

Identifying the Disputes on Spanish National Structure

Haolin Lv^{1,*}

¹ The School of Public Management, Nankai University, Tianjin, 300000, China

*Corresponding author. Email: 2012414@mail.nankai.edu.cn

ABSTRACT

Many studies use the concept of the form of national structure. When referring to Spain, there are always disputes about its national structure. This article explores the disputes of the academic community on the form of Spanish national structure, which can attract more scholars' attention to this issue and will be beneficial to relevant studies in this field. This article selected 20 papers from Google Scholar and used the method of classification to summarize the views of various scholars. From the perspectives of the constitution, nationality, and political practice, this paper concludes three attitudes of different scholars: they separately believe that Spain is a nominal unitary, actual federalism and adjective federalism country.

Keywords: Spanish, Spanish national structure, Comparative politics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern countries can be divided into two modes: Federalism and unitary system. However, when it comes to Spain, there are always disputes. In the current research, some scholars regard it as a federal state. For example, George Anderson's federal guidance theory, while in other studies, it is described as a unitary state. However, whether it is a federal state or not appears as an established premise rather than the content of the research [1]. At the beginning of the 20th century, most of the attention paid to the topic of the form of Spanish state structure was the binary opposition between federalism and the unitary system. Around 2010, the study of Spanish structural forms gradually turned to the study of their institutional particularity and endogeneity. In 2010, Gemma Sala, a scholar, put forward the concept of adaptive federalism, which well-expressed the meaning of endogeneity and specificity of Spanish structural forms in the new stage [2]. There is little research on the form of the Spanish national structure itself. To fill this gap, we need to study the dispute itself of the structural form of Spain. This article selected 20 controversial studies related to the determination of the form of Spanish national structure in Google academic order from high to low, and summarize their attitudes and reasons. Focusing on the research theme of the causes of Spain's unique form of national structure, this article makes a comprehensive summary of the views on Spain's form of national structure through the induction of different studies, and has an insight into the reasons for

the controversy of Spain's form of national structure through the division of three angles. It can help researchers understand the particularity of the Spanish system, understand their relationship with national structure when discussing Spanish public policies and social events, and have a more comprehensive understanding of the Spanish political model.

2. DISPUTES OF THE SPANISH STATE STRUCTURE

Firstly, according to the definition of Zhiwei Tong, federalism and unitary system are listed as followed [3]. Federalism is a political system in which several member units form a unified country. It is the main body in international exchanges, has its own supreme legislature and executive organ, and has a unified constitution and law. The Federation exercises the country's diplomatic, military, financial and other major powers. The division of powers between the Federation and its member units shall be prescribed by the Federal Constitution.

Unitary system refers to the system of a single sovereign state composed of several general administrative regional units that do not enjoy independent sovereignty.

In the current study, there are three views on the classification of the Spanish state structure. One is that Spain cannot be called a federal state at least in the name. The second view is that Spain is a federal country in actual operation. The third is aspirational federalism,

which tries to surpass the federalism and unitary system and focuses on the particularity of the Spanish system. Their argumentation bases are generally concentrated in three perspectives: political practice, constitution and nationality.

2.1. Nominal Unitary System

Scholars who believe that Spain is not a federal country in the name include Daniele Conversi, Enric Martinez-Herrera, Karlo Basta, Stefuriuc, all of them mentioned one reason, that is, Spain does not have any expression on the Federation in the constitution [4][5][6][7]. In the constitutional sense, Spain must not be a federal country because it does not guarantee the independent status of its components. From the perspective of nationality, Karlo Basta pointed out that Spain's special democratic process that need central and local cooperation and consultation, in which the nation as the main body strives for its own rights and interests (including autonomy), is logically inconsistent with the "constituent unit" of federalism [6]. From the perspective of political practice, Stefuriuc paid attention to the independence of Catalonia [7]. In 2019, the central government of Spain took over the government administration of Catalonia autonomous region, which is very inconsistent with the traditional federal state.

2.2. Substantive Federalism

Scholars who support the second view are George Anderson, Josep M. Colomer, Alberto, Núria Bosch and José M. Durán, Luis Moreno believes that autonomous regions have the same status as the Federation, including power organization form (Legislative Administration), finance and justice [1][8][9][10][11]. This symbolizes the federalism of Spain in its actual operation. From the perspective of nationality, Josep M. Colomer pointed out that Spain has been a multi-ethnic country since ancient times [8]. This country's tradition of autonomy and the organizational form of state power to protect the relatively independent rights of all ethnic groups have led to Spain's inevitable federal system in the form of national structure. From the perspective of constitution, Morenon mentioned that due to Spain's multi-ethnic background and national relative independence, local division will be a serious problem perplexing Spain [11]. Therefore, for the sake of unity ideology, Spain prefers to recognize itself as a unitary country (the country with single system) in the constitution.

2.3. Adjective Federalism

The third view is supported by Nancy bermeo, Ronald L. watts, Eliseo Aja, Gemma Sala, Steven D. Roper, Baltimore, Michael Burgess, Ferran Requejo Col said that "it is a meaningless debate to define the state with

system" [12][13][14][15][16][17][18]. When comparing political systems, it is necessary for us to include and compare them, and distinguish the similarities and differences of different models of political systems in operation. However, when analyzing the internal operation of a country, we should jump out of the existing Federation and single framework and see its specific historical soil and endogenous system. Based on the attention to particularity, Eliseo Aja proposed the concept of "asymmetric federalism" to describe Spain in view of the asymmetry of financial rights, judicial power and national rights in various regions of Spain [14]. Because some regions meet the requirements of "components" under the federal system, and some regions are controversial. Michael Burgess paid attention to the division of rights between central and local governments in Spain, and described Spain with "shared federalism", that is, through consultation and political game, political rights are shared under the constitutional framework, and each autonomous region retains its particularity [17]. Similar descriptions also include mutation federalism of Ronald L. watts and multilevel structure federalism of Eliseo Aja [13][14].

2.4. Comprehensive Analysis of Three Views Above

According to the formulation of various scholars, the structural form of Spain is not a definite model of black or white, but a complex and pluralistic process, Chinese scholar Wang Jiane described an important of democratic constitution making in Spain in his paper "exploration of unbalanced regional autonomy system under the framework of unified state -- the process of democratization and the growth and decline of regional nationalism in Spain".[10]

As his description, Spain has finally formed its unbalanced regional autonomy system, that is, 50 provinces are organized into 17 regions. The region is composed of neighboring provinces, islands and provinces that used to be a regional unit in history with common historical and cultural characteristics. The autonomy regulations are the basic law of the autonomous community, including the powers, obligations and management methods of the political community. For example, they stipulate the official language of the autonomous region, the election of the autonomous region's parliament, the selection of heads of government and officials of the autonomous region, the establishment and management authority of government departments, the size of personnel, and the operation mode of various departments The authority of local administrative units below the autonomous region, etc. The content of the autonomy regulations is the result of the compromise between the autonomous regions and the central government in the constitutional reform in 1978. Because of the differences in the autonomous tradition,

geographical identity, national culture and comprehensive strength of each autonomous region, the autonomy regulations finally formed an unbalanced geographical autonomy system.

After the centralization and autocracy in the Fermingo era, while maintaining the unified state system, Spain also adjusted the autocratic state system model in the Franco era, including the state structure system on the distribution of central and local power, implemented the regional autonomy system of decentralization to the local, and give local governments relatively full autonomy by the autonomy regulations, which design to achieve ethnic diversity and inclusiveness. This article focuses on the political game and consultation between Catalonia, Basque and Catalonia and the central government under the constitutional sharing mode, the formation of their respective ethnic regional systems, and the differences in financial power, ethnic language, culture, civil servants and local government design, so as to reflect the unique institutional process of each autonomous region. The whole system design is realized between the process of democratization and the rise and fall of local nationalism, the maintenance of national unity and the protection of cultural diversity. From the perspective of historical process, researchers can more clearly understand the endogenous and three-dimensional nature of the form of Spanish national structure. It is not imitated according to a mature institutional model, but bred and produced in the local political game practice. The form of Spanish national structure is a three-dimensional design. Different scholars describe or quote a certain aspect or feature of the country's institutional system through different emphases. For example, scholars demonstrate the unity of the Spanish state through the design of unitary system in constitution and national form; At the same time, it can also describe the decentralization model of similar federalism in Spain to explain political issues such as Catalan independence movement; Other scholars have focused on grasping some characteristics of Spain's

decentralization system in operation and formed many understandings of "adjective federalism", such as "shared federalism", "asymmetric federalism", "multilevel structure federalism". These original concepts highlight a certain feature of Spain's central and local decentralization model. Through the summary of this article, readers can understand the three-dimensional nature of the form of Spanish national structure. When analyzing and demonstrating different political issues, they can associate with some factors, sides and characteristics of the form of Spanish structure, rather than completely dividing Spain into the category of "federalism" or "unitary system".

2.5. Analysis of Attitudes towards the Form of Spanish National Structure in 17 papers

The classification of the articles can be seen in the Table 1, it indicates that the binary opposition of Federalism or unitary system in the study of Spanish structural form is mainly concentrated before 2010, but it is worth noting that during this period, scholars often do not directly study the form of Spanish national structure, but judge the problem of structural form in the study of other issues, or in comparative politics analysis, scholars did research on classification and induction between federal or unitary system among many countries. Therefore, in this period, the shortcoming of "black or white" in the judgment of Spanish structural form has its contextual reasons. It can be seen that after 2010, with the proposal of the concept of adjective federalism, the particularity and endogeneity of Spanish structural form have attracted the attention of the academic circles. Many scholars have described the causes and characteristics of Spain's "central local" institutional arrangement from different perspectives. The research on the Spanish structural form began to become an independent subject and were gradually improved and became more comprehensive.

Table 1. Classification of the disputes of Spanish national structure.

Number of papers	Attitude to the issues of the Spanish national structure	References
4	Nominal unitary system: According to the Spanish Constitution and constitutional history, this country should be classified as a unitary state.	[4][5][6][7]
5	Substantive federalism: From the distribution mode of central and local power, Spain is more like a federal state in the actual political operation.	[1][8][9][10][11]

8	Adjective federalism: Neither single system nor federal system can perfectly describe the national structure of Spain. These scholars have created special concepts from different angles, collectively referred to as adjective federalism.	[2][12][13][14] [15][16][17][18]
---	--	----------------------------------

3. CONCLUSION

In this article, this paper studies the contents and reasons for the disputes in the form of Spanish national structure, and summarize the three views of different scholars on the form of Spanish national structure: nominal unitary system, substantive federalism and adjective federalism. It is clear that the reasons for the disputes in the form of Spanish national structure lie in the diversity of nationalities, the avoidance of the concept of Federation in the Constitution and the federal color of autonomous region politics in the actual operation. This paper summarizes the views of different scholars on the form of Spanish national structure, and through the method of induction and analysis, sort out the development process of the research on this topic. At present, the structural form of Spain has got rid of the classification of binary opposition, and the attention to its particularity and endogeneity has become the consensus of the academic community, which has well improved the background and starting point of the research on other public affairs in Spain, such as the Catalan independence case and the fiscal reform of Spain. Moreover, in the current research on Spain's comparative politics and central local relations, the attention to its special institutional arrangements is also the starting point of many studies, such as "asymmetric federalism", "fiscal federalism", "nationalism" and so on. This paper can help researchers better explain the causes and implementation methods of some public policies by understanding the institutional arrangement of "controversial federalism" in Spain when studying Spanish political and social life. The special position of Spain can also be clarified in comparative politics. The three perspectives of nationality, constitution and political practice have strong explanatory power for the form of Spanish national structure, and the reasons for the controversy of its system are also reflected in it.

REFERENCES

- [1] G. Anderson, Federal guidance theory, 2009, pp. 56-59.
- [2] G. Sala, Federalism with Adjectives in Spain, Pennsylvana State University, vol.2, 2016, pp. 3-6, DOI:10.1093/publius/pjt010
- [3] Z.W. Tong, Comment on the basic classification of modern state structure forms, Journal of Central South University of Political Science and Law, vol.5, 1995, pp. 5-9.
- [4] D. Conversi, Asymmetry in Quasi-federal and Unitary States, Ethnopolitics, vol.2, 2007, pp. 2-4, DOI:10.1080/17449050701233064
- [5] M.H. Enric, The Constitution and the Politics of, National Identity in Spain, Nations and Nationalism, vol.2, 2010, pp. 3-5.
- [6] K. Basta, The state between minority and majority Nationalism: Decentralization, Symbolic Recognition, and Secessionist Crises in Spain and Canada, The Journal of Federalism, vol.3, 2009, pp. 6-10, DOI:10.1773/Synasibe/12242001170
- [7] D. Stefuriuc, Government Formation in multi-level settings: Spanish regional coalitions and the quest for vertical congruence. Party Politics, vol.5, 2009, pp. 3-7.
- [8] J.M. Colomer, Political Institutions in a Comparative Perspective, The Oxford Handbook of Spanish Politics, vol. 2, 2020, pp. 3-5, DOI:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198826934.013.10
- [9] A. López-Basaguren, LE San Epifanio, The Ways of Federalism in Western Countries and the Horizons of Territorial Autonomy in Spain, vol. 1, 2013, pp. 5-7.
- [10] B. Núria and J.M. Durán, Fiscal Federalism and Political Decentralization Lessons from Spain, Germany and Canada, vol. 9, 2008, pp. 6-9.
- [11] M. Luis, The Federalization of Spain. , London: Frank Cass, vol. 3, 2001, pp. 56-79.
- [12] N. Bermeo, A New Look at Federalism, the importance of institutions, Journal of Democracy vol. 13, April 2002, pp. 3-5.
- [13] R.L. Watts, Spain: a multi-national federation in disguise? Comparative European Politics, vol. 4, 2003, pp. 2-4.
- [14] E. Aja, C. Colino, Multilevel structures, coordination and partisan politics in Spanish

intergovernmental relations, *Comparative European Politics*, vol. 4, 2014, pp. 1-4, DOI:www.palgrave-journals.com/cep

- [15] S.D. Roper, *Federalization and Constitution-Making as an Instrument of Conflict Resolution*, *Demokratizatsiya*, vol. 17, 2012, pp. 2-8.
- [16] B. Stepan, C. Alfred, J. J. Linz, Y. Yadav, *Crafting State-Nations: India and Other Multinational Democracies*. MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, vol. 11, 2009, pp. 4-8.
- [17] M. Burgess, A. Tarr, *Spain's Constitution and the statutes of autonomy: Explaining the evolution of political decentralization. In Constitutional dynamics in federal systems: Sub-national perspectives*, Canada: McGill Queen's Press, vol. 5, 2012, pp. 3-6.
- [18] F.R. Coll, *Revealing the dark side of traditional democracies in plurinational societies. The case of Catalonia and the Spanish, "Estado de las Autonomías"* *Political Theory Working Paper*, vol. 4, 2009, pp. 3-8, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/BFb0025774>
- [19] J. Wang, *Exploration of unbalanced regional autonomy system under the framework of unified state-the process of democratization and the growth and decline of regional nationalism in Spain*, *Ethnology and Anthropology*, vol. 9, 2019, pp. 2-7.