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4

FROM POLICY-SEEKING TO OFFICE-SEEKING: THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE SPANISH SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

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INTRODUCTION

> *From being a party of militants, who in theory at least were expected to be disciplined, thoroughly committed, active, and schooled in the theory and practice of socialism, the PSOE went a long way towards an alternative electoralist model in which the role of the militant was relegated and party leaders sought direct communication with an electoral clientele by means of mass media and marketing techniques.*
>
> GILLESPIE (1989a: 300)

This chapter attempts to explain the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party's (PSOE) rapid shift from a policy-seeking party (as late as 1978) to an office-seeking party (by 1982). The PSOE emerged from the transition to democracy as a classic policy-seeking party: Its radical agenda was aimed more at party activists than at the electorate. After a loss in the 1979 general elections, the party moderated its image to enhance its electability, thus becoming more of a vote-seeking party. This strategy paid off in the 1982 elections, but the party entered government with some vestiges of a policy-seeking party. The Socialist leadership quickly eliminated these traits after the 1982 elections, and the PSOE subsequently became a largely office-seeking party. A new emphasis on economic modernization, efficient administration, and the desire to create "Things Well Done" (the PSOE campaign theme for the June 1987 elections) replaced the old concern for equality and participatory democracy (*autogestión*). The PSOE adopted

a new image, based on its technocratic-administrative capability and the charisma of its leader, Felipe González, and it rapidly shed its social democratic skin.

Several scholars (e.g., Gunther 1986; Share 1989) have tried to explain this metamorphosis, but this chapter attempts to do so using the framework of political party behavior outlined by Strøm and Müller in Chapter 1 of this volume. Their model stresses the importance of a set of internal *organizational* variables and systemic *institutional* variables when explaining political party behavior. Organizational variables include the degree to which party organizations are labor or capital intensive, the degree of intraparty democracy, the amount of control over recruitment to leadership positions, and the nature of leadership accountability. Institutional variables include the amount of public financing of political parties, the nature of electoral institutions, the manner in which governments are formed, and the ability of parties to influence policy.

I argue that these two sets of variables were important, but they were not primary causes of the PSOE's change of behavior. The Strøm–Müller model is useful because many of the organizational and institutional variables – especially the former – encouraged and facilitated the PSOE's shift to an almost exclusively office-seeking party. However, a more complete explanation of this case requires consideration of three factors that are not part of their model: First, the role of organizational leadership was crucial in Spain, just as it appears to have been accentuated in other new Southern European democracies. Second, the "transactive" or negotiated nature of the democratic transition itself entailed a set of informal norms and "rules of the game" that shaped and constrained the behavior of party elites far more than organizational or institutional variables. Third, the international context formed an important political economic backdrop against which the behavior of PSOE leaders must be analyzed. Prevailing conditions in the international political economy encouraged PSOE leaders to pursue policies that directly contradicted past positions and that encouraged a shift to the office-seeking model.

After a cursory historical overview of the PSOE, this chapter explains the metamorphosis of the party, focusing first on the internal *organizational* and *institutional* variables described in Chapter 1. The additional variables noted earlier are then considered.

THE PSOE'S AMBIGUOUS HISTORICAL LEGACY

The PSOE has been one of Spain's most important political parties for over a century, but until 1982 it had held political power only briefly.[1] The PSOE collaborated briefly with the ill-fated Primo de Rivera dictatorship in the 1920s, a decision that split the party's ranks. During the short-lived Second Republic (1931–6), the PSOE was the largest and best-organized Spanish political party, but it did not formally participate in the pact that created the new regime (Contreras 1981). The PSOE leadership was never able to heal a complex set of

ideological, tactical, and personal schisms that wracked the party. These divisions were caused by a rapid growth in PSOE membership and a dramatic surge in popular mobilization.

Faced with growing political polarization, the inability of the Republic to deliver on promised economic reforms, and the rightist government of 1934–6, some PSOE leaders adopted what Juan Linz (1978: 142–215) has called "semi-loyal" positions vis-à-vis the democratic regime, even though much of the party remained loyal to bourgeois democracy. PSOE involvement in the ill-fated Asturian revolution of 1934 split the party further, weakened the republican regime, and antagonized the right. According to one historian of the period (Juliá 1986: 231), "Union and Party, which had been unified behind the project of consolidating and upholding the Republican regime, had become divided, unable to formulate a policy, and torn between supporting the Republic and undertaking a definitive assault against it."

In 1936 the last democratic elections prior to the Spanish Civil War (1936–9) once again gave the PSOE a legislative plurality (37 percent), but the "victory" did not stem the internal disintegration of the PSOE. The party's left dominated the parliamentary party and refused to collaborate with centrist forces. The bitter tactical, ideological, and personal struggles within the PSOE turned violent and continued even after the outbreak of the Civil War.

During the thirty-six-year dictatorship of Francisco Franco, the PSOE was virtually eliminated as a political force within Spain, despite repeated efforts to regroup.[2] As a relatively open mass party, the PSOE was less able to adapt to a clandestine existence than its much smaller rival, the Spanish Communist Party (PCE). Franquist repression forced PSOE members into a party largely of exiles and turned its leaders into what Gillespie (1989a: 135) calls "men without names." Thousands of them were executed, and six consecutive PSOE Executive Committees were arrested between 1939 and 1953. In addition to the severe repression, continued internal divisions hampered a revival of the PSOE during franquism. By the early 1950s the PSOE had become a small, embittered group of political exiles whose activity was increasingly irrelevant to Spanish politics. Indeed, the only unifying theme within the exiled PSOE was its militant anticommunism, which prevented it from forging effective antifranquist alliances with forces inside Spain.

Despite the atrophy of the PSOE in exile, by the mid-1950s a number of disconnected socialist movements were emerging inside Spain, separate from or only loosely connected to the exiled leadership. The stubborn refusal of the exiled leadership to acknowledge and integrate these groups created yet another division within the PSOE between internal and exiled forces.[3] It was not until the early 1970s that the socialist forces of the interior were able to wrest control of the PSOE away from the exiled old guard, and it was not until 1974, a year before Franco's death, that the party was led by a new generation of PSOE militants from inside Spain. In that year, Felipe González, a young Sevillian, was elected general secretary of the PSOE.

For the purposes of this chapter, it is useful to divide the discussion of PSOE's evolution after González's rise to power within the PSOE into four periods. In the first, from October 1975 to June 1977, the PSOE adapted to semilegality and struggled to react to the franquist regime's various attempts at reform. In the second period, from July 1977 to March 1979, the PSOE became a loyal opposition party within the new regime, participated in the construction of the new democracy, and consolidated its position within the left. In the third period, from March 1979 to October 1982, the PSOE focused on the centralization of power within the party and the elimination of the party's left. The final period, after the PSOE assumed power in October 1982, was characterized by a dramatic reversal of key party policies and the pursuit of neoliberal political economic strategies, with continued authoritarian tendencies inside the PSOE.

EMERGING FROM CLANDESTINITY

After the death of Francisco Franco, the PSOE faced a number of important political challenges in an atmosphere of extreme uncertainty (Share 1989: Ch. 3). Political mobilization and labor unrest were on the rise, but political power remained firmly in the hands of Franco's heirs. Without the dictator, the postfranquist authoritarian leadership oscillated between reform and reaction, creating a confusing political scenario for the inexperienced PSOE. The sudden resurgence of political activity after years of repression also gave rise to numerous leftist competitors, including Enrique Tierno Galván's Popular Socialist Party and the rump old guard PSOE–Historical Sector.

The PSOE maintained a largely skeptical and hostile posture toward the internal reform attempts of the postfranquist leadership, even after Adolfo Suárez assumed the prime ministership in July 1976. The PSOE continued to press for a democratic clean break induced by pressure from below, even though the objective conditions within Spain (weak political organizations, low levels of mobilization, continued widespread support for the franquist regime, and the still intact authoritarian repressive apparatus) did not favor such an outcome. In part, the PSOE's rigid posture was caused by the failure of political reform within the franquist regime before Suárez's appointment, but in large part it reflected the crude Marxist ideology that was popular among the PSOE's young new leadership. While there had always been an active left wing in the PSOE (most notably during the later years of the Second Republic), the revolutionary rhetoric espoused by the party in the 1970s was largely superficial and was the result of special circumstances within the PSOE and within Spain.

Only Suárez's remarkable record of rapid political reform between July 1976 and June 1977 persuaded the recalcitrant PSOE leadership to support his strategy of "transactive transition" (Share 1986). Suárez was able to convince the franquist Cortes to approve a political hara kiri and then quickly obtained popular approval for a broad political reform law in a December 1976 referendum. In early 1977, Suárez prepared for general elections by legalizing most

political parties and dismantling pillars of the authoritarian political structure. His shocking decisions to legalize the Communist Party and abolish the franquist National Movement in April 1977 convinced all but the most skeptical within the PSOE that Suárez's democratic reforms were real.

The rapid pace of Suárez's democratic reform and the political situation within the PSOE could not have been more out of sync. After years of franquist repression and clandestine politics, a young, politically inexperienced leadership and a rapidly growing party membership responded to newly obtained freedoms with radical political rhetoric. The PSOE's first Party Congress inside Spain since the Civil War proclaimed the party to be "mass, Marxist, and democratic" and rejected "any attempt to accommodate capitalism, or any simple reform of the system" (PSOE 1977). The party's program advocated extensive nationalization and officially rejected the Suárez reform. Gunther (1986: 11) has argued that this radical posture reflected the weakness of the PSOE vis-à-vis an uncertain political situation in the predemocratic period. After thirty-six years of political impotence, the PSOE leadership had no way of gauging how the party would fare in competition against other socialist parties and, after April 1977, against the better-organized Communists. Given this uncertainty about electoral prospects, the PSOE publicly deemphasized elections and instead behaved more like a classic mass party, with an emphasis on mobilization and pressure from below. The PSOE's confrontational approach reflected a logical distrust of the Suárez reform and of the emerging democratic politics in general.

Nevertheless, as the PSOE turned its energy toward the June 1977 elections, thus implicitly accepting the Suárez reform, its combative rhetoric softened somewhat. The PSOE's electoral campaign, engineered and funded with support from Western European socialist parties, downplayed the party's radicalism and emphasized the figure of Felipe González. While PSOE leaders continued to project a radical party image to activists at party rallies, its electoral propaganda presented a milder social democratic image. Even the last-minute candidacy of Adolfo Suárez at the helm of the Union of the Democratic Center (UCD) could not provoke the PSOE to attack the prime minister's reform program.

BECOMING A LOYAL DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION

The June 1977 elections were a watershed in the PSOE's political trajectory. Despite its second-place finish, the PSOE's strong showing (28.5 percent of the vote and 33.7 percent of the lower house seats) gave it a moral victory.

As the young leaders consolidated their control over the party, and as it became apparent that the Suárez strategy had indeed produced a democratic regime, the PSOE's radical party platform became increasingly awkward. While as late as 1977 party leaders continued to make surprisingly radical statements on political, economic, and foreign policy matters, by 1978 González had decided that a substantial ideological overhaul was necessary.

There were two major reasons why González and the PSOE leadership sought a substantial moderation of the party ideology and platform. The first and most important reason was electoral. Public opinion specialists linked to the PSOE (Maravall 1979; Tezanos 1983) presented well-documented arguments that only through a more moderate electoral appeal could the PSOE hope to gain a majority in the legislature. Survey data consistently demonstrated that the average Spanish voter was only slightly to the left of the political center. In the 1977 and 1979 general elections the PSOE was still viewed by many voters as too radical, a weakness adeptly exploited by Suárez in both campaigns. Party leaders increasingly felt that the PSOE had to broaden its appeal to include the vast middle classes and to encompass traditionally shunned sectors of the electorate (e.g., the Church, small farmers, and entrepreneurs). José Félix Tezanos (1983: 57), the party's leading pollster, argued in 1979 as follows:

> An incorrect definition of the class nature of the PSOE that fails to take into account new social realities, or that looks down at or ignores the importance of these new social sectors, could not only lead to a dangerous isolation, preventing the achievement of an electoral majority, but could also cause serious political setbacks.

Second, PSOE leaders were genuinely concerned about threats to the consolidation of democratic rule. Since the beginning of the transition, the PSOE had reestablished itself as the major force on the Spanish left, and it had recovered a great deal of legitimacy. It had absorbed competing socialist parties and built a stronger political machine. Its general secretary was among the most charismatic leaders in the country. In short, the PSOE had been handed a huge stake in the new democracy. Its leaders increasingly harbored real fears about the fragility of democratic politics, concerns that were compounded by persistent terrorism and by the attempted coup of February 1981.

Moreover, the slow and agonizing self-destruction of Suárez's governing centrist party, UCD, created the potential for a dangerous political polarization. As early as 1979, PSOE leaders were fearing the destruction of UCD, or its turn to the right, and a resulting polarization between an anachronistic and questionably democratic neofranquist right and a radicalized PSOE left. For González and his supporters in the party leadership, this scenario was too reminiscent of the disastrous Second Republic. The types of reforms contemplated in the 1977 party platform would logically antagonize powerful sectors in Spanish society, but given the fragility of democracy, the PSOE leadership was not willing to initiate such a confrontation: the stakes were simply too high.

Finally, as noted later in this chapter, the PSOE's organization was too weak to advocate a radical democratic socialist platform: The PSOE was a minuscule party, and while it enjoyed close links with the General Confederation of Workers (UGT), the UGT was only one of several competing unions within an extremely weak trade union movement. Moreover, the PSOE leadership was completely inexperienced in government. Even if a party with such a democratic socialist platform could get elected, and even if the taking of power by such a party did not destroy the fragile democracy, the idea of initiating a transition to socialism while occupying the decrepit franquist state seemed out of the question.

The PSOE's leadership's belief that it must moderate the party program for electoral reasons, and in order to help consolidate democracy, was nicely summarized by González's statements in early 1979: "The Party has to represent the desire for social change of many social sectors that are not identified with one class, contrary to the analysis at the start of the century. Secondly, the Party has an obligation, in this historic moment, to be a source of tranquillity for society, transcending the boundaries of the Party itself. And it has this obligation because this role can be played only by the Socialist Party. And that is contradictory for a party based on change. This is the whole drama of the PSOE" (quoted in Claudín 1979: 11–13). Thus, in mid-1978 González shocked many PSOE members by suggesting publicly that the party should drop its Marxist label. The party campaign platform for the March 1979 general elections was far more moderate than the 1977 version and directly contradicted the more radical statement of party goals developed at the December 1976 twenty-seventh Congress.

DEMOCRACY OUTSIDE THE PSOE, AUTHORITARIANISM INSIDE THE PSOE

In the period between the 1977 and 1979 elections the PSOE uneasily straddled the "mass-mobilization" and "catch-all" party models (Gunther 1986: 11–13). Party elites widely interpreted the failure to defeat Suárez's centrists in the 1979 elections as proof that only through a catch-all strategy could the PSOE win future elections. The ability of UCD campaign strategists to harp on radical aspects of the PSOE platform, raising fear among voters, was certainly a factor motivating González and Deputy Party Leader Alfonso Guerra to take action in order to move the party toward a mass mobilization model.[4]

At the PSOE's Twenty-eighth Congress (May 1979), González formally attempted to remove this source of confusion by proposing an end to the Marxist definition of the party, a move that was defeated by the delegates but later approved at a Special Congress in September. While a full description of these measures is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to note that the PSOE leadership snuffed out the last serious source of internal discord at this congress (Gillespie 1989a: 354; Share 1989: Ch. 3). Some rank and file leftist opponents, loosely called *críticos,* were able to stop the leadership's plan to water down the PSOE's Marxist image and rhetoric, but the leadership won less publicized but far more important organizational and policy battles. The Congress ended in deadlock, and a Special Congress was convened several months later to resolve these issues. Felipe González, furious over the resistance of the rank and file, refused to present himself for reelection to the PSOE leadership.[5]

Faced with González's resignation, the PSOE's left opposition disintegrated and opposition members were unable to form an opposition slate to replace him. Gillespie (1989a: 347–8) notes:

> Most delegates wanted the impossible: radical resolutions without losing González as a leader. . . . There was genuine affection for him, as well as an accurate appraisal of how the party's fortunes had become identified with those of its leader. . . . The left fell victim to the strength of *felipismo*, which at this time cut across left and right. They criticized the star marketing of the *superlíder* . . . but they naively tried to challenge this without counter-organization.

Delegates to the Special Congress were then elected under a new set of party rules that implemented an indirect, strictly majoritarian, winner-take-all electoral system. The new system virtually eliminated internal opposition by filtering out minority views at each level of the indirect delegate selection process.[6] During the Congress itself, new procedures required delegations to vote in blocs. Voting during Congresses was now conducted by the heads of sixty-eight delegations, facilitating the leadership's control over the entire process. Alfonso Guerra, González's lieutenant, was now able to single-handedly control the entire Andalusian delegation, about one quarter of the total delegates. The newly elected delegates included far more PSOE professionals and far fewer workers and students (Tezanos 1983: 143).[7] In short, by centralizing power in the hands of provincial and regional PSOE organizations, the leadership became less beholden to party members on policy issues. The new party rules included strong sanctions and even expulsion for public criticism of the PSOE, and they even required party members to get permission to attend rallies or meetings not sponsored by the party (Gillespie 1989a: 346–7).

By the time of the Twenty-ninth Party Congress (October 1981), the social democratization of the party ideology and program was complete, Marxism was relegated to the role of a purely analytical tool, and there were no longer calls for nationalization of industries or *autogestión* in the workplace.

THE PSOE IN GOVERNMENT: BECOMING AN OFFICE-SEEKING PARTY

The PSOE came to power after winning an absolute majority in the October 1982 legislative elections. Its Party Program called for a typically Keynesian stimulation of the economy in order to create 800,000 new jobs, thereby reducing Spain's alarming unemployment rate (over 16 percent in 1982). While eschewing nationalization of industry, the PSOE did call for a significant redistribution of income and vastly increased social expenditures. The party advocated Spain's withdrawal from NATO and promised a referendum on the issue.

Once in power, the PSOE abandoned each of these commitments. The government almost immediately embarked on a harsh economic austerity program and instituted a severe industrial streamlining plan. By 1987 over 3 million Spaniards (over 21 percent of the labor force, over 40 percent among twenty- to twenty-four-year-olds) were unemployed, the highest rate of any developed country. The PSOE had banked on an economic recovery that, coupled with lower inflation and increased foreign and domestic investment, would create jobs, but the dramatic economic recovery never reduced unemployment to the extent expected. During the "hot spring" of 1988 and the general strike of December 1988, many sectors of Spanish society protested the government's political economic policies, and Spain experienced the highest level of mass protest and mobilization in years. As early as 1984, the government had also changed its position on NATO membership, and in 1986 the government held a referendum in which the PSOE successfully persuaded a majority of voters to approve Spain's continued membership in the Atlantic Alliance. By early 1984 one scholar was calling the PSOE "Spain's new centrist party" (Serfaty 1984: 492).

Despite its blatant abandonment of the 1982 electoral pledges, the PSOE continued to chalk up political victories. The party scored its most stunning victory in the March 1986 NATO referendum, despite the fact that a substantial and remarkably stable majority of Spanish voters supported the withdrawal from NATO up until the day of the referendum (Gunther 1986: 25). The PSOE won a second absolute majority in the June 1986 general elections, and, though weakened somewhat, continued its political hegemony in the June 1987 municipal, regional, and European Parliament elections. The party barely retained its majority in the October 1989 general elections, but it still remained far and away the largest party in the Spanish parliament. Only after a long series of corruption scandals in the early 1990s was the continuation of the PSOE government called into question, but the party was able to hold power until 1996.

EXPLAINING THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE PSOE

INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

The behavior of party leadership is constrained by party organization. In order to carry out party goals, leaders need to gather information about the electorate, mobilize supporters in campaigns, and implement party policy if elected to office. Many traditional labor-intensive parties have given way to modern capital-intensive political parties (Strøm 1990: 575), and this is especially true of southern European socialist parties over the last two decades (Pridham 1990: 116). Capital-intensive parties are more able to depend on high-tech media campaigns and highly paid professionals in order to lure voters. They are far less dependent on their mass memberships to spread the word during campaigns and are less beholden to amateurs. Capital-intensive parties are thus less likely

than labor-intensive ones to be constrained by policy preferences of their membership. They are also far more likely to renege on promises to party activists after elections, since they can more easily afford the cost, in angry or disillusioned cadres, than labor-intensive parties.

Since 1975 the PSOE has become the increasingly capital-intensive party described by Strøm and Müller. To begin with, the party has never had a sizable membership. Party membership did not even reach 75,000 until 1936 (at a time when the PSOE won 16 percent of the votes). Membership during the long Franco dictatorship never totaled more than several thousand. With the transition to democracy the PSOE experienced a rapid growth in party membership, peaking at about 215,000 in 1988.[8] Despite the euphoria of the transition and the electoral success of the PSOE in 1982, its membership figures were below those of socialist parties in smaller European countries like Austria or Belgium.[9] According to the PSOE's own data, the party had a smaller voter-to-member ratio than any of its European socialist counterparts (Del Castillo 1989: 186). All contemporary Spanish political parties have notoriously small memberships, in large part due to forty years of authoritarian rule, but by the 1980s the PSOE had fewer members and a lower member-to-voter ratio than the conservative opposition party, the Popular Alliance.

Not only was the PSOE not beholden to party activists, but in the early 1980s over half of its members were paid party professionals (López Guerra 1984: 132). By 1988, a staggering 70 percent of PSOE Congress delegates held elective office or posts in government administration (Padgett and Paterson 1990: 103). The tiny membership of the PSOE, and the fact that much of that membership depended directly on the party leadership for their livelihoods, gave the leadership an unusual amount of insulation from its rank and file. These factors made it highly unlikely that the membership would take the PSOE leadership to task for straying from official party policy once in office.

A party's dependence on amateurs or professionals is determined in part by the mix of policy influence benefits versus office benefits (spoils) a party can deliver since "[t]he greater the proportion of office to policy influence benefits, the larger the ratio of professionals to amateurs" (Strøm 1990: 756). This relationship is nicely illustrated in the case of the PSOE after 1982. On the one hand, as described earlier, the PSOE rank and file were unwilling and/or unable to influence many of the policies taken by the new Socialist government, even when these policies openly contradicted official party policy. On the other hand, the new PSOE administration represented the first genuine opportunity for broad administrative turnover in forty years. While in opposition, the PSOE had criticized the *patrimonialismo* of UCD governments, and it pledged in 1982 to make only 4,000 political appointments. Once in office, the PSOE abandoned this pledge and made about 25,000 appointments between 1984 and 1987 alone (Gillespie 1990: 132). What the PSOE was unwilling to deliver to its supporters in policy influence benefits it more than compensated for with the spoils of office, leading one observer to lament the "hemorrhage of cadres

destined for public office" and to note that the PSOE "lacks sufficient membership or cadres to continue as a socially rooted party, especially after thousands of its supporters were recruited by the state apparatus" (*El País*, December 10, 1984: 10). The growing influence of party professionals and the decreasing dependence of the PSOE on party volunteers to win elections in 1986 and 1992 helped the party to ignore campaign pledges, internal discord, and other forms of pressure from below.

Secondly, Strøm (1990: 577) argues that "[T]he more policy decisions are decentralized, the more policy oriented the party becomes at the expense of office and vote seeking." As noted earlier, from the party's reemergence in the mid-1970s to its electoral success in 1982, the PSOE's organizational structures became more centralized, majoritarian, and authoritarian. As López Guerra (1984: 138) notes, the party's electoral success after 1982 was in large part a reflection of the fact that it alone remained a unified and coherent party.

Socialist leaders' views of intraparty democracy were strongly influenced by both distant events and recent history. Some analysts (Linz 1978: 142–215) have argued that the PSOE's internal discord was a contributing factor in the breakdown of Spanish democracy during the Second Republic. Many PSOE leaders learned the historical lesson that internal ideological and tactical bickering during the Republic had helped sabotage the regime. More recent history seemed to confirm this lesson. The spectacular collapses of the UCD and the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), the two parties that flanked the PSOE in the Spanish party system, were both directly caused by internal discord. The leadership of the PSOE had solid historical reasons to desire a strict limit on party democracy and dissent.

Despite the fact that the "new" PSOE was born in 1974 out of an open act of rebellion by the faction led by Felipe González and Alfonso Guerra, the two soon implemented strong measures to restrict intraparty democracy. In short, most students of the Spanish socialists see 1979 as a watershed: "It saw the consolidation of the personal authority of Felipe González in the party, as well as decisive moves to transform the PSOE from being a party of militants into an electoral party" (Gillespie 1989a: 337). Strengthened by new party rules, the leadership began to intimidate internal critics by removing them from electoral lists (or demoting them) and by applying tough party sanctions. These rule changes were so effective in preventing a repeat of the 28th Congress turmoil that observers at the next two party congresses criticized the eerie unanimity and lack of debate, comparing the atmosphere with that of the franquist and Soviet legislatures.

During the 1980s there emerged serious concern about the lack of party democracy, even by those who supported the leadership on most policy issues. A new set of party rules adopted in 1984 officially tolerated "currents" within the party but seriously proscribed all organizational attributes. The leadership was aware that its effort to unify the party and avoid internal fragmentation seriously threatened party democracy, and it consequently called for a renewed

internal debate on a wide range of issues. However, after crushing most internal dissent and breaking the back of its major opposition during the NATO controversy, the leadership's new concern for party democracy appeared to many as both belated and somewhat hollow.[10] Only after the PSOE's defeat in the 1996 elections did significant internal party reform take place.

The PSOE's leadership recruitment policy increasingly gravitated away from the promotion of activists, facilitating the overall shift toward office-seeking behavior. Since many of the most loyal party members found themselves in the internal party opposition (the party left), and since this opposition was defeated in 1979, the party leadership has tapped a number of individuals who lacked much history of party militancy or even affiliation. The PSOE absorbed members and integrated many leaders from the plethora of leftist parties that were weeded out during the first two general elections, further minimizing the importance of activist loyalty. After 1982 the PSOE frequently chose non-PSOE persons and technocrats to fill important government posts.[11]

Thus, organizational features are important in explaining the PSOE's evolution from a policy-seeking party to an office-seeking one. The PSOE was a small party with few activists to constrain party leadership. Its internal political structures were increasingly authoritarian (at least until the late 1980s). The PSOE became a highly capital-intensive party. Office benefits clearly outweighed policy benefits since stated policy objectives were consistently ignored or contradicted (the NATO about-face and the reversal of political economic policies are the best examples). With a permeable leadership structure and no policy content, the party became little more than a vehicle for careerism and personal advancement. In the words of one expert (Gillespie 1989b: 67), "the party gained a new image of middle-class careerism, not exempt from 'yuppie' insinuations. Socialist designs seemed to some to have been replaced by designer socialism." The spectacular series of corruption scandals that plagued the PSOE in the 1990s is perhaps best understood in this context.

INSTITUTIONAL VARIABLES

I now consider four sets of institutional variables that may help explain party behavior: public financing of parties, electoral institutions, legislative institutions, and government institutions.

Even before the first democratic elections in Spain, political parties were heavily dependent on public finance and public campaign subsidies.[12] In terms of electoral financing, Spanish law provides for compensation of parties per vote won only in districts in which the party obtained at least one seat. Parties get an additional subsidy per seat obtained in the legislature. In short, Spanish law favors successful parties and penalizes marginal ones. The discrimination against extraparliamentary parties is enhanced further by the fact that Spain's lower house electoral law (proportional representation using the D'Hondt allocation method) already favors large parties. The weakness of most Spanish political

parties and the fact that, in comparative perspective, Spanish campaigns tend to be among the most costly increase the importance of the discriminatory nature of Spanish campaign financing laws.

Spanish law also provides for the public funding of the normal operating expenses of political parties. The criterion for allocating these funds is similar to those employed for campaign financing. However, rather than fixing an amount of compensation per vote (pegged to inflation) or seat, acting governments establish levels of compensation in their annual budgets. These provisions thus not only discriminate against extraparliamentary and smaller parliamentary parties, they also give the governing party the power to increase its own spoils.

Since the first elections in 1977, most major political parties have become heavily dependent on the state for both their campaign and day-to-day financing, and this is especially the case for the PSOE. Del Castillo (1989: 189) reports that 92 percent of PSOE revenue obtained from 1981 to 1984 came from state subsidies. Membership dues contributed only 3 percent of the total, and this figure consisted mostly of the mandatory 10 percent contribution from PSOE employees' salaries. The economic importance of the PSOE membership has therefore been minimal. Trade union financial support, so crucial to parties of the left in many countries, is negligible in Spain, where unions suffer the same organizational and economic weaknesses as political parties (Del Castillo 1989: 190). Del Castillo (1989: 195) concluded that "The group which has been receiving the greatest amount of state support due to its excellent electoral results, PSOE, has been the least successful in obtaining economic resources from its members and sympathetic social sectors."

Other institutional aspects of the Spanish political system have favored office-seeking behavior by the PSOE. From 1982 to 1989, the presence of strong majority governments and the absence to date of governing coalitions raised the value of both winning votes and holding office. Spain's legislative institutions follow the Westminster model, which gives parties a strong incentive to occupy government. Indeed, it is fair to say that for the first decade of PSOE government, opposition parties in the Spanish system have not been able to influence government policy or obtain government spoils.[13] Gillespie (1990: 133) argues that "a 'winner-takes-all' attitude has prevailed among the Socialist leaders, and the prestige of the Cortes has suffered as a result." The PSOE leadership also centralized its power by altering the prevailing pattern of legislative–executive relations. Using strict party discipline to centralize control over legislative activity in the hands of the cabinet (and especially in the hands of Deputy Prime Minister Guerra), the PSOE government effectively abandoned the consociational model of decision making that had characterized the five years of weak and fragmented UCD government. As a result, during the first four years of PSOE government, the percentage of laws resulting from parliamentary initiative, including PSOE backbenchers, plummeted.[14] Due in large part to the PSOE's imposition of tight party discipline and strong centralized leadership, the Spanish Cortes – like Parliament in the United Kingdom – has been

widely assailed as a mere rubber stamp and debate forum (Capo Giol, García Cotarelo, López Garrido, and Subirats 1990: 93–130).

Greater electoral competitiveness (and greater electoral uncertainty) encourages parties to value votes over office-holding. From the PSOE's point of view, Spain's party system between 1982 and 1993 was not highly competitive, despite the fact that the PSOE's electoral strength steadily diminished after 1982 (see Table 4.1). The 1982 electoral results were an unexpected windfall for the PSOE. Not only did the party win a large absolute majority in parliament (57.7 percent of lower house seats and a plurality of votes in forty-one of fifty-two provinces), followed by equally impressive victories at the local level in 1983, but the PSOE's two major competitors (the centrist UCD and the communist PCE) were virtually destroyed in the election. The governing UCD declined from 168 to 12 seats and did not win a single constituency, while the PCE dropped from 23 seats to only 4. Moreover, both parties further self-destructed after their respective electoral debacles, with the UCD disappearing altogether and the PCE splitting in two. After the 1982 elections the only serious parliamentary opposition was the conservative Popular Alliance (30 percent of the seats), a party also in turmoil that, according to all electoral analyses, was simply too far right to win a parliamentary majority.

After the June 1986 elections, the situation was roughly the same. The PSOE continued to have a parliamentary majority, though slightly reduced, and there was still no serious competition to the left or right. The renaissance of the center under Adolfo Suárez was remarkable, but his new party, Centro Democrático y Social (CDS), captured only 5 percent of the seats, and the Popular Alliance still controlled only 30 percent. While the PSOE came close to losing its majority in the October 1989 elections, the opposition remained equally fragmented (thanks in part to the steady success of a plethora of regional parties), and the PSOE retained its political dominance. Only with the electoral setback of June 1993 was the minority PSOE government obliged to compromise with parties of the opposition (mainly the Catalan nationalists).

Ironically, the major consequence of the destruction of the PCE and the UCD was to provide the PSOE with an electorally cost-free opportunity to occupy center ground in the political system. The PSOE was free to pursue neoliberal economic policies without fearing punishment by a Communist left. The party was confident that, barring the unlikely rebirth of the center, it could replenish the small number of lost votes on the left with the mass of party-less voters in the center. The destruction of a powerful centrist opposition, the crumbling of the PCE, the repeated failure of new political forces to take their place, and the inability of the Popular Alliance to take advantage of the PSOE's electoral decline have given the PSOE over a decade of relative electoral comfort. Indeed, the steady decline of votes for the PSOE has had little if any impact on party policy or electoral strategy.

Table 4.1. *Congress of Deputies seats won in Spanish general elections, 1977–1996*

	1977	1979	1982	1986	1989	1993	1996
AP/CP/PP	16	9	106	105	106	141	157
UCD/CDS	166	168	12	19	14	0	—
PSOE	118	121	202	184	176	159	140
PCE/IU	20	23	4	7	17	18	21
CIU	2	8	12	18	18	17	16
PNV	2	7	8	6	5	5	5
Others		14	4	11	14	10	11

Source: Anuario El Pais (various years) and *El Pais Internacional.*

THE ROLE OF THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that internal organizational and institutional variables were important in explaining the PSOE's rapid shift toward office-seeking party behavior. However, three other factors are necessary to explain this outcome: the role of the transition to democracy, the international context, and leadership.

The PSOE's metamorphosis occurred within the context of the transition to democracy. As I have argued elsewhere (Share 1986, 1987: 525–48), the transition was based on intraelite negotiation in which party masses were utterly ignored. As Pridham (1990: 116) points out, "In Spain, the parties have certainly tended to develop far more as institutional than as social actors, partly because of historical patterns, also because their élites devoted more attention to the first role in managing the transition and that seems to have had some effects on later party development." Opposition party leaders negotiated terms of the transition with the outgoing authoritarian leaders. This arrangement entailed a number of dilemmas and contradictions, most notably the agreement by the opposition parties to allow (at least initially) the authoritarian leadership to control the pace and extent of reform. This *consensus model* institutionalized elite behavior in all parties that downplayed internal democracy, mass membership, or policy considerations. Like all Spanish political parties, the PSOE therefore "renounced the goals of mobilizing and revitalizing civil society, accepting 'provisional democracy' rather than risking destabilization" (Caciagli 1986: 210). According to Gunther, Sani, and Shabad (1988: 117):

> A . . . crucial feature of the politics of consensus was that negotiations took place in private, and not in public arenas. Privacy shields party representatives from the scrutiny of their respective supporters and electoral clienteles, and thus facilitates the making of concessions central to compromise agreements. Deliberations in public forums provide incentives toward dem-

agogic posturing and reduce the willingness of political elites to make embarrassing concessions.

Despite some real sacrifices, the PSOE leadership viewed transactive democratization as a complete success. The party emerged from the transition process as one of the two largest vote getters, easily defeating its rivals on the left. Its strong showings in 1977 and 1979 and its electoral victory in 1982 were evidence that the negotiated transition had paid off for the PSOE more than for any other party: The UCD, the other great beneficiary of the transition, had disintegrated, while the PCE was in disarray and the Popular Alliance was saddled with its connection to the franquist regime. The success of the Spanish transition model for the PSOE contrasted markedly with the party's experience during the ill-fated Second Republic. Internal division and ideological polarization had been replaced with an almost haunting intramural unity and an ideological homogeneity. Instead of competing leaders battling for party power, there was now a single, unassailable socialist leader. Instead of a party of activists with links to trade unions and mass movements, the party was now made up mostly of professionals and paid staff. Instead of a party platform aimed at fundamental change of the system, the PSOE now had a vague ideology aimed mostly at integrating Spain into European capitalism. Instead of forty years in political exile, the PSOE enjoyed the spoils of power only five years after the first democratic elections in 1977. Viewed in this context, many PSOE leaders were more than willing to abandon traditional policies and guide the party toward an office-seeking posture.

This logic became even more pronounced after the failed coup of February 1981. If before that date PSOE references to the need to preserve democracy contained a large element of rhetoric, after the coup attempt few in the party doubted the need for political moderation and internal party discipline. The coup was widely interpreted as a reaction to the internal discord and resulting powerlessness of the beleaguered UCD government, and PSOE leaders at the time took note.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The international context of the PSOE's metamorphosis is also crucial. Felipe González and his Seville faction gained control of the party in 1974, only a year after the Pinochet coup in Chile and the same year as the Portuguese Revolution. These events were followed closely by Spanish socialists, and interviews with PSOE leaders made it clear that they formed important reference points for many party elites.[15] Both experiences seemed to point to the dangers of premature mass mobilization and the futility of implementing political economic policies that contradicted prevailing international trends.

On a global level, the late 1970s and early 1980s was a time of contraction in the international capitalist political economy. Implementation of a policy of

job creation through government spending, as called for in PSOE platforms as late as 1982, would require bucking the internal trend of fiscal austerity (Merkel 1989: 25). It is important to remember that the context within which the PSOE operated was "that of a relatively isolated European country democratizing late, during a period of economic downturn, and immediately being faced with a need for expeditious 'modernization' if it were to do well in a more integrated Europe where most of its partners were more developed" (Gillespie 1989b: 62). On a regional level, the PSOE leadership watched with horror as the French Socialist Party (PS) tried unsuccessfully to implement just such a policy (under far more favorable conditions). The PS paid a heavy price for its inability to contravene trends in the international capitalist political economy. In short, the international climate made commitment to policy change appear futile.

Finally, it is worth noting that the PSOE received important financial and technical support from its German and Swedish counterparts (Del Castillo 1989: 180). Such influential figures as Willy Brandt were strongly opposed to the radical party platform and incendiary rhetoric of the PSOE's Twenty-seventh Congress in late 1976 (De la Cierva 1983: 250–1). These connections enhanced the power of the central party leadership and encouraged PSOE leaders to abandon their more radical policy orientations (Gillespie and Gallagher 1989: 178).

LEADERSHIP AS A CRUCIAL VARIABLE

While the organizational variables discussed earlier help explain why the PSOE leadership was able to behave with few intramural constraints, they fail to take into consideration the specific nature of political leadership. As I have argued elsewhere (Share 1986), the Spanish transition to democracy enhanced the role of party leaders while diminishing the importance of party activists. Indeed, a common outcome of Southern European transitions to democracy has been the enhanced role of political leaders. According to Gianfranco Pasquino (1990: 42), "party leaders enjoy an unusual amount of political visibility, strategic flexibility, and tactical discretion in the phases both of transition and [of] consolidation." Important conditions of the transition and whole sections of the Spanish constitution were hammered out between political elites, with little or no consultation from party members.

Within the PSOE, authoritarian political structures helped González retain his hegemony within the party, but the absence of charismatic contenders for power within the PSOE was equally important. The importance of personal charisma at a national level, so crucial in a new democracy that follows a long period of authoritarian rule, worked within political parties as well. González's ability to defeat the PSOE old guard in 1974 gave his image within the PSOE almost mythical proportions (Calvo Hernando 1987; Chamorro 1980). His daring confrontation with the PSOE left in 1979 only served to enhance this image. Even his ability to finesse what were essentially complete policy reversals

gained him respect both within and outside the party. During the Thirtieth Congress (December 1984), González once again drew on his popularity within the party to gain acceptance for the NATO policy reversal, despite strong opposition within the party. In the words of one internal PSOE critic, at key points González convinced party members and voters that the choice was between "Felipe or chaos."

González's youthful image, disarming sense of humor, and ability to relate to common folk – his ability to turn on his Andalusian accent and charm was remarkable – were immensely important in weakening potential critics. González was also fortunate to have a loyal and highly skilled number two man, Alfonso Guerra, to deflect much criticism. Guerra was widely perceived as doing much of the dirty work, especially in maintaining party discipline.

However, González's good fortune to have presided over a period of stunning political successes was most important in bolstering his charisma and creating a myth of an invincible *Felipismo*. After decades of political stagnation, González took hold of the PSOE in 1974 and quickly guided it through a difficult transition and a short period of political opposition before leading the party to over ten years in office. During that time Spain became a member of the European Community, and its economy boomed despite lingering problems with unemployment.

González's adaptability as a leader added to the durability of his image, which evolved rather quickly from that of a fiery leftist orator in the mid-1970s to a sage and somewhat aloof head of government in the 1990s. Ironically, questions about experience and maturity that long haunted the PSOE plagued opposition leaders once the PSOE was in government. The historical figures of the opposition (Suárez, Fraga Iribarne, Carrillo) faded away, leaving González as the only national leader with experience and a record. His increasing interest and participation in international affairs helped insulate him from the seemingly unending series of corruption scandals that rocked the party during the 1980s and early 1990s. By 1994 these political disasters had badly eroded the popularity of the governing PSOE, but polls showed the González's image fared somewhat better than that of his party. Even after the PSOE lost power in 1996, González continued to be rated as Spain's most popular politician.

In short, González built a charismatic image that has facilitated his iron control over the PSOE and greatly facilitated the shift from policy-seeking to office-seeking behavior. According to Gillespie (1989a: 299), "[i]f the party that formed a government in 1982, not long after celebrating its centenary, was recognizable to outsiders as that which had renovated itself a decade earlier, this was mainly because the image of the party leader had become synonymous with the party initials." His image translated directly into political capital that was expended in crucial situations, such as the party crisis of 1979 or the NATO referendum of 1986.

The PSOE's dependence on the leadership of González was part of a general trend in Southern European socialism toward increased personalization of party

leadership. Padgett and Paterson (1990: 102) observe that "[T]his historic dichotomy of strong leadership/pliant membership in northern Europe and weak leadership/assertive factionalized membership in southern Europe has largely been reversed in the 1980s." Gillespie and Gallagher (1989: 184) note that "for southern Europe as a whole, the years 1983–1985 represented a period of maximum socialist conformity around personalist leadership." This trend is in large part explained by the enhanced role of political elites in transitions to democracy throughout the region.[16]

CONCLUSION

A number of variables explain the PSOE's rapid and dramatic shift from a policy-oriented party to an office-seeking party. Foremost among them was the willingness of the PSOE leadership to accept the rules of political compromise inherent in Spanish democratization. Of secondary but still crucial importance was the ability of the leadership to impose such a compromise on a rapidly growing and undisciplined party membership during the period 1977–9. Organizational and institutional variables were clearly important in the PSOE's transformation, but they are best viewed as indirect environmental factors, not as direct causes. Indeed, the organizational and institutional contexts within which the change occurred were very much the conscious creation of party elites, who sought to create political institutions and intraparty organizational structures that would facilitate concrete political outcomes. The electoral system and party finance laws, for example, were designed to favor a majoritarian system of government. Likewise, PSOE elites were clearly aware of the need to centralize authority and create discipline within the party in order to assume the role of a moderate catch-all political force capable of governing and capable of integrating Spain into the Western European political economy. Gunther et al. (1988: 395) conclude that

> the behavior of political elites was by far the most important factor in the emergence of the new party system. Electoral and party financing laws were the product of conscious deliberations and negotiations among party leaders. Elites were the driving force behind the creation or expansion of party organizational infrastructures. Their electoral strategies determined the ideological stance, and overall image they would present to the voters. Moreover, in the role of electoral strategists political elites determined how organizational resources would be deployed.

Once established by political elites, intraparty organizational and institutional variables clearly help to explain the PSOE's continued office-seeking behavior, even if they were not the primary causes of it. The PSOE's weak membership, centralized leadership, and permeable recruitment structures greatly facilitated the shift to more office-seeking behavior. The PSOE's ability

to procure state funds, the electoral system, the noncompetitive party system, and the lack of opposition party access to spoils also encouraged office-seeking behavior.

In addition to the role of leadership, the nature of the transition, and intraparty organization and institutional variables, the international context formed an important backdrop for the PSOE's evolution. Implementing the PSOE's radical party platform would have entailed bucking prevailing international trends. Only a policy-oriented party with broad popular support and a strong organizational base could have attempted such a confrontational strategy, and even then the odds for success would have been low. The international context thus created a strong incentive for party leaders to abandon official party policy, to deemphasize intramural democracy, and to direct party policy toward office holding and away from original policy objectives.

NOTES

1. The best historical overview of the PSOE in English, with a telling title, is Gillespie (1989a). Some other fine works include Padilla Bolívar (1977), de la Cierva (1983), and Moral Sandoval (1979).
2. On the PSOE during the franquist regime, see Preston (1986).
3. An overview of the divisions within PSOE during the late franquist regime is Caro (1980).
4. As Gunther (1986) and others have noted, it is unclear whether González was originally predisposed to a strategy of mass mobilization. Some view his radical rhetoric of the 1974–7 period as purely opportunistic. Others argue that González underwent a genuine ideological and tactical conversion due in part to the evolution of political events between 1977 and 1979.
5. González complained that Spain "cannot wait ten years for the Party to mature. The Party cannot afford the luxury of immaturity." Quoted in Claudín (1979: 8).
6. For a full description of these rule changes, see Nash (1983: 46–7). She estimates that despite the support of about 40 percent of the PSOE membership, the left opposition received only about 10 percent of the delegates to the Special Congress.
7. There were widespread reports that the PSOE leadership urged only González supporters to pay their dues and later excluded all those who failed to do so from the delegate selection process. It has also been alleged that the German Social Democratic Party threatened to withold financial aid if González was not re-elected to the party leadership. See De la Cierva (1983: 263).
8. The figure was quoted by PSOE Secretary of Organization Txiki Benegas in *Cambio 16* (January 18, 1988: 23). The number is almost certainly too high. Del Castillo (1989: 187) estimates the PSOE membership at 160,000 in 1985.
9. Useful data on Spanish party membership in comparative perspective can be found in *El País* (October 14, 1988: 18). See also Caciagli (1986: 224).
10. In 1989 the Spanish socialists officially initiated a working group within the PSOE, called "Program 2000," to begin such a discussion of a long-term political vision. The fact that the group was dominated by the party leadership and completely excluded all members of the PSOE left did not augur well for the enterprise. See *El País* International Edition (March 5, 1990: 12–13). A key author of the document, Manuel Escudero, admitted that past PSOE governments have "paid too much attention to only one school of experts, the monetarists." Escudero argued that the party must take on environmental issues and must reach out to "environmentalists, feminists, Christians and intellectuals." See Guerra et al. (1986: 18). These bold announcements coincided with the party's decision to dissolve "Democratic Socialism," a dissident party faction, and to expel its leader, Ricardo García Damborenea.
11. Examples abound, but the most prominent case was the appointment of Francisco Fernández Ordoñez as foreign minister in July 1985. Fernández Ordoñez had been a UCD cabinet minister, and he replaced Fernando Morán, a party loyalist widely identified with the PSOE left.
12. On Spanish financing of political parties, see Del Castillo (1989: 179–99). The following discussion draws heavily on that excellent work.
13. This is true only at the national level, since opposition parties in Spain are able to wield considerable influence and enjoy spoils of office though regional and local government. After the June 1993 elections the PSOE became especially responsive to and dependent on the Catalan nationalists.
14. Between 1979 and 1982, 13.4 percent of laws were initiated by parliament, compared with only 6.4 percent between 1982 and 1986. See Capo Giol et al. (1990: 111).
15. Interviews with PSOE elites were conducted by me in 1982 as part of my research for *Dilemmas of Social Democracy: The Socialist Workers Party in the 1980s*.
16. For an excellent overview see Higley and Gunther (1992).

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