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Abstract

Parliamentary elections to the Basque Autonomous Community have a stable multi-party system that regularly produces long-lived minority and coalition governments. More amazing still, this stable party system arises in the context of a complex social and political setting in which the society cleaves along at least two lines – left-right ideology and nationalism – and in which people have strong identities tied to the Basque language and culture. This paper analyzes voting behavior in parliamentary elections in this region to understand how the left-right ideology, nationalism, and identity sustain this party system. We extend the conventional spatial voting model to incorporate identity issues. Our empirical analysis shows that left-right ideology, nationalism (or regional autonomy) and identity strongly predict vote choice. Interestingly, the analysis suggests that identity politics both polarizes voting and sustains a stable multi-party system.

Keywords: Basque Elections; Multi-Party Elections; Coalition Governments; Positional Issues; Valence Issues; Identity Groups.

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1 Why Basque Parliamentary Elections

The Basque region of Spain holds a distinct fascination. It boasts an ancient language with mysterious roots, one of the earliest recorded representative assemblies in Europe, and a long history of occupations and resistance.¹ Today, this region of just over 2 million people has become a model for independent regional government in Europe. The Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) has emerged as one of the most economically successful regions of Spain with a relatively stable political system. The BAC is closely eyed by regions of other countries where local political leaders seek either greater autonomy or even independence.²

For Political Science, Basque Parliamentary elections present an important, puzzling case. Basque regional elections exhibit a highly stable political alignment in a context in which one would expect instability. Basque regional elections are an excellent, clear case of multi-party politics in a multi-dimensional setting in a relatively young democracy. Typically three to four main parties divide 90 percent of the votes and seats, and no party has ever won a majority of seats in the Eusko Legebiltzarra, the regional parliament. A number of smaller parties often play a pivotal role in determining which coalition governments can form. Further the parties split across multiple issues that cannot be boiled down to a single left-right or conservative-socialist orientation. The electorate in the Basque country divides along at least two dimensions—a traditional Left-Right dimension, common in most European democracies, and a Nationalist dimension, ranging from complete incorporation into Spain to complete independence of the region from Spain (Díez Medrano, 1995).³ And, no party can be clearly identified as centrist, taking moderate positions on all of the major issues facing the government and acting as a centripetal force (Cox, 1990) This setting would seem ripe

¹As pointed out by Bisin and Verdier (2000), Basque, Catalans, Corsicans and Irish Catholics, among others, have all remained attached to their language and cultural traits over time.

²The political conflict itself has been economically costly (Abadie and Gardeazabal, 2003), so resolving the issue of autonomy and independence likely will have further benefits.

³Martínez-Herrera (2002) study the effects of political decentralization on citizen identification with their region.

for political instability, with shifting numbers and configurations of political parties and shifting political coalitions from one government to the next. There is, however, a remarkable stability. One party, the EAJ-PNV, has been the governing party from all but three years of the forty year duration of the regional government, and the political alignments of the parties have shifted little if at all since the emergence of democracy in the 1970s.

The primary goal of this paper is to describe the electoral politics in the BAC and, in doing so, to offer an account for why there is so much stability in regional electoral politics. Valence issues, such as the economy, and demographic and cultural features of the electorate also matter in vote choice, but the Left-Right and Nationalist dimensions cleanly capture the main features of the party system in the Basque region and most of the voting behavior. Other accounts of the regions politics, such as [Bourne \(2010\)](#), describe the difficult and complex political situation that nationalist parties are in.

An unusual aspect of the electoral and political system is the role of language. The Basque language, Euskera, is often freighted with nationalist sentiments, especially because both the Spanish and French governments outlawed the language at various times over the past 80 years. To give an idea of the magnitude of language politics in the region, in 1991, 33 percent of the population defined themselves as Euskera speaker or passive speaker. This figure raised to 49 percent in 2011 with a non-decreasing trend.⁴ As we will show, speaking Euskera maps into electoral divisions among the region’s voters.⁵ The language question appears to have an independent effect on voting behavior from the effect of Nationalism, or the degree of autonomy. Language politics in the region can be separated from Nationalism, and should be viewed as identity politics. Identity is tied to long histories and symbolism that are not readily changed. Identity groups are extensively studied by social psychologists (see, e.g., [Tajfel, 2010](#)). According to this literature, [Ashforth and Mael \(1989\)](#) suggest that “*Identification*

⁴These data come from the I to V Sociolinguistic Survey conducted by the Basque Government every five years starting in 1991.

⁵[Lijphart \(1979\)](#) shows that language is an important determinant of party choice in linguistically divided countries such as Belgium, Canada and Switzerland.

*induces individuals to engage in, and derive satisfaction from activities congruent with the identity, to view him or herself as an exemplar of the group, and to reinforce factors conventionally associated with group formation".*⁶

Aspachs-Bracons et al. (2008) show that language politics has a relevant impact on individual identities in this region as well as in the Catalan region. Identity politics, we argue, do not map neatly into the usual spatial model with valence issues, and this presents an opportunity to extend the spatial model to incorporate a non-position, but nonetheless spatial issue. Our extension is, therefore, in coherence with Shayo (2009) who suggests that people not only vote their economic self-interest, they also vote their identity. As pointed out by Conover (1984), people identifying with different groups evaluate political issues from different perspectives (see also Miller et al., 1991).

The cultural and political divisions in the region would seem to make for a dangerously unstable political situation, especially given the not so recent history of civil unrest and violence during the 1930s and 1970s and 80s.⁷ In an electoral setting with multiple issues and multiple parties, political and social choice theory would typically predict highly unstable and shifting political coalitions.⁸ Empirically, Müller and Strom (2000) and Diermeir et al. (2003) find that situations similar to that in the Basque Country typically have long-lasting negotiations to form a government, short-lived governments, and frequent changes in the party in power.⁹

Here lies the puzzle. Following the 10 elections in the BAC, government formation has taken relatively little time, with the average period between elections day and the investiture vote of 2 months. For most of its 35 years, the Eusko Legebiltzarra has been governed by one party, the Partido Nacionalista Vasco in Spanish or Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea in Euskera, commonly called the EAJ-PNV or just PNV. Cabinet members

⁶Besides, Hale (2004) justifies that ethnic identification is not merely inherit, but it comes from human motivations to pursue physical security, material resources or status. See also Jenkins (2008).

⁷See Zulaika (2000) for an excellent anthropology of the origins of the ETA uprising in the 1970s.

⁸Starting with Baron and Ferejohn (1989), many other authors have analyzed the difficult problem of inter-party bargaining from a non-cooperative game theory approach (see Ansolabehere et al., 2005, footnote 6 for additional references).

⁹See also Laver and Schofield (1998) and Laver and Shepsle (1994).

have only been modified once during the legislature (following the 1990 elections). Only from 2009 to 2012 was someone from a party other than the PNV chosen by the Legebiltzarra to be President of the Basque Autonomous Community. The minority and coalition governments led by the PNV have been very stable and long-lived, and all but once have the governments lasted the full duration of the election cycle. A remarkable run of one party, minority government emerges out of a seemingly impossible political situation.

Our objective in this paper is twofold. First, we show that the conventional spatial voting model explains vote behavior in a region with strong ties to culture and language. Second, we explain why there is so much political stability in a region where the electoral and cultural circumstances ought to make for political chaos. The answers, we believe, lies precisely with the nature of identity politics.

[Akerlof and Kranton \(2000, 2011\)](#) introduce identity-based payoffs in the utility representation of the preferences of agents. We introduce identity-based payoffs in the utility representation of the preferences of voters. In our proposal, identity is not associated to social categories (such as men, women), but to the language of the individuals in the region. We show that identity has a significant effect when explaining vote-choice in the region.

In terms of coalition theory, two traditional main factors have explained the formation of coalition governments, the number of seats – with the theory of minimal winning coalitions ([Von Neumann and Morgenstern, 1947](#); [Riker, 1962](#)) – and the adjacent positions in the policy scales – with the theory of minimal connected winning coalitions ([De Swann, 1973](#)) –. In the particular case of Basque Regional Elections, we find that there are other factors, related to identity, that contribute to explain the stability of both, minority and coalition governments.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the electoral system in the Basque region. Section 3 extends the traditional spatial model of voting and incorporates identity issues. Section 4 maps the Basque electorate and the perceived location of the parties according to the surveys of the Centro de Investigaciones

Sociológicas (CIS) for the period 1994-2012. Section 5 analyzes the pattern of voting , and in particular, Identity voting according to the CIS surveys. Section 6 concludes.

2 The Party System in Basque Elections

The party system in Basque Parliamentary elections consists of a mix of regional parties and national parties. The national parties are the two primary parties in Spain that vie for control of the Cortes Generales as well as compete in regional elections. These are the Partido Popular (PP) and Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), which runs as the Socialist Party of the Basque Country (PSE) in the region's elections. In the Cortes Generales, the PP and PSOE oppose each other, but in 2009 they managed to find common ground and formed a coalition government in the Basque parliament.

Two other parties with presence in the national Spanish government also have a notable presence in the Basque regional elections. These are Izquierda Unida, IU or United Left and Unión Progreso y Democracia (UPyD). IU runs in the Basque parliamentary elections as Izquierda Unida-Ezker Batua (IU-EB) and in recent years in league with the Green Party. UPyD is a liberal party that rejects Basque and Catalan nationalism, and was formed in 2007.

The principal regional party is the PNV. Its main political platform is national autonomy, but on economic and social matters it promotes a very pragmatic platform. Various factions have split from the PNV and formed their own parties over time. The most significant fracture came in 1985 when Lehendakari Carlos Garaikoetxea clashed with PNV party leader Xabier Arzalluz over the direction of the party. As a result of the internal party struggle, Garaikoetxea founded Eusko Alkartasuna (EA) in 1986, and he was replaced as president of the regional government by Jose Antonio Ardanza.

The most controversial political parties in Basque regional politics are the leftist and nationalist parties organized under a variety of banners. Herri Batasuna (HB), or Unity of the People, formed in 1978. The party won 17,500 votes in the Basque and Navarre regions in the Spanish General election of 1979, enough to earn a seat in the

Cortes Generales. In the 1980 regional elections in the Basque Country, HB received 17 percent of the vote – enough for 11 seats. HB was renamed Batasuna (Unity) and ran with a second independence party Euskal Heritarrok, until Batasuna was banned in 2003 due to the ties with the armed band ETA. To fill the void left by HB/EH, the Communist Party of the Basque People reappeared in the 2005 election and won 12 percent of votes, and Aralar emerged in an attempt to capture the independence-oriented left voters, but it was never as successful as HB/EH.

In 2011 a number of leftist parties and political leaders who strongly support independence or greater autonomy – including Aralar, EA, Alternatiba, and some former Batasuna members – ran under a new party label Euskal Herria Bildu (EHBildu), or Basque Country Gather. In the 2011 Spanish general election Bildu won a stunning 24 percent of votes in the region, trailing only PNV. The presence of candidates from Batasuna and Aralar in Bildu prompted a challenge to the legality of the new party in the run-up to the 2012 Basque Parliament election. In this occasion, the courts ruled that the party had not violated Spanish law and could run and hold seats in parliament. And in the 2012 election, Bildu repeated its performance from a year earlier, winning 25 percent of votes and 21 seats in the Eusko Legebiltzarra.

A secondary stream of the leftist nationalist parties were organized as the Euskadiko Ezkerra (EE), or Basque Country Left. In the first regional election in 1980 the socialist EE and communist Euskadiko Partidu Komunista (Basque Communist Party) parties won 14 percent of the vote. They merged in 1982 into a Marxist-oriented socialist, nationalist party, EE-IPS, but they never regained their electoral strength of the 1980 election. In 1991, the party split again. A majority of the party merged with the PSE. Adherents to the Euskadiko Ezkerra faction, however, joined with Eusko Alkartasuna.

Table 1 shows the election results for every party since the first election to the Eusko Legebiltzarra in 1980.¹⁰

The table reveals both, remarkable stability and tremendous instability in the Basque party system. The two principal parties, EAJ-PNV and PSE, have proven

¹⁰Table 1 contains the information of the official web of the Basque Government www.euskadi.net.

to be very stable forces. The PNV typically wins about 35 percent of the vote and wins on average 27 seats in the parliament. The PSE typically receives about 20 percent of the vote and 16 seats. The PP, although always present, has received less constant support. From 1980 to 1994, support for the PP was quite low in the region, in the single digits. The party surged from 1994 to 2001, but has since sunk back to about 12 percent of the vote. During the 1998 and 2001 elections, the PP supplanted the PSE as the number two party in the region. As a result, the Basque party system appears to be a 3+ system, with the plus added because of the chaos among the nationalist left parties.

The nationalist left parties show tremendous instability. This surely owes to the repeated bans placed on the ETA-related parties, Herri Batasuna, Batasuna, and Euskal Heritarrok. Other left parties, however, have not been able to find a solid footing in the region. The IU-EB/Green coalition has never cleared 10 percent of the vote, and the Communists come and go, depending on the presence of a strong independence party, such as HB. The splinter parties from the PNV – notably EA – were not able to maintain a presence and ultimately collapsed back into Bildu in the 2012 election. The emergence of Bildu in 2011, however, offers the possibility of a stable new party, the fourth for the region.

Finally, it is worth noting that for much of the 35 year history of Basque parliamentary elections there have been very few “wasted votes” – votes for parties that had no chance of clearing the threshold for receiving a seat. However, in the past two elections (2009 and 2012) more than 7 percent of all votes went to parties that won no seats. In 2012, 8 percent of the vote was distributed across many smaller parties, none of which won more than 5 percent in any province. In 2009, 9 percent of voters went to the polls and spoiled their ballots to protest the Spanish Court’s decision to ban Batasuna.

The formation of the government of the Basque Autonomous Community reflects the same odd mix of stability and instability as the parliamentary elections. [Table 2](#) reveals that throughout the 35-year history of the parliament, the PNV has served as the governing party for all but 3 years (from 2009-2012), and until 2009, there had

been only three different Lehendakari (Garaikoetxea, Ardanza, and Ibarretxe).

From 1980 to 1990 the PNV held power as a minority government, a notably long tenure for a minority government. From 1990 to 1998, the PNV and PSE joined in coalition to form the regional government, along with several smaller parties. Over the next decade the PNV shed its alliance with the PSE, and formed coalition with EA and IU. Up until 2009, then, the government had always included the largest party in the region, the PNV, and that party chose the Lehendakari.

But, in 2009, the negotiation to form a new PNV coalition broke down. First, the PSE insisted on selecting the next Lehendakari, a position unacceptable to the PNV. Then, the PNV failed to find common ground with the smaller parties of the left, primarily over differences in economic and development issues in the midst of the recession sinking the Spanish economy. In a stunning political maneuver, the PSE seized the opportunity to form a coalition with the PP – its adversary in the Cortes Generales – with the vote of UPyD. Uniting the two Spanish federal parties was their common opposition to the increasing autonomy of the BAC. The coalition of the PSE and PP was ill-fated from the start. It was brought about because the members of the EB decided to not vote in the selection of the government in 2009, and throughout its existence, the coalition hung on the vote of a single member of parliament. As the first year of the government wore on, the differences between the PSE and PP on economic and social issues caused greater strains on their governing arrangement. Had the PSE and PP not formed a coalition in 2009, the PNV almost surely would have formed a minority government as it had from 1980 to 1990. Following the 2012 election, the PNV returned yet again to govern as a minority.

3 A Spatial Model

The electoral and party system in the Basque region can be understood analytically in terms of three types of issues confronting the Basque electorate. First, there are Positional or Spatial issues. These are issues over which there exists a policy choice,

such as moving economic policy more to the Left or Right. The voters have distinct preferences along the dimensions that characterize each of the issues, and the parties adjust their platforms to compete for votes. Second, there are Valence issues. These are issues on which all voters are in agreement, such as economic prosperity and growth, and for which they hold elected officials accountable. Third, there are Identity issues. These are issues on which some groups of voters orient the same way, but other groups of voters may orient a different way. The voters classify the parties on the basis of an identity, such as race, language, or religion, but the parties cannot (at least in the short run) alter their identities.

It is important to distinguish Identity from Nationalism. Nationalism is what Political Scientists typically call a spatial issue. Nationalism involves a specific policy decision concerning the degree of autonomy of the region. The parties can alter their platforms concerning the amount of autonomy that they think the regional government ought to have however, identity is tied. Some people may never vote for HB, Aralar, or Bildu owing to family history or events during the ETA uprising; others will only vote for those parties. Still others may only vote for nationalist parties because of their identity as Basques, rather than Spaniards. The parties cannot change their identities or the identities of the people. Unlike Valence issues, Identity issues do not affect all people the same way. Unlike Spatial issues, the parties cannot easily adjust their image on Identity issues.

As is well known, pure strategy Nash equilibria exist only under special circumstances for multi-party elections in a multi-dimensional setting. When those conditions do not adhere, chaos results. However, the valence and identity issues broaden the conditions for finding equilibria. The purpose of this paper is not to characterize the equilibria in the electoral setting, but to use this framework to help us analyze the politics in the region. Our intuitions about the characteristics of likely equilibria derive from valence politics models in multiple dimensions with complete information ([Ansolabehere and Snyder, 2000](#); [Aragonès and Palfrey, 2002](#); [Schofield, 2003](#); [Schofield and Sened, 2005](#)). [Schofield \(2004\)](#) introduces the term “activist valence” by which

the activist members of the party contribute to increase the valence of the party in exchange for moving the platform of the party closer to their more extreme position. The behavior of the electorate under multiple dimensions with "activist valence" is quite similar to that of the electorate with Identities.

Mathematically, we represent electoral choice in this setting as follows.

There is a society with a continuum of voters. There are two main Positional issues in the society, the ideological issue (issue X) that is measured by the left-right scale and the nationalist issue (issue Y) that measures the support for policies ranging from complete independence (or regional autonomy) to complete incorporation into Spain. There are $N > 1$ political parties and each party j is characterized by a platform (x_j, y_j) in each of the Positional issues.

Each voter i has an ideal policy (x_i, y_i) and voters' preferences over each political party j are measured by the party's valence advantage plus the quadratic distance between the position of the party and the ideal policy of the voter on each issue dimension

$$U_i(j) = w_j - \alpha[x_j - x_i]^2 - \beta[y_j - y_i]^2, \quad (1)$$

where $\alpha, \beta > 0$ are the weights (or salience) that voters assign to issue X and Y respectively and $w_j \in \mathbb{R}$ is the valence characteristic of party j .

Let A and B be two distinct political parties. Voter i is indifferent between the two parties when $U_i(A) - U_i(B) = 0$. Solving for y_i , we deduce the linear function that describes the locations of the ideal policies of those voters that are indifferent between the two parties:

$$y_i = a - bx_i \text{ where } a = \frac{-w + \alpha(x_A^2 - x_B^2) + \beta(y_A^2 - y_B^2)}{2\beta(y_A - y_B)} \text{ and } b = \frac{\alpha(x_A - x_B)}{\beta(y_A - y_B)} \quad (2)$$

where $w = w_A - w_B$ is the net valence of party A (with respect to party B). The above expression is the dividing line between those voters that prefer party A over party B and those that prefer party B over party A .

Expression (1) represents the preferences of voters in the pure spatial voting model. If there is sincere voting and more than two political parties, the corresponding dividing lines between each pair of parties intersect each other and sort voters into political parties.

Identity Issues

We incorporate Identity issues to this model. Consider that voters are not only characterized by their ideal policy, but also each of them belongs to certain identity group. For the sake of simplicity let $\mathcal{I} = \{E, S\}$ denote a partition of the electorate into two different identities, where E is the set of voters speaking Euskera and S is the set of voters speaking Spanish. When Positional, Valence and Identity issues are incorporated to the model, each party is characterized by a profile $(x_j, y_j, w_j, d_{jE}, d_{jS})$ where $d_{jE}, d_{jS} \in \mathbb{R}$ measure how voters belonging to identity groups E and S , respectively, feel about party j . Our proposal consist of measuring the preferences of voters when there are identity groups by

$$U_i(j) = \begin{cases} w_j + d_{jE} - \alpha[x_j - x_i]^2 - \beta[y_j - y_i]^2 & \text{when } i \in E \\ w_j + d_{jS} - \alpha[x_j - x_i]^2 - \beta[y_j - y_i]^2 & \text{when } i \in S. \end{cases} \quad (3)$$

Following the terminology by [Fajfels \(2010\)](#), each of the terms d_{jE}, d_{jS} capture a positive externality when there is an "ingroup" effect (and $d_{jE} > 0, d_{jS} > 0$) and a negative externality when there is an "outgroup" effect (and $d_{jE} < 0, d_{jS} < 0$). In other words, when voters in an identity group perceive that the political party shares their identity, there is a positive externality due to the "ingroup" effect. However, when the identity of the political party does not coincide with the identity of the group, there is a negative externality due to the "outgroup" effect.¹¹

The location of those voters that are indifferent between Party A and Party B also

¹¹As an example of positive ingroup effect, the experimental evidence by [Chen and Li \(2009\)](#) shows that there is more forgiving towards misbehavior from an ingroup compared to an outgroup.

depends on the identity group. Solving for $U_i(A) - U_i(B) = 0$ we deduce

$$y_i = \begin{cases} -d_E + a - bx_i & \text{when } i \in E \\ -d_S + a - bx_i & \text{when } i \in S, \end{cases} \quad (4)$$

where $d_E = d_{AE} - d_{BE}$, $d_S = d_{AS} - d_{BS}$ are the net identity terms and a and b are as defined by Expression (2). Identity issues sort voters into different parties depending on the identity of the party.

Figure 1 illustrates the effect of identity voting. In graph (a), we only represent those voters that belong to group E . We consider that this group shares identity with party A . This implies that those voters in this group whose ideal policy is equidistant (or close to equidistant) to the platforms of the two competing parties will vote for party A . In this case, identity voting induces a positive externality over the vote-share of party A . In graph (b), we only represent those voters that belong to group S . We assume that this group of voters do not share identity neither with party A nor with party B . As a consequence, the dividing line between the voters in this group that choose party A and those that choose party B is not as close to party B as it was in graph (a). In graph (c), we overlay the two identity groups, those represented in graph (a) and those represented in graph (b). We show, in this new graph, that there is no perfect stratification between the voters that prefer party A over party B , and those that prefer party B over party A . There is an intersecting area in which some voters choose party A –if their identity group is E – and choose party B –if their identity group is S .

Point m in graphs (a) and graph (b) of Figure 1 is the intersecting point between two lines, (1) $U_i(A) - U_i(B) = 0$ and (2) the line that joins the policy positions of party A and party B . Let d_i be the net identity term for individual i where either $i \in E$ or $i \in S$, solving for the location of point m ,

$$\left(\frac{x_A + x_B}{2} + \frac{(d_i + w)(x_B - x_A)}{2(\alpha(x_A - x_B)^2 + \beta(y_A - y_B)^2)}; \frac{y_A + y_B}{2} + \frac{(d_i + w)(y_B - y_A)}{2(\alpha(x_A - x_B)^2 + \beta(y_A - y_B)^2)} \right), \quad (5)$$

where $x_B - x_A < 0$ and $y_B - y_A < 0$ imply that the higher is the positive net valence, the closer point m is to the location of party B . Likewise, the higher is the positive net identity term, the closer point m is to the location of party B . Notice that when both, the net valence and the net identity term, equal zero ($w = 0$, $d_i = 0$), the location of m coincides with the midpoint of the parties' platforms ($\frac{x_A+x_B}{2}$, $\frac{y_A+y_B}{2}$). Notice that whereas the net valence term is equal across individuals, the net identity term differs across identity groups. This explains why the sorting of voters between party B and party A differs across identity groups.

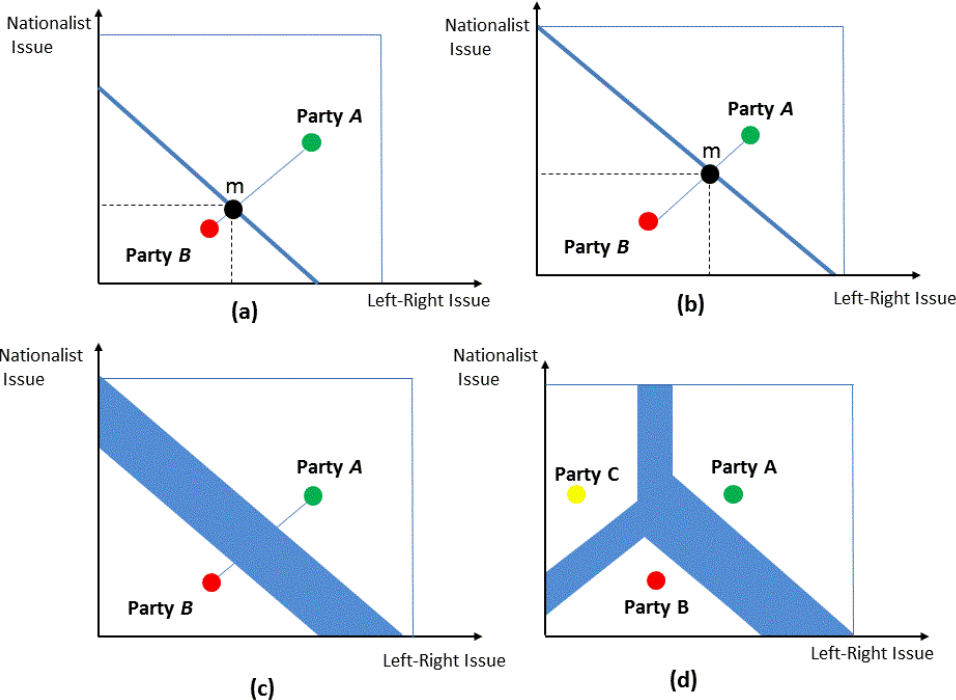


Figure 1: Identity Voting. (a) Group E. (b) Group S.
(c) Groups E and S. (d) The case of three parties.

Our analysis is extensive to the case of more than two political parties and sincere voting behavior. Graph (d) in Figure 1 provides an example of the sorting of voters

among three political parties when there are identity groups. The inverted Y-shape is the area of voters that depending on their identity group vote for one or another political party.

Empirical Analysis

For the sake of empirical analysis, we transform the deterministic spatial voting model into a probabilistic voting model.

The described model provides an excellent framework for understanding the link between the mapping of the party system and voters' decisions. There are four features of the model that describe which voters prefer which parties. First, there are the parties' platforms – the location of the parties in the space defined by Ideology and Nationalism. Second, there are the preferred policies of voters – the distribution of voters' ideal points in the two-dimensional space. Third, there is the intensity of voters' preferences – the weight that voters place on one dimension over another. Fourth, Identity and Valence issues pull voters away from their ideological and nationalist orientations. Here we measure the weight of Ideology, Nationalism, Identity and Valence issues in voters' decisions.

A voter chooses party A over party B when $U_i(A) - U_i(B) > \mu_i$ where μ_i is the realization of a random variable $\mu \in (-\infty, \infty)$ which represents the additional benefits or costs derived from voting for party A over voting for party B (these are benefits or costs which are not captured by Positional, Valence or Identity issues)

Let w and d_i be the net valence and the net identity term respectively. According to Expression (3),

$$\begin{aligned} Pr(V = A|A \text{ or } B) = \\ Pr(-\alpha(x_A^2 - x_B^2 - 2(x_A - x_B)x_i) - \beta(y_A^2 - y_B^2 - 2(y_A - y_B)y_i) + w + d_i > \mu). \end{aligned}$$

This can be rearranged into a probability function that is linear in the arguments x_i ,

y_i , w , and d_i . That is,

$$\begin{aligned} Pr(V = A|A \text{ or } B) = \\ Pr(-\alpha(x_A^2 - x_B^2) - \beta(y_A^2 - y_B^2) + 2\alpha(x_A - x_B)x_i + 2\beta(y_A - y_B)y_i + w + d_i > \mu). \end{aligned}$$

Hence, for any paired comparison between parties A and B , the choice function can be modeled as a linear function of the voter's position on X , the voter's position on Y , the valence term w , and the identity term d_i .

A logit or probit model can be used to estimate the probability with which a voter chooses party A over party B as a function of x_i (Ideology), y_i (Nationalism), w (economic circumstances), and d_i (Identity).¹² This is the model that we estimate.

4 Mapping the Basque Electorate

Basque parliamentary elections conform remarkably well to a spatial model characterized by Positional issues, Valence characteristics and Identity. Using public opinion surveys of the BAC region, we can map the preferences of people and the positions of the parties, and we can gauge the extent to which the various types of issues shape voting behavior.

The Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS), an independent entity of the Ministry of the Presidency of Spain, conducts surveys during national and regional elections throughout the country.¹³ CIS began conducting national sociological surveys in 1963, and their surveys cover all regional and national elections in the Basque Country from 1980 on. Households are selected at random and the interviews are in person. The surveys are conducted before and after the election. The typical sample size is 1,400. We pool the pre- and post-election surveys when both are available, yielding samples of 2,800. The increased sample size helps with the estimation of vote preferences, especially for smaller parties.

¹²According to [Mc Fadden \(1973\)](#), this reasoning that we apply for the binary model can be extended to a multinomial model in which we analyze the vote choice among more than two political parties.

¹³www.cis.es

We study the CIS surveys from 1994 to 2012, as these surveys contain appropriate measures for examining the importance of ideology and nationalism in Basque parliamentary elections and the Basque party system. The surveys ask people whether they voted and how; various demographics, such as age and gender; sociological characteristics, such as languages spoken and cultural identities; and political attitudes. These indicators allow us to gauge the nature and importance of spatial voting, identity voting, and valence voting. Our analysis will focus on five key variables from the survey: Vote Preference or Choice, Nationalist Orientation, Left-Right Orientation, Basque Identity or Language, and Assessment of the Economy. Not every survey contains all of the indicators of interest.

Vote Choice or Preference is the outcome of interest. The surveys branch the voting questions, asking people first whether they voted (or planned to vote). Of voters (or likely voters) the survey asks for which party or coalition of parties the individual voted.

Left-Right Orientation measures the ideological position of the person. "Normally when talking about politics the expressions left and right are used. On this card there are a series of boxes that go from left to right. In which box would you place yourself? The box 1 is labeled "Izquierda" for left and 10 is labeled "Derecha" for right. The second dimension of interest is Nationalism. The survey asks "In relation to the nationalist sentiment, could you tell me please where you would place yourself on a scale from 1 to 10, in which 1 means the least Basque nationalism and 10 the most Basque nationalism?" We use these questions to map out the ideological orientation of individuals. In addition, four of the surveys (1998, 2005, 2009 and 2012) ask respondents to place the parties on the Nationalist and Left-Right scales. We use responses to these questions to measure where the parties are in the two-dimensional space and the stability of their policy positions.¹⁴

¹⁴There is a recent debate on the real meaning of left-right self-placement in the Basque Country ([Strijbis and Leonisio, 2012](#); [Dinas, 2012](#)). This debate is motivated by the counter-intuitive result of left-right self-placement placed as better predictor for electoral choices than nationalism self-placements. Our concluding section gives our interpretation on this point.

Separate from nationalist preferences, the CIS surveys asks various questions that gauge identity. Three of the surveys (2005, 2009 and 2012) ask whether the individual speaks Euskera fluently, with a Yes or No answer. We use this question to map identity. For the 1998 survey, we include a question about identity "How do you identify yourself? Responses are coded so that 1 (Spanish), 2 (more Spanish than Basque) up to 5 (Basque). We use this question to gauge the identity of individuals and how Identity issues explain vote preferences in the 1998 regression.

We also include an indicator of the size of the locality that the person lives in and the Province, as studies of aggregate voting patterns conclude that town population correlates strongly with nationalist party vote.

Finally, survey respondents evaluate the state of the economy in the Basque country. "What is your view of the economic situation in the Pays Basque today? Very Good, Good, Average (Regular), Bad, Very Bad" captures the most common form of valence issue, economic voting.

The Electorate's Preferences

The CIS surveys provide a clear picture of the Left-Right and Nationalist orientations of the Basque electorate and party system. Turning first to the electorate, we can map the positional issue preferences of Basques along each dimension separately and in a two-dimensional space.

The Left-Right ideological orientation of the Basque electorate is highly Centrist, with a slight left of center cant. Pooling the surveys from 1994 to 2012, we find that the modal ideological identification is 5 – 30 percent of adults place themselves exactly in the center of the scale. Another 18 percent chose 4 and 21 percent chose 3. Over three-quarters of respondents placed themselves in the interval from 3 to 6 on the scale. Fifteen percent chose the far Left (either 1 or 2), and only 8 percent chose a position to the right of Center (7 to 10). Pooling all years, the median is 4 and the average score on the 10 point Left-Right scale is 4.2. The high centrist concentration of the electorate is reflected in the relatively small standard deviation of just 1.7. Moreover,

the distribution of preferences along the Left-Right dimension has been very stable. The average, median, and standard deviation have not changed in any meaningful way over the past 20 years.

On questions of Nationalism, the Basque electorate also appears fairly centrist, with a tilt in favor Nationalism and greater regional autonomy. Again pooling the surveys from 1994 to 2012, we find that the modal response to the Nationalism question is exactly in the center, with 20 percent choosing 5 on a scale from 1 (Minimal Nationalism) to 10 (Maximal Nationalism). The distribution of preferences, in contrast with Left-Right ideology, is not concentrated around the center, but is quite polarized. Forty percent of respondents support greater Nationalism and autonomy (7 to 10 on the scale), while a quarter (25 percent) support minimal Nationalism (1, 2, or 3 on the scale). The median voter along the Nationalist scale places herself exactly in the center. The median placement is 5, and the mean is 5.6 on the Nationalism scale. Unlike the Left-Right scale, the Nationalism distribution is more widely dispersed around the mean, as reflected in the standard deviation of 2.8.

Nationalist attitudes have also exhibited some trending over time. In 1994, the average Nationalist score was 6.3, but by 2012 it had fallen to 5.0. In addition, the spread of the distribution has increased. In other words, the center of Basque electorate has shift from somewhat Nationalist to Moderate on the question of Nationalism, but the degree of polarization on this issue has also increased. The standard deviation of the Nationalist Scale was 2.4 in 1994, and it rose to 3.1 by 2012 – a thirty percent increase in the dispersion of the electorate away from the center on the question of Nationalism. In 1994, those who supported greater national autonomy outnumbered those who supported minimal nationalism by 3 to 1. In 2012, these groups are about equal in size, and each accounts for slightly more than a third of the electorate.

Interestingly, the Left-Right and Nationalism dimensions of Basque politics appear to be unrelated to each other. There are historical reasons why one might expect some association between Ideology and Nationalism. During the Spanish Civil War, for example, Russia supplied arms and tactical support for the guerrilla fighters loyal to the

monarchy, while the U.K. and United States stayed on the sidelines. This had a radicalizing effect on those fighting to defend the nascent Basque Republic. Similarly, the organizations associated with ETA in the 1970s and 1980s aligned very strongly with Marxism and revolutionary ideologies. After Franco's death, his supporters aligned most strongly with the PP in the Cortes Generales and in the regional elections. History, it would seem, laid the foundations for alignment of nationalists with the left and of pro-Spain factions with the right.

But, history dies. In the Basque region, people's views exhibit only a slight negative correlation between Nationalism and Ideology of $-.14$. That correlation has varied somewhat from year to year, but there is no clear trend of either weakening or strengthening ties between Nationalism and Ideology in the Basque electorate. There is a slight, noticeable correlation, but it is not the strong association one might expect from the annals of Basque and Spanish history.

We capture the relationship between pro- and anti-Nationalist sentiment and between Left and Right ideology in [Table 3](#).

This table distills the 10-point scales down to a simpler representation of Ideology as Left-Center-Right and of Nationalism as Minimal-Moderate-Maximal. We collapse the values 1, 2, and 3 on each scale to indicate those on the Left and those on the Minimal Nationalism end of each spectrum. We collapse the values 4, 5, and 6 to indicate Centrists and Moderates. And, we collapse the values 7 through 10 to indicate those on the Right and Nationalists. Reading across the rows of the table one can see that most people are Centrists. Reading down the columns one can see much more dispersion of people's preferences about Nationalism. The degree of centrism, though, is quite clear. Almost a quarter of all people in the surveys identify as Centrist-Moderates, and another 20 percent as Centrist-Nationalists.

The map of the Left-Right and Nationalist orientations of the Basque electorate is quite informative about what one might expect of the electoral alignment of the parties. In a proportional representation system, such as for the election of the Eusko Legebiltzarra, it would make sense for at least one party to occupy the centrist position,

as that is where there is the greatest density of voters. The Nationalist Center and Nationalist Left would also seem to be strong bases of electoral support.

Perceptions of the Party System

The party system, as our discussion in Section 2 suggested, is quite stable, and the stability is reflected not only in the vote shares of the parties but in the policies and platforms that the parties present to the electorate. The CIS surveys allow us to gauge the positions of the parties along the same Left-Right and Nationalist scales as the electorate. The surveys ask respondents to place the parties on each of the two scales, as well as themselves. The average party score (from the voters' perspective) on the Left-Right and Nationalist dimensions are shown in [Table 4](#).

The placements of the parties provide a mapping of the party system that is consistent with descriptive accounts of the Basque party system. The four major parties or coalitions have staked out quite distinctive electoral bases. The PNV, the largest party in the region, is strongly Nationalist, with a Nationalism score of 8.2, and somewhat Right of Center, with a Left-Right score of 6.4. The PSE appears closest to the center. It is slightly Left of Center, with a Left-Right score of 4.5, and somewhat Anti-Nationalist, with a Nationalist score of 3.4. The PP is Right and Anti-Nationalist, with a Left-Right score of 8.6 and a Nationalist score of 1.9. The string of parties with labels HB, EH, and Bildu occupy similar ideological space, being highly Nationalist (score of 8.7) and farthest to the Left (Left-Right score of 2.1). In sum, the 4 main parties or coalitions occupy the Nationalist-Center, the Nationalist-Left, the AntiNationalist-Center, and the AntiNationalist-Right.

Smaller parties – notably IU, EA, and UPyD – also occupy important positions within the system. IU is quite moderate on the Nationalist dimension and farther to the Left than the Socialist Party. IU-EB increasingly aligns with the Greens. EA, which split from the PNV in the 1980s, is Centrist on the Left-Right dimension and strongly Nationalist. Finally, UPyD, and a similar faction UA, occupy a Conservative-AntiNationalist position. UPyD is slightly more moderate than the PP. Interestingly,

even though EA and UPyD are closer to the center than their partner parties (PNV and PP) they have not established strong electoral support. The situation of EA is particularly puzzling from this perspective. They appear to occupy a relatively strong electoral position, but, as we shall see, EA never established itself as a strong electoral faction to rival the PNV.

A few comments about the overall party alignment are in order.

First, the parties stake out very distinct policy positions. The PNV, PSE, and PP occupy very different policy areas within the two-dimensional space. The PP and UPyD occupy the Nationalist Right. The PNV and EA have staked out the Nationalist Center and Center Right. The IU and the PSE appeal to the Left and Moderate or anti-Nationalist voters. Even within each of these parts of the electorate the parties manage to distinguish themselves.

Second, the party alignment in terms of positional issues is extremely stable. There is almost no variation from year to year in the positions of the parties. In a multiparty, multi-dimensional setting one might expect more instability, but even the smaller parties exhibit very little movement over time. What is more, the party system remains stable even after some of the parties are banned or fold. Herri Batasuna was banned in 2003, but no party shifted to capture the substantial Left-Nationalist vote. When HB is reformed into Bildu it occupies exactly the same ideological location as HB, at least in the voters' minds.

Third, there is no centrist party. The PNV is often described as a moderate or Center-Right party, but the electorate sees it as on the extreme in terms of Nationalism and noticeably to the Right of the typical voter ideologically. EA is equally nationalistic, but centrist ideologically. The PSE is close to the center of the Left-Right spectrum, but favors minimal nationalism. IU is centrist on Nationalism, but far to the left ideologically. The electorate looks quite different, as was shown in [Table 3](#). The median voter in the region is Centrist or slightly Left of center and Moderate or slightly pro-Nationalist. There is no party in the system that represents this pair of positions. The closest to the center might be EA or the PSE, and these parties, as we

see in the next section have failed to capture the upper hand in Basque parliamentary elections. Nonetheless, the observed locations of the parties are in coherence with the centrifugal forces in proportional representation systems motivated by parties who seek to maximize votes (or seats). As predicted by [Cox \(1990\)](#), parties may be disperse over the ideological spectrum.¹⁵

5 Spatial Voting

How well do Positional, Identity, and Valence issues account for patterns of voting in Basque parliamentary elections? It is useful to keep in mind the positions of the parties and the density of voters in different segments of the two-dimensional ideological space. We expect to see people to vote for parties that have the same orientation on the Left-Right Scale and those with the same Nationalist orientation as them. We also expect that assessments of the economy and Basque and Spanish identities will pull people in various directions. Here we offer an assessment of the strength of the appeal of various types of issues and a comparison of the appeal of Left-Right and Nationalist ideals.

The pure spatial model (with only positional issues) carries a fairly stark set of predictions about which people vote for which parties. A person only votes for the party that is closest ideologically. Generally speaking, closeness depends on the orientation and steepness of the contours of voters' preference functions. For simplicity assume that voters weigh both issues equally and hence have spherical indifference curves. Then, simple distance in two-dimensions determines proximity. That model provides a remarkably powerful description of how people vote in Basque parliamentary elections. A voter Nationalist-Leftist will choose HB or Bildu and not vote for the PNV or PSE. An Anti-Nationalist-Rightist voter will choose PP (or perhaps UPyD) rather than PNV or PSE.

Identity politics complicate this picture somewhat. As discussed earlier, it is possible for identity politics to push some voters away from parties that they would otherwise

¹⁵A similar result is also showed by [De Sinopoli and Iannantuoni, \(2008\)](#).

support. Consider, for example, a Rightist voter who supports greater autonomy for regional governments as a matter of principal, who also identifies as Spanish, rather than Basque. That individual might vote for the PP because that party is Spanish and the nearest alternative, the PNV, identifies as Basque. If identity is uncorrelated or negatively correlated with left-right ideology or nationalist orientation, then identity can produce a significant vote that blurs the lines establishing positional voting. If identity is positively correlated with positional issues, then identity can strengthen voting on the positional issues. For example, Basque identity is positively related to preferences on regional autonomy; people who speak Basque fluently favor separation. This positive relationship is expected to increase the appeal of regional autonomy among those who identify as Basque and increase the appeal of stronger central government control over the region among those who identify as Spanish.

Votes

We wish to explain which party a given individual chooses to vote for. The survey measures voters' preferences in the pre-election polls and choices in the post election polls. In any given year the pre- and post-election surveys are very similar, so we feel justified in pooling the two surveys. [Table 5](#) presents the percent of people in the CIS survey who said they intend to or actually voted for each of the parties.

One concern with any election survey is the degree to which the responses accurately reflect actual behavior. Compare [Table 5](#) with [Table 1](#). In every year, the share of the reported vote for the PSE, HB/EH/Bildu, and IU parties in the survey is quite close to the actual vote for each of these parties. The estimated support for these parties in the survey is never more than a couple of points off of the parties' actual performance. The most glaring discrepancies in the poll arise with the PNV and the PP. On average the CIS surveys overestimate the vote for the PNV by 8 percentage points, and understate the support for the PP by 9 percentage points. The poll results for the PNV are reasonably close to the party's actual performance in 2009 and 2012, but there are large discrepancies between the actual and estimated vote in 1994 and

2001. The correlation between the survey errors for PP and for PNV is -.49. We are unsure why these errors arise; we do not think these errors affect our inferences appreciably, but they may merit further investigation.

It is worth emphasizing the impressive showing of the PNV, PSE, and PP. These are the three main parties in Basque elections. They are somewhat more extreme than the smaller parties with whom they share political common ground – EA in the case of PNV, IU in the case of PSE, and UPyD in the case of PP. However, the PNV, PSE, and PP do much better than the smaller parties. Most notably, in years that it ran, EA, which is ideologically closest to the center, never managed more than 15 percent of the vote, and its support shrank over time.

Positional Issues and Vote Choice

Issue voting in Basque elections can be thought of as a calculation made by each voter as to which party is closest to their ideal point. In [Figure 2](#) we have a map of party positions and voters' ideal points based on placements on the Left-Right dimension (horizontal axis) and Nationalist dimension (vertical axis). In this figure, we overlay the average positions of the parties according to [Table 4](#), on [Table 3](#) (the distribution of positions of the voters). [Table 4](#) tells us the ideological location of each of the parties in the two-dimensional space. [Table 3](#) shows us where the density of voters are in that space.

In the absence of Valence and Identity issues, a party would obtain the vote of those voters self-placed in the space defined by the cutlines. For example, if a voter is a 4 on the Left-Right scale and a 3 on the Nationalist scale, he or she will vote for the PSE, because that party is closest, and not for the PP or PNV or any of the other parties. However, from the 13 percent of all voters that are AntiNationalist-Center, a fraction of them may opt for UPyD. If positional issues strongly determines vote choice, then voters ought to sort themselves fairly cleanly along these lines.

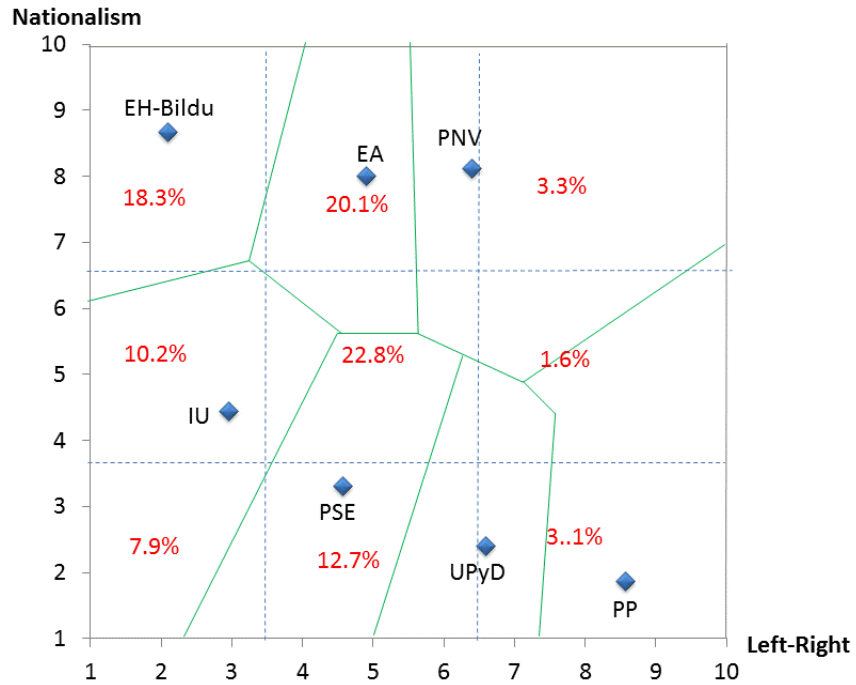


Figure 2: Perceived positions of the parties and orientation of the electorate.

Table 6 shows the vote for each party in each sector of the two-dimensional space spanned by Left-Right Ideology and Nationalism. Starting with the classification of voters in Table 3, we calculate the percent of all survey respondents in each cell of the table who chose a particular party. For example, the first panel inside Table 6, presents the vote for the PNV for each subgroup created by crossing Left-Right Ideology and Nationalism. The first cell indicates that 5.2 percent of people who are Leftists and Anti-Nationalist voted for the PNV. The remaining 95 percent of respondents who identify themselves as Anti-Nationalist Leftists voted for other parties. This table excludes non-voters.

The table shows a high degree of spatial voting along Left-Right Ideology and Nationalist lines: People vote for the party closest to them. The base of the PNV are

Nationalists who are Center or Right on the Ideological spectrum.

Consider people who are Rightist and Nationalists, the bottom right cell in each table. Over 90 percent of those people, across all elections, voted for the PNV. The rest of the vote of these people was scattered: EH/HB/Bildu captured 4 percent and the PP, 2 percent. Now consider people who are ideological Centrists and Nationalists. The PNV won 86 percent of the votes of these people. Center and Right Nationalists, then, are the base of the PNV, and the PNV wins almost all of the voters who hold these attitudes. The PNV also won 31 percent of votes of people who consider themselves Right of Center ideologically and Moderate on the Nationalism question; the party won 31 percent of votes of people who are Left of Center and strongly Nationalist, and the party won 51 percent of voters who consider themselves Centrists and Moderates.

This pattern fits perfectly with what one would expect from positional voting in a spatial model. The PNV party is somewhat Right of Center ideologically and strongly Nationalist. It has no real competitor parties in that space, and it wins nearly all of the Right and Center votes among those who are Nationalists. It wins half of the Centrist-Moderate vote, and there are no parties in that space. And, it makes a substantial second choice among those who are Left-Nationalists and Right-Moderates.

Turning to the Anti-Nationalist Right, we find the base for the PP and UPyD. The PP won 68 percent of all votes cast by people who describe themselves as Right of Center and opposed to Nationalism. UPyD received votes of 20 percent of these people. The PP also won 45 percent of votes of Moderate-Rightists, and UPyD received the votes of 9 percent of these people. Support for these parties drops precipitously as one moves to the left or in the Nationalist direction.

The Moderate and Anti-Nationalist Left is reflected in the support for the PSE and IU-EB/Green parties. The PSE receives the support of 65 percent of Leftist-AntiNationalists; 55 percent of the vote of Moderate-AntiNationalists; a third of the votes of Leftist-Moderates; and 27 percent of Centrist-Moderates. In other words, as one moves away from the Leftist-AntiNationalist pole, support for the PSE drops quickly. The IU-EB/Green coalition comes in a distant second among this pole, with

19 percent of their votes. And, this coalition competes with the PSE for the support of the Leftists who are more moderate on Nationalism, winning 30 percent of these votes. Beyond that, the IU-EB receives very little support.

Finally, consider the Left and Nationalist parties EH, HB, and Bildu. These parties ran in 1994, 1998, 2001, and 2012. In those years, the parties won 61 percent of the votes of people who considered themselves Left and Nationalist. They won 15 percent of the votes of Left leaning people who were otherwise Moderate on the Nationalism question and 9 percent of votes of Leftists who were Anti-Nationalist. Their appeal to the Nationalist - Centrists, however, was weak, and they won only 7 percent of these people's votes.

We did not show the vote for EA, as that party received only a small share of the votes among survey respondents. The party is Centrist ideologically and strongly Nationalist. It received only 12 percent of the Center Nationalist vote, which is anemic compared with the PNV's 78 percent among these voters, and among the Leftist Nationalists EA won only 7 percent compared with 19 percent for the PNV among these voters. Why EA's vote was so low is odd, given their ideological moderation. One possibility is that the party was exceedingly close to the 5 percent threshold, below which a party does not receive a seat.¹⁶

Whatever the explanation for EA's weak showing, the degree of sorting of voters along ideological and nationalist lines suggests that positional issues offer a powerful explanation of Basques' electoral choices.

Estimating the Model

We estimated the statistical model presented in Section 3 using a multinomial logit model for each year, as the parties running for election vary from year to year. For each party we estimate the probability of voting for that party or for the PNV (e.g., PSE v. PNV). That is, party B in our analysis is always the PNV, and party A is one

¹⁶Strategic voting in 2009 elections could also be motivated by voters' anticipation on the parties that could form government-coalition, PSOE-PP (see [Cox, 1997](#); [Myerson, 1999](#) and [Baron and Diermier, 2001](#) for an explanation of strategic voting in proportional representation systems).

of the other parties. Since the PNV is the governing party in all elections except for 2009 (when the PSE held the position of Lehendakari), we expect any economic voting to be a retrospective assessment of the PNV from 1994 to 2009 and a retrospective assessment of the PSE in 2012. Our measure of Identity is whether the individual speaks Euskera. Finally, size of community (Population) is included in the analysis as that is argued to be an important predictor of voting by past research. [Table 7](#) presents the estimated coefficients and standard errors from this analysis. We perform a separate analysis for each year, so each panel should be read across the table.

There is clear evidence of all three types of issue voting – valence, identity, and positional issues. Valence issues appear to have the smallest effect in magnitude. There are strong effects of economic assessments across the board in 2001 and 2005, but no significant effects in 2012. We will set aside such retrospective judgments as they appear to be of more marginal importance. Similarly, community size does not have regular and predictable effects. Population has some significant effects, especially contrasting the PP and PNV, but the effects are highly unstable from year to year and most comparisons are insignificant.

The important factors that emerge in our statistical analysis are Identity, Ideology, and Nationalism. Population, the economy, and other demographics are of secondary importance. Valence issues, measured as the respondent’s subjective evaluation of the economy in the Basque country, have minimal effect on voting in this region. The coefficients on economic assessments are significantly different from 0 in only 5 of the 15 comparisons for which we could estimate an effect (there was no economy variable in the 1998 survey), and the economy played no significant role in distinguishing the PNV and the PSE. It mattered most in voting for the Leftist-Nationalist parties PCTV and EH. Population was also rarely an important indicator of preferences. The important explanatory variables were Euskera speakers and individuals’ preferences along the Nationalism and Left-Right scales.

Positional issues – Ideology and Nationalism – have the largest effects on voting. The overall effect of a variable can be measured as the change in the probability of

choosing one party over another for a one standard deviation difference in the independent variable, holding other variables at their mean value. That calculation reveals that the overall effect of Nationalism on vote is approximately the same, or perhaps greater than, the overall effect of Ideology. This is because of the greater degree of polarization along the Nationalist dimension than along the Ideological dimension. A one standard deviation change on the ideology scale is only a change of 1.6 units, but a one standard deviation difference across people in the Nationalism scale is 2.8 units along the scale. Hence, the total effect of differences in Nationalist attitudes in the electorate as a whole is approximate 3 times larger than the estimated coefficients would indicate, and about twice as large as a one standard deviation difference in the Ideology variable. We standardize the variables and reestimate the models. For 2012, for example, the standardized logit coefficient on Nationalism is -1.70, compared to a raw coefficient of -.57, and the coefficient on the standardized Left-Right Ideology measure is -1.34, compared with -.80. A one standard deviation difference on the Nationalist scale accounts for approximately a 50 percent change in the probability of voting for the PNV, where a one standard deviation difference on the Left-Right scale amounts to a 30 to 40 percent difference in the probability of voting for the PNV.¹⁷

Consider the role of identity, measured as whether the individual speaks Euskera. We consider this to be an Identity indicator because it is the most obvious and salient indication of identity in this region, and it appears to have a separate effect from Nationalism. Inclusion of an indicator as to whether the person speaks Euskera did not change the coefficient on Nationalism appreciably. Nationalism is a policy choice; speaking Euskera is a characteristic. The parties themselves are tied to identity politics. Euskera speakers, holding constant ideology, nationalist views, population, and economic performance, are much more likely to vote for the PNV over the PSE, PP, or IU. The coefficient on speaking Euskera appears to be strong and fairly steady over

¹⁷Fernández-Albertos (2002) and De La Calle, (2005) argue that the ideological issue is more relevant than the nationalist issue to predict vote choice in the BAC. Balcells i Ventura, (2007) shows a similar pattern in Catalan Elections. These authors, however, do not measure the overall effect of each of these issues given that they do not account for the standard deviation of each of these independent variables.

time. Euskera speakers strongly prefer Bildu, EH, and the PCTV to the PNV. Consider the difference between support for the PNV or the PSE. Although there is some shifting in the coefficient from year to year, the average coefficient is .98. That implies that the difference between an Euskera speaker and a Spanish speaker is approximately a 10 percentage point difference in the probability that someone votes for the PNV over the PSE. The average coefficient for the PP versus the PNV is even larger, about 1.20. That translates into roughly a 12 percentage point difference in the probability that an Euskera speaker votes for the PNV over the PP. (Note: the difference arises because of the lopsided distribution of votes for PNV over PP in the sample.) The largest effect of identity on the probability of support, by far, is for the EH/HB/Bildu parties. The probability that an Euskera speaker votes for EH/HB/Bildu is 21 points higher among Euskera speakers than among Spanish speakers. Language, then, operates as a valence, drawing Euskera speakers toward the Nationalist parties relative to Spanish parties.

6 Conclusions

This paper has added an important element to the empirical study of spatial voting in multi-party systems. We have presented a general model that accommodates Identity as well as Valence and Positional issues. The introduction of identity creates a set of voters who are cross-pressured and will not vote cleanly in line with their policy or spatial preferences. Analytically this resembles a random utility model as identity is an individual-level term added to the usually spatial framework, but we see it as a deterministic element that sorts voters into parties and, thus, has systematic effects on voting behavior of people close to indifferent between two parties on ideological grounds.

We have sought to understand why the Basque electoral system looks the way it does. The Basque Autonomous Community has a multiparty proportional representation system with an electorate divided across at least two important political

dimensions (Left-Right and Nationalism) and further divided by strong cultural identities. This is a setting that seems destined to chaos. Yet, Basque regional elections produce a stable alignment of political parties and a stable pattern of minority and coalition government with the PNV almost always holding power. One of the most striking features of the Basque party system is the absence of a centrist party. There is no Center Left party that is Moderate on Nationalism, even though that is the modal voter and the median (in multiple directions).

The reason for this stable party alignment, we argue, lies with the strong Identity politics tied to Basque language and culture. Euskera speakers and others who identify with the culture vote in line with that identity, above and beyond their preferences about regional autonomy, education policy, and other policies that reflect Nationalism and quite apart from the usual Left-Right divisions common to most European political systems. The presence of Identity issues moves voters who are otherwise centrists toward the parties that align with their identities. There are fewer centrist voters than there appear to be as some are pulled toward the Basque parties and some toward the Spanish parties. This makes it harder for a truly centrist party to establish a reliable electoral base in the presence of a strong Identity vote. Identity politics makes the center difficult for any party to hold.

This is not to say that voting one's identity rather than one's interest or ideology is a bad thing for the individual or for the society's politics. Identity voting in the Basque country contributes to the stability of the multi-party system: it makes it more difficult for parties to split and merge or to shift their political orientation. Identity politics prevents the sort of chaos one associates with multi-party systems where there are multiple dimensions or cleavages in the political sphere. By the same token, it may also make it more difficult to form broad coalitions that span the Euskera-Spanish divide.

Identity voting, combined with the patterns of spatial voting we have observed, contributes to dominance of nationalist parties for three decades. Identity voting, we showed, cuts and creates a schism between the Spanish and Basque-identity parties.

Voters who choose Bildu for reasons of cultural identity do not want a government that compromises that identity through a coalition with the PSE. Perhaps even more strongly felt is the division over identity between voters on the right; the PNV and PP would make highly unlikely bedfellows, precisely because of questions of identity. In the other direction, parties would have to bargain on Left-Right ideology, but this is hard and rare. The PSE-PP coalition in 2009 was in clear contrast to the adversary position that these two parties gather in the Cortes Generales. Likewise, it is hard to bring Bildu and PNV under the same tent.¹⁸

Against the background of strong identity and ideological voting in regional elections, the politics of government formation comes into clearer focus. Identity politics can be viewed as a cost associated with cross-identity coalitions, such as Bildu-PSE or PP-PNV. Forming such cross-identity coalitions might alienate some voters who chose a party precisely because of identity. There is, then, a political price for such coalitions that is not reflected in the compromises one makes in negotiating which public policies to implement or which party holds which ministries. The political cost of crossing cultural identities appears to be quite steep in Basque politics. As a result, the most credible and likely governments are minority government by the largest party, the PNV, or coalitions among the nationalist parties. The Identity issues, associated to the history and culture of the region, restricts in a clear fashion the feasible coalitions and provides disproportionate bargaining power to one party, the PNV.

In line with [Akerlof and Kranton, \(2000, 2011\)](#) who argue that identity influences economic outcomes, we have shown that identity also influences electoral outcomes. The language and culture in the Basque region, we showed, generates a division of the region's voters into two identity groups. Such division not only has significant effect on voting behavior but also on the subsequent process of coalition formation. We believe that this finding is of immediate import to other regions and countries where the electorate is divided by strong ties to different religions, languages or cultures.

¹⁸As argued by [De Swann \(1985\)](#): "*Coalition theory analysis can only acquire its significance within the context of historical social research*".

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Table 1: Basque Parliament Election Results, 1980-2012

| Year | Political Party | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|-----------------|-------|-----------------|----------------|--------|-------|-------|-------------|--------------|--------|
| | Percent of Votes and Number of Seats Won | | | | | | | | | | |
| | PNV- EAJ | PSOE/ PSE-EE | PP | EH/HB Bildu* | Green EB-IU | Aralar | EA | EE | UPyD/ UA | PCE/ PCTV | Other |
| 2012 | 34.6% | 19.1% | 11.7% | 25.0% | | | | | 1.9% | | 7.6% |
| | 27 | 16 | 10 | 21 | | | | | 1 | | 0 |
| 2009 | 38.6% | 30.7% | 14.1% | | 3.5% | 6.0% | 3.7% | | 2.2% | | 1.3%** |
| | 30 | 25 | 13 | | 1 | 4 | 1 | | 1 | | 0 |
| 2005 | 38.7% | 22.7% | 17.4% | | 5.4% | 2.3% | | | | 12.4% | 1.1% |
| | 29 | 18 | 15 | | 3 | 1 | | | | 9 | 0 |
| 2001 | 42.7% | 17.9% | 23.1% | 10.1% | 5.6% | | | | | | 0.6% |
| | 33 | 13 | 19 | 7 | 3 | | | | | | 0 |
| 1998 | 28.0% | 17.6% | 20.1% | 17.9% | 5.7% | | 8.7% | | 1.3% | | 0.3% |
| | 21 | 14 | 16 | 14 | 2 | | 6 | | 2 | | 0 |
| 1994 | 29.8% | 17.1% | 14.4% | 16.3% | 9.2% | | 10.3% | | 2.7% | | 0.1% |
| | 22 | 12 | 11 | 11 | 6 | | 8 | | 5 | | 0 |
| 1990 | 28.5% | 19.9% | 8.2% | 18.3% | | | 11.4% | 7.8% | 1.4% | | 0.1% |
| | 22 | 16 | 6 | 13 | | | 9 | 6 | 3 | | 0 |
| 1986 | 23.7% | 25.6% | 4.9% | 17.5% | | | 15.8% | 10.9% | | | 5.2% |
| | 17 | 21*** | 2 | 13 | | | 13 | 9 | | | 0 |
| 1984 | 42.0% | 23.1% | 9.4% | 14.7% | | | | 8.0% | | | 3.0% |
| | 32 | 19 | 7 | 11 | | | | 6 | | | 0 |
| 1980 | 38.1% | 22.7% | 4.8% | 16.5% | | | | 9.8% | | 4.0% | 4.0% |
| | 25 | 15**** | 2 | 11**** | | | | 6 | | 1 | 0 |

* These parties run in coalition and under different names over time.

** Additionally, 8.8 percent invalidated their ballots intentionally.

*** Includes votes and seats for the UCD in 1980 and for CDS in 1986.

**** Not seated.

Table 2: [Basque Parliament Governments, 1980-2012](#)

| Year | Parties in Government | Lehendakari (Party) | Government |
|--------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 2012 | PNV | Urkullu (PNV) | Minority Government |
| 2009 | PSOE+PP* | Lopez (PSE) | Coalition |
| 2005 | PNV-EA+EB-IU | Ibarretxe (PNV) | Coalition |
| 2001 | PNV-EA+EB-IU | Ibarretxe (PNV) | Coalition |
| 1998 | PNV+EA+EH* | Ibarretxe (PNV) | Coalition |
| 1994 | PNV+PSOE+EA | Ardanza (PNV) | Coalition |
| 1991** | PNV+ PSOE | Ardanza (PNV) | Coalition |
| 1991 | PNV+ EA+EE | Ardanza (PNV) | Coalition |
| 1987 | PNV+ PSOE | Ardanza (PNV) | Coalition |
| 1985 | PNV | Ardanza (PNV) | Minority Government |
| 1984 | PNV | Garaikoetxea (PNV) | Minority Government |
| 1980 | PNV | Garaikoetxea (PNV) | Minority Government |

*No Cabinet Member

** A new coalition government was formed in 1991.

Table 3: [Left-Right and Nationalist Orientations of the Basque Electorate](#)

| Ideology | Nationalism | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| | (Scale: 1 = Minimal, 10 = Maximal) | | |
| | Min (1 to 3) | Mod (4 to 6) | Max (7 to 10) |
| Left (1 to 3) | 7.9% | 10.2% | 18.3% |
| Centrist (4 to 6) | 12.7% | 22.8% | 20.1% |
| Right (7 to 10) | 3.1% | 1.6% | 3.3% |

N = 15,303

Table 4: [Perceived Positions of Parties](#)

| Party | Dimension | Year | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | | 1998 | 2001 | 2005 | 2009 | 2012 |
| PNV | Left-Right | 6.2 | | 6.5 | 6.3 | 6.6 |
| | Nationalism | 8.0 | 8.4 | 8.4 | 8.0 | 7.8 |
| PSE | Left-Right | 4.7 | | 4.5 | 4.4 | 4.7 |
| | Nationalism | 3.3 | 3.1 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.1 |
| PP | Left-Right | 8.4 | | 8.7 | 8.6 | 8.6 |
| | Nationalism | 2.1 | 2.0 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 1.7 |
| EH-B/ HB | Left-Right | 2.1 | | | | 2.1 |
| | Nationalism | 8.9 | 8.4 | | | 8.7 |
| IU | Left-Right | 3.1 | | 2.9 | 3.2 | 2.6 |
| | Nationalism | 4.0 | 4.5 | 4.9 | 4.5 | 4.3 |
| EA | Left-Right | 4.9 | | 5.0 | 4.8 | |
| | Nationalism | 7.9 | 8.3 | 8.1 | 7.7 | |
| UpyD/UA | Left-Right | 7.6 | | | | 6.6 |
| | Nationalism | 2.5 | 2.6 | | | 2.4 |

Table 5: [Survey Results for Basque Parliament Election, 1994-2012](#)

| Year | Political Party | | | | | | | | | | N of Obs |
|------|--|-----------------|-------|-----------------|----------------|--------|------|------------|---------------|-------|----------|
| | Percent of Votes and Number of Seats Won | | | | | | | | | | |
| | PNV- EAJ | PSOE/ PSE-EE | PP | EH/HB EB/EHB | Green EB-IU | Aralar | EA | UPD/ UA | PCE / PCTV | Other | |
| 2012 | 37.1% | 18.8% | 5.8% | 28.9% | 8.5% | | | 0.9% | | 3.3% | 1,471 |
| 2009 | 39.3% | 32.0% | 6.6% | | 4.8% | 4.1% | 4.3% | 1.3% | | 7.6% | 1,204 |
| 2005 | 46.4% | 23.5% | 7.6% | | 8.5% | 3.8% | | 0.2% | 8.9% | 1.1% | 2,154 |
| 2001 | 55.5% | 14.0% | 7.2% | 9.6% | 6.4% | | | 7.2% | | 0.7% | 2,708 |
| 1998 | 36.4% | 12.9% | 12.8% | 22.8% | 7.0% | | 6.1% | 1.1% | | 1.0% | 1,090 |
| 1994 | 52.7% | 18.1% | 5.2% | 8.3% | 6.4% | | 4.5% | 1.8% | | 0.7% | 1,481 |

Table 6: Orientations and Vote for Party, 1994-2012

| Ideology | Nationalism (Scale: 1 = Minimal, 10 = Maximal) | | |
|-------------------|---|--------------|---------------|
| | Percent Voting for PNV | | |
| | Min (1 to 3) | Mod (4 to 6) | Max (7 to 10) |
| Left (1 to 3) | 5.2% | 20.2% | 31.2% |
| Moderate (4 to 6) | 10.8% | 51.1% | 86.4% |
| Right (7 to 10) | 5.0% | 30.7% | 91.1% |
| | Percent Voting for PSE | | |
| Left (1 to 3) | 64.6% | 32.9% | 2.0% |
| Moderate (4 to 6) | 55.0% | 27.0% | 2.3% |
| Right (7 to 10) | 2.5% | 6.3% | 0.9% |
| | Percent Voting for PP | | |
| Left (1 to 3) | 1.2% | 0.9% | 0.0% |
| Moderate (4 to 6) | 18.9% | 8.0% | 0.4% |
| Right (7 to 10) | 67.5% | 44.9% | 1.8% |
| | Percent Voting for EH/HB/Bildu* | | |
| Left (1 to 3) | 9.5% | 15.2% | 60.9% |
| Moderate (4 to 6) | 1.0% | 3.7% | 7.2% |
| Right (7 to 10) | 0.4% | 1.0% | 3.7% |
| | Percent Voting for IU-EB/Green | | |
| Left (1 to 3) | 18.5% | 29.8% | 5.0% |
| Moderate (4 to 6) | 3.0% | 5.6% | 1.0% |
| Right (7 to 10) | 0.0% | 3.9% | 0.9% |
| | Percent Voting for UPyD/UA | | |
| Left (1 to 3) | 0.6% | 0.2% | 0.0% |
| Moderate (4 to 6) | 3.8% | 1.1% | 0.2% |
| Right (7 to 10) | 19.5% | 8.5% | 0.8% |

* Only for 1994, 1998, 2001, and 2012, when these parties were on the ballot.

Table 7: [Explaining Vote, 1998-2012, Multinomial Logit Analysis](#)

| Year | Choice | Independent Variable | | | | |
|------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| | | Nationalism b (SE) | Left-Right b (SE) | Economy b (SE) | Euskerra b (SE) | Population b (SE) |
| 2012 | PSE v PNV | -.57 (.04) | -.79 (.09) | -.02 (.12) | -.98 (.24) | -.06 (.08) |
| | PP v PNV | -.79 (.10) | 1.03 (.15) | .26 (.24) | -.88 (.56) | .15 (.14) |
| | Bildu v PNV | .17 (.04) | -1.33 (.08) | -.18 (.12) | .88 (.20) | .20 (.07) |
| | IU v PNV | -.46 (.06) | -1.23 (.12) | -.09 (.18) | -.30 (.34) | -.05 (.18) |
| 2009 | PSE v PNV | -.82 (.06) | -.81 (.10) | -.07 (.13) | -.59 (.24) | .19 (.08) |
| | PP v PNV | -.77 (.08) | 1.04 (.16) | .12 (.20) | -1.17 (.56) | .44 (.14) |
| | IU v PNV | -.48 (.08) | -1.54 (.16) | .40 (.20) | -.85 (.40) | .07 (.13) |
| 2005 | PSE v PNV | -.98 (.06) | -.29 (.09) | .25 (.15) | -.88 (.24) | .10 (.12) |
| | PP v PNV | -1.37 (.11) | 1.56 (.19) | .49 (.23) | -1.55 (.54) | .39 (.22) |
| | IU v PNV | -.68 (.06) | -.85 (.11) | .32 (.18) | -.24 (.26) | .18 (.14) |
| | PCTV v PNV | .13 (.07) | -1.37 (.11) | .58 (.16) | .75 (.25) | .19 (.12) |
| 2001 | PSE v PNV | -.88 (.06) | -.44 (.08) | .25 (.15) | | .10 (.12) |
| | PP v PNV | -.98 (.07) | .78 (.09) | .36 (.18) | | .75 (.16) |
| | IU v PNV | -.63 (.07) | -.78 (.11) | .26 (.21) | | .56 (.21) |
| | EH v PNV | .32 (.07) | -.90 (.11) | .46 (.16) | | -.35 (.12) |
| 1998 | PSE v PNV | -.63 (.08) | -.77 (.11) | | -1.45 (.20)* | .08 (.10) |
| | PP v PNV | -.84 (.10) | .56 (.11) | | -1.17 (.20) | .10 (.12) |
| | IU v PNV | -.53 (.06) | -1.24 (.13) | | -.50 (.22) | .46 (.14) |

* Identity in 1998 is coded by 1 (Spanish), 2 (More Spanish than Basque), 3 (Half Spanish, half Basque), 4 (More Basque than Spanish) to 5 (Basque).