisie: that the individual bourgeois can continue to exploit other classes and to enjoy undisputed property, family, religion and order that their class be condemned along with other classes to similar political nullity; that, in order to save its purse, it must forfeit the crown.

<sup>ii</sup> “Power bloc” is defined by Poulantzas as a “contradictory unity” of classes and class fractions organised around the hegemonic class or class fraction. This does not mean a homogeneous composition, but an alliance structure that is fractured and full of contradictions. It is marked by permanent competition between the sectors of internationally oriented capital.

<sup>iii</sup> Technocrats came to power in 1957, known as Opus Dei technocrats.

<sup>iv</sup> Movimeto: the sole fascist political party permitted under the dictatorship.

<sup>v</sup> Cortes: The Cortes Generales (Spanish for General Courts) is the legislature of Spain.

<sup>vi</sup> Antonio Tejero, breaking into the Congress of Deputies February 23, 1981, attempting a coup.

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