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The regionalized states of Italy and Spain

Italy and Spain are regionalized unitary states. Both have chosen this half-way compromise between centralized unitary state and full fledged federalization for the solution of the internal tension caused by their ethno-territorial heterogeneity. Italian and Spanish political systems are characterized by the presence of asymmetrical elements; some of their sub-national authorities can achieve more autonomy than others. In my paper I compare the Italian and Spanish regionalized states, how did they grow up, how are they working and what future possibilities can be seen in their development.

In the first chapter I give an outline about why the Italian and Spanish states opted for this type of power sharing. I summarize the historical, ethnical and culture factors that led to the regionalization of these states.

In the second chapter I present the main characteristics of the Italian and Spanish regionalized systems. In both cases we can observe that some federal elements were adopted in their constitutional arrangements, while others are still missing. I set out those elements of these political systems which are relevant in the central government – regional actors' relationship.

In the third chapter I examine the intentions of the political actors, which is the core question of my future dissertation. Nowadays, the reform of the actual political systems, the claim for constitutional changes, and even the federalization of the state are on the political agenda in Italy and Spain. The sub-national political actors claim for more autonomy for their regions respectively, which would cause more asymmetry in the whole system. With the aim of maintaining the unity of the state, central governments response the regional claims by the implementation of symmetrical changes. In my paper I argue that this dynamics between regional claims and central governments' reactions can lead to a higher degree of decentralization in Italy and Spain.