7

Parliamentary Party Discipline in Spain

MANUEL SÁNCHEZ DE DIOS

Spain provides an example of a new democracy based on well-structured and disciplined parties, where party stability is directly related to party discipline and to the control of party leaders. Spanish parties are essentially parliamentary parties. This is not only because, as elsewhere, the parliamentary group dominates the whole organization but also because, as in the United States, party membership is not significant. Compared to elsewhere in western Europe, Spanish parties have exceptionally small memberships (Gallagher, Laver, and Mair 1995, 247).

As a new democracy, the Spanish case fits Attila Ágh's thesis of "party parliamentarization" (chap. 8 of this volume): the parliamentary group has been the basis of party institutionalization. This process was stimulated in Spain by an initial "consensus" among the groups that provoked the transition to democracy in the 1970s: it has also been facilitated by the constitutional structure of the system. In Spain the process of party parliamentarization implies that a group of leaders take control over the whole party, imposing strong discipline by means of organizational rules and by deciding on who the party's candidates will be. In essence, the parties that have been created in Spain are parties of government.

After 20 years of democratic government, however, we can differentiate two periods in the Spanish party system. The first period, before 1982 (see table 7.1), is consistent with Laver and Shepsle's notion of parties emerging from "the primeval slime" (chap. 2 of this volume). Here we see various groups and factions ceding strategic autonomy in

Table 7.1
Spanish Parliamentary Parties, Number of Legislature Seats, 1977–1996

	C[a] 1977	I 1979	II 1982	III 1986	IV 1989	V 1993	VI 1996
N	350	350	350	350	350	350	350
Popular[b]	16	9	106	73	107	141	156
Centrista	165	168	12				
CDS				19	14		
Socialista	105	98	202	184	175	159	141
Soc. de Cat.	13	17					
Soc. Vasc.		6					
M. Cat.	11	8	12	18	18	17	16
Vasco	8	7	8	6	5	5	5
Comunista/IU[c]	20	23			17	18	21
Andalucista		5					
C. Can.						4	4
Mixed: Agrupaciones				39[g]			
Mixed: Rest	12[d]	9[e]	10[f]	11[h]	14[i]	6[j]	7[k]

Sources: *Memorias de Legislatura;* data from the Archives of the Congreso de los Diputados.

Note: See chapter appendix for key to party acronyms.

[a]Constituent assembly. The subsequent legislatures are indicated by roman numerals.
[b]AP in 1977, CD in 1979.
[c]Communists from 1977 to 1982; IU from 1986 to 1996.
[d]PSP (6), UDC (2), ERC (1), EE (1), P. Arg. (1), I. Cast. (1).
[e]UN (1), HB (3), ERC (1), EE (1), PAR (1), UPN (1), UPC (1).
[f]CDS (2), PCE (4), HB (2), ERC (1), EE (1).
[g]Dem. Crist. (21), P. Liberal (11), IU (7).
[h]HB (5), EE (2), PAR (1), AIC (1), CG (1), UV (1).
[i]HB (4), P. And. (2), UV (2), EA (2), EE (2), PAR (1), AIC (1).
[j]HB (2), ERC (1), PAR (1), EA (1), UV (1).
[k]HB (2), BNG (2), ERC (1), EA (1), UV (1).

the expectation of generating a disciplined party of government. An example of this is provided by the centrist party, UCD, which was little more than a coalition of leaders that finally dissolved. A further example is provided by the socialist party, PSOE, which won the 1982 election by a huge majority. Its electoral success was based on the fact that a group of leaders had taken control of the party. At this early stage in Spanish electoral politics, we also see the formation of a coalition of groups under the banner of the Popular Party (PP).

According to Cotarelo (1992, ix), the next phase in the development of the party system was marked by the consolidation of Spanish democracy after 1979. By 1982 the party system was structured around two basic dichotomies, right-left and center-periphery. Only when the Popu-

lar Party was refounded in 1990 and when new leaders took control of the party was the dilemma resolved about which center-right group was going to direct the conservative forces. The situation was even more clear after the 1996 election, which saw the alternation in power between the PSOE and the PP. Nowadays Spanish parties are very well differentiated by their programs, by their leadership group, and by their MPs: they have clearly left the "primeval slime."

The Spanish case can be considered also from the viewpoint of parliamentary government, which places stress on party discipline as one of its basic principles, particularly in Europe. Stable governments are those supported by a disciplined majority of a strong party or a coalition, and only a homogeneous and unified opposition can aspire to take control of the government.

Sometimes party discipline is imposed; at other times it is due to group cohesion. What is clear in all cases is that the practice of European parliamentary democracy is based on the existence of large and disciplined voting blocs. As a matter of fact, when we compare European parties with their U.S. counterparts, we see that their voters tend to vote for parties rather than for individual candidates and that individual parliamentarians think of themselves first and foremost as members of their party's parliamentary group (Gallagher et al. 1995, 52).

The Spanish case is entirely consistent with the European pattern of parliamentary government: the government is responsible to the legislature, and both the government and the parliament are dominated by parties. The party in government is supported by its parliamentarians on all issues, while the MPs of the different opposition groups support their party lines when voting in Parliament. Party discipline is a clear feature of Spanish parties.

Although on first impression Spain appears as a consensual system because of its written constitution, multiparty system, proportional representation electoral system, bicameralism, and regional autonomy, if we pay closer attention to how some of these characteristics operate, it is clear that things are not so straightforward. First, there is the "rationalization" of the system giving the prime minister power over the government.[1] Second, there is the weakness of the senate, which has no say in electing the prime minister and cannot place a vote of no confidence against the executive. Third, as the most important feature, there is the electoral system, which, although formally proportional, has some modifications that make it close to the majoritarian rule: notably, small electoral districts and the d'Hondt rule for dividing seats among parties. In

consequence, the electoral system works in favor of having a small number of big and polarized parties, against multipartyism, and in favor of strengthening the power of ruling party leaders and party discipline at the highest level.

This chapter seeks to explain how party discipline works in the Spanish parliamentary system. Due to the secondary position of the senate—its representative function is quite similar to that of the chamber (*Congreso de los Diputados*)—the focus in on discipline in the parliamentary parties of the *Congreso.* The chapter starts, in the first section, with a consideration of constitutional rules, with particular reference to electoral and financial rules. I examine how these strengthen parties and the party leaders. Additionally I analyze turnover as an indicator of the degree of party discipline. Next, I consider the effects of parliamentary standing orders on the parliamentary party system, observing how these affect the structure and activity of groups, as well as the mobility of MPs between groups. The last section assesses party discipline from the point of view of the internal organization of groups, looking at mass and parliamentary group statutes and at disciplinary procedures.

The Constitutional Formula

Although parliamentary parties are fundamental actors in the system, the Spanish 1978 Constitution has only the briefest of references to them, in article 78.1, which states that parliamentary groups have to send representatives to the *Diputación Permanente,* a constitutional organ in charge of the Congreso's powers when it is not in session. But if the Constitution does not pay attention to parliamentary groups, it does affirm clearly that parties have a powerful role in the system. Article 6 states that parties are "fundamental instruments for political participation."

On the other hand, the Constitution ensures the freedom of MPs from being mandated (art. 67.2), and it states that MPs cannot delegate their vote to anyone (art. 79.3), since it is personal. In theory, at least, both these rules enable MPs to break party discipline without losing their seats. However, as we shall see, the practice of party discipline overrides this freedom, and one can talk of a pseudoimperative mandate of parties over MPs.

In Spain the main source of party power is the electoral system, regulated for the Congreso by the Constitution (art. 68), which establishes

proportional representation based on closed party lists.[2] Moreover, the use of the d'Hondt formula,[3] together with small districts, has some extremely distorting effects that benefit the two major national parties (socialists and centrists or conservatives), as well as the Basque and Catalan minorities, which are the largest parties in their regions. These majority elements work against small parties and any splinters from the big ones. The electoral rules also enforce the power of party leaders because it is the leaders who determine the lists. This is the main source of party discipline: MPs wanting to be placed high on the electoral lists must accept the instructions and proposals set by the leadership.

As elsewhere in Europe, there are no American-style primaries, though in contrast to many of the older European parties, the leadership group of each Spanish party has a dominant role in candidate selection. More precisely, in the PP there is a national electoral committee, linked to the national executive committee of the party, that must approve the electoral lists for the *Cortes Generales.* In the PSOE there is a "committee on lists," elected by the party's federal committee, that controls the content of electoral lists. In the left coalition, IU (United Left), the federal political council approves the lists proposed by each federation. The same practice occurs in the Basque nationalist party, PNV, where the national executive organ (*Euzkadi Buru Batzar*) proposes the parliamentary list to the national assembly of the party.

In addition to the electoral rules, party leadership is also strengthened by the 1987 law on party finance.[4] Much as elsewhere in Europe, the bulk of Spanish party revenue comes from the public budget—about 80%—and goes directly to party headquarters (del Castillo 1990, 86). For this reason individual parliamentarians cannot oppose party leaders if they want to be economically protected by the party—for example, when financing electoral campaigns.

Parliamentary Party Turnover

When we take into account the effects of the electoral system on party structure, parliamentary turnover can be seen as a good measure of party discipline: the stronger the party discipline, the more stable the parliamentary representation, and vice versa. In this analysis, a "normal" rate of turnover is taken to mean that 70% of MPs (of a given group) from the previous parliament remain in office. This is the case for the PP in 1996 (68%) and the PSOE in 1993 (72%) and 1989 (74%). Whenever a parliamentary group's size grows after an election, the "nor-

that rate can be calculated on the basis of that proportion of MPs who were also members of the previous parliament. This is the case for PSOE in 1982 (85 of 121), PP in 1993 (74 of 107) and 1996 (107 of 141), and CIU (Catalan nationalist party) in 1986 (8 of 12) (see table 7.2).[5]

The PSOE and CIU are the most stable during the period (table 7.1).

Table 7.2
Parliamentary Turnover in Spanish Parties

*AP-CD-CP-PP** *(Conservative)*	*1977*	*1979*	*1982*	*1986*	*1989*	*1993*	*1996*
1996	9	11	14	25	59	107	**157**
1993	16	18	22	45	74	**141**	68% (76%)
1989	17	16	26	57	**107**	74% (70%)	38%
1986	16	15	40	**105**	54%	32%	16%
1982	13	18	**106**	38%	25%	16%	9%
1979	4	**9**	17%	14%	15%	13%	7%
1977	**16**	44%	12%	15%	16%	11%	6%

Note: The table should be read as follows: Of the 157 MPs in 1996, 107 (or 68%) of them were MPs in 1993, 59 (or 38%) in 1989, and so on. The percentage figures in brackets show the reverse: i.e., 76% of MPs in 1993 remained in the parliament in 1996.
*AP in 1977, CD in 1979, CP in 1982 and 1986, PP from 1989.

*UCD-CDS** *(Liberal)*	*1977*	*1979*	*1982*	*1986*	*1989*
1989	2	1	4	11	**14**
1986	2	4	2	**19**	79%
1982	8	10	**14**	11%	29%
1979	92	**168**	71%	21%	7%
1977	**165**	55%	57%	11%	14%

Note: The table should be read as follows: Of the 14 MPs in 1989, 11 (or 79%) of them were MPs in 1986, 4 (or 29%) in 1989, and so on.
*UCD in 1977, 1979, and 1982; CDS in 1982 to 1989.

PSOE *(Socialist)*	*1977*	*1979*	*1982*	*1986*	*1989*	*1993*	*1996*
1996	14	22	42	49	59	78	**141**
1993	26	40	76	95	114	**159**	55%
1989	34	49	102	129	**175**	72%	42%
1986	39	62	128	**184**	74%	60%	35%
1982	52	85	**202**	70%	58%	48%	30%
1979	75	**121**	42% (70%)	34%	28%	25%	16%
1977	**118**	62% (64%)	26%	21%	19%	16%	10%

Note: The table should be read as follows: Of the 141 MPs in 1996, 78 (or 55%) of them were MPs in 1993, 59 (or 42%) in 1989, and so on. The percentage figures in brackets show the reverse: i.e., 70% of MPs in 1979 remained in the parliament in 1982.

Table 7.2
Parliamentary Turnover in Spanish Parties *continued*

*PCE-IU** *(Communist)*	*1977*	*1979*	*1982*	*1986*	*1989*	*1993*	*1996*
1996	1	2	3	0	6	11	**21**
1993	0	0	0	3	9	**18**	52%
1989	1	2	1	4	**17**	50%	26%
1986	2	3	0	**7**	24%	17%	0
1982	2	4	**4**	0	6%	0	1%
1979	17	**23**	100%	43%	12%	0	1%
1977	**20**	74% (85%)	50%	29%	6%	0	1%

Note: The table should be read as follows: Of the 21 MPs in 1996, 11 (or 52%) of them were MPs in 1993, 6 (or 26%) in 1989, and so on. The percentage figures in brackets show the reverse, i.e., 70% of MPs in 1979 remained in the parliament in 1982.
*PCE from 1977 to 1982; IU from 1986 to 1996.

CIU (Nationalist)	*1977*	*1979*	*1982*	*1986*	*1989*	*1993*	*1996*
1996	0	2	2	5	5	8	**16**
1993	1	3	4	11	11	**17**	50%
1989	1	6	7	17	**18**	65%	31%
1986	2	6	8	**18**	94%	65%	31%
1982	2	7	**12**	44% (67%)	39%	24%	12%
1979	5	**8**	58%	33%	33%	18%	12%
1977	**11**	63%	17%	11%	6%	6%	0

Note: The table should be read as follows: Of the 16 MPs in 1996, 8 (or 50%) of them were MPs in 1993, 5 (or 31%) in 1989, and so on. The percentage figures in brackets show the reverse: i.e., 67% of MPs in 1982 remained in the parliament in 1986.

PNV (Nationalist)	*1977*	*1979*	*1982*	*1986*	*1989*	*1993*	*1996*
1996	0	0	0	2	2	3	**5**
1993	0	0	0	2	4	**5**	60%
1989	0	0	0	3	**5**	80%	40%
1986	0	1	2	**6**	60%	40%	40%
1982	2	2	**8**	33%	0	0	0
1979	6	**7**	25%	17%	0	0	0
1977	**8**	86%	25%	0	0	0	0

Sources: See table 7.1.
Notes: The table should be read as follows. Of the 5 MPs in 1996, 3 (or 60%) of them were MPs in 1993, 2 (or 40%) in 1989, and so on.
See chapter appendix for key to party acronyms.

PSOE stability can be explained by the fact that it was a ruling party until 1996. Before 1982, when the PSOE was in opposition, the party strengthened its centralism (and stability) in order to fulfill its aim of being a party of government. Around 1996 the PSOE faced a big crisis over problems of corruption and of a "dirty war" against terrorism while it was governing. (There was also a crisis of leadership.) The stability of CIU—which is a coalition of nationalist parties—is due to the fact that it has been a governing party in its home region.

The nationalist Basque party (PNV) was very stable until the mid-1980s. In the 1989 election it separated into two different groups, and since then it has remained stable. What also explains the stability of the PNV is that it has been the ruling party in the Basque region. (On many occasions high turnover in the nationalist parties is due to the fact that MPs consider it more important to take part in regional institutions than in the national parliament.)

The PCE (Communist party) was stable, reflecting its strong position in Parliament through to the early 1980s. But its successor, IU, has been in constant difficulty, changing its parliamentary leaders very frequently. IU was formed when the PCE was unsuccessful in 1982, the leftist vote having gone to the PSOE. After that election, the PCE (which had been the best organized opposition to Franco's dictatorship) was in crisis, and many of its leaders joined the PSOE ranks. In 1986 the Communists set up the coalition IU, and the PCE is still the main group in control of it. The regular changing of leadership by IU stopped in 1989 when an orthodox group took control of the PCE. Since then, IU's stability has consistently increased.

On the right there have been two groups (national parties) competing between each other not only—or even primarily—for votes but also for MPs. The UCD is a centrist party based on a coalition of "families" (factions) ranging from liberals to social democrats and including Christian democrats (Esteban and López 1982, 88). UCD won the first and second elections with a relative majority. Due to disputes among internal groups, the party faced a big crisis in 1981 when the resignation of the prime minister and party leader, A. Suarez, was followed by the departure of some of its parliamentary party members. The party disintegrated after big losses in the 1982 election. Suarez founded a new centrist liberal party, CDS, with the aim of being a possible government coalition partner. Despite becoming the third largest national party in 1986, its plan was unsuccessful, and CDS disappeared after 1993.

The conservative party, AP (*Alianza Popular*), was founded by Francoists. It was unsuccessful in the two first legislatures, even though some

liberals joined it before the 1979 election. UCD's difficulties helped conservative party development, and in 1982 AP set up a new coalition, *Coalicion Popular* (CP), which had a very good electoral result. CP became the main opposition party and a potential governing party. Some of UCD's MPs joined this group, though the figure was not really that significant, only about 16% (table 7.2). The rate of centrist deputies going over to the conservative group remained about the same in the subsequent parliaments, as can be seen when we consider how many MPs of the conservative group of 1986 had been in Parliament in 1977 and 1979 (15% and 14% respectively).

From 1982 onward, CP has had a big turnover. In 1986 only 38% of its deputies had been in the 1982 parliament. In 1989 the proportion increased to 54%. Before the 1989 election, the party changed leadership and name—to the Popular Party (PP)—and began a process of power centralization. In 1990 it held a party congress of "refoundation and renovation," which resulted in the party becoming firmly under the control of a new group of young leaders. This explains the stability of the party in 1993, when it held onto 70% of its MPs from 1989. In 1996 the PP achieved a huge majority and became a governing party. (The rate of PP turnover was higher in 1996 than in 1993 because many of its MPs had gone to take part in many regional institutions.)

To sum up, in the Spanish case, being a party of government makes for a stable and disciplined party. At the same time a stable party involves the existence of a group of leaders who control candidate selection. Thus, the leadership is structured under an autocratic regime. Finally, a party turnover of about 30% in every election is the normal rate for a stable party of government.

Parliamentary Parties in the Standing Orders of the Congreso

The parliamentary parties are well defined and structured by the standing orders of the Congreso. That is as a result of the main role that parliamentary groups play.

The Parliamentary Party System from 1977 to 1996

MPs must be integrated in a parliamentary group from the beginning of the legislature, or from the first time that the MPs arrive in Parliament (at the beginning of the session) (art. 23). There is the

so called *grupo mixto*, formed of MPs who cannot form a group in their own right and have to act through this.

From 1982 onwards, when new standing orders were adopted, it was specified that forming a parliamentary group required at least 15 MPs, or 5 if the party (or coalition) obtained either 5% of the total vote at the national level or 15% in the electoral districts where the party (or coalition) presented candidates. As a result of this rule, not only must MPs be part of a group, but they must be part of a strong group.[6] Another rule is that MPs cannot form an alternative parliamentary group to the one that included them in its electoral list. A consequence of this is that the Spanish parliament must have one of the smallest and most stable number of parliamentary groups. Before 1982, the rules were more lax: parties needed just five MPs (with no minimum vote requirements) to form a parliamentary group. This was the case with the Andalusian Socialist Party (PSA) in 1979. At that time it was also possible to form separate parliamentary groups of deputies of the same party, as was the case with the Catalan and Basque socialists (table 7.1).

In 1986, when the number of deputies in the *grupo mixto* increased because of a crisis in *Coalicion Democrática*, the President of the Congreso permitted the formation of *agrupaciones* (small parliamentary groups) in the *grupo mixto*. Christian democrats and liberals abandoned the *grupo popular* and formed two *agrupaciones*. The communists, with 4.7% of the vote at national level, could not form a parliamentary group, so they also set up an *agrupacion*.

Party Discipline According to the Standing Orders of the Congreso

According to the standing orders, the Spanish parliament is a "parliament of groups." Parliamentary parties are the main agents of the Congreso: they form the *Junta de Portavoces* (council of party representatives in the chamber), which is in charge of organizing parliamentary work (distribution of time). They also decide on the composition of parliamentary committees, which is based on a quota that every group has according to size.

The most important point of the standing orders is that groups are considered as unified actors with only one voice, so when a parliamentary group acts through a representative, its vote is worth exactly the number of members of the group (*voto ponderado*). This means that the representative of a group (*portavoz* or whip) votes on behalf of the entire

group of deputies (the vote weighted according to the size of the group) in every parliamentary commission or in the main organs of the Congreso. The power of parliamentary parties is even more impressive when we consider how MPs can act in the Congreso. For instance, in the legislative process, individual deputies can present total or partial amendments to legislative bills, but all amendments must be signed by the chief whip of the parliamentary party (*Portavoz del grupo*) (art. 110). Legislative proposals (*proposiciones de ley*) can be tabled both by groups or by MPs. However, legislative proposals of deputies must be signed by at least 15 MPs (art. 126.1). In this case it is clear that only if the group supports the proposal will it be debated.

In the case of checking on executive power, we also find a strong hold of the groups over MPs. Because in parliamentary debates the only speakers are the representatives of the parliamentary parties, motions that end in a debate are controlled by groups, as are interpellations (which can be tabled both by groups or members), since they can give rise to a debate. In addition, because each parliamentary party has a limited number of interpellations in each session, it is a responsibility of the group leaders to decide when to table an interpellation. Only questions are totally reserved to MPs (art. 185), but even here there is a limited number for each group that the leaders administer.

Clearly, deputies are so controlled by the groups that one can conclude, with López Aguilar (1988, 205), that the only scope for MPs to speak freely is in the so-called *turno por alusiones*. This is when in a debate an MP refers to another where this reference is not central to the debate. In this situation the MP who has been referred to has a right of reply without any intervention by the group.[7]

Finally, the standing orders establish that financial and personal resources are in the hands of groups, which are in charge of distributing them. The resources of each group are proportional to size. The result of all this is the weakness of the individual parliamentarian, who has little room for autonomous initiative.

Interparty Mobility

The standing orders of the Congreso regulate faction hopping in a restrictive way. An MP who wants to change his or her group must be accepted by the chief whip of the target group, and the MP can ask for a change of group only in the first five days of a parliamentary session; otherwise the deputy has to remain until the end of the session in

the *grupo mixto*. In spite of the restrictive regulation, interparty movement in the Spanish Congreso has been relatively frequent, as table 7.3 shows.

According to Ágh (chap. 8 of this volume), "migrations among the factions" are characteristic of the new democracies. The Spanish case differs from eastern Europe, and particularly from Hungary, in that the parties have always been very homogenous internally. This Spanish singularity is due, first, to the fact that from the outset, the process of democratization in Spain entailed the establishment of two main parties on the right-left spectrum and, second, to the fact that leadership competition has tended to take place more in the electoral arena than in the parliamentarian one.

At a very early stage, PSOE dominated the center-left. The center-right, however, was disputed between two groups, and it is here that faction hopping tended to predominate (Montero 1989, 505), though in fact, in the fourth and fifth legislatures there were no significant moves because the PP won the race among right-wing groups. In the constituent legislature (1977–79), there was a big move from the Popular Socialist Party (PSP)—which was in the *grupo mixto*—to PSOE, but this could be considered a normal process of integration of socialists into a single party. However, abandonment of the centrist group in the first legislature was due to a crisis in the party quite similar to that of the first Hungarian parliament as described by Ágh.

Moves to the popular group in the third legislature were produced by the addition of MPs from the Christian democratic and liberal groups that were members of the same electoral coalition in 1986 (CP). These changes took place at the end of the legislature, with the aim of rebuilding the electoral coalition. In the third legislature there were also moves to the centrist party, CDS, which at that time was being predicted as a possible pivotal party in the fourth legislature.

In conclusion, it is evident that the standing orders regulating parliamentary parties fit completely with the constitutional formula favoring the existence of a small and powerful group of parties in the Spanish democracy. The standing orders strengthen party discipline by furthering strong leadership in each group, by constraining the free activity of individual backbenchers, and by making faction moves by MPs difficult.

Table 7.3
Intergroup Mobility (*Transfugismo*) in Spanish Parliamentary Parties, 1977–1996

	Beginning of Legislature	*End of Legislature*	*Change to*
Constituent legislature, 1977–79			
Group Centrista (GC)	165	157	8 GMx
Group Socialista (GS)	105	106	
Group Soc. de Cat. (GSC)	13	17	
Group Min. Cat. (GMC)	11	10	1 GMx
Group mixto (GMx)	12	15	4 GSC, 1 GS
I legislature, 1979–82			
Group Centrista	168	150	13 GMx, 4 GCD, 1 GA, 1 GMC
Group Socialista	98	97	1 GMx
Group Soc. de Cat.	17	16	1 GA
Group Coal. Democ. (GCD)	9	12	1 GC
Group Min. Cat.	8	9	
Group Comunista	23	22	1 GMx
Group Andalucista (GA)	5	7	
Group mixto	9	24	4 GSC, 1 GS
II legislature, 1982–86			
Group Centrista	12	11	1 GP
Group Popular	106	104	3 GMx
Group mixto	10	13	
III legislature, 1986–89			
Group Socialista	184	182	2 GMx
Group Popular	73	89	2 GCDS, 3 GMX, 1 GMC
Group Min. Cat.	18	19	
Group Vasco	6	4	2 GMX
Group CDS	19	27	1 GMX
Agrupácion Dem. Crist.	21	0	15 GP, 3 GMx, 3 GCDS
Agrupácion P. Liberal	11	0	6 GP, 3 GCDS, 2 GMx
Agrupácion IU	7	6	1 GCDS
Group mixto	11	23	
IV legislature, 1989–93			
Group Popular	106	105	1 GMx
Group CDS	14	12	2 GMx
Group mixto	15	18	
V legislature, 1993–96			
Group Coal. Canaraia	5	4	1 GMx
Group mixto	5	6	

Sources: See table 7.1.

Note: See chapter appendix for key to party acronyms.

The Internal Organization of Parliamentary Parties

Party discipline is structured by the internal organization of parties and primarily by party rules and statutes. As Katz and Mair (1992, 7) have pointed out, party rules offer a fundamental and indispensable guide to the character of a given party, "affording an insight into its internal conceptions of organizational power, authority and legitimacy." For this reason, to explain how Spanish parliamentary parties are organized, we have to take into consideration both mass party and parliamentary party statutes, as well as practices and ways of proceeding.

Mass Party Statutes

Some of the rules governing how parliamentary parties function are located in the mass party statutes: they are the basic principles. First, these party statutes set up a link between the party and the parliamentary group. For example, in the case of the PP, the president of the party is at the same time the president of the group. In the case of *Izquierda Unida* (IU), the party statutes state that the president and the *portavoz*, both elected by the parliamentary group, must be ratified by the federal council of the coalition (executive committee). This is the same for the Basque group. The PSOE statutes simply state that the parliamentary group elects its own leaders and that the president of the group is a member of the federal executive committee of the party.

The statutes of the PP, IU, and PNV establish that the parliamentary groups can write their own statutes but that these must be finally approved by the mass party leadership (executive committees). In the PSOE statutes there is a rule of unity of action and vote for MPs, who can be sanctioned if they do not act in accord with the set position. Similarly, the PP states that MPs must act according to instructions by the party leadership.

A clear difference among parties relates to the financial relationship between party and MPs. In the PP the parliamentary group is autonomous when administering its resources, so that deputies receive their salary directly from the Congreso. But for socialists, communists, and Basques, it is the mass party—through a special fund in which the deputies' salaries are deposited—that decides the wage of each MP.

The PSOE statutes state that parliamentarians who abandon the party should resign as MPs. This can be understood only as a moral requirement because no party can legally force an MP to resign. On the

other hand, the PSOE accepts that members of its parliamentary group can be independents—though not socialist militants—as has happened several times. In such cases discipline has been difficult to demand, especially in the area of voting.

The Internal Statutes of the Parliamentary Parties

The general structure of parliamentary parties is stated in their internal statutes (*reglamento interno*). In each case it is specified that there is a *portavoz* of each group in the chamber who is a member of the *Junta de Portavoces.* This function is also defined in the Constitution and in the standing orders of the Congreso. The *portavoz* usually is the "chief whip"—according to the British pattern—and he or she is elected. The *portavoz* plays a very important role: it is the main representative of the group and the person who organizes and directs the whole group (Solé and Aparicio 1984, 138).

In the PP the president is different from the *portavoz.* When the PP was in opposition, the *portavoz* was the second leader of the party and substituted for the president in the council of direction (executive committee). When the PSOE was in government, the *portavoz* was also the president of the group. When the PSOE was in opposition, the president of the group was the party leader—and the leader of the opposition, as in Britain. In this case, the chief whip is a different person and is given the title of general secretary of the group. Both can act as the *portavoz* of the group, but usually the *portavoz* is the general secretary.

The PP party leaders propose the candidate to be the *portavoz;* in the PSOE, this position is elected by the group. The PSOE was homogenous and unified before the 1993 election, but since then two main factions have been competing in the parliamentary group (and in the mass party): "renovators," who are the majority, and "guerristas" (Guillespie 1992, 8–10). That is why in 1993, for the first time, PSOE MPs had to choose by secret ballot between two candidates for president of the group. And in 1994 and 1996, whenever the PSOE had to elect a new president or a general secretary, again there was an internal division in the group.

The mass party chooses the *portavoz* of the Basque group and of the Catalan minority. In the IU group there is a president, a vice president, and a *portavoz* elected by the group. Only the *portavoz* of the IU is in charge of having formal relations with other groups.

The two major parliamentary parties in the Congreso (PSOE and

PP) are organized along similar lines. Both meet in a general assembly (*pleno*) of all backbenchers who belong to the party. The PSOE general meeting takes place three times a month: that is, before each general assembly of the Congreso. The PP meet just once a month. Party leaders use these meetings to give information to backbenchers; PSOE also uses the occasion to have political debates. When the party is in government, ministers participate and inform backbenchers about their proposals.

Members of IU also meet regularly before each plenum of the Congreso to have a political debate. In the assembly of the IU group, different proposals or initiatives from MPs are taken into consideration before being tabled, and conflicts between MPs and committee coordinators are resolved.

Both the PSOE and PP are governed by an executive committee elected by the MPs. In the PSOE group, candidates to the direction committee (*comité de dirección*) can be proposed by the party's federal executive committee—which has been the usual practice—or by five members of the parliamentary group. The direction committee is responsible to the general assembly of the group, and in each session a vote of confidence in the committee must be held. The committee coordinates the activity of the whole group within the government.

The PSOE group has a second executive committee called the permanent committee (*comite permanente*). This is larger than the first one, with about 30 members, consisting of the entire direction committee and all the coordinators of commissions (i.e., the whips who are in charge of coordinating socialist MPs in each parliamentary commission). The permanent committee monitors legislative initiatives as well as the parliamentary activities of MPs.

The PSOE parliamentary group has a third committee that controls participation and voting by MPs: this is the committee on discipline. It has three members, and its president is a member of the permanent committee. The committee on discipline is helped by the whips, who give information about failings by MPs. The committee can propose sanctions that can be imposed by the direction committee.

The PP parliamentary group has just one formal executive committee: the council of direction. It is very large, consisting of leaders of the parliamentary party and others from the mass party. However, in its weekly meetings, only the main leaders of the parliamentary group meet under the presidency of the *portavoz*. When the PP was in opposition, there were meetings between the party president (who at the same time was president of all the party's parliamentary groups) and the chief

whips of the parliamentary parties of both chambers and the European Parliament, held each week to coincide with the plenum of the Congreso, to prepare party strategy. A meeting of the council of direction of each parliamentary party was held afterwards. There was a second meeting at the end of the week to consider proposals or amendments that were coming up.

The council of direction studies different legislative proposals and initiatives by PP MPs before they are tabled. It designates members of the group for the parliamentary commissions. The council also takes decisions about party discipline. The general secretary of the group, who is also a member of the council, takes care of the discipline of the group and informs the council about absences by MPs. Finally, the popular group has a "coordinator of commissions," a member of the council who coordinates and monitors the parliamentary activity in commissions by popular MPs. The "coordinator" meets regularly with the *portavoz* or representatives of the party in each parliamentary commission.

Discipline Proceedings

Each parliamentary party has procedures for dealing with MPs who do not follow party discipline. In the case of the PSOE and PP, this is regulated in their statutes. For the IU group there is only a minor reference to this question. Usually it is the executive committee of the group who penalizes MPs. The statutes refer to the kind of penalties that can be imposed on deputies, depending on what they have done. If, for example, there is a very important vote requiring a qualified majority and an MP is absent without any justification, the executive committee can impose a fine of up to 25,000 pesetas in the PSOE group or 40,000 pesetas in the PP group. While in the PSOE group the money is easy to take because MPs receive their salary through the party, in the case of the PP group, deputies have to pay the fine by themselves.

The executive committee of each group can penalize other kind of acts by MPs, such as voting contrary to party instructions. Under party statutes it is usually the mass party leaders who are charged with monitoring the behavior of MPs and, if necessary, expelling recalcitrants from the party. The executive committee of each party acts as a high court with competence to judge on the appeals of MPs against such decisions. From this viewpoint we can analyze how party discipline works in practice, taking into consideration two variables—voting, in

which we pay particular attention to levels of dissension, and substitution of MPs—examining to what degree these are due to poor relations between MPs and the party.

Dissension in voting has not been significant across the whole period. Research by Capo (1990, 99) on votes during the first four legislatures shows that there has been a general consensus among parties. In the 568 cases in which there has been a final vote on the entire legislative act (*leyes* and *decretos-leyes*), the average was 223 votes in favor, 28 against, and 14 abstentions. Moreover, there was more support for the proposed law in the case of minority governments than with majority ones; this means that UCD governments gained support from part of the opposition. It means also that we have to distinguish between UCD and PSOE governments. Before 1982, not only did every bill have to be negotiated among the different families that made up UCD, but also the government had to make deals with other parliamentary groups because it did not have an absolute majority (Capo 1990, 108). In the case of PSOE governments (the second, third, and fourth legislatures) the socialist parliamentary party provided a "rubber stamp" to government proposals (Guillespie 1989, 420). Abstentions are significant because prior notice is given of final votes, but it is difficult to link abstentionism with dissent because usually it is not made explicit.

Table 7.4 provides data on the numbers of substitutions of MPs—when an MP retires from the house midterm and is replaced by a substitute on the party list—showing a global number of 35 to 40 for each legislature. The particularly large amount in the first legislature was due to the fact that many MPs left to represent their parties in the brand-new regional parliaments that were being established. On average, three to four replacements are due to deaths in each legislature. Of the rest, only about 10% of substitutions are actually due to a crisis between the MP and the party.

In sum, from the point of view of the parliamentary party organization, we find in each group real integration among its members based on a strong direction that coordinates the group with the mass party, and, where applicable, with the government. There is also a unified representation of the whole group through the *portavoces* in the Congreso and in each parliamentary committee. In addition, in each main parliamentary group, there is a web, structured by the *portavoces,* that serves to transmit instructions to backbenchers as well as monitor them. Finally, in the Spanish case, party rules and statutes not only protect leaders by ensuring their legitimacy but also help enforce their power.

Table 7.4
Substitutions of MPs in Spanish Parliamentary Parties, 1977–1996

	C	*I*	*II*	*III*	*IV*	*V*
Group Centrista	5	9	2			
Group CDS				2	3	
Group Popular			7	9	12	6
Group Socialista	1	13	26	21	12	12
Group Soc. de Cat.	1	6				
Group Soc. Vascos		2				
Group Comunista-IU	2	4		1		
Group Min. Cat.		7	2	4	2	2
Group Vasco	1	3	2	1	3	1
Group Mixto	1	1			5	1
Group Andalucista		2				

Source: See table 7.1.

Note: C = Constituent legislature; I–V = first through fifth legislatures. See chapter appendix for key to party acronyms.

Concluding Remarks

In Spain, party discipline is very strong, to the point that we can affirm how in practice the constitutional principle of free mandate of deputies is ineffective. Spanish MPs always act according to party instructions. The reason for this is the electoral law, which places in the hands of party headquarters the capacity to decide who appears on the electoral lists. Moreover, party discipline is helped by the principal role that parties have in the parliamentary system: parliamentary groups are the main actors in Parliament.

Among the parliamentary parties, the PSOE group has the most extensive set of rules on party discipline, ensuring that it has been more cohesive and stable than any other group. There are different explanations for this: first and most important, it has been a government party (with a qualified majority) for several parliaments; second, it is a center-left party that takes party discipline seriously; and finally, it has been organized as a mass party with the highest rate of membership affiliation in Spain.

By contrast, the conservative and liberal groups have been less stable, as reflected by a high turnover of deputies. These parties are primarily electoral parties with weak organizations: a lack of professionalism among the MPs is evident. The most important cause of instability in the conservative parties was the nonexistence of a unique political or-

ganization; there have always been two competing parties with MPs moving between them. Nevertheless, since 1990 the PP has been moving in the right direction. A new leadership has strengthened its organization, and by 1996 it had become the only national center-right party and the majority party in government.

APPENDIX

Abbreviations for Parties

AIC	Agrupaciones Independientes de Canarias
AP	Alianza Popular
BNG	Bloque Nacionalista Galego
C. Can.	Coalición Canaraia
CIU	Convergencia i Unió
CD	Coalición Democrática
CDS	Centro Democrático y Social
CG	Coalición Galega
Coal. Can.	Coalición Canaria
CP	Coalición Popular
Dem. Crist.	Democracia Cristiana
EA	Eusko Alkartasuna
EE	Euskadiko Eskerra
ERC	Esquerra Republicana de Cataluña
HB	Herri Batasuna
I. Cast.	Independientes de Castellon
IU	Izquierda Unida
M. Cat.	Minoria Catalana
P. And.	Partido Andalucista
PAR	Partido Aragonés Regionalista (in 1996 part of Group Popular)
P. Arg.	Partido Aragonés
PCE	Partido Comunista de España
P. Liberal	Partido Liberal
PNV	Partido Nacionalista Vasco
PP	Partido Popular
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español
PSP	Partido Socialista Popular
Soc. de Cat.	Socialistas de Cataluña

Soc. Vasc.	Socialistas Vascos
UCD	Unión de Centro Democrático
UDC	Union Democrática de Cataluña
UN	Unión Nacional
UPC	Unión del Pueblo Canario
UPN	Unión del Pueblo Navarra (from 1992 part of Group Popular)
UV	Unión Valenciana

NOTES

1. According to articles 99 and 113 of the Spanish Constitution, the vote of confidence (investiture) and the vote of no confidence (censure motion) of the *Congreso de los Diputados* are given only to the prime minister—as president of the government—and not to the entire government. In addition, the prime minister is charged with the formation and leadership of the government as well as the coordination of its members (art. 98). The prime minister has a virtual free hand over the structure of and appointments to cabinet (Heywood 1991).

2. Senate elections are under a majority rule, which usually produces the same majorities as in the chamber.

3. Real Decreto-Ley de 18 de marzo sobre Normas Electorales 1977; Ley Orgánica 5/1985 de 19 de junio, sobre el Régimen Electoral General 1985.

4. Ley Orgánica 3/1987, de 2 de julio, sobre Financiación de los Partidos Políticos 1987.

5. The stability of a group can be also understood if we take into consideration the fact that the total number of MPs of each parliament is about 45% of the total of two parliaments before.

6. Sometimes a party helps another to form a parliamentary group by lending an MP just for its formation. This happened in 1993 and in 1996 with Partido Aragonés Regionalista (PAR) and Coalición Canaraia. Shortly thereafter, there was a faction change between both groups (see table 7.3).

7. There is another possibility for MPs to act freely from group control. This is when the cabinet provides information to the Congreso and MPs ask for complementary information.

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