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**REGIONALIZATION IN ITALY AND SPAIN**

RESEARCH PROJECT

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## **THE RESEARCH TOPIC**

During the second half of the 20th century a number of European countries have begun to decentralize or regionalize their unitary centralized states, using these methods for offering different strength and degree of independence to their sub-national territorial units. The structure of power in the state is not stone engraved never-changing formation. States are forming between different levels of centralization and decentralization in response of historical and economic challenges. In the 19th century the centralized nation state was the scene of the national modernization, but now it is becoming less and less able to meet the challenges of globalization and localization. Elazar (1996) talks about change of paradigm: the Westphalian type, state-centered world is getting progressively replaced by federal structures and by forms of international integration, which are more appropriate to the requirements of the modern era. In other approach, the state still is in possession of its power, but uses it differently than earlier (Keating & Loughlin, 1997: p27).

The European Union itself is an example of regional alliance. While initially it was dominated by the political aspects of integration, from the seventies significant changes have occurred: differences in development between regions have increased, and the nation states did not have adequate facilities to face the strengthening of transnational corporations and the challenges of globalization. All this led to a strengthening of the Common Regional Policy and Structural Funds, and also encouraged the Member States to limber up their level of centralization.

Due to the growing role of globalization, regionalization and regionalism, the content of federalism has gained a new meaning. A number of researchers do not mean only a constitutionally fixed type of state-structure, or form of state under the name of 'federalism'. They also consider it as a form of coexistence, and as an operating mechanism, which is less linked to formal constitutional arrangements, but in the internal logic of political systems, in the specific institutional arrangements and in political practice can be tested.

The theme of my research project is the comparative analysis of two regionalized countries, Italy and Spain. Both are EU Member States, and their political systems and the evolution of their structures of state show a number of similarities that warrant the comparison, though of course I do not ignore the differences. By the regionalization in the formerly centralized unitary state-structure of Italy and Spain, several characteristic elements of the federal system appeared, however, some basic federal elements are still missing. Today is felt that the Italian

and Spanish form of regionalized system does not give a satisfactory answer to the internal conflicts. The efforts to convert certain elements of the systems are continually present, and the two systems are gradually taking shape, moving in a direction of more decentralization and more symmetry. They apply more and more elements and operational mechanisms of the federal states, and they are getting closer to the operational logic of federations.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In the comparative analysis of the Italian and Spanish regionalism I pretend to find the answer to the above listed research questions essentially:

- What are the causes and circumstances that led to the development of regionalized state?
- To what extent is similar the state-structure of a regionalized state to a federal one? What are the characteristics, in which they differ?
- What centripetal and centrifugal forces are operating in the regional states? Which factors are affecting the stability of the systems? Which factors could lead to a federal type evolution? Which factors could lead to the strengthening of the central government?

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND, OPERATIONALIZATION OF CONCEPTS**

The political science researchers have long employed the analysis and comparison of different forms of state-structures. Within the comparative approach, the trend of comparative federalism is concentrated on the comparative analysis of the federal states. Traditionally, the these researches focused on the classical federal states, examining the nature of federalism, the different forms, practices and the specific institutional arrangements implemented by them. In recent decades, the strongly emerging processes of devolution, decentralization and regionalization – particularly in Europe – changed the direction of the attention of researchers. As decentralized and regionalized states appeared besides of the centralized unitary or federal states, many of new questions raised. Today, the researchers of regionalism and federalism focus on the study of the asymmetrical elements that federal structures have shown, on the analysis of regionalization processes, and their relationship to the federal structures.

For the analysis of the Italian and Spanish regionalized systems the use of the literature on regionalism is unavoidable. Taking into account that in the research of the two countries the

assessment of the federal systems is highlighted, the knowledge of the literature of comparative federalism is also needed.

## **Region**

The region's definition is a complex task; even within the field of political science is used in more than one meaning:

- At international level, 'region' is typically designated to an integration or cooperation of a group states, lying on one continent.
- At sub-national level, 'region' is the name of the middle level between the central state and the local level of territorial system.
- As a result of the organizational development of cross-border co-operations, 'region' can stay for them as well.
- In addition, 'region' may designate a geographical unity, an area covered by the dominance of an economic branch, or an area populated by particular ethnic groups, or nationalities. (Kruppa, 2003: p18)

From the international literature I would like to point out Michael Keating and John Loughlin joint and separate works. Keating and Loughlin (1997) distinguish four main types of 'regions':

- Economic Region
- Historical - ethnical region
- Planning - statistical region
- Political - administrative region

In each of the four types of region, the homogenizing effect inside and the role the distinctive features from the environment can be observed as a general characteristic.

I consider that in the present stage of my research an appropriate basis can be the definition of 'region' offered by the General Assembly of European Regions (AER, 1996: article 1.1 & 1.2).

"The region is the level directly below the state level, the regional body established by the public law, which is empowered with self-governance. The region is recognized by the national constitution, or by a legislative process, which guarantees its autonomy, identity, power and organizational structure. "

In the case of the two states I use the concept of the region to determine the political-administrative unit located directly below the state level. Both countries have a four-level,

hierarchical model of public administration, consisting of municipal, county (province), regional and state levels<sup>1</sup>. In Italy the term of region is used to describe the regional level, while in Spain, the denomination of autonomous community is applied.

## **Regionalism**

In the literature, essentially three approaches can be found for the theoretical interpretation of the development of European regionalism.

- The works of Converse Daniele and Luis Moreno are the main examples of the representatives of ethno-territorial approach. The authors highlight the importance of the ethno-national, cultural and religious diversity existing in the European continent. They consider that - within democratic circumstances – the need for sovereignty and the political aspirations of geographically distinct groups with specific identity, necessarily lead to the regionalization of the political systems.
  
- The concept of new regionalism has been worked out by Michael Keating and by John Loughlin. The new regionalism covers a paradigm shift: the regions are no longer viewed as politically totally dependent units from their central states, but also as actors operating in their own right. This change carries a new quality: the new regional perspective, no longer focus on the interests of the state, but the on the regions having their own interests (Keating, 2004: pp373-375). In this complex process the economic efficiency remains central aspect, to which the institution building and the elements of civil society are also added. It both satisfies the requirements of efficiency and the claims for functional autonomy. The new perception of identity and culture are no longer obstacles to modernization, but also an integral part of the new paradigm.
  
- The third type of approach to the concept of regionalism is linked to multi-level governance. In this respect, Gerry Marks' and Liesbet Hooghe's works can be considered essential. Their researches focus on the development of European integration. They consider as determining factor the Multi-level governance working in the European Union, which provides the opportunity to participate in decision-making at Community level for regional-level players also. The role of regions increased in regional policy-making, their interests may

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<sup>1</sup> In the Italian system there are metropolitan cities also.

be represented and enforceable not only at the central government's level, but at the level of the European Union too. The European integration process transforms the state: involving in decision-making processes actors from various levels of government helps the development of co-operation (Börzel, 2001: p139). As a repercussion of the multi-level governance practices in some EU Member States' internal lives, the regions at the national level are also seeking greater autonomy and participation.

The three approaches do not diverge sharply from each other, all of them are arguing that a new quality appeared in the context of regional players, and they focus on different aspects of this process in their researches.

## **Federalism**

Federalism is a theory supporting the federal political system, where authority is shared between the center state and its sub-unites (Stanford Encyclopedia). The word originates from the Latin word of *foedus*, which means contract, alliance. The federation is the institutional emergence of the federal principles, where state is made up of sub-national and central government units, both being legitimized and responsible for the population, and both operate their own competences respectively. (Moreno, 2008.p31).

The federal states may diverge at a great extent in their internal structure. I outlined the following typology based on different researchers of comparative federalism literature:

- According to their origin we may distinguish federal states that came into existence as results of unification process (United States), and those by which was chosen the application of the principle of ethnical – territorial power sharing to replace the previously centralized state power (Belgium). To designate the two types, Stepan (1999) applied the names 'coming together' a 'holding together'. Krisztina Vida (2004: P41) uses the names of associative (bottom up) and dissociative (top down) federalism to distinguish the two processes.

- The relation between the central government's and the member states' competences is also formed differently for each federal state. We can distinguish centralized and decentralized federal states on the basis of the relative role and weight of their two levels with political power.

■ Considering the principles of the division of competencies between the central government and the member states, two types of federal systems can be identified<sup>2</sup>. In dual federalism, the member states' and the central governments powers are parallel, both is allowed to decide separately in their own competencies. This principle is focuses on member states' rights. In the case of co-operative federalism the member states' and the central government's powers overlap each other, bound together. A typical element of the governance is the work of the framework legislature: the central government and legislature form a comprehensive set of disciplines in each policy field and lay down the principles, than the member states' legislative bodies fill it with concrete content. The two levels of power are interdependent and check each other's activities mutually. The increase of the number of joint powers was a clear consequence of the strengthening of the welfare state, because public tasks increased, and the democratic requirement of equality for the citizens also had a role in this process.

■ A distinction can be made on the basis that how the individual member states' rights and competences are related to each other within the federation (Tarlton, 1999: pp28-29). We may talk about symmetrical federation, if all member states have the same powers and rights. In case of asymmetrical federation the autonomy of some member states is major than of the others. We may distinguish the two types of asymmetrical structures. It is a de jure asymmetry, when the different legislative powers, the different representation in central institutions, and the different rights and obligations are set out in the constitutional framework. The de facto asymmetry of the federation does not appear in the federal constitution, but through bilateral agreements, ad hoc pacts, and national policy-making practices shall ensure greater autonomy for some member states (Watts, 2001). Widespread practice, that the federation's capital will receive a special status, and belongs under the direct control of the central government.

The Italian and Spanish regionalized systems are similar to a type of co-operative federation with asymmetrical elements, and established using the principle of holding together (dissociative).

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<sup>2</sup> They are also denominated as layer cake federalism and marble cake federalism.

## **Differences between federal and unitary states**

Kelson considered that we may imagine centralized unitary states and classical federal states such as they are the two final places in an axis, and the alternative solutions, such as the transition between the two types of endpoints. Thus, the two regionalized unitary states chosen as the subject of my research also can be located in this axis. Nevertheless, it is very important to understand the fundamental differences between the two end points. The federal systems are based on the principle of shared sovereignty, while in the unitary states sovereignty and authority belongs solely to the central state.

In unitary states the autonomy of the regions exists thanks to the central state, the autonomy, there will be a top-driven process. Hague, Harrop and Breslin (1992: p276) say that in unitary states the sub-units shall enjoy autonomy in policy-making, but they are not garbed with national authority. In federal states sovereignty is constitutionally shared between at least two territorial levels, so all levels dispose with final authority, and may act independently of others in some areas. In federations a Constitutional Treaty sets out the Member States' sovereignty, their power of government, and neither party can change it unilaterally. Some regionalized unitary states have introduced federal elements in their political systems, and although the independence of the sub-units is not guaranteed constitutionally, it is difficult to imagine that a one-sided political change could happen. Because of this quasi stability, and due to the broad powers exercised by the regions, these types of unitary states are also known as de facto federations.

Federalism itself is not characterized by a range of member states' autonomy, in this field a wide range of practices can be observed in different federations. The basic difference between unitary and federal state is not related to the sub-units competences, but to their constitutional structure and to the logic of their construction.

## **Placing the regionalized states on the imaginary axis**

The classification of the states that established a regionalized structure in between the traditional structures is an interesting task. Even within the unitary states, and within the federal states we may observe significant differences regarding to their particular solutions for organizing their power-structure. In recent decades, in response to specific challenges, an

increasing number of special solutions appeared in terms of power-structure, such as devolution (Great Britain), the granting of more autonomy for some specific areas in the state (Portugal, Finland), or the very special consociational system of Belgium. In particular, the case of Belgium well exemplifies that the structure of power in the state can not be necessarily regarded as stone engraved solutions or permanent structures, but facing the challenges it may change over time. These changes tend to affect the direction of greater decentralization. The main purpose of them is to preserve and to maintain the unity of the state, paradoxically. The tensions that otherwise threaten the system with the risk of disintegration, can be diminished by the mean of consensual decentralization.

Non-federal states that gave effect to the principle of territorial power sharing can also be characterized by the presence of asymmetrical solutions. A distinction between two kinds of methods can be made. Many states recognize the right to autonomy of their geographically distinct and often ethnically different areas. In general, the characteristic way that the autonomy is concerned for the specific area and decentralization does not affect the rest of the territory. The state will continue along the logic of centralized state, and the area with special status works like a foreign body in the structure of the state. Italy and Spain have chosen a different solution, and the total area of these countries is divided into regions / autonomous communities. In both cases, two types of regional level entities have been created.

As already mentioned, unitary and federal states, not only differ from each other in the specific institutional arrangements, but also in the state's logic. This, however, is not only to depend on how they set out themselves constitutionally, but on how, by which basic logic are they operating in the practice. In order to assess the Spanish and the Italian State, their location and movement on the imaginary axis, it is essential to examine, which elements of the federal systems have been introduced in there political systems, and which elements are missing. In the literature we can find from different authors different lists of typical and necessary elements of federal states. (Table)

**Table I.: Necessary elements of federal systems by different authors**

<p><b>Hague, Harrop and Breslin (1992: p272)</b></p>	<p><b>Elazar (1990:p45)</b></p>	<p><b>Aja (2003:p44)</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The minimal institution of the federal state is a written constitution. The federation is a deliberate, complex, and legal creation of the contract between the parties concerned.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Written constitution, which includes the power sharing between the two levels of government, and guarantees for the central government and for the sub-national governments.</li> <li>▪ Bicameral legislature, (chambers of political representation, and chamber of territorial representation)</li> <li>▪ In the chamber of territorial representation the smaller sub-units are over represented</li> <li>▪ Ensure the right to participate in the federal constitution's amendment for the sub-units, as well as the full rights to establish their own internal constitutions.</li> <li>▪ Decentralized Government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The constitutional recognition of the federal structure</li> <li>▪ Constitutionally guaranteed division of competences between the member states and the central state</li> <li>▪ Conflict resolution by a neutral institution, which is typically the Constitutional Court</li> <li>▪ Institutions of political representation in the member states, which operate independently of the central government</li> <li>▪ Objective and guaranteed funding network structure of the member states and the central state</li> <li>▪ In EU member states is also essential the sub-national entities' participation in shaping national positions in fields of regional competences</li> <li>▪ In recent decades, taking into account the development of the new federalism the operation of vertical and horizontal intergovernmental relations also became an important element. (Aja, p29)</li> </ul>

In the examination of the regionalized states should be useful to use for testing a broad range of typical federal elements. Based on the table above, in my research the following aspects will be considered:

- Characteristics of the Constitution: the question of authority
- Establishment of two levels of power, the regional level's right of self-determination
- Constitutional amendments
- Inter-regional relations
- Separation of powers
- Objective and guaranteed funding, regional solidarity
- Role of the Regions in the central legislature
- Constitutional Court, the resolution of conflicts of jurisdiction,

- Internal communication: the vertical (state regions) and horizontal (inter-regional) channels of coordination
- Cooperation in EU policies

## **THE RESEARCH SUBJECTS: ITALY AND SPAIN**

I chose as research subject two countries, which have been developed many similar elements in their regionalized systems. The similarities can be evidenced by geographic, ethnic and historical aspects as well. Both states are members of the European Union, which means that the same external criteria concern for them. Of course, in my research I also have to demonstrate the differences, because - in my view - these are exactly the main factors that cause differences in the development of the two states.

### **Geography**

The theme of geographical factors is not necessarily subject of the examination of the political framework, in this case, however, I consider unavoidable to briefly address this aspect. In both cases the geographical location had a considerable impact on the territorial scope of the state and on the application of some specific features in the today's political system. The two states are located on peninsulas surrounded by high mountains in the northern frontier land<sup>3</sup>. The Peninsula defines the location of natural boundaries for a large part of the boundary. Another important common feature is the existence of islands with special needs, which was also taken into account in the design of the political structure. The islands of Sicily and Sardinia in Italy, and the Balearic and Canary Islands in Spain are independent political sub-units. In case of Spain, is worth mentioning the special position of two North African enclaves.

### **Ethnic composition**

From the aspect of nationalities, Italy is one of most colorful states of Western Europe, although the population of the minority nationalities makes up only a few percent (Sipos, 1993). In Valle d'Aosta, in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and in Southern Tirol, the goal of creating a

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<sup>3</sup> Portugal on the Iberia Peninsula is an independent state since the 12th century.

special autonomous status was the protection of the minority languages (French, German, and Slovenian). There are other minorities living in Italy, such as sards (2%), the reto-romanian (1%), and the Tyrolean (0.5%). At the time of the creation of the Italian unity, just a small percentage of the population used the literary Italian language; the various different dialects were widely used. The creation of the Italian state induced the flourishing of the regional cultures.

In Spain, the ethnic divide is more important than in Italy. Minority ethnics (Catalan 18%, 6% Galician, and Basque 1.5%) were the engines in the development of the shared state. Besides the historical nationalities, in some recently formed autonomous communities a major emphasis has been placed on the strengthening of the modern regional identity. The means of this policy are primarily the rediscovery of the common history, and the revitalization of quasi extinct languages or old dialects.

### **History, the process of state building**

The needing of the territorial power sharing of the two states roots in their history. If we make an overview of the two countries' history from the Middle Ages to today, we find as similar feature the revolving decentralizing and centralizing processes, even if those were not reported in the same time in both cases.

In Spain, the kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula merged under the leadership of Castile, during and after the war against the moors (reconquista). The Spanish rulers were not, however, established a single state, the combined areas (sub kingdoms) maintained their traditions and a certain degree of autonomy on its own territory. In the Kingdom of Spain a huge variety of legal, administrative and tax systems were operated. A defining feature of the kingdom's internal political life was the use of political pacts, the internal peace was provided by mutually beneficial political and economic arrangements between the central government and local power-elites. After the Spanish war of succession, in the reign of the Bourbons, the centralization of power and the unification of administration began, based on French sample. The spread of ideas of the nation state and of the nation took effect not only the central government level, but also in the minorities which enjoyed a relative autonomy in the past. From the 19th century, long periods of decentralization and shorter periods of centralization alternated which each other: in 1873 the first, and in 1933 the second republican constitution

included as a central element the territorial division of power. During the first republic a federal state structure was aimed to achieve, in the thirties and the creation of autonomous communities was designed. The interim period is characterized by centralization and military dictatorship. The Franco dictatorship, established after the civil war, re-centralized the government, and finished with the power sharing in accordance with the organic theory of state. This affected painfully the national minorities in particular, by the prohibition of use of minority languages in addition to the withdrawal of political rights. During the period of oppression the national and regional political movements have strengthened. As a consequence, during the democratic transition has been made of the necessity to alleviate the centralization of power, and the application of the principle of territorial power sharing.

In Italy, the state has been established as a result of the unification process (Risorgimento) taking place between 1860 and 1870. In the middle ages, on the peninsula Apennine large number and a wide range of states and power relations were flourishing. Basically, three geographically distinct types can distinguished: in the north republics and city-states have been established, while in the south of the large feudal properties and earldoms became to be the characteristic form of local power. The central part of the peninsula was subject of the papal supremacy. The Italian areas did not enjoy independency, lived under the dominium of different kingdoms, but these did not prevent the functioning of local political life. The absence of a common state, the prominent role of local politics, and the unifying power of the Christian faith became to be characteristic features of the Italian tradition (Tibor Szabo, 2003). In the 19th century the ideas of nation-state and of nation also found many followers in Italy. Finally, in 1870, the single Italian state was created under the reign of King of the Piedmont. Italians exploited the opportunities created by the wars between the great kingdoms in Europe. In connection with the structure of the new Italian state a variety of ideas, including a federal plan, aroused, however, a centralized unitary state was established, based on the French model. The internal discontent, due to the absence of an agreement, favored the strengthening of extremist movements. In the 1920s, with Mussolini's coming into power the liberal state was replaced by the fascist dictatorship, characterized by centralization and with the desire to create a strong a unified Italy. After World War II, the internal claims for autonomy met the international standards, which led to the emergence of the regionalism in Italy.

## **Democratization**

The regionalized state-building in both cases occurred at a time when after the fall of the centralized authoritarian regime the framework to a democratic state was created. In the background of the regionalization appeared the aim of the stabilization of the democratic systems. After the Second World War for Italy there was an international political pressure, which, just like in the German sample, considered that power-sharing is an important step in stabilizing the democratic system. Following the collapse of the fascist regime, its elite did not participate in the democratic constituent process. On the contrary, In Spain, the domestic demand of regional power sharing was stronger. The main goal was to preserve the unity of the state, and after the suppression of the previous decades this could be ensured only by the application of the principles of decentralization. In the process of transition to a democratic system the reformists of the previous regime's elite were also involved, and the new system has been set in consensus among various political forces.

### **Characteristics of the regionalized systems**

- Both in Italy and in Spain the regionalized state has been created by the democratic constitution, which was filled with content by the foundation of the regions or autonomous communities and by the adoption of regional statutes. The institutions at the head of the regions / the autonomous communities are constitutionally defined.
- In both cases the constitutions are quite inelastic: amendments assume a very wide political consensus, which is enhanced by the application of the mean of referendum in certain cases.
- Cardinal question is the definition of the state unity and its harmonization with the territorial decentralization. Both the states' constitutions declare the inextricable unity of the state, while they are recognizing the right of autonomy.
- In the decentralization process, both countries decided to regionalize the total area. Both have granted faster and more extensive autonomy for certain regions than for others. In Spain, among the autonomous communities there were established seven with total, and twelve with limited self-autonomy, while in Italy five regions enjoy special status and fifty regions have normal status. From the beginning, the two systems are characterized by the presence of asymmetrical features such as the establishment of the regions, the exercise of self-rule powers, as well as in terms of

population and economic performance within the regions. In either case, the states established special arrangements within the two-speed system that only affected one region or a very limited number of autonomous communities (hechos diferenciales).

- Italy and Spain use a mixed system of power sharing between the central and regional level of government. The Constitution provides a list of competences, where the exclusive state powers, the exclusive regional powers, and the shared powers are clearly separated. The powers actually exercised by each region and autonomous community is included in its statute. The decentralization of powers focused to the executive and legislative branches, while the judicial system remained centralized.
- Both Constitutions guarantee the provision of funding related to the powers of the regions or autonomous communities. In the system of allocation of resources both states have established compensatory mechanisms of solidarity, to mitigate the disparities within the regions.
- The legislative body of the state is a two-chamber parliament in both countries. In this context, there can be found significant differences between the two states. A common feature is, however, that the self-representation of the regions and of the autonomous communities has not been realized in the Senate and in the whole legislature. Relation of the two chambers in Italy allows playing an equal role for the Senate. In Spain the Senate has an absolutely subordinate role. However, in Spain, even in a limited form, but appears the element of regional representation associated to the autonomous communities, while in Italy, the principle of the representation of the nation is overwriting the territorial logic<sup>4</sup>.
- The Constitution in both cases confers the Constitutional Court with the power to decide the disputes between the central government and the regions or autonomous communities.
- For the management of vertical coordination (between the central government and regions / autonomous communities), both states have introduced weak and symmetrical mechanisms, despite the asymmetrical features of their political systems. In Spain, bilateral negotiations have a great tradition.
- The role of the regions and the autonomous communities in the hierarchy of power is different: in Italy, the lower territorial levels enjoy more extensive powers, while in

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<sup>4</sup> Members of parliament represent the nation (Article 67.).

Spain; the autonomous communities are the key players in the vertical power sharing hierarchy.

### **Development of the regionalized systems: since 1948 in Italy, since 1978 in Spain**

In both states we can observe the development of the regionalized system since the adoption of the constitutions, however the shape and rhythm of the corrections is different. In this research paper, I only mention the most important moments of these processes.

In Italy, the development and the implementation of regionalization was initially slow. The Statutes of the special status regions were approved (most recently in Southern Tyrol, in 1963), but until the seventies the normal status regions only existed on paper. This happened mainly due to the fears of the leaders of governing parties (Christian Democrats and their allies). They were thinking that by the decentralization they would lose power in the party against the regional actors. In particular, the Communists, excluded from the central power called for the creation of regions in this period. Finally, the normal status regions started functioning in 1970, with limited room for maneuver. In the eighties there was set up the first bicameral committee, which was responsible for preparing institutional reforms, and it was followed by more (1983-85, 1992-94, 1996-97). By the end of the eighties, the political parties committed to regionalism (leagues) also strengthened, which in the northern areas led to the drafting of separatist ideas, such as the Padania plan. Significant change in the development of regionalism in Italy arrived by the constitutional amendments of 1999 and 2001. In 1999, the rights of self-determination of the regions has been expanded (in the adoption of the Statutes, they abolished the need for central government's approval). In 2001 the functions of the regional legislatures have been expanded (Article 114 and 116), the constitution lists the exclusive state powers (117 articles) and the funding system has been reformed as well (119. article). Italians made changes to the administrative functions as well, but this is confirmed by the local levels. In the constitutional drafts of 2002, 2003, and 2004 further changes and federal elements appeared. The constitutional amendment adopted by the parliament in 2005, had as a central element the reform of the legislation (especially of the Senate) but this federal-type transformation in the referendum did not receive the required majority. The implementation of the provisions of the Constitution of 2001 is going slowly. In Italy, the corrections of the regional system appeared in constitutional amendments.

The situation is different in Spain, where the constitution of 1978 is practically unchanged, and the corrections of the system were achieved by political pacts, and by legislations. Following the adoption of the constitution, all of the autonomous communities were set quickly, before the end of 1983. The efforts for the harmonization of the two-speed regional system soon appeared, but a significant part of the Harmonization Act of 1983 (LOAPA) was repealed by the Constitutional Court. The issue of the powers of the autonomous communities came into view again at the end of the eighties, when the autonomous communities – using their constitutional possibility - five years after the adoption of their statutes, initiated the amendment of the statutes, by the enlargement of their competencies. On the basis of the Autonomy Pact of 1992, made in cooperation of two large parties (PSOE and PP) the reforms of statutes were adopted in 1994. The next waves of reform efforts came in 1996, and the early 2000's. In particular, some of the recent claims for amendments of statutes are characterized by the radicalization of the autonomy aspirations (Ibarratxe Plan, the reform of the Statute of Catalonia). In the funding system a number of changes occurred during the past thirty years, which have sought to optimize the relation between allocation of powers and funding arrangements, and faster the adaptation to changing circumstances. Worth mentioning the amendment of Senate's operating rules in 1994, which created the Standing Committee of the Autonomous Communities, garbed with special competences. The Committee, though in a limited way, but provides the opportunity to for the presidents and governments of the autonomous communities to participate in the work of the Senate.

The factors existing in both states and appear to play an important role in territorial power sharing are clear: a geographical separation from the rest of the continent, the particular situation of the islands, the development of strong local identities in medieval power structures, the limited success of absolutist centralization, the appearance of ideals of nation in the minority communities, and the experience of a centralized fascist dictatorship. Following the democratization, regionalized systems have been developed, with a number of elements in parallel, not just accidentally, but sometimes because they took samples from each other.

Some differences are also worth mentioning:

- In Spain, the ethnic aspect has a greater emphasis. While the greater part of Italian national minorities belongs to neighboring states, in Spain live three strong minorities with no dam.
- In Spain, the centuries-long common experience of living under the same hegemony guaranteed the survival of the institution of monarchy at the beginning of the

democratization. Moreover, it has a power of cohesion, and it is the symbol of the unity of the state. In Italy, a short-lived experience of the Italian monarchy was not clearly positive, however, the republican form of state was deeply rooted in the Italian tradition and history. The republican form of state was decided by referendum, and this is the only one immutable element of the Constitution (Article 139. Limit to Constitutional Amendments).

### **Impact of EU membership**

The development of European integration, the aim to create the social and economic cohesion has impact on the Member States in the field of power sharing practices. This is particularly true for states that include regions with a wide range of the legislative and executive functions. As a result of the enlargement of the integration the internal differences in development has increased, while by the process of deepening raised a number of policy areas pushed up to the EU level, some of which fall within the sub-units competences in particular member states. Inspired by the idea of Europe of the Regions, the Treaty of Maastricht introduced a number of important innovations for the sub-national entities. The most important results are the introduction of the principle of subsidiarity, the creation of the Committee of the Regions, as well as the 146th Article, which provides the possibility for sub-national government's ministers to take part in the work of the European Council. These processes do not simply increased the role of the regions, but the mutual dependence between central and regional levels of government, and established new forms of cooperation between them (Jeffery, 1997).

Italy and Spain are concerned in this matter like all the federal member states. They have to establish the mechanisms to ensure the participation of their regions in the EU decision-making (bottom up), as well as to help the application of Community decisions in regional legislation or implementation (top down).

### **HYPOTHESES**

After the presentation of research subjects, in connection with my research questions I set up the following hypotheses:

- (H1) In Spain the development is dominated by internal factors, while in Italy, the external conditions influence more the state's development and transformation.

- (H2) In Spain, due to the strength of the internal factors corrections are fast, and linked to the autonomous communities, while in Italy they are slower and continue to appear in the North-South context.
- (H3) Both cases are characterized by the lack of those federal elements that would provide the vertical cooperation. (Senate, inter-governmental forum for consultations)
- (H4) The regional parties work as centrifugal forces (pulling out the system), while the centripetal forces are the state-wide parties and the requirement of the EU.
- (H5) The speed and dynamics of changes are closely dependent on the ideological profile of the governing parties. The steps for the correction of the regional systems shall be associated with left-wing governments.
- (H6) The position and role of regional parties in political competition affects the dynamic and the nature of the corrections of the regional systems. (parliamentary and governing coalitions)

## **RESEARCH AGENDA**

In the research of federal systems Thorlakson (2003) separated three approaches, such as the sociological approach, the constitutional approach and the governmental approach. I think in the comparative assessment of Italy and Spain it is reasonable to combine these approaches. The constitutional approach is essential for the understanding of the institutional framework. The governmental approach points to the operation displayed in the political system, while the sociological approach provides us guidance in relation to the social acceptance of the political system.

Connected to the hypotheses I would like to examine the following topics in these approaches:

- Constitutional approach: I will study the relations between the central government and the autonomy of regional powers, as it is defined in the Constitutions. Some aspects of the functioning of the political system, which knowledge is essential, are ruled by separate laws: such as the electoral law, the law on Constitutional Court. The regional statutes also have a fundamental role in the definition of the institutional framework. I examine the processes draw up by the constitutions for their amendments. Finally, the study of the relevant parts of EU legislation must be added as well.
- Governmental approach: It is adequate for the study of the political actors, especially of the role of political parties. I will take into account the role of the state-wide parties

and the regional parties, the latter in particular when they are becoming a decisive factor in national politics. Besides their ideological orientation, the party's efforts are influenced by their role and position in the political system: governing or opposition (in the central government or at regional level), or they are in the role of scales.

- Sociological approach: I examine the attitude of the society to the different forms of vertical power sharing, using data of public opinion research data, electoral results and the results of referendums. In addition, the theoretical literature, basically the works of Putnam and Deth, provides me a comprehensive overview of the social capital and civil society issues.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION**

The proposed thesis is structured in two major units logically.

1. Developing the theoretical framework and the operationalization of the concepts I will analyze the forms of vertical power sharing. I give an overview of the characteristics of the centralized and regionalized unitary states, as well as the types and characteristics of the federal systems.
2. Comparing the Italian and Spanish regionalism I present their political systems linking to my research questions and hypotheses. First, I examine the causes of the emergence of the regionalized systems, than the characteristics of the status quo achieved by them, and finally the stability of the regionalized systems focusing on those - internal and external – factors, that challenge this stability.

## **CONCLUSION**

In my research project I compare the Italian and Spanish regionalism. The most interesting question of the proposed thesis is the possible trajectory of the two regionalized countries, taking into account the characteristics of their development so far, the ambitions and claims of political actors in the central government and at regional levels, as well as the evolution of the public opinion. The research is focused on the challenges of internal factors, but also takes into account that Italy and Spain are member states of the EU.

I do not mean to say that the two states or even one of them can ever be constitutionally self-determined as a federation. The issue in question is not a specific name, but that in the operation of the states to which extent are present the characteristic elements and logic of

federations. Rather than examine statically their present state I would like to monitor the dynamics of changes.

The research project is in many respects a draft. The main purpose of this paper is the presentation of the research subject and to explain the relevance of my research questions, providing also an overview on the theoretical framework.

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