



ECONOMIC CRISIS, CENTER–PERIPHERY RELATIONS, AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEM: THE CASE OF SPAIN AFTER 2008

KRYZYS GOSPODARCZY, RELACJE CENTRUM–PERYFERIA
I SYSTEM POLITYCZNY.
PRZYPADEK HISZPANII PO 2008 ROKU

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— ABSTRACT —

The interdependence between the economy and politics is particularly visible during economic crises. The subject of research is the impact of the economic crisis in Spain after 2008 on its political system. And the main aim is to answer the question: what factor had the most important impact on the functioning of the state's political system. Authors assume that it was the amendment of the Art. 135 of the state constitution. The theoretical framework of the study is the output on the relationship between the economy and politics. The empirical research was based on the analysis of changes in the economic situation in Spain after 2008, and on the analysis of the evolution of the Spanish political system. Obtained results may be useful in the context of the impact of changes in the economic situation

— ABSTRAKT —

Współzależność między gospodarką a polityką jest szczególnie widoczna podczas kryzysów gospodarczych. Przedmiotem badań, które stały się podstawą do przygotowania artykułu, jest wpływ kryzysu gospodarczego w Hiszpanii po 2008 roku na działanie jej systemu politycznego. Natomiast głównym celem badawczym jest odpowiedź na pytanie, który czynnik w największym stopniu wpłynął na funkcjonowanie badanego systemu politycznego. Autorzy zakładają, że była to nowelizacja art. 135 konstytucji państwa. Teoretyczną ramę badania stanowią opracowania dotyczące relacji między gospodarką a polityką. Badania empiryczne oparto na analizie zmian sytuacji gospodarczej Hiszpanii po 2008 roku oraz na analizie ewolucji hiszpańskiego systemu politycznego. Uzyskane wnioski mogą być przydatne w kontekście wpływu zmian spowo-

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caused by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Keywords: economic crisis; Spain; political economy; political system; center–periphery relations

dowanych pandemią SARS-CoV-2 oraz wojną w Ukrainie na sytuację gospodarczą kraju.

Słowa kluczowe: kryzys gospodarczy; Hiszpania; ekonomia polityczna; system polityczny; relacje centrum–peryferie

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important crises that have ever happened, and which can nowadays already be the subject of scientific analysis, was the economic crisis after 2008. In Europe, it was particularly visible in the South, especially in Spain. Due to the scale and dynamics of the phenomenon, its consequences were noted not only in economic indicators, but also in the functioning of the political system.

The purpose of the study is to answer the main research question: what was the most important factor that has caused so many changes in the operation of the Spanish political system after the crisis of 2008? The main research hypothesis, derived from it, is as follows: the most important factor that caused so many changes in the operation of the Spanish political system after the crisis of 2008 was the amendment of the Art. 135 of the state constitution, resulting from the economic disturbances. It was, in fact, the first breach of the principle of cooperation between the state-wide parties and regional parties in the shaping of its regulations since 1978. The amendment of Art. 135 of the Spanish Constitution, without taking into account the right of political representation of the peripheral regions to express their opinion on the subject, resulted in serious changes in the operation of several subsystems of the Spanish political system, deriving from a political compromise reached at the beginning of the democratic transformation in Spain.

To achieve the presented objective, the paper will be divided into two parts. In the first one, the economic causes and manifestations of the economic crisis after 2008 in Spain will be identified. The second part of the study will focus on changes in the functioning of the Spanish political system. The answer to two detailed research questions will be presented there:

1) was the decision to change the regulation of Art. 135 of the Spanish Constitution an intra-systemic decision, or rather was it taken under the influence of extra-systemic factors?;

2) which subsystems of the Spanish political system were particularly susceptible to changes in the context of the economic crisis after 2008?

The study covered the years 2008–2019. The period starts from the dawn of the global economic crisis, the consequences of which have had an immense impact of the functioning of the political system of Spain. The end of the period is marked by the year 2019, in which Spain held the general elections twice.

Due to the nature of the research material, several research methods will be employed: economic data analysis, the comparative method, the legal-institutional analysis method, and the decision-making method.

CAUSES AND MANIFESTATIONS OF THE POST-2008 ECONOMIC CRISIS IN SPAIN

Various aspects of the relationships between politics and the economy as manifestations of social life have been studied for a long time (Boulding, 1962; Brittan, 1975; Kindleberger, 1978; Steunenberg & Blommestein, 1994; Feng, 2003). The political and economic systems interact particularly strongly in democratic capitalist states such as Spain. The political authorities decide on the principles of functioning of democratic institutions and the political market, on the one hand, and of economic institutions and markets, on the other. The civil society elects the political authorities and it is active in the political and economic market, which would be unable to function in a free market democracy without citizens, consumers, and entrepreneurs (Scott, 2009, pp. 61–65).

The post-2008 economic crisis, which affected primarily the US and EU states, was the biggest crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. It led to an increased interest in political economics, including in how the economic situation affected political processes and how to explain the fundamental changes in the functioning of political systems (Schofield & Caballero, 2011; Schofield, Caballero, & Kselman, 2013). It is a foregone conclusion that the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, which has affected EU states very severely, will have very negative economic consequences. This makes an analysis of the impact of the previous global crisis on the functioning of the political system seem even more interesting and important.

According to comparative analyses, Spain was one of the states affected most severely by the negative effects of the economic crisis after 2008. The causes and selected aspects of the development of the economic crisis in Spain have been

addressed in the literature. However, the literature so far has focused on strictly economic problems (Suarez, 2010; Carballo-Cruz, 2011; Éltető, 2011; Gentier, 2012; Laparra & Pérez Eransus, 2012) and, consequently, the references are useful for outlining the causes and development of the economic crisis in Spain. However, the literature has not touched upon the aspect of the impact of the crisis on the functioning of the political system. Studies exist concerning only selected aspects of the impact of the crisis on the political institutions in Spain, most often in comparison to other countries (Roth, Nowak-Lehmann, & Otter, 2011; Álvarez-Díaz et al., 2015). Moreover, elements of the analysis comparing the case of Spain to two other Mediterranean states, Greece and Italy, were included in the publication of Kubin, Lorencka, and Myśliwiec (2017).

The causes of the economic crisis in Spain after 2008 can be broken down into external ones, which the Spanish authorities had no influence on, and internal ones, related to the economic policy pursued in Spain before 2008. The most important external cause was obviously the global crisis. Its causes, development and economic consequences have already been presented extensively and well in the literature (Krugman, 2009; Taylor, 2009; Roubini & Mihm, 2011; Blinder, 2014; Bernanke, Geithner, & Paulson Jr., 2019).

The second important external factor involved the flaws in the functioning of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). Another external factor, indicated as important for the economic crisis in Spain, was the increase in prices on global natural resources markets (Rahman, Sanguino Galván, & Barroso Martínez, 2017).

The most significant internal cause was the so-called speculative bubble on the real estate market. Before the 2008 crisis, the development of the construction and real estate sector was the main driver of economic growth in Spain. In 2007, the construction sector accounted for 10.5 per cent of Spain's GDP, and real estate activity for 8.5 per cent. In 2014, it was 5.2 per cent and 11.4 per cent of GDP, respectively. In 2007, the construction and real estate activity sectors accounted for 13.5 per cent of the total number of jobs, while in 2014, the relevant share was only 6.2 per cent.

This was influenced, for instance, by the decrease in the cost of credit as a consequence of Spain's entry into the euro area and the increase in demand for real estate due to demographic processes, the influx of immigrants (about 4.5 million in 1997–2007), the low ECB interest rates and the relatively cheap and easily accessible pre-crisis loans and the purchasing of second-home properties by foreign citizens (Carballo-Cruz, 2011). The increased demand for real estate

obviously resulted in increased supply and prices – in the years 1997–2007, house prices grew on average by 11.4% annually, with a cumulative price increase of 232 per cent (Cuerpo & Pontuch, 2013, p. 1). The high increase in real estate prices in Spain before 2008 and their subsequent decline after the outbreak of the crisis showed that a bubble had formed in that market and real estate had been strongly overpriced. Since 2008, prices started to fall, and much larger decreases were visible in the number of transactions (Carballo-Cruz, 2011).

Another factor that contributed to the crisis in Spain was the current account deficit. Until the outbreak of the crisis, this deficit would deepen (from about one per cent of GDP surplus in 1997 to about nine per cent of GDP deficit in 2008), and after 2008, it started to fall and kept falling until a surplus was recorded in 2014.

Table 1 presents the basic economic ratios for the period 2007–2018. In addition to Spain, to better illustrate its situation, the EU average, the four largest economies in the EU (Germany, France, UK, Italy), as well as Poland and Greece are included. The data in Table 1 show that Spain's two biggest problems during the 2008 crisis were unemployment and the rise of public debt. It is worth noting that Spain had an even more difficult situation in terms of youth unemployment (among people aged below 25).

Table 1. Selected Economic Indicators Related to Spain, the EU Average and Selected EU Member States 2007–2018

Index	EU/State	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Real GDP growth rate (% change on previous year)	EU	3.1	0.5	-4.3	2.2	1.8	-0.4	0.3	1.7	2.3	2.0	2.6	2.0
	Spain	3.8	0.9	-3.8	0.2	-0.8	-3.0	-1.4	1.4	3.8	3.0	2.9	2.4
	Germany	3.3	1.0	-5.7	4.2	3.9	0.4	0.4	2.2	1.7	2.2	2.5	1.5
	France	2.4	0.3	-2.9	1.9	2.2	0.3	0.6	1.0	1.1	1.1	2.3	1.7
	UK	2.6	-0.3	-4.2	1.9	1.5	1.5	2.1	2.6	2.4	1.9	1.9	1.3
	Italy	1.5	-1.0	-5.3	1.7	0.7	-3.0	-1.8	0.0	0.8	1.3	1.7	0.8
	Poland	7.0	4.2	2.8	3.6	5.0	1.6	1.4	3.3	3.8	3.1	4.9	5.3
	Greece	3.3	-0.3	-4.3	-5.5	-9.1	-7.3	-3.2	0.7	-0.4	-0.2	1.5	1.9
Government deficit/surplus (% of GDP)	EU	-0.9	-2.5	-6.6	-6.4	-4.6	-4.3	-3.3	-2.9	-2.4	-1.7	-1.1	-0.7
	Spain	1.9	-4.6	-11.3	-9.5	-9.7	-10.7	-7.0	-5.9	-5.2	-4.3	-3.0	-2.5
	Germany	0.3	-0.1	-3.2	-4.4	-0.9	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.9	1.2	1.2	1.9
	France	-2.6	-3.3	-7.2	-6.9	-5.2	-5.0	-4.1	-3.9	-3.6	-3.6	-2.9	-2.3
	UK	-2.7	-5.1	-10.1	-9.3	-7.5	-8.2	-5.5	-5.6	-4.6	-3.3	-2.5	-2.2
	Italy	-1.3	-2.6	-5.1	-4.2	-3.6	-2.9	-2.9	-3.0	-2.6	-2.4	-2.4	-2.2
	Poland	-1.9	-3.6	-7.3	-7.4	-4.9	-3.7	-4.2	-3.6	-2.6	-2.4	-1.5	-0.2
	Greece	-6.7	-10.2	-15.1	-11.2	-10.3	-8.9	-13.2	-3.6	-5.6	0.5	0.7	1.0

Index	EU/State	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Government conso- lidated gross debt (% of GDP)	EU	58.2	61.4	74.0	79.6	82.1	84.4	86.3	87.0	84.9	83.8	82.1	80.4
	Spain	35.8	39.7	53.3	60.5	69.9	86.3	95.8	100.7	99.3	99.2	98.6	97.6
	Germany	64.0	65.5	73.0	82.4	79.8	81.1	78.7	75.7	72.1	69.2	65.3	61.9
	France	64.5	68.8	83.0	85.3	87.8	90.6	93.4	94.9	95.6	98.0	98.3	98.1
	UK	41.5	49.4	63.3	74.6	80.1	83.2	84.2	86.2	86.9	86.8	86.2	85.7
	Italy	103.9	106.1	116.6	119.2	119.7	126.5	132.4	135.4	135.3	134.8	134.1	134.8
	Poland	44.2	46.3	49.4	53.1	54.1	53.7	55.7	50.4	51.3	54.3	50.6	48.8
	Greece	103.1	109.4	126.7	146.2	172.1	159.6	177.4	178.9	175.9	178.5	176.2	181.2
GDP per capita (% of EU in PPS)	EU	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Spain	102.6	100.6	99.5	95.1	91.7	89.9	88.8	89.2	90.1	91.0	91.8	90.8
	Germany	116.4	116.2	116.2	119.1	122.5	122.9	123.1	125	123.0	123.3	122.8	121.9
	France	107.8	106.2	107.6	107.8	107.8	106.8	108.2	106.8	105.4	104.5	103.4	103.5
	UK	112.6	110.9	108.6	109.1	106.9	108.5	109.4	109.8	109.7	107.6	106.5	105.2
	Italy	107.2	106.7	106.5	104.5	104.2	102.0	98.7	96.3	95.2	97.4	96.8	95.8
	Poland	53.1	55.4	59.2	62.4	65.0	66.7	66.8	67.3	68.4	68.2	69.0	70.5
	Greece	92.6	93.3	94.2	84.5	75.2	71.6	71.4	71.4	69.4	67.9	67.4	68.0
Unem- ploy- ment (% of active popula- tion)	EU	7.2	7.0	9.0	9.6	9.6	10.4	10.8	10.2	9.4	8.5	7.6	6.8
	Spain	8.2	11.3	17.9	19.9	21.4	24.8	26.1	24.5	22.1	19.6	17.2	15.3
	Germany	8.5	7.4	7.6	7.0	5.8	5.4	5.2	5.0	4.6	4.1	3.8	3.4
	France	8.0	7.4	9.1	9.3	9.2	9.8	10.3	10.3	10.4	10.0	9.4	9.0
	UK	5.3	5.6	7.6	7.8	8.1	7.9	7.5	6.1	5.3	4.8	4.3	4.0
	Italy	6.1	6.7	7.7	8.4	8.4	10.7	12.1	12.7	11.9	11.7	11.2	10.6
	Poland	9.6	7.1	8.1	9.7	9.7	10.1	10.3	9.0	7.5	6.2	4.9	3.9
	Greece	8.4	7.8	9.6	12.7	17.9	24.5	27.5	26.5	24.9	23.6	21.5	19.3

Source: Authors' own work based on: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tec00115/default/table?lang=en>; https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=gov_10dd_edp-t1&lang=en; https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=nama_10_pc&lang=en; https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=une_rt_a&lang=en.

As opposed to other EU states where high public debt was the biggest problem, private debt was the biggest issue in Spain (Carballo-Cruz, 2011). A consequence of the very high increase in unemployment was a change in the behaviors of households in Spain after the crisis. The value of new loans taken out by private sector entities, including households and non-financial businesses, dropped very noticeably – in 2006, credit flow was over 35 per cent of GDP and in 2012, -11 per cent of GDP. As a consequence, the consolidated value of private sector debt in Spain declined in 1995–2014. In 2008–2010, it exceeded 200 per cent of GDP; it reached its highest value in 2009 (204.2 per cent of GDP).

THE CHANGE OF THE SPANISH CONSTITUTION:
SELECTED SUBSYSTEMS OF THE SPANISH POLITICAL SYSTEM
AFTER 2008

The Spanish Constitution currently in force is the fruit of a difficult political compromise. In fact, all political groupings, both state-wide parties and regional parties which in 1977 obtained political representation in the Congress of Deputies, were involved in its adoption (BOE, 1978; Powell, 2001).

For the first 25 years, the established constitutional order was respected by all the political forces that had their representation in the Cortes Generales. The Constitution was amended only once in that period, in 1992. The amendment concerned Art. 13.2 and was a consequence of the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty.

The situation began to change seriously in 2004, when the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) took over power in the country. In fact, already the program presented before the elections to the Cortes Generales included a presentation of four areas regulated by the Constitution which the socialists wanted to debate and eventually change. However, during the 2004–2008 term of the Cortes Generales, no reform took place (Belda Pérez-Pedrero, 2008).

In the 2004–2008 term, 17 statutes of the Spanish autonomous communities were amended with the consent of the socialists in power. In addition to Andalusia, Aragon, Valencia, the Balearic Islands, and the Canary Islands, as well as Castile and León, and Castilla-La Mancha, Catalonia also requested an amendment to the statute of autonomy. The latter case aggravated the conflict between the political center and the peripheral regions, characterized by their distinct identities.

The process of further decentralization of Spain resulted in proposals to include the names of the existing autonomous communities in the text of the Constitution, as well as to transform the Upper House of the Cortes Generales into a genuine chamber of territorial representation (Chueca Rodríguez, 2005). However, until the end of the 2008 term, these demands remained exclusively in the sphere of political plans.

The situation began to develop completely differently after 2008, when the global economic crisis hit Europe with great force. Although the relevant documents were officially unavailable, some journalists (Julian, 2012, pp. 12–13) and authors (García Fernández, 2012, p. 311) report that on August 5, 2011, the then Prime Minister of Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, received a letter from

the President of the European Central Bank, Jean-Claude Trichet, and from the President of the Bank of Spain, Miguel Ángel Fernández Ordóñez. The letter obligated the Spanish Prime Minister to introduce a public finance discipline by constitutional regulation, significantly restricting the possibility of increasing the public debt. It was also supposed to introduce the principle of priority of external financial liabilities of the state towards foreign creditors over any internal liabilities, including guarantees of welfare benefits for the citizens. The authors of the letter reportedly made the redemption of the Spanish debt by the ECB conditional upon the rapid inclusion of the requested regulation in the Constitution. It is worth noting that in early 2011, the concept of the “golden rule”, guaranteeing budget stability for EU Member States, was promoted politically by Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy. However, it did not arouse enthusiasm among the heads of state, who were facing the serious consequences of the 2008 economic crisis. The only EU Member States that decided to include such solutions in their respective constitutions at that time were Germany (Bundesgesetzblatt, 2009), Spain, and Italy (Bar Cendón, 2012).

The very manner in which the procedure of reform of the Spanish Constitution was implemented in 2011 still raises many reservations among constitutional law researchers, even today. On August 23, 2011, an extraordinary session of the Congress of Deputies was held. It was then, in fact, that José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero officially put forward a proposal to amend the Spanish Constitution regarding the budgetary balance principle. He also noted that he had already obtained support for the draft from the opposition leader, Mariano Rajoy. The impressive pace of work on the initiative resulted in the presentation of a joint draft amendment to Art. 135 of the Constitution, signed by the socialists and by the People’s Party politicians three days later, on August 26, 2011 (BOCG, 2011a). It was not signed by representatives of regional parties. On August 30, the members of the Chamber passed a motion to “take it into consideration” (*toma en consideración*), which in practice means agreeing to the commencement of the relevant legislative proceedings. Of the 336 who voted, 318 voted for the commencement of the procedure, 16 against, and two abstained (DSCD, 2011a). This involved setting a deadline of only 48 hours to propose amendments to the submitted draft (BOCG, 2011b). In practice, it limited strongly the right of the other parliamentary groupings to formulate their statements of position and reservations. Only 24 amendments were eventually presented. Their authors were mainly parties representing peripheral autonomous communities: *Convergència i Unió*, *Partido Nacionalista Vasco*, *Bloque Nacionalista*

Galego, Esquerra Republicana-Izquierda Unida-Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds, and Nafarroa Bai. On September 2, 2011, all the amendments were rejected (or withdrawn earlier), while the draft itself was adopted by a majority of 316 votes, with five votes against (DSCD, 2011b). As Javier García Fernández points out, the haste to amend Art. 135 of the Spanish Constitution even led to the publication of the amendments proposed in the lower chamber of parliament in the Official Journal only on September 5, 2011 (García Fernández, 2012, p. 10; BOCG, 2011c).

A similar pace of work could be observed in the upper chamber of the Cortes Generales. On September 6, the draft was adopted by the Constitutional Committee of the Senate (DSS, 2011a), and already on the following day it was submitted to the entire Chamber for deliberation. Just like in the Congress of Deputies, after rejection of all the amendments, the draft was adopted by 233 votes, with only 3 votes against. 25 senators did not take part in the vote (DSS, 2011b).

In accordance with the provisions of Art. 167(3) of the Constitution, the adoption of the draft amendment to the Constitution by the required majority in both chambers initiated a 15-day period during which at least a tenth of the members of either chamber had the right to request a referendum on the matter. However, neither the MPs nor the senators exercised this option. Finally, on September 27, 2011, the text of the amendment that was passed was published in the official journal – *Boletín Oficial del Estado* – and entered into force (BOE, 2011).

A brief reconstruction of the process described above makes it possible to conclude that from 1975 to 2011, the impact of the external environment on the functioning of the Spanish political system had never been so significant. The process of political transformation after General Franco's death was carried out mainly through the involvement of "internal forces" (Powell, 1996).

One of the most serious consequences of the economic crisis of 2008 was the disruption of the rhythm of electoral cycles. In the 31 years between the first fully democratic elections and the year of outbreak of the crisis under examination, elections were held ten times. In the period 2011–2019, they were held as many as five times. It should be noted that until 2008, holding elections before the formal end of the term of both chambers of the Cortes Generales was a phenomenon characteristic of the Spanish political practice.

The takeover of power by the People's Party was associated with a gradual improvement of the Spanish economy and with the restoration of the four-year electoral cycle rhythm. The subsequent three elections were held in March, in 2000, 2004, and 2008. The cycle was disrupted again in 2011. Following the procedure to amend Art. 135 of the Constitution described above, a decision

was made to call an early election. It was held in November 2011, not in March 2012, as the electoral calendar would suggest.

New political groupings appeared on the Spanish political scene, and joined the electoral competition successfully already in 2015. The political representation obtained by the Podemos and Ciudadanos parties in the Congress of Deputies disrupted the traditional model of functioning of the Chamber and the alternation of power to such an extent that with the new distribution of seats, it became impossible to form the Spanish government. Such a major change in the functioning of the Spanish political system had several consequences. First of all, it contributed to maintaining destabilization of the electoral cycle rhythm. The fact that the elections to the Cortes Generales had to be called again in 2016 and that they were held twice in 2019 confirms this diagnosis. Secondly, it contributed to the successful implementation of the constructive vote of no confidence procedure provided for in Art. 113 of the Constitution (Delgado Ramos, 2019; Simón Yarza, 2019). On June 1, 2018, Pedro Sánchez succeeded in replacing Mariano Rajoy as Prime Minister, thanks to the new political balance of power in the Congress of Deputies. Thirdly, the changes that took place in the functioning of the Spanish political system under the influence of the 2008 economic crisis made it necessary to form the first coalition government in 2019. This solution had never been experienced before in the existing political system in Spain, in the 40 years since it came into being.

The political events that took place after 2008 significantly reinforced the decentralist trends in Spain. In particular, the exacerbation of relations between Madrid and Barcelona after the illegal referendum of October 1, 2017, should be mentioned. This resulted in a significant increase in the number of seats for the Catalan pro-independence parties in the Congress of Deputies. The importance of the Catalan and Basque parties was also evident after the elections held on November 11, 2019. Without their support for selected political projects, the functioning of Pedro Sánchez's minority coalition government would have been impossible.

CONCLUSIONS

The study makes it possible to verify the main hypothesis, which assumed that the most important factor that caused changes in the operation of the Spanish political system after the crisis of 2008 was the amendment of the Art. 135 of

the state constitution. The decision to amend wording of Art. 135 of the Spanish Constitution was influenced by factors external with regard to the system.

The amendment to the regulation included in Art. 135 of the Spanish Constitution in 2011 was in turn made under the influence of extrasystemic factors and meant a departure from the principle of cooperation between state-wide parties and regional parties in terms of compromise co-decision-making with regard to the text of the regulations contained in the Constitution.

The subsystems of the Spanish political system affected most strongly by the economic crisis were the following: the rhythm of electoral cycles, the party system, the stability and composition of government, and the center-periphery relations. The economic crisis of 2008 contributed to a decomposition of the party system, dominated by two state-wide parties. The rhythm of the electoral cycles was seriously disrupted. The fragmentation of the Spanish parliamentary scene, the difficulties in forming governments after elections and the successful attempt to conduct a constructive vote of no confidence procedure are all signs of the increasing instability of the cabinets formed. However, the procedure described here for the amendment of Art. 135 of the Spanish Constitution in 2011, violating the principle of cooperation between state-wide parties and regional parties, has undoubtedly been one of the most important factors exacerbating the center-periphery conflict.

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