

Varia

The Party System in Spain and Its Indicators: A Review from The Transition to The Present Day



O Sistema Partidário em Espanha e os seus Indicadores: Uma Revisão desde a Transição até aos Dias de Hoje

El Sistema de Partidos en España y sus Indicadores: Un Repaso desde la Transición Hasta Nuestros Días

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Abstract: The aim is to analyze the main indicators of the party system in order to define the whole from its different explanatory elements. The objective is to update the academic information based on the study of the main single-member indicators, thus characterizing the Spanish party system up to the XIV legislature. After the construction of an electoral matrix in SPSS, the data are introduced into the formulas and functions of the indicators, under the descriptive statistics method. For the forecasts, the linear regression technique, inserted in inferential statistics, will be used. The foundational stage is defined by a very high electoral concentration index, low fragmentation, only two as a result of the NEP and volatility between blocks. From 2015 onwards, the concentration index reaches historic lows. Counterintuitively, electoral competitiveness declines from 2016 onwards, with fragmentation increasing to 0.88/1. Looking ahead, the data show an electoral evolution favorable to the left, accompanied by a new crystallization of voters into ideological poles. At the same time, there is an increase in intra-bloc volatility close to 25%. These results indicate that electoral competition will take place within each of the main ideological spaces.

Keywords: Party System, Indicators, Spain, Evolution.

Resumo: O objetivo é analisar os principais indicadores do sistema partidário a fim de definir o todo com base nos seus diferentes elementos explicativos. O objetivo é atualizar a informação académica com base no estudo dos principais indicadores de um só membro, caracterizando assim o sistema partidário espanhol até à 14ª legislatura. Após a construção de uma matriz eleitoral no SPSS, os dados são introduzidos nas fórmulas e funções dos indicadores, sob o método da estatística descritiva. Para a previsão, será utilizada a técnica da regressão linear, que faz parte da estatística inferencial. A fase fundacional é definida por um índice de concentração eleitoral muito elevado, baixa fragmentação, apenas dois como resultado do NEP e volatilidade

entre blocos. A partir de 2015, o índice de concentração atinge mínimos históricos. Contra-intuitivamente, a competitividade eleitoral declina a partir de 2016, com a fragmentação a aumentar para 0,88/1. Olhando para o futuro, os dados mostram uma evolução eleitoral favorável à esquerda, acompanhada de uma nova cristalização dos eleitores em pólos ideológicos. Ao mesmo tempo, verifica-se um aumento da volatilidade intra-bloco próximo de 25%. Estes resultados indicam que a competição eleitoral terá lugar dentro de cada um dos principais espaços ideológicos.

Palavras-chave: Sistema Partidário, Indicadores, Espanha, Evolução.

Resumen: Se pretenden analizar los principales indicadores del sistema de partidos para definir el conjunto a partir de sus diferentes elementos explicativos. El objetivo es actualizar la información académica a partir del estudio de los principales indicadores uninominales, caracterizando así el sistema de partidos español hasta la XIV legislatura. Tras la construcción de una matriz electoral en SPSS, los datos se introducen en las fórmulas y funciones de los indicadores, bajo el método de la estadística descriptiva. Para los pronósticos, se utilizará la técnica regresión lineal, inserta en la estadística inferencial. La etapa fundacional se define por un altísimo índice de concentración electoral, baja fragmentación, apenas dos como resultado del NEP y volatilidad entrebloques. A partir de 2015, el índice de concentración alcanza mínimos históricos. De forma contraintuitiva, la competitividad electoral desciende a partir de 2016, aumentando la fragmentación hasta 0,88/1. De cara al futuro, los datos muestran una evolución electoral favorable a las izquierdas, acompañada de una nueva cristalización de los votantes en polos ideológicos. Al mismo tiempo, se produce un aumento de la volatilidad intra-bloque cercano al 25%. Estos resultados indican que la competencia electoral tendrá lugar dentro de cada uno de los principales espacios ideológicos.

Palabras clave: Sistema de Partidos, Indicadores, España, Evolución.

1. Introduction and theoretical framework

The first characterizations of the party system come from the great figures of political science: while Duverger (1957) understood that every party system was directly determined by the electoral system that conformed to it, Peter Mair (1997) has been standing out among them by understanding that the term "party system" refers to the set of formations that achieve parliamentary representation after a democratic electoral process. Following these postulates, every proportional electoral system will culminate in a two-party system. However, the Spanish transition from a bi-partisanship to a multiparty system without altering the electoral legislation showed that other factors define the landscape of formations (Crespo, 2020).

For their part, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) pointed out that the party system of each nation is a representation of social fragmentation into cleavages. In other words, these authors stated that each party will represent a specific, recognizable

electorate, with homogeneous socialization and similar needs. Although this proposal may seem intuitive, many examples demonstrated the transversality present in the electorate of a single party. This phenomenon, along with the de-ideologization of electoral contests, also led us to reject the validity of the cleavage theory as an explanation of the Spanish partisan context (Díaz, 2022).

At present and following Riveros and Pelfini (2022), the Spanish party system would be framed within polarized pluralism, defined by the role of the media as a political tool. Although this situation is recognizable in Spain, it should be noted that in strict adherence to Sartori's (1976) approach, this system would require the existence of two main parties in the struggle for power with a press oriented to the elite. Nevertheless, the affirmation of this reality cannot be questioned, due to the proliferation in the last decade of parties with the possibility of achieving success in the electoral contest (Ferrándiz and Lobera, 2019).

Therefore, Spain has a party system difficult to classify, a recipient of the great classical theories in Political Science but far from being the perfect archetype of any of them. This is the reason why it has been decided to study the Spanish party system from the empirical study of its indicators. This paper intended to analyze the main indicators of a system to define the whole from inferences of its different explanatory elements. It was considered crucial to update the information offered by the academy based on the joint study of the main single-member indicators, thus offering a complete characterization of the Spanish party system up to the XIV legislature.

The following is a descriptive analysis of the electoral periods into which Spanish democracy can be divided, as a theoretical contribution. The explanations will be referred to the State-level parties (PAE by its acronym in Spanish) (*see* Figure I), even though references to the non-State-level parties will offer in this paper.

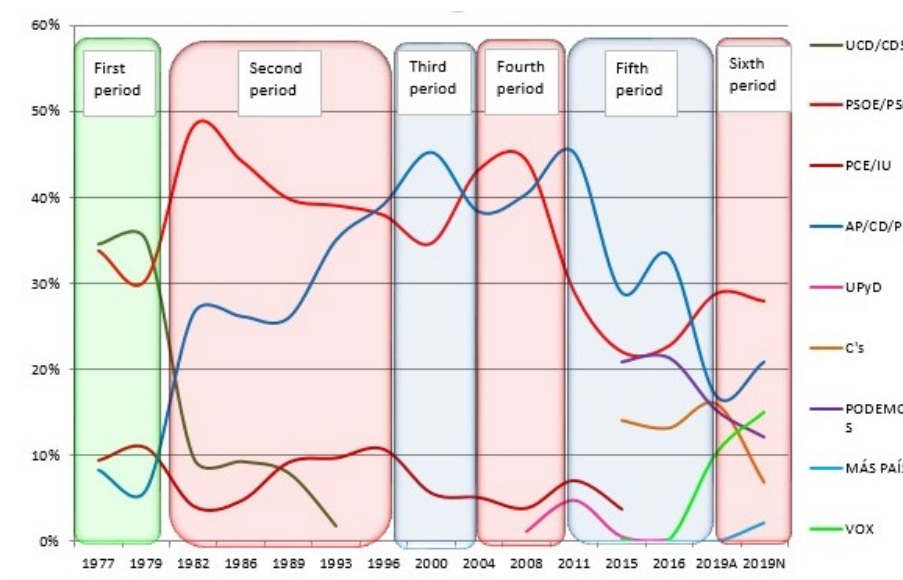


Figure 1

Evolution of PAE electoral support

Prepared by the author based on data from the Ministry of the Interior.

This graph shows the electoral results obtained in all national elections by the different State-level parties. To operationalize this analysis, Spanish democratic history has been divided into 6 electoral periods:

1. 1. Foundational elections (1977-1979): the situation is merely one of consolidation of the democratic State. The army, a great supporter of the Franco dictatorship, had not lost its strength and a new uprising was feared, which was later portrayed in the attempted coup d'état by General Tejero in 1981. This period was, therefore, aimed at implementing the Constitutional order and democratizing the party system and the whole Spanish political life. Thus, between the end of 1976 and the beginning of 1977, most of the parties opposed to Franco's regime were legalized, thanks to the Amnesty Law. Leading this Transition, Adolfo Suárez founded the Union of the Democratic Center (UCD): a vehicle and catch-all party destined to articulate the political center, a fact that would allow him to approve his political program of regeneration in a Cortes that were formed during the dictatorship (Pasamar, 2019). In the founding elections, two electoral struggles are observed: for the Presidency, at the top of the electoral results, between the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) and the UCD of Suarez, the latter winning the battle, and becoming the third force, fighting between the Communist Party (PCE) and Alianza Popular (AP), with the Communist Party winning.
2. Socialist hegemony (1982-1996): in this second period, it can be observed that the electoral results of UCD and PSOE diverge both radically and symmetrically since the PSOE increases its result by the same 20 points that Suárez loses. The Popular Party, in the process of reform, gained more than a considerable number of supporters. This trend of popular ascent remained stable throughout the socialist period, reaching its peak with the electoral victory of José María Aznar in 1996 (Ministerio del Interior, n.d.). This socialist period is characterized by its crystallization: the PCE remains stable at around 10% of the votes, the PSOE, always a winner, oscillates between 38 and 48% and the Popular Party (PP) continues its rise to power. In terms of Sartori (1976), at this time Spain experienced a hegemonic party system, defined as centered on one party and with a periphery of small secondary parties that do not compete for power. Spain underwent a process of reaffirmation and a search for its place in various international spaces. "For change", Felipe González's electoral slogan in 1982, may be the syntagm that best defines this period (Delgado and Cazorla, 2017).
3. Aznar Administration (1996-2000): in this period the Popular Party managed to impose itself over the hitherto prevailing socialist option, in the first elections in a tight way and in the 2000 elections achieving a comfortable majority and the second-best results in its history (45.24% of the votes) (Ministry of the Interior, n.d.). José María Aznar's victory would not have been possible without the regenerative process that the PP imposed on itself during its last years in opposition, since both Manuel Fraga and Alianza Popular appeared

to the electorate as reminiscences of an outdated regime that only the figure of this new Secretary General managed to dissolve (Villaplana & Medero, 2022). However, despite the Popular triumph, Aznar's investiture required months of negotiations with the peripheral parties.

4. Zapatero's Government (2004-2008): José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero succeeded in repositioning the Socialist option as the one preferred by Spaniards, surpassing by 5 percentage points the results obtained by the Popular Party in the two elections held during the period. The main governmental purposes were to increase the quality of employment, improve public services, withdrawing Spanish troops from the Iraq war and raise the minimum wage to 600 euros per month. Spain was also at the forefront of tolerant countries with homosexual marriage, express divorce and Historical Memory (Sánchez-Moreno, 2020). However, economic projects for Spain were cut short by the bursting of the real estate bubble and the devastating economic and financial recession that hit the Occidental countries. This crisis threw a huge number of workers into unemployment or starvation wages, a situation to which the Government responded with the so-called adjustment policies: driven by the European Union in exchange for the demand to reform the constitutional text to place debt repayment at the center of the State's priorities. This little-publicized constitutional reform cost the Presidency a barrage of criticism, which was added to those already received from those who considered it directly responsible for the crisis (Olmeda, 2021). This economic situation punished Zapatero's management and gave the next electoral triumph to his direct adversary.

5. Breakup of the two-party system (2011-2016): that scenario of stability was completely fractured in 2011, when an explosion took place in terms of the conformation of presidential parties with Podemos entering the political game on the left in the spectrum and Ciudadanos in the center right. In 2011 the PP gets the best result in its history, with a large absolute majority, however, a few months after the celebration of these elections, the Indignant Movement (15M) exploded in the streets. The peaceful protests and the various collectives that grew up under its protection, would come to question the role of the traditional political parties, creating a climate of discontent that led to the emergence of new political forces from 2011 onwards. The 15M inaugurated a new political cycle and acted as a revolutive turning point with deep effects on both public and published opinion (Cacheda and Rofojos, 2020). This opinion became hostile to the government and to the system in general. Despite the above, Mariano Rajoy managed to revalidate his permanence in the Executive in the first multiparty elections in Spanish history, held in 2011. However, at this electoral moment, something unprecedented in Spanish history occurred: Rajoy, after receiving the royal protocol offer to present his investiture as President of the Government, rejected this option because he did not have sufficient support. As a

result of this refusal and the rejection by Congress of Pedro Sánchez in his investiture, something even more unprecedented occurred in Spain: the elections were repeated and only then did the PP manage to form a government (Llera, Bras and Montabes, 2018). This second legislature of Mariano Rajoy was marked by instability, so, finally, the successful motion of censure presented by Pedro Sánchez replaced the Executive.

6. Current Events (2019April/2019November-2023): this political moment, characterized by a new electoral repetition, included the radical right embodied by VOX among the main parties for voters. The green formation burst into the political arena in the first elections of 2019, after having achieved unprecedented electoral results in autonomic elections to subsequently continue increasing its support until it managed to become the third most voted force. The orange party suffered the absence of Albert Rivera reducing by half its seats, Unidas Podemos, electoral coalition between Podemos, Izquierda Unida (IU) and minority left-wing alternatives, despite obtaining the second worst result of its trajectory, manages to be part of an Executive with many difficulties for its constitution, and the PP, in a situation of highs and lows, redefines its corporate image. Finally, it was the Socialist Party who managed to prevail in the contest and formed the first coalition government in Spanish history, sharing the Executive with Unidas Podemos (Ferrándiz and Lobera, 2019). The major milestones of this electoral period are the reform of the abortion law, the exhumation of Francisco Franco, the trials of the leaders of the process, the Organic Law of Integral Guarantee of Sexual Freedom and the health crisis generated by the coronavirus pandemic.

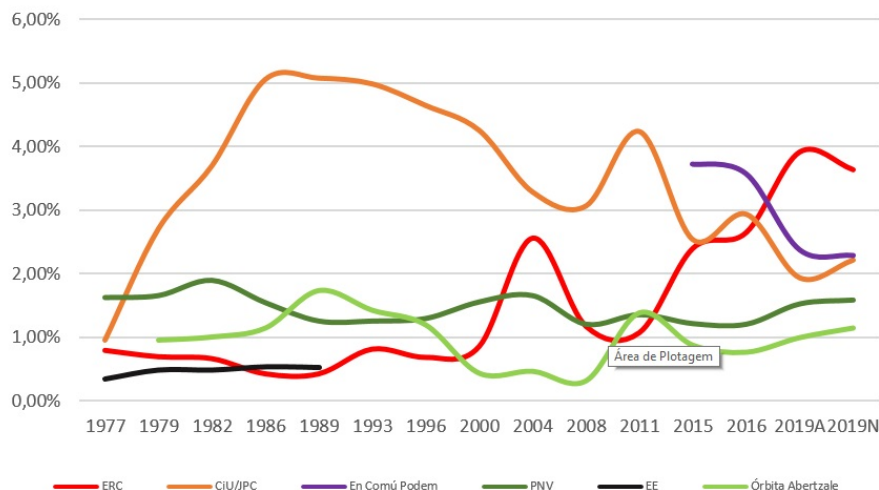


Figure 2

Evolution of PANE electoral support

Prepared by the author based on data from the Ministry of the Interior

First, it should be noted that the reform of Article 169 of the LOREG that took place in 2011 was fundamental, not in terms of the representation obtained but in terms of the possibility of presenting a candidacy. For a party to be able to run in the elections, it was required the signature of 1% of those registered in the

electoral roll of the constituency or 0.1% of the voters registered in the electoral roll of the constituency for which they intend to be elected.

The Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) experiences a more than stable electoral evolution, always oscillating its results between 2 and 1.3%. The aggregate results of the parties of the abertzale[1] orbit (Amaiur, Herri Batasuna, Euskal Herria Bildu...), on the contrary, obtain the best results in history in 1989, then quickly declined to go up again in 2011 and since then remained stable at around 1% (Ministry of the Interior, n.d.). Among all the PANEs, we observed that the Catalan region stands out for its good results, mainly *Convèrgència i Unió* (CiU), obtaining the best results of its history and of all the PANEs in 1986. *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC) reached its best result in 2019A, a moment of nationalist boom in Catalonia.

2. Methodological Framework

This study utilized a quantitative methodology to achieve its research objective. We analyzed secondary sources using the SPSS statistical processing program to understand the national arena and we described the values reached by each index over time using univariate descriptive statistical methods. To offer future forecasts and predict the behavior of the variable, we utilized the inferential method, specifically the linear regression technique. The study employed deduction to observe the consequences of the general conclusions. We used the obtained data to infer or demonstrate the non-affectation of particular realities in the general statements presupposed in the research. The importance of this methodology lies in its ability to establish generalizations that aid in the prognosis, evaluation, or understanding of future phenomena with similar characteristics to the current object of study.

The following is the electoral matrix constructed as a basis for the analyses described below:

Table 1

	1977	1979	1982	1986	1989	1993	1996	2000	2004	2008	2011	2015	2016	2019A	2019N	
UCD/CDS	34,52%	34,95%	9,68%	9,27%	7,95%	1,77%										
PSOE/PSP Socialist Party	33,86%	30,50%	48,34%	44,33%	39,88%	39,10%	38%	34,71%	43,27%	44,36%	29,16%	22,16%	22,80%	28,89%	28%	
PCE/IU Communist Party	9,35%	10,81%	4,04%	4,66%	9,13%	9,63%	10,64%	5,54%	5,04%	3,81%	7,02%	3,70%				
AP/CD/Popular Party Union, Progress and Democracy	8,23%	5,91%	26,48%	26,13%	25,97%	35,04%	39,17%	45,24%	38,31%	40,39%	45,25%	28,92%	33,26%	16,82%	20,82%	
C's (Citizens)										1,20%	4,76%	0,62%	0,21%			
PODEMOS												0,18%	14,05%	13,16%	15,98%	6,73%
MÁS PAÍS												20,83%	21,31%	15,17%	12,07%	
VOX/Far right												0,00%	0,00%	2,08%		
CiU+JPC (Nationalist right of Catalonia) Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC)												0,23%	0,20%	10,34%	15,09%	
Basque nationalist party Abertzale (Basque independence orbit)		2,70%	3,69%	5,05%	5,07%	4,98%	4,64%	4,25%	3,28%	3,06%	4,23%	2,27%	2,03%	1,93%	2,19%	
Basque nationalist party Abertzale (Basque independence orbit)	0,79%	0,69%	0,66%	0,42%	0,42%	0,81%	0,68%	0,85%	2,56%	1,17%	1,07%	2,40%	2,65%	3,92%	3,63%	
Galician nationalist bloc (BNG)	1,62%	1,65%	1,89%	1,54%	1,25%	1,25%	1,29%	1,55%	1,65%	1,20%	1,35%	1,21%	1,20%	1,52%	1,57%	
OTHERS		0,96%	1,01%	1,15%	1,07%	0,88%	0,73%	0,44%	0,71%	0,57%	1,39%	0,88%	0,77%	1%	1,15%	
Participation	0,12%	0,34%	0,18%	0,13%	0,23%	0,54%	0,89%	1,34%	0,82%	0,84%	0,77%	0,28%	0,19%	0,36%	0,50%	
PANE Basque Country	7,32%	11,80%	3,35%	6,64%	8,59%	5,99%	4,38%	7,42%	4,79%	4,11%	5,34%	2,33%	2,35%	3,90%	3,48%	
PANE Catalonia	78,83%	68,04%	79,97%	70,49%	69,74%	76,44%	77,38%	68,71%	75,66%	73,85%	68,94%	69,67%	66,48%	71,76%	69,87%	
	2,16%	2,32%	3,38%	3,22%	2,99%	2,68%	2,49%	1,99%	2,36%	1,80%	2,92%	2,09%	2,03%	2,61%	5,82%	
	4,56%	3,71%	4,73%	5,75%	5,49%	5,79%	5,32%	5,10%	5,84%	4,98%	5,55%	5,07%	4,68%	6,29%	2,72%	

Electoral matrix

Prepared by the author based on data from the Ministry of the Interior

The following methodological clarifications should be made regarding the above matrix: under the label "Others", a series of state-level parties have been grouped together whose entity was not sufficiently representative to constitute each one of them as a category of its own, but all of them obtained a minimum percentage of votes of 0.01% of the total. The following groupings: UCD and CDS (Democratic and Social Center), PSOE and PSP, PCE and IU or AP and PP, respond to parties that have simply changed their denomination, to situations in which one party has been subsumed in the other, close ideological relationship or situation of parent party-splits. Finally, it should be noted that under the label "Vox/ Far Right" the results of the different expressions that the Falange has adopted since 1977 and the results obtained by Vox have been collected (Jaén, 2022, p. 87).

Having clarified the above, the indicators that will be used to answer the research question - What are the characteristics of the Spanish party system from the Transition to the present? - are:

1. 1. Electoral concentration: measures the sum of the percentage of votes and seats won by the two main parties;
2. Fragmentation: it measures whether political power is dispersed or concentrated in actors;

3. Competitiveness: represents the degree of rivalry between the parties vying for government based on the percentage measurement that separates the first from the second place finisher in the elections;
4. Effective number of parties: weighs the parties and their relative strength. According to Nieto-Jiménez (2022), it is calculated with the following formula:
5. Aggregate volatility: reports the electoral changes between two successive elections due to individual vote transfers. It affects the party system as a whole. It is calculated using the following formula (Bartolini and Mair, 1990),:
6. Volatility between blocs: it refers to the transfer of vote between parties of the same ideological bloc. It is calculated using the following formula (Bartolini and Mair, 1990):
7. Intra-bloc volatility: refers to the transfer of votes between parties of the same ideological group and is calculated by subtracting the volatility between blocks from the aggregate volatility.

The calculation of all these indicators aimed to analyze the chosen dimensions of the Spanish political system to the best understand of the scenario in which the future electoral contest will take place in the autumn of 2023.

Table 2

1. Theoretical review	Scopus, WoS, Dialnet...
2. Data collection	Ministry of the Interior
3. Statistical processing with SPSS	3.1 Concentration 3.2 Competitiveness 3.3 Fragmentation 3.4 Volatility 3.5 Electoral turnout 3.6 Right Bloc Electoral Evolution 3.7 Left Bloc Electoral Evolution 3.8 Inter-bloc Volatility 3.9 Intra-bloc volatility 3.10 Gains and losses in the left-wing bloc 3.11 Gains and losses in the right-wing bloc
4. Chart design	Microsoft excel
5. Discussion with precedents	Theoretical review
6. Writing up findings	Final review

Summary Table of Methodology

3. Results and Discussion

From the electoral concentration index, it can be assumed that the relationship between concentration and competitiveness could be inversely proportional, since the two large parties will capture almost all the voters (Medrano & Rubia, 2023). When the two most voted parties concentrate all the votes, the level of concentration reaches the maximum (100%) and when the vote is distributed among many parties that all get approximately the same support, the level of

concentration would reach the minimum. As a limitation of this index, it should be noted that the concentration only considers the two most voted parties and therefore does not allow differentiating between situations where there is greater diversity.

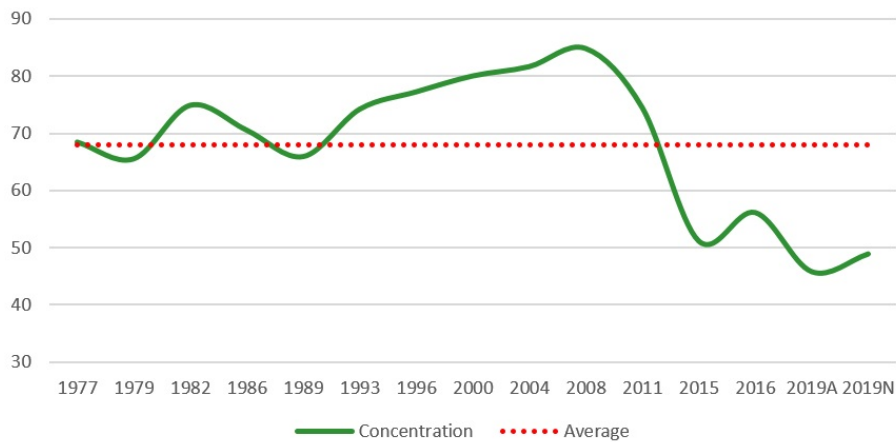


Figure 3

Concentration 1977-2019 period

Prepared by the author based on data from the Ministry of the Interior

The Figure 3 shows, in general, a very high concentration in Spain, since simply by evaluating the average, 67.91%, we see how almost 70% of the votes are distributed between the two main parties, reducing the competition to 30% of the electoral space. We also see how in the period of maximum crystallization of the bipartisanship and the system as a whole, the concentration reaches very high values, with the record of 84.75% in 2008. In this period, however, not in all cases it has resulted in absolute majority governments, but in the narrow margin left by the two giants to the competition, the results of the nationalist parties were fundamental to invest one President or the other. After these very high results of the concentration observed in the period 1977-2008, it is evident that support for the two main parties plummeted (by more than 35 points) from that date onwards. There were many factors that influenced this change, but in general we can highlight the population's weariness with corruption and the "old politics", together with the progressive emergence of the self-named parties of change, which fragmented the parliamentary arc (Berenguer, 2019).

The competitiveness index shows whether an election has been very or not very competitive. The term competitiveness, responds to four dimensions: the opening of the electoral market to all parties, without illegalization of any of them, the availability of voters to vote for different parties, the differentiation between political alternatives and the possibilities of political alternation (Bartolini and Mair, 1990).

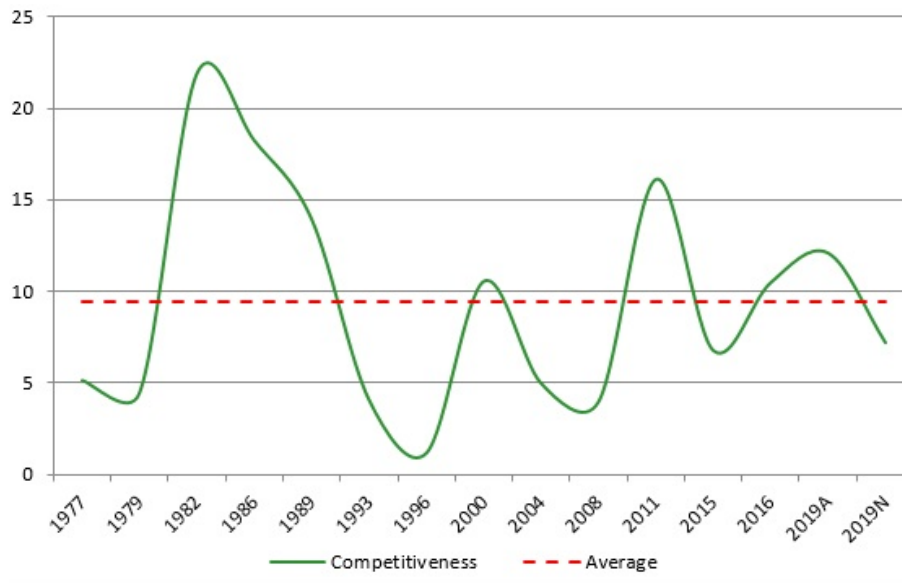


Figure 4

Competitiveness 1977-2019

Prepared by the author based on data from the Ministry of the Interior

The Figure 4 shows an electoral competition average of 9,39 points. This average reflects the weighting of very discordant values, since we could call this graph saw-toothed: with four sharp rises followed by sharp falls, which generates a lot of variability among the values. The most competitive moments we can observe are: 1996 (1.17 points difference between Aznar and González) and 2008 (3.97%, which was nevertheless enough to revalidate Zapatero's presidency). In contrast, periods of lower competitiveness, i.e., when competitiveness reaches higher values, are related to the large absolute majorities achieved in Spain, in which the victory was so comfortable that we do not recognize struggles for power.

The fragmentation index measures the existence of spaces of inter-party competition, understanding that each fragment is a sort of sub-arena in which the parties compete. A result with many spaces or fragments would imply that a wide variety of parties compete in the elections: left, right, center-periphery, class, ecologists... This index shows values between 0 and 1, these being understood as ideal values, since 1 would mean total atomization of the space and 0 would mean a non-democratic situation of a single party (Nieto-Jiménez, 2022).

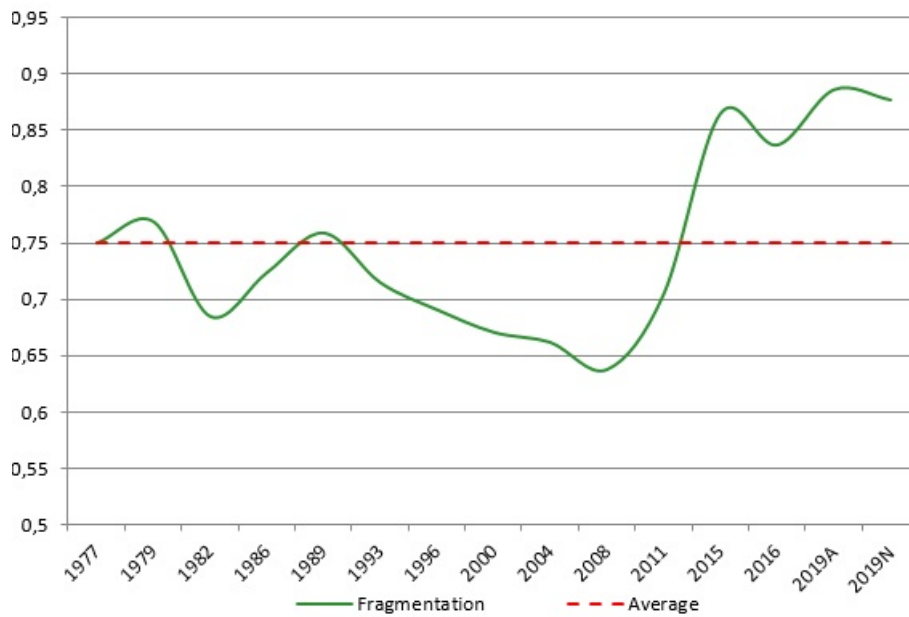


Figure 5

Fragmentation 1977-2019 period

Prepared by the author based on data from the Ministry of the Interior

The average Spanish fragmentation, as shown in the Figure 5, is 0.75 points. During the period 1977-2008, fragmentation levels are low, in accordance with the years of crystallization of the two-party system. This period includes the exceptions of the second founding elections, still a time of accommodation and definition of the foundations of the democratic system, and 1989, due to the strength that regionalist parties and the PCE obtained in the elections. Breaking with the above, in 2015 this trend of low fragmentation is completely broken, since the change to a multiparty system offers new options from then on among which Spaniards could choose with real impact on the governability of the country. Fragmentation reached its maximum value in April 2019, when there was a 0.88/1 chance that, selecting two Spaniards at random and asking them about their voting intentions, they would answer with different parties. In 2008, a moment of minimum fragmentation, this possibility was reduced to 0.64 points out of 1. The moments of least fragmentation are associated with elections resulting in large majorities.

The Effective Number of Parties (NEP) is related to fragmentation, and shows the number of parties with electoral play, that is, the number of parties with the possibility of competing for the government (Nieto-Jiménez, 2022). Sometimes these parties are clearly identifiable, for example the Partido Popular or the Partido Socialista Obrero Español, however, in other cases they represent in the abstract an unidentified third actor that can become the key to the government or regionalist parties in general.

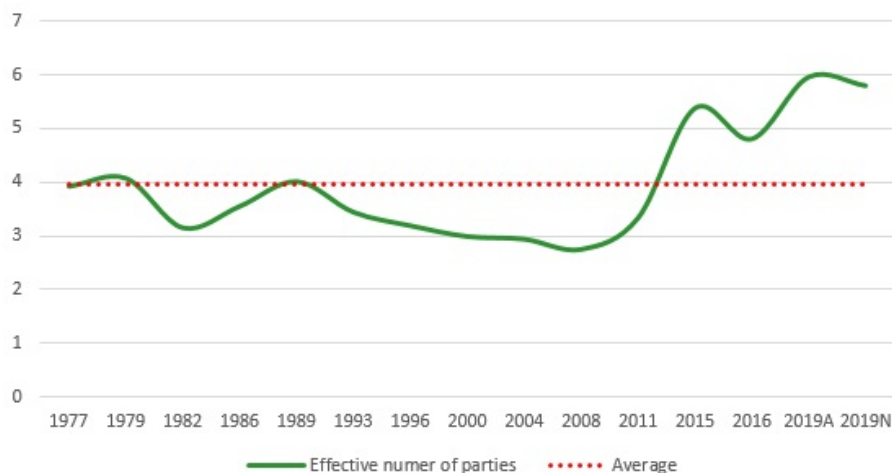


Figure 6

NEP period 1977-2019

Prepared by the author based on data from the Ministry of the Interior

The average shown in Figure 6 is exactly four points, which means that in the Spanish democratic history there have been 3,95 parties that in each election could have been leaders of the Executive power. The jump in the NEP that we observe from 1979 to 1982 is due to the absolute majority that Felipe Gonzalez obtained at this time, since half of the votes and the electoral space were taken by the PSOE, practically eliminating the possibility of competition from other parties. One of the keys to his triumph is that he brought together all the remnants of a fragmented system. It also picked up part of the PCE electorate. From 1982 to 1989 we observe a rise of the NEP due to the opening of the State of Autonomies and the proliferation of Non-State Parties that this entailed. From then on, the party system crystallized into two major ideological fragments: one for the left and the other for the right.

To speak of volatility is to speak of vote change; therefore, the greater the fragmentation and NEP, the greater the possibility that volatility will increase (Ocaña and Oñate, 1999). The aggregate volatility is the sum of all the partial volatilities, that is, what the parties gain or lose in each process.

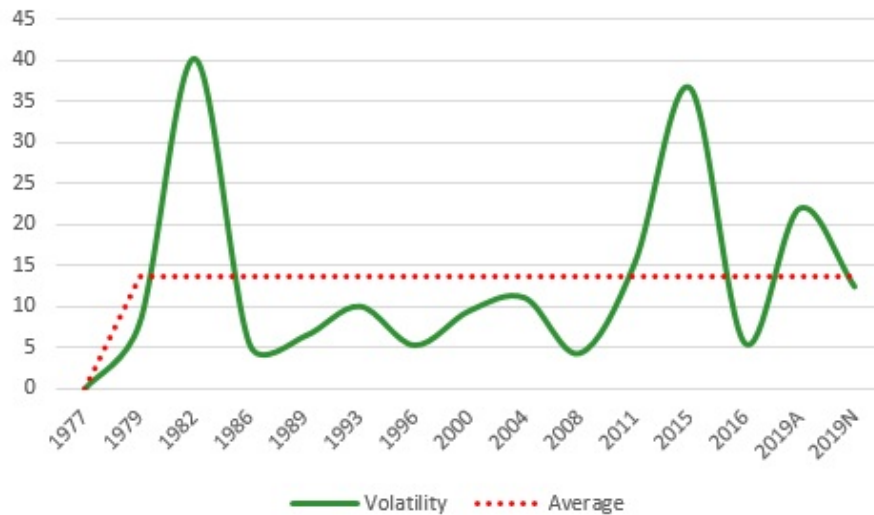


Figure 7

Volatility period 1977-2019

Prepared by the author based on data from the Ministry of the Interior

Figure 7 shows an average of 13.74% of the total votes cast in each election since 1979. It means that 13.74% of the votes represent a change in the voter's choice with respect to his previous decision. It should be noted that we cannot evaluate volatility in the 1977 elections because there are no previous elections with which to compare the movement of the vote. The three moments of greatest volatility are:

1. 1982, when the PSOE agglutinates votes from previous voters of both UCD (since this party implodes and its voters disperse between the left option of the PSOE and the right option of the PP) and the PCE or splits of the PSOE itself presented as independents in previous elections. This volatility, therefore, is related to the blast of the foundational party system. After this moment, there is a crystallization of the party system, which remains stable until 2015.
2. In 2015 we observe a great movement on the right due to the loss of the PP vote and the gain of Ciudadanos.
3. After 2015 the party system proto-crystallizes, but not for long enough, because in 2019A this index shows high values again, mainly due to the irruption of VOX and the stability achieved by the parties of change: Unidas Podemos and Ciudadanos.

The following figures show the variation of the vote between the two ideological poles of our system: the left and the right (volatility between blocs). In other words, this section will analyze what percentage of the population in the previous elections voted for the right and in the subsequent ones for the left or vice versa. As we have already mentioned, the variability between blocs is not too high.

Beginning by offering the electoral evolution by blocs in Spain, this graph shows the evolution of the electoral support received by both the left and the right in relation to the percentage of electoral participation in each election, to discover which bloc is more favored or harmed by the fact that Spaniards go to

the polling stations to cast their ballots. In this graph we will use the statistical technique of lineal tendency, which allows us to predict the future value of a variable based on its previous behavior.

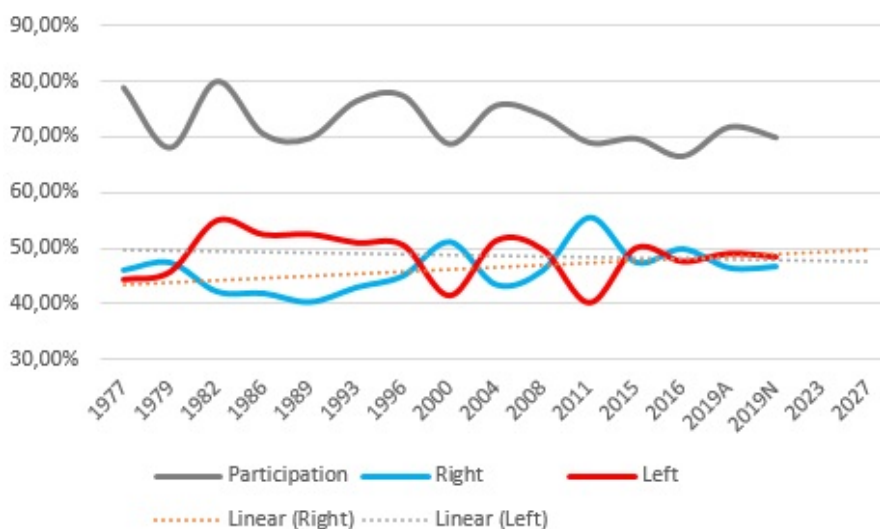


Figure 8

Electoral evolution by blocs

Prepared by the author based on data from the Ministry of the Interior

The volatility between the change of bloc has experienced ups and downs that are shown practically in perfect symmetry, which means that the loss of votes from the left-wing bloc has gone to the right-wing bloc or vice versa, not to abstentionism as a general trend. The most convulsive years occurred in the 1882 elections in which the UCD lost practically all its votes. These were transferred to the PSOE, giving the government to Felipe González. In 1996 we again find a transfer of votes from the left to the right, this time the voters placed their trust in Aznar. After 8 years of popular government, there was again a transfer of votes to Zapatero's PSOE. Finally, it is in the last stage when there is an effervescence of the vote with the entry of new parties into the electoral arenas. This system of power interleaving between the two majority forces, characteristic of the first 25 years of democracy in Spain, exploded after 2015.

About electoral participation, we observe how the bloc that has benefited most from Spaniards' consideration of the importance of the vote has been the left, since it has obtained better results (in a directly proportional way) in the years of higher participation, such as in 1982 or 2008. This correlation has also occurred in reverse: the worst results for the left (and therefore better for the right) have occurred in elections with a low level of participation: in 2000 and 2016. As for the prospective analysis, we observe that the forecast gives slightly better results to the left-wing bloc in the future elections of 2023 and 2026.

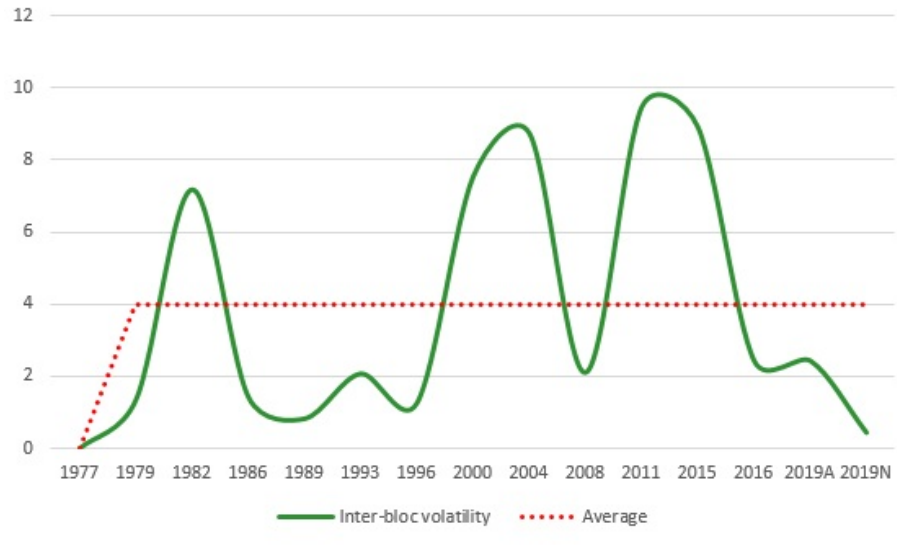


Figure 9

Volatility between blocs

Prepared by the author based on data from the Ministry of the Interior

Figure 9 shows the vote movements between one ideological frontier and the opposite one. The average of this graph is exactly 4 points, which indicates that, on average, 4% of the votes cast in an election have changed their ideological destination concerning those of the previous election. We observe that the peaks of the highest volatility between blocks in this sawtooth graph are the years: 1982, when the majority of the UCD (right) vote was transferred to the Socialist Party (left), 2004, when Aznar's previous voters punished his management by electing Zapatero, and 2015 when this same benefited Zapatero was then severely punished for his management of the economic and social crisis of 2008. The prospective analysis shows how inter-bloc volatility will decrease in the following elections, accompanied by a predictable increase in intra-bloc volatility, given the greater variety of parties.

Intra-bloc volatility deals with changes between parties located in the same ideological bloc, based on the transfer of votes from one party to another. The following is an analysis of vote transfers from left-wing parties to other left-wing parties and from right-wing parties to other right-wing parties.

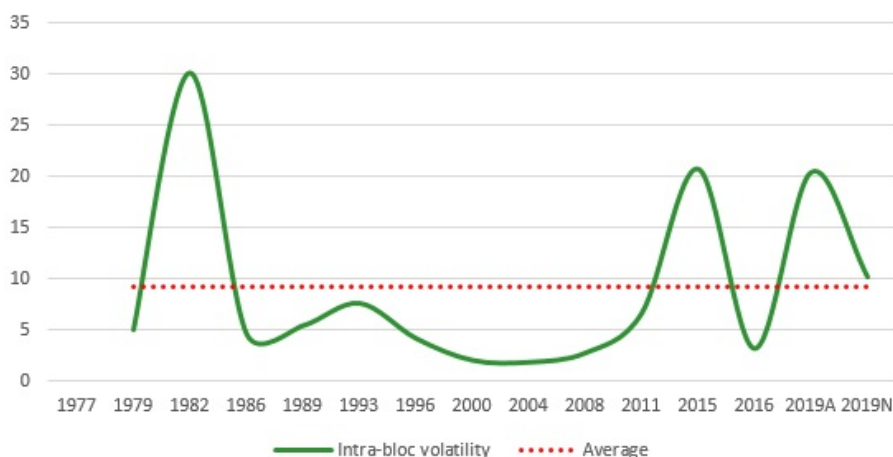


Figure 10

Intra-bloc volatility

Prepared by the author based on data from the Ministry of the Interior

The average value offered by this graph is 9.24%, i.e., of the total votes cast in all the elections to the Spanish Parliament, 9.24% varied between parties of the same ideological bloc. Intra-bloc volatility has been quite high, generally throughout the different elections, although it is possible to observe large differences divided into stages. With the first victory of Felipe Gonzalez, we can see how within the left there is a large transfer of votes to the PSOE. Meanwhile, on the right, with the fall of the UCD, the PP begins to gain greater importance, taking a large part of the percentage of votes to its territory. The period from 1986 to 2011 shows a very low intra-bloc volatility, since these elections are characterized by the sweeping victories of the two leading parties of the Spanish bipartisanship, without any of them finding competitors at their level in any of their ideological arenas. This situation, however, was replaced in the 2015 elections by the irruption into the political arena of two major competitors to the traditional parties. The emergence of Ciudadanos in the right-wing bloc and Podemos on the left explains the second highest peak of intra-bloc volatility in the history of Spain (20.68%). This led to an unprecedented situation in the Spanish Legislative. The expansion of the NEP was so exceptional that, given the fragmentation of the resulting Congress of Deputies, the party that won the elections did not obtain sufficient support to form a government and the legislature had to be dissolved and the elections repeated. The crisis of governability described above led to a new electoral campaign, in 2016, characterized by the appeal of the traditional parties to the useful vote, an explanation for which the intra-bloc volatility went down again and finally the Popular Party managed to crystallize its position in the Government.

However, after the success of the motion of censure presented by Pedro Sánchez in 2018 and the call for new elections, intra-bloc volatility rises again, given that it went from the 9 parties that formed the parliament to 13, with 90% of the seats being distributed among 6 different political formations, highlighting among them the emergence of a new competitor in the right-wing bloc. This is the crystallization of the multiparty system but, as in the case of three years ago, the most voted party did not obtain sufficient support to form a government and the elections had to be repeated.

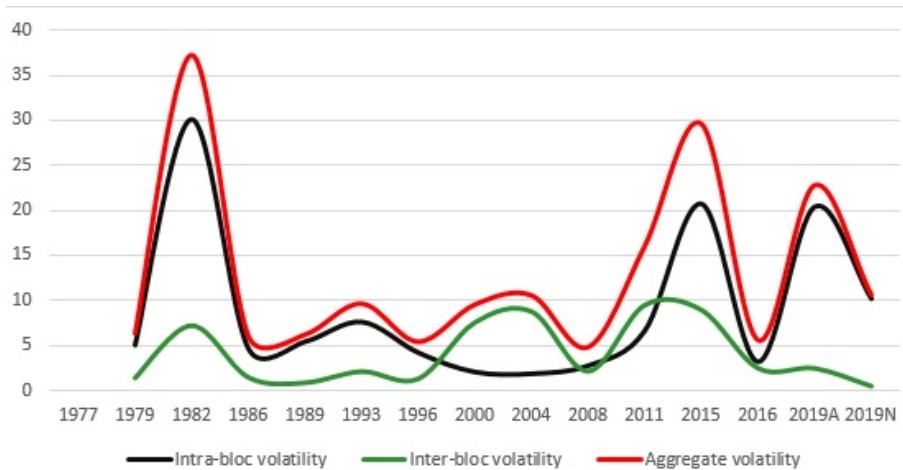


Figure 11

Comparison between volatilities

Prepared by the author based on data from the Ministry of the Interior

This last section on volatility demonstrates a trend that has already been pointed out throughout this study: in the total or aggregate volatility, intra-bloc volatility has a greater influence, since the greatest oscillations between the destination of the vote occur within the same ideological spectrum. This trend, however, shows a turning point in 2004, when inter-bloc volatility exceeds intra-bloc volatility, perhaps due to the enormous electoral punishment that the electorate decided to impose on Aznar; a punishment that materialized in the fact that traditional PP voters placed their trust in Zapatero, since he had shown himself to be a good manager of crisis situations after the terrorist attacks in Atocha on 11M that same year, the main decisive event in the vote in these elections (De Castro Redondo, 2021). The three most relevant moments are:

1. 1982, where the distance accounted for 23 points of difference.
2. 2015, where intra-bloc volatility reached a value of 20.6% due to the transfer of the socialist vote to the hope that Podemos represented in its beginnings.
3. 2019A, when the left divided its votes between Podemos and PSOE and the right found itself with three presidential candidates among which to decide its vote.

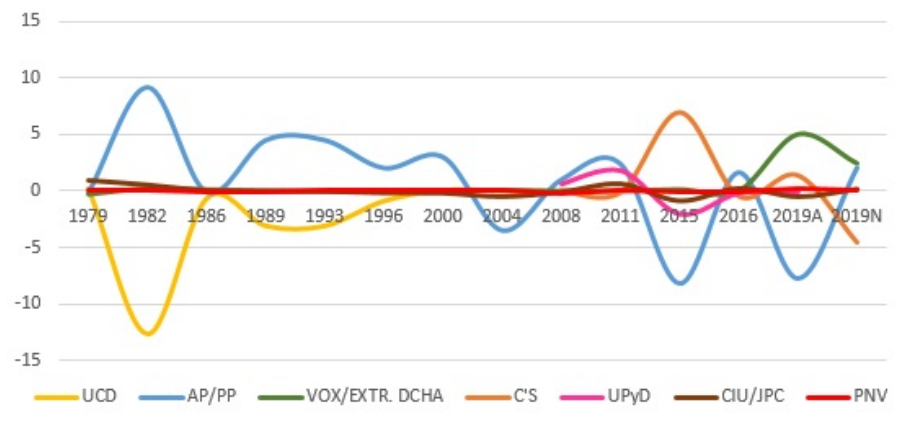


Figure 12

Gains and losses in the right-wing bloc

Prepared by the author based on data from the Ministry of the Interior

This figure offers an analysis of how the vote has been distributed within the right-wing bloc, or, in other words, when a right-wing party has lost votes, which other right-wing party has been favored by the voters who have punished the first one. Starting with the results of the Popular Party as the dependent variable, in 1982 the correlation is clear and symmetrical: the vote won by the PP is due to the losses experienced by Suárez's UCD, a trend that continues throughout the period 1982-1996, when the progressive disappearance of the UCD finds the Popular Party as a direct beneficiary. Between 1996 and 2011, the PP does not find a direct ideological competitor, owing its electoral gains and losses to a diffuse distribution of its voters among other formations. The relationship between the Popular Party and Ciudadanos reaches its peak in 2015, when Ciudadanos increases its electoral results by 7 points at the same time that the PP sees them decrease by 8 points. This shows us that, on this occasion, the traditional popular electorate bet on the orange formation. Subsequently and very quickly, VOX snatched the pole position from Ciudadanos as the main recipient of previously popular votes, since in the April 2019 elections, the loss of 7 points in electoral support suffered by the PP is divided between the 1.5 that goes to Ciudadanos and the 5 that the radical right gains.

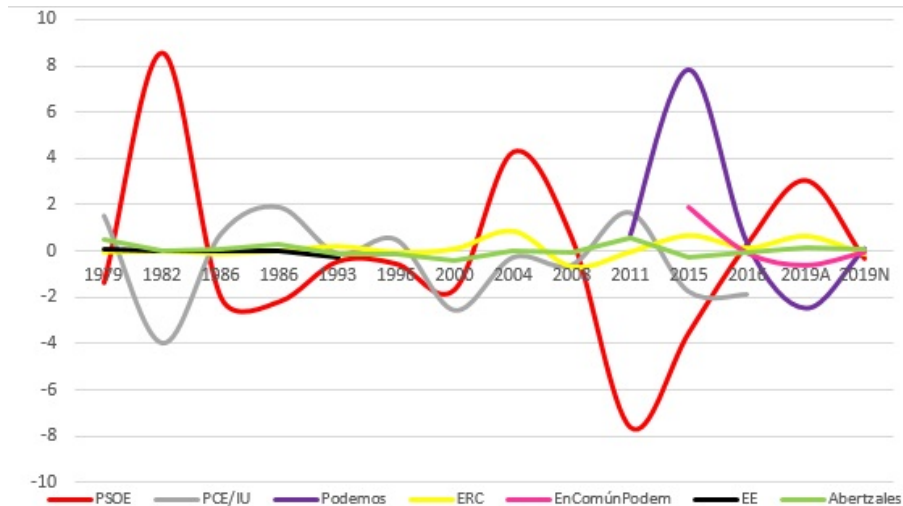


Figure 13

Gains and losses in the left-wing bloc

Prepared by the author based on data from the Ministry of the Interior

In this graph, which shows which parties of the left bloc have gained electoral support when other parties also on the left have lost it, we do not observe such a clear transfer as in the case of the right. In 1982 the great socialist gain is not entirely due to the decrease in votes suffered by the PCE, since although this first party increases by 8.5 points, only 4 have been taken away from the PCE, the rest perhaps coming from the transfer of votes between blocs which benefits the PSOE due to the UCD debacle. In 1989, the 2 points of electoral gain that benefited the PCE came from the loss of these same two points by the PSOE of Gonzalez. In 2004 the PSOE benefits from a great increase in its results, however these are not obtained at the expense of other left-wing parties, but once again from the transfer of votes between blocs with which the electorate punished Aznar. In 2015, the socialist electoral failure is due to a vote snatching by the new great competitor of the left bloc, Podemos, a consequence of the agglutination of the abstentionist vote and previously distributed in the remaining minority fragments of the left. The correlation between Podemos and PSOE, is symmetrically manifested in April 2019, when the increase of 3 points that benefits PSOE comes from the loss of 2.5 that Podemos suffers.

4. Conclusions

It is undeniable, in view of the data analyzed, to recognize the transformation of the Spanish party system. While in the founding moments of democracy and during the presidencies of González, Aznar and Zapatero, a very high rate of concentration and reduced fragmentation was observed (except for the Autonomous Communities with powerful regionalist parties), the paradigm of the dominant party experienced left to never return. From 2015, with the irruption in the political arena of major competitors to the traditional parties, Spain experiences a turning point that causes the evolution of its party system from bipartisan to polarized pluralist. This is accompanied by a large increase in intra-bloc volatility. This can be explained by the growing political polarisation

generated by the media, agents of public opinion creation both in the Spanish case and in other political systems.

From this moment on, the concentration index reaches historic lows. Counterintuitively, electoral competitiveness declines from 2016 onwards, with fragmentation increasing in parallel to the very high level of 0.88/1. The explanation for this dissonance can be found in the fact that the evolution of the Spanish political cycle should not only be observed from the partisan prism. Despite the existence of new parties, in the last five years there has also been an evolution of the electorate (more and better informed) and of the coverage of political information, which is crucial in mediatized democracies. Reasons why Spain falls within the system of polarized pluralism. The Effective Number of Parties in 2019 reached its historical maximums; however, the linearity of the graph shows a predictable downward trend for the elections that make up the XV Legislature, since the current scarce political relevance of Ciudadanos reduces its options to be competing for the Government. Its position as a presidential party will be replaced by the amalgam of PANEs with a traditional strategic position in the construction of governments. Governments, more and more, multi-coloured and forced to dialogue.

Finally, it should be noted that, looking to the future, the data show a slightly favorable electoral evolution for the left-wing bloc, directly related in history to the gradual decrease in electoral participation. These results will be accompanied by a new crystallization of voters into ideological poles, as the trend line of volatility between blocs drops below 2%. At the same time, there is an increase in intra-block volatility close to 25%. These results indicate that electoral competition will take place within each of the main ideological spaces, even more so on the left. This will force the parties with a truly presidential candidate to submit to the culture of consensus, pacts and alliances with similar formations.

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Notes

- [1] The main postulate of the abertzale left is: "territoriality, a notion that expresses the right of the Basque nation to the territory formed by the seven Basque homelands, which expresses the right of the Basque nation to the territory made up of the seven historical lands, is therefore a symbolic element of identity creation and differentiation" (Martínez, 1999: 41).

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