

Violence and Political Institutions in the Basque Country

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Introduction

A credible analysis or proposal to solve the problem of the treatment of violence in divided societies has to be based in a good understanding of the micro-foundations of the political mobilization in these societies. Much of the engineering models seem to have been based on rather strong simplifications of the electoral behaviour of the citizens. This paper aims to contribute to the understanding of the underlying political competition in divided societies with a neo-downsian model of party competition that is based on the interpretation of Tsebelis (1991) of the consociationalism. According to the degree of monopoly control of the representation in each segment, the political elite can easily undertake the accommodation politics. If the political preferences of each segment of a divided society can be represented in a single dimension, the monopolistic elite can choose any point of the space. If the political market is sufficiently open (i.e. there are no strong institutional barriers to representation) and the national issue becomes salient, the elite has to take into account the position of potential or actual rivals. This situation seems to introduce more polarization and destabilization in the political system. This increase of the polarization is related to the phenomenon of outbidding, a typical problem of political competition in divided societies. But this paper argues that the polarization of the electoral competition is actually no so bad if it is a path for the pacification of the violence outside the democratic institutions. In the long term, the only definitive way to end the support to violence is to increase the democratic debate and information. Therefore, even if in the short term it is perceived that there is an increase of the difficulties in the electoral and parliamentary arenas, it is better to give incentives to the radicals to enter into the democratic institutions by making them less restrictive and promoting the electoral competition.

This model is applied to the case of the Basque Country to illustrate its interpretative ability. The proposed model helps to simplify and to understand the strategic moves of the political parties in the regional elections since the democratic transition. The intention is that some of the apparently bizarre traits of the politics in this polity will become clearer.

This paper is structured as follows. First, Tsebelis' model of consociationalism is introduced, followed by an interpretation from a neo-downsian model and a critical assessment of Rabushka and Shepsle's model of ethnic conflict in divided societies. In the empirical application, the neo-downsian model is applied to the case of the Basque country. The electoral competition in the regional elections is presented through the comparative electoral results attained by the different party blocks and political parties. Then the ideological dimensionality of the politico-ideological space in the Basque country is assessed through a multidimensional scaling of the distances perceived by the Basque electorate to the different parties. Finally, the strategic movements of

the parties in the national identity dimension are interpreted according to the neo-downsian model of party competition.

The consociationalism according to Tsebelis and the neo-Downsian translation

Tsebelis (1991) conceives the consociationalism as a problem of elite decision-making in a context in which the masses impose significant constraints on their representatives. He wants to establish the conditions under which political elites in segmented societies are able to pursue “accommodating” strategies, or strategies aiming to settle divisive issues when only a minimal consensus exists (Lijphart 1977, 1968). Tsebelis’ central assumption of his model is that political elites participate in games in two different arenas: the parliamentary and the electoral. “(P)olitical elites engage in a parliamentary game that is embedded or nested inside an electoral game.” (Tsebelis 1990:160).

Tsebelis takes into account two crucial factors that affect the way in which elites weight the parliamentary and electoral arenas. The first is about the kind of information that the masses have about the elites’ behaviour. If the elites can inform and rhetorically convince the masses of their reasons, they can then transform the game of the followers into a chicken game. However, if the followers have information about the elites’ behaviour and do not approve it, this decreases the elites’ freedom to play accommodation. On the other side, the elites’ freedom increases with the lack of information of the followers because, for instance, the issues are too complex or are not publicly salient. The second factor is the degree of elite competition for the representation of the followers. According to Tsebelis’ model of consociationalism the characteristic element is that elites have monopoly control of representation in their segments and, therefore, each segment of the electorate is not able to reward or punish the elites. The fact that elites are largely unconstrained by the electoral arena explains how elites in deeply divided societies are able to reach consociational agreements in the parliamentary arena.

Tsebelis identifies three factors that influence the availability of rival elites: salience of issues, costs for new elites to enter the electoral game (the inclusiveness of the electoral law), and the resources controlled by the elite (existence of strong organizations, or endorsement by other organizations). If elites are menaced by the potential entry of rival new elites, they can discourage them taking such a position in the political space impeding that the challengers become more popular than themselves. If challengers are interested in acting as a blackmail group, their entry can be prevented by institutional constraints that can affect the electoral level.

In sum, if elites enjoy a monopoly of representation inside the pillar or the information costs regarding elite behaviour are high, the elites are less constrained by the electoral arena and play a chicken game. If there is elite competition inside the pillar and information costs are low, the elites have to conform to the demands of the masses and a prisoners’ dilemma or deadlock game results. Tsebelis states that it is reasonable to think that information costs and competition are related. Strong competition among rival politicians will reduce information costs and reach the masses.

This model can be traduced and represented with a variation of the Downsian spatial model of electoral competition. In fact, Tsebelis himself uses the spatial logic inside a social segment with one dimension of conflict to show how the elite of a social segment is conditioned by the

presence of a rival elite to follow the median voter preference of the electorate. But, in segmented societies there is sense to construct a composite spatial model in the same line as Michael Laver (1976) induced an ideology space to describe the electoral competition in Northern Ireland. For Laver, the main difficulty to construct a single ideological space came from the sectarian nature of the communication system that dominated in each social segment. Therefore, Laver proposed the use of two independent discrete spaces: one for Catholics and another for Protestants, assuming that occupants of one do not even consider the existence of the other when deciding how to cast their vote. In general, this means that political parties in divided societies can be ordered in a dimension taking into account their position with respect to a pole that represent the defence of their segment interests regardless the interests of the other segments.

If there are two groups or segments, A and B, the respective ideological space will be as follows:

| A regardless -----A Moderate |
| B regardless ----- B Moderate|

Although the poles are not the opposite ends of a spectrum and are almost discrete and mutually exclusive alternatives, parties would take extremist and moderate positions in each segment. The spaces corresponding to each segment can also be considered conjointly and a single one-dimensional space appears.

If there is the possibility of vote transfers between segments, i.e. that some moderate voters of one segment will vote for parties of the other segment, the space can be represented this way:

| A regardless ----- A moderate |
| B moderate ----- B regardless |

If for simplicity vote transfers between segments are precluded, then the ideological space takes this form:

| A regardless ----- A moderate || B moderate ----- B regardless |

In an ideal consociational society where the elites have the monopoly of representation in each segment, and without electoral abstention, the hegemonic parties will locate themselves wherever they like on the ideological space of each segment. As far as they are interested in maintaining the political system (or the interests linked to it), they will tend to be located in the moderate centre of the conjoint voters distribution. Note that this result will apply independently of the shape of the voters' distribution on the ideological dimension of each segment. According to Tsebelis' approach, this centrist location has to be understood as a conditional position with respect the other elites' location. Even when an elite has reached an agreement with the other elites to share the power and to accommodate, they are always tempted to defect from cooperation (that is to move their location near the preferences of their segment of the electorate), because they are playing a chicken game. They are tempted to initiate a conflict and reach their more preferred output. Due to this, the institutional solutions of the consociational societies will try to reduce the incentives of abandoning the cooperative result. Nevertheless, the elites in this monopoly of representation situation are expected to reach a consociational agreement which is a moderate convergent output.

The factors that explain that the elite will give more weight to the electoral arena are identified by Tsebelis. The most important factor is the menace of rival elites. If the electoral system (and other institutional traits) allows for more than a viable party in each segment, then the old party loses its capacity of choosing any location of the ideological space. The typical result of the simplest one-dimensional spatial model predicts here a convergence to the median elector. If we are looking to the previous centrist parties, the entry of new radical rivals in a segment causes the polarization of this segment. If the rivals enter in each segment, then the political system experiences a generalized polarization with respect to the previous monopolistic situation. Therefore, unless there is a clear majority of one group in the society, it will be more difficult to form a government and their policy proposals will be more unacceptable for each segment of the electorate.

Naturally, this pessimistic evaluation depends crucially on the validity of measuring the polarization of the political system taking into account only the electoral results and the conventional politics. But in more complex situations, where violence and radicalization of part of the society are extreme, it does not seem equally valid to strictly focus on the electoral arena to evaluate the polarization.

Let us imagine that the polar extremes of each segment are reluctant to accept the moderate policies pursued by the centrist consociational parties, and that they are unable (because of the institutional barriers) or unwilling to participate in the electoral contests. It is likely that the more extremist, radical and intransigent parts of each segment will be tempted to create organizations outside the electoral institutions and the conventional politics to solve the conflict and recur to violence. It is then conceivable to observe a coalition of the centrist parties doing moderate policies with respect to the main political cleavage and, at the same time, to observe groups outside the conventional political system using violence to influence the political results. If we apply a measure of the electoral polarization to this situation it is possible that we will obtain a very moderate one. But this measure will hide (or at least will not take into account) the impact of extremist violence on the political system as a whole.

Let us now imagine that the extremist groups decide that it is worth to enter into the electoral competition. They would organize new parties (or redesign pre-existing parties with compatible ideologies) in order to compete seriously in the elections. This process can be seen as a move from the extreme of the social segment ideological dimension towards the centre. As this move has to be perceived as a menace from the moderate party, it will respond with a symmetric movement towards the median voter of their segment.

When this process starts at one social segment, it is likely that it will spread or affect in some way the other side as well. The electoral competition will promote the political debate about the identity dimension and the available alternatives. This debate will raise the amount and complexity of the information available in the entire electorate. The increase in the saliency of the identity dimension can be seen as an opportunity for the extremist parties of the other social segment to compete electorally. Therefore, if the extremists of one social segment are successful in their centrist move, it is probable that they will spread to the other side.

The entry of the extremist parties in the electoral competition will certainly increase electoral polarization, as mentioned before. But when there is an enduring situation of violence and alienation of the political system, the participation of the extremists in the political institutions is far better in terms of creating the condition of possibility to solve the extreme political polarization and conflict.

Now the total radicalization of the system decreases and the existence of a political debate makes it more difficult to lie. The public (or publics) are more informed and the automatic mechanisms of democracy can begin to work more efficiently. A progressive reinforced decrease of the radicalization based on ethnic issues may now begin because they are better known by the electorate and at the same time are less available for political manipulation. Hence, the structure of the preferences of the different social segments will tend to be more chicken-like than the prisoners' dilemma or deadlock games. On the other hand, the extremist political parties are probably the only political agents that can persuade effectively the more radicalized sectors of each social group to abandon violence.

The neo-downsian model and the Rabushka and Shepsle ethnic conflict model

This neo-downsian model can be seen is a positive counterpoint to the classic ethnic conflict model proposed by Rabushka and Shepsle (1974: chap 3). Their semi-formalized dynamic model or paradigm supposes that there is an irreversible process that starts from an initial period of ethnic cooperation in the plural society and finishes in a conflictive situation of electoral machinations, mistrust and violence, passing through some periods characterized by the demand generation, the increased salience of ethnicity, the strategy of outbidding and the decline of the initial multiethnic coalition. In Rabushka and Shepsle's model (RSM) the ethnic preferences of divided societies are different from the political preferences typical of pluralist societies. They are not "real", but they are "created" by the politicians and the community leaders that exert control over the definition of political alternatives (see especially, Rabushka and Shepsle 1974:77 note 27). Politicians reinforce the perceptions of incompatible communal values, and the resulting intra-group politics unleash the logic of outbidding that ultimately destroys the role of the political parties as brokerage institutions which are converted into corporate representatives of communal values. In contrast to the pluralism of perceptions that assumes the neo-downsian model, the RSM assumes that each ethnic group has a perceptual frame common to all actors. "In the plural society the lines of conflict are drawn, hardened, and in full view of everyone." (Rabushka and Shepsle 1974:69) In addition, ethnic preferences are intensely held. This intensity justifies modelling them as convex functions, which means that ethnic agents are risk acceptant with respect to the range of alternatives. This characteristic of the preferences explains why the initial cooperative equilibrium is so fragile and that when this equilibrium is broken, the result is so strongly biased and stable. "The plural society, constrained by the preferences of its citizens, does not provide fertile soil for democratic values or stability." (Rabushka and Shepsle 1974: 92)

Rabushka and Shepsle realize that their model is not complete because it has two limitations. First, they have lacunae in the articulation of the role of the political entrepreneurs and the issue of the preference formation. Second, the modelled dynamic process may be affected unpredictably by exogenous events. The question of the preferences' origin and their stability is the key point that differs in the neo-downsian model of electoral competition in segmented societies. This model supposes that the political preferences of the plural societies can be

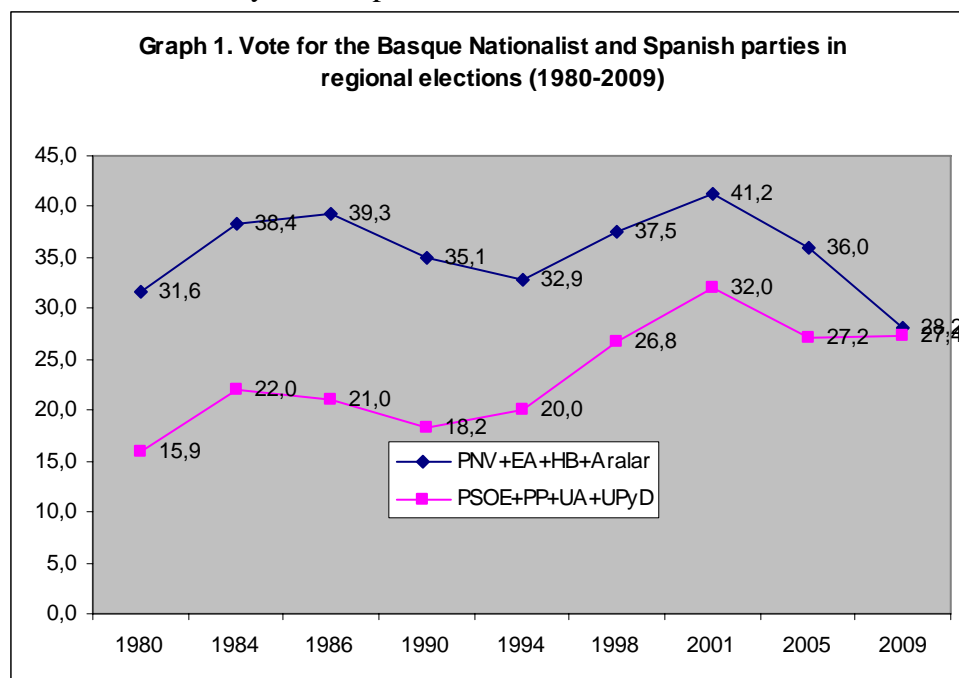
modelled in the same way as in normal pluralist societies (i.e. non segmented societies). The other two points, the lack of a political entrepreneurs' theory and, especially, the role of the exogenous events can be applied equally to the neo-downsian model.

In the next section the case of the Basque country will be explored in order to see which of the two approaches is more coherent to account for the behaviour of the political parties and the electorate.

The case of Euskadi

The current Basque political map has been understood as the result of the consolidation of a polarized pluralism party system that is accompanied by the survival of a significant anti-system movement (e.g. Llera 1994, 1999). Since the democratic transition, the relative polarization of the party system has progressively increased. A two-block configuration of parties of similar magnitude divided by the national cleavage emerged.

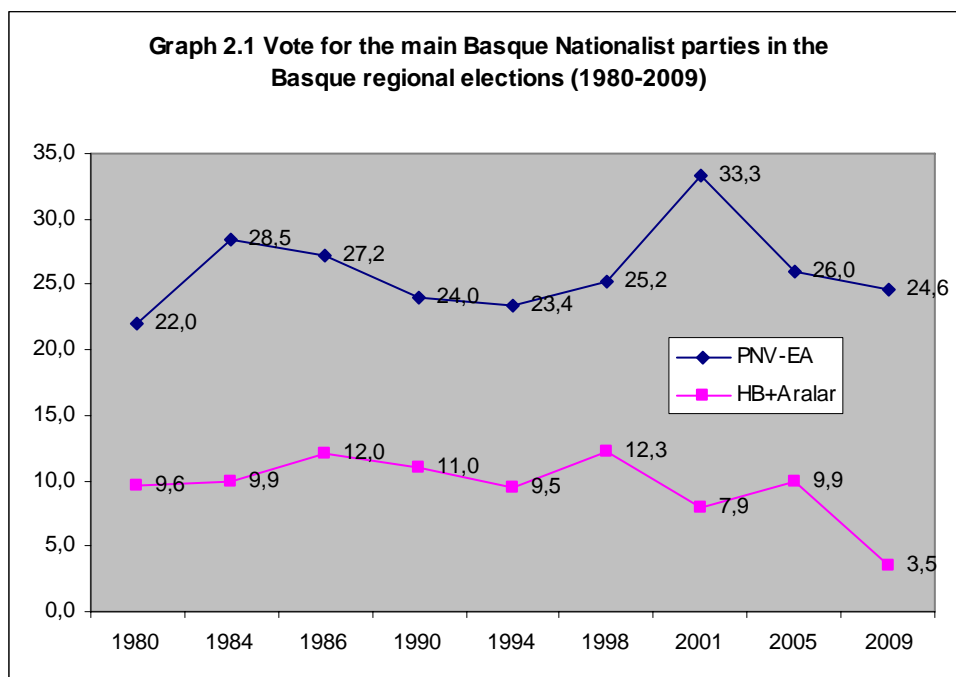
In order to gain a better understanding of the context and consequences of the strategic movements of the parties in the two segments of voters, it will be necessary to have a look at the evolution of the electoral support that the different parties have experienced in the Basque regional elections. Graph 1 shows the ebb and flow of mobilization in each party block. The advantage in vote mobilization of the nationalist Basque parties with respect to the national Spanish parties has decreased slightly. In fact, in the last elections, when the radical left-wing radical Basque nationalist party (Herri Batasuna) was completely banished from the elections, the Spanish block grew to attain the same level of votes as the Basque block. It is worth noting that last cycle of increased party mobilization began on the Spanish parties' side in the 1994 regional election, i.e. one election before the Basque block began its own cycle of mobilization in 1998. As we will see later, the beginning of the Spanish parties' higher mobilization is the moment in which the Conservative Popular Party first challenged successfully the pre-eminence to the Socialist Party in the Spanish block.



Graphs 2.1 and 2.2 show how the vote in each social group block was split between their main political parties. Although the data are percentages of the vote over the electoral census, both graphs show a remarkable negative correlation between the moderate party and the extremist party vote shares.

On the Basque nationalist side (graph 2.1), the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) is the biggest party of the Basque segment. It is a Christian Democratic party that traditionally has played a centrist role. Alone or in coalition, it has always been a member of the Basque regional governments since the first elections up to the last elections in which the Spanish Socialist Party has formed government with the parliamentary support of the Spanish Conservative Popular Party. With less than half of the vote for the Basque Nationalist Party, the left nationalist radical party Herri Batasuna (HB), which has been accused to be the political wing of the terrorist group ETA, shows a fairly stable percentage of the vote until the 1998 election, that is a higher share of the electorate. After this peak, the forces that have represented the radical Basque nationalist left have decreased in their share of vote. In fact, this force was barred to take part in the last regional elections (even when using another political label), and proposed its followers to vote the list of the banned party provoking almost 100,000 null votes. The vote displayed in the graph corresponds to the anti-violence party Aralar born inside the lines of the Basque National Liberation Movement.

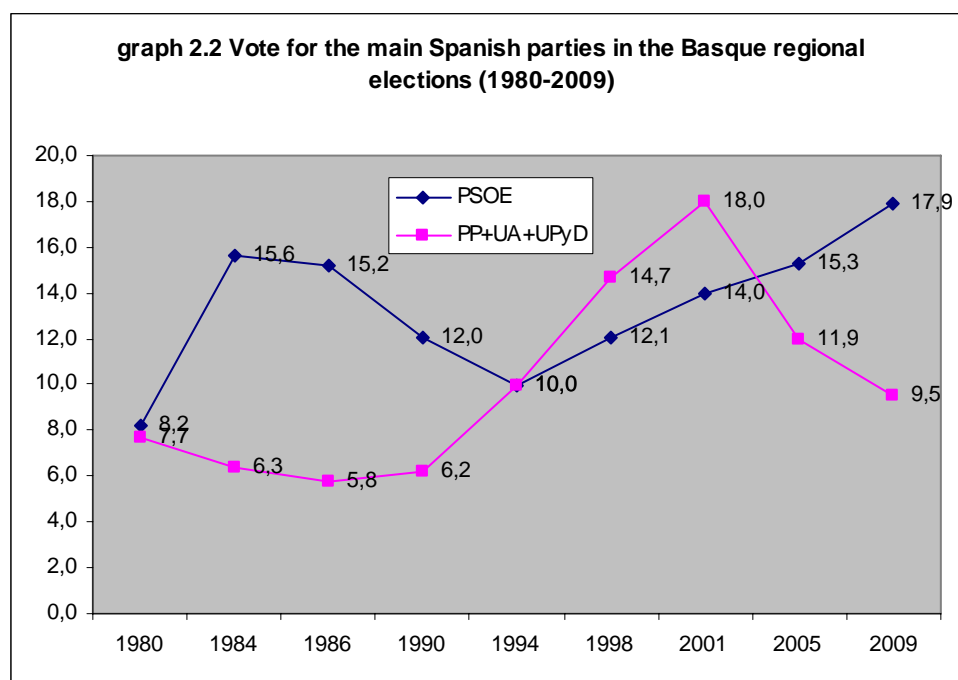
Both series of data show a negative correlation mostly at the beginning and, especially, at the end of the period. The connexion between the vote of the moderate and the extremist parties is confirmed by the vote transition matrices based on survey studies. An important part of the voters of the Basque segment can be considered changing their vote between the two parties. In the first elections, Herri Batasuna was the second most voted party, however, its absence of the parliament allowed the PNV to form a minority government. This policy of no participation in the parliamentary field began to change in the mid-90s. An important turning point was the support all the Basque nationalist parties gave to the pact of Lizarra in 1998. The objective of this pact was to reach peace. It was largely and explicitly influenced by the peace process in Northern Ireland. In the context of the pact, the terrorist group ETA declared a truce. In 1998, PNV and Eusko Alkartasuna formed a coalition government with the formal parliamentary support of Euskal Herritarrok (an electoral coalition of HB and other left radical nationalists). In the next elections (2001), after the rupture of the truce by ETA, HB lost almost a half of their votes while the PNV reached its maximum. At this time, HB converted into Batasuna, and Aralar, a party that explicitly reneged of violence, split. In the 2005 elections, HB was banned from participation and recommended the vote for a small historical party: the Communist Party of the Basque Homeland.



In sum, the lecture of graph 2.1 shows how the vote for parties of the Basque segment is connected. In the mid 90s the left radical nationalist leaders felt that they had to change. The support for the violence of ETA was declining. The peace process in Northern Ireland was used as a focal point in the coordination of the strategies of the Basque nationalist parties: a superior equilibrium, without violence, seemed possible. The willingness of the extremist party to moderate their discourse and policy radicalized the position of the moderate party. However, the process was truncated by the intervention of the Spanish justice banning the extremist party.

The graph 2.2 shows the evolution of the Spanish parties vote. Three periods can be distinguished according to the electoral advantage of the Socialist Party or the Popular Party. Significantly, the advantage of one party parallels the advantage of this party in the Spanish general elections. In the first period, the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) was the party of reference to the Spanish segment. The maximum was in 1984, just after the 1982 absolute majority of the Socialist party in the Spanish elections. In 1986, the party won the plurality of the seats in the Basque parliament and formed a coalition government led by the Basque Nationalist Party (that had suffered a split led by the former president of the Basque Government). After this maximum the Socialist Party decreased its capacity of attracting electors but this decrease did not quite benefit the Conservative Party which actually was perceived as a right-wing extremist party, direct heir of the Francoist regime. In 1993, the Socialist party absorbed the left-wing Basque nationalist party Euskadiko Eskerra, trying to be more attractive to the voters of the Basque nationalist segment. But according to the net results in the next elections and the survey studies, this movement was unable to increase the vote. In 1994, the crisis of the Spanish Socialist party at state level, in part boosted by the efficient opposition of the Popular Party led by future Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar which in 1996 gained the Spanish national elections by using its “trip to the centre” slogan, triggered the increase of votes to the Conservative party, menacing the dominance of the Socialist party in Spanish segment of the electorate. The advance of the Conservative party provoked a crisis in the Socialist party. The pro-Basque leader, Mr. Jauregui, was substituted by Mr. Redondo Terreros at the party congress

held in 1997, which broke the government coalition with the PNV in 1998, some time before the next regional elections. In 1998, the advantage of the Conservatives was obvious. The Socialist party decided to collaborate with the PP to face the Basque nationalist front resulting from the pact of Lizarra. The victory of the Basque nationalist party in 2001 implied the demission of Mr Redondo Terreros. Due to the change in the leadership, the Socialist party returned to more moderate positions. The next regional elections were held after the defeat of the Popular Party in the Spanish national elections, after the controversial attribution by the Popular Party of the train bombing massacre which took place on 11 March 2004 to the Basque terrorist organization ETA. In the 2005 regional elections, the Basque branch of the PP returned to a subordinate position in the Spanish segment of the electorate. With no credible menace on the Spanish flank, the Socialist party maintained the policy of moderation, entering in peace talks with ETA. Finally, in the last regional elections, held in 2009, the Socialists gained their maximum share of the electorate and, although the plurality of the votes went to the PNV, was able to form a minority government with the parliamentary support of the Spanish conservatives.



In the previous description two points have to be highlighted. The first is the general interpretability of the party strategic manoeuvres and the electoral results in terms of the electoral incentives of each segment of the electorate. With this very simple scheme in mind, it is possible to make an intelligible explanation of such a complex political world as in the Basque Country. The second point is the impact of the exterior events in changing the focus points on the internal politics: On the Basque nationalist segment, the peace process of Northern Ireland, whereas on the Spanish segment, the connection between the viable strategies inside the Basque country and the electoral results in Spanish state cannot properly be considered an “exterior event” as the Conservative and the Socialist Spanish parties are the Basque branches of these parties. Nevertheless, it has to be retained that the interests of the parties at state level constraint the strategic options at the regional level.

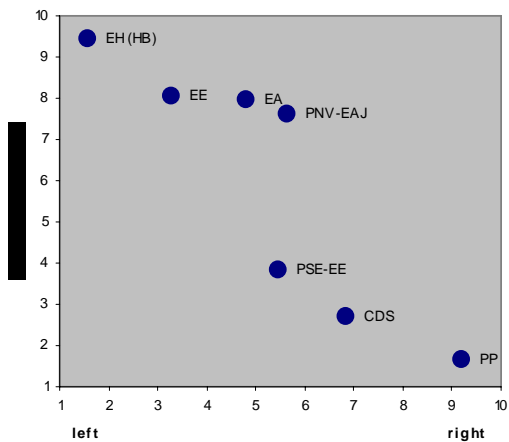
The next section intends to show how the evolution of the survey measures of the two main dimensions of conflict in the Basque country, the national and the left-right, reflect the strategic movements of the parties.

The ideological dimensions of electoral competition in the Basque Country

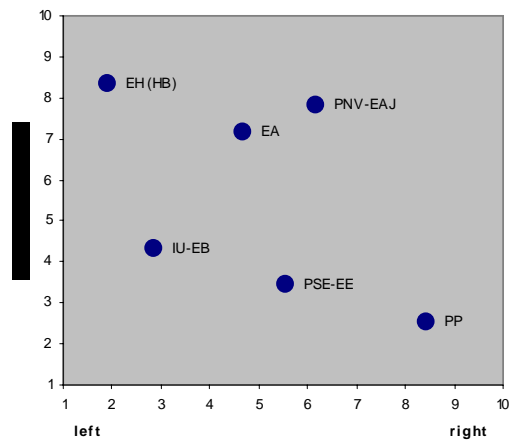
It is commonly assumed that the dimensions of conflict in the Basque country are the national and the traditional socio-economic cleavage, the left-right. The question of which dimension is the most important in the Basque political system has attracted some attention and debate in the Spanish political science literature. In this section three pieces of evidence are presented to show that the existence of two relatively well defined electoral segments, Basque and Spanish, can explain the strategic movements of the political forces in the Basque country. First, the results of a multidimensional scaling procedure of the perceived distances of the Basque electorate to the different political parties in 2006 will confirm the intuition that the Basque electoral competition space is indeed bi-dimensional, beyond the description of the journalists and the analysis of the academics. Second, the bi-dimensional maps of the mean location of the parties on the two dimensions will be shown. Finally, the evolution of the location of the political forces in the national dimension that better reflect the strategic movements of the parties will be presented.

Graphs 3 and 3.1 show the result of a multidimensional scaling procedure ($N= 2,872$ Stress = .07106; RSQ= .99495) applied to a random sample of the Basque electorate in 2006 (Basque Government Study). Graph 3.1 shows the conjoint distribution of the location of the parties and the location of the individuals in the bi-dimensional space. Graph 3 shows only the distribution of the parties. This late distribution demonstrates that the Spanish and the Basque parties fall apart in the political space. The only 'misplaced' party is the small Spanish communist party Esker Batua that is located among the Basque parties. However, this is not a great anomaly as this party was a member of the tri-party government coalition led by the PNV and it was apparently receiving a great share of the vote of the Basque Socialist Euskadiko Eskerra since this party had merged with the Spanish Socialist party. The horseshoe shape of the locations of the parties perfectly matches Laver's constructed single dimension of conflict. At one extreme there is the Spanish Conservative party PP, at the other, Batasuna. Both segments get in contact through the Spanish Socialist party and the PNV. The croissant-like distribution of the electorate (graph 3.1) reflects the linearity of the space. The less populated space between the horns is formed by the indifferent electors that tend to place themselves at the centre of the political space.

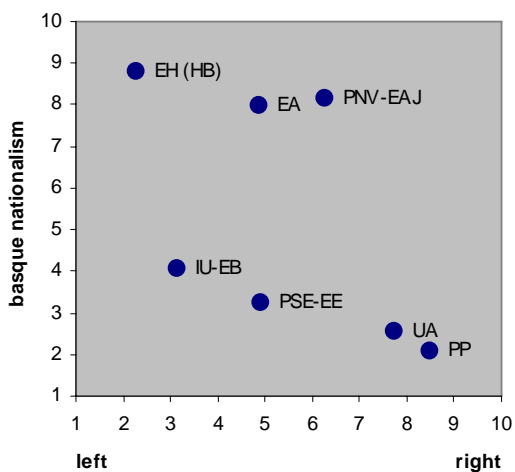
Euskadi 1986



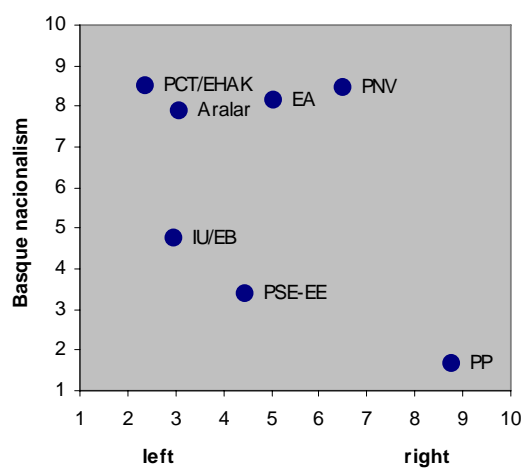
Euskadi 1994



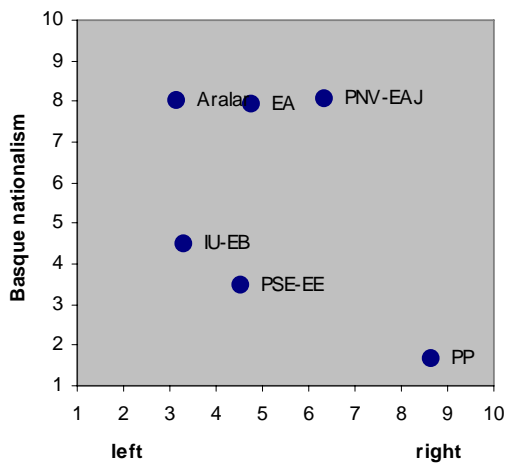
Euskadi 1998



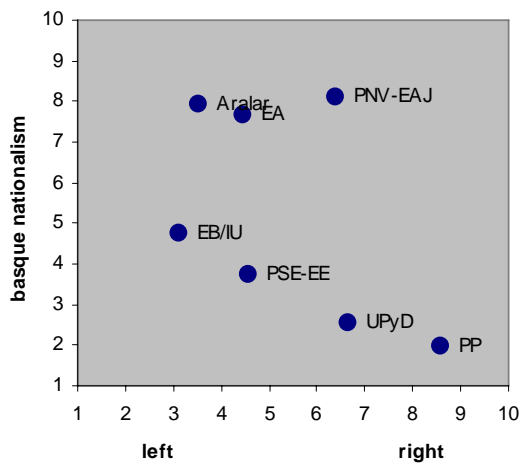
Euskadi 2005



Euskadi 2009 (pre-electoral)

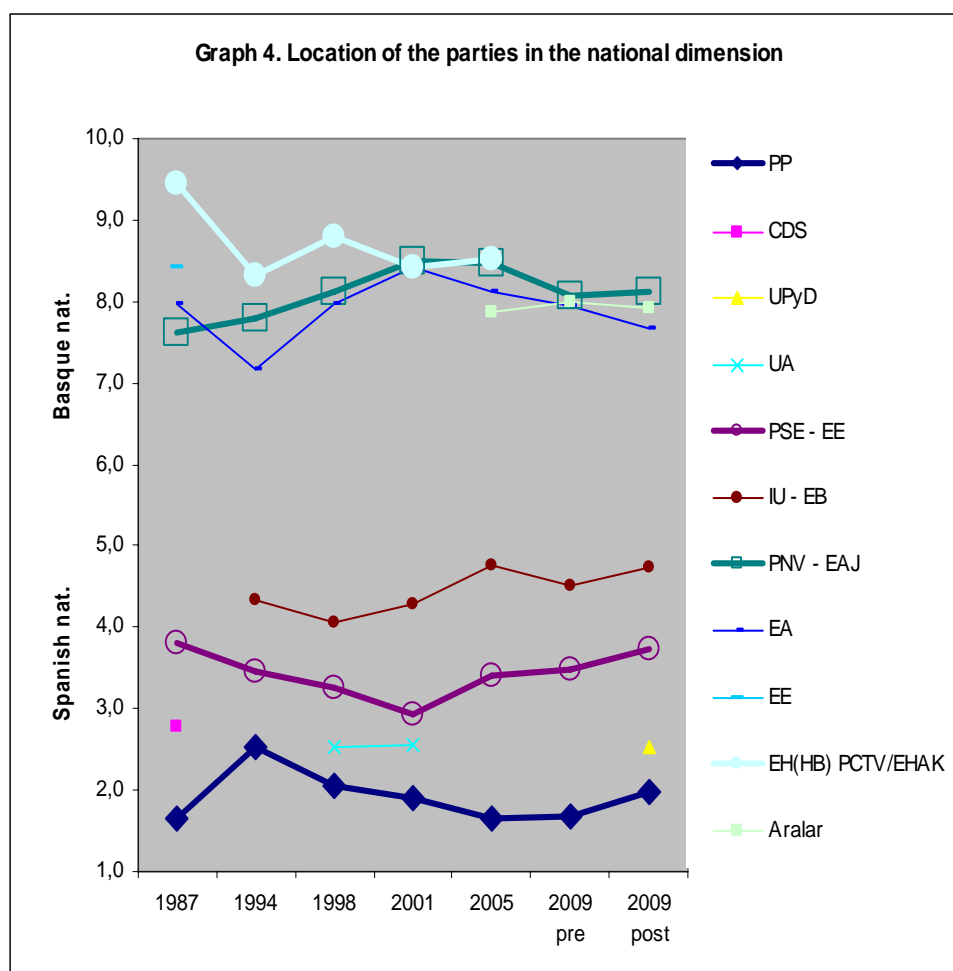


Euskadit 2009 (post-electoral)



The panel of the locations of the political parties in the bi-dimensional space shows clearly the complexity of the ideological space. The national dimension always divides the parties into two blocks: Spanish and Basques. Due to this it seems generally insufficient to use a single left-right dimension to capture the different ideological positions of the parties in the system. Only the first map (1986) shows a visible strong correlation of the two dimensions during the Socialist and PNV government coalition. In the rest of the panels, the Basque side of the maps shows a progressive disconnection between the two dimensions, while on the Spanish side there remains a correlation between the right and Spanish nationalism.

As the panels are too complex and difficult to analyze, it is better to focus on the movements of the parties in the national dimension (graph 4).



Although there is a remarkable stability in the relative positions of the parties, the small movements along the years are, first, significant, second, match the description of the evolution of the electoral support of the parties perfectly, and third, correspond to the predictions of the theoretical model of party competition in a segmented society.

At the starting point (1987), the centrist parties (PNV and PSE-EE) that were members of a regional government coalition are in the closest position of all the series whereas the extremist parties (HB and PP) are very far in the ideological space and do not menace their electorates. In the next survey (1994) the landscape changes radically: the extremist parties jumped to the centre of the dimension and the centrist parties responded by beginning a movement to the extremes. From the 1998 post-electoral survey onwards, the Spanish and the Basque side behave differently. On the Basque side, the PNV continued moving to the nationalist extreme until full convergence with the positions of HB in 2001 and 2005, reflecting the pact of Lizarra and the support of the left radical nationalists to the tri-party. The last surveys show a moderate centrist move of the PNV. According to the model of competition, this movement responds to the lesser competence from the extreme because the extremist party was banned.

On the Spanish side, the centrist party (PSE) responded to the centrist pressure of the extremist party (PP) with an extremist movement. But instead of stabilizing its position in a more centrist location the extremist party returned progressively to a more extremist location. The Socialist party accompanied the Conservative party in this extremist drift until the 2001 elections, when, after suffering a clear electoral defeat, they returned slowly to the centre of the dimension. The Conservative party had lost its credibility of defending the Spanish ethnic interests in the Spanish segment after the 2004 defeat at state level. Therefore, the Socialist return to the centrist positions was relatively safe and, in fact, was rewarded with an increase of the vote and opportunity of forming a minority government in 2009.

Conclusion

The neo-downsian model of competition helps to understand the political competition in a segmented society as the Basque country. I think that it also helps to see that, at least in some circumstances, the only way to solve the problems of the segmented societies in an enduring way is to grant the minorities more access to the democratic institutions. More inclusivity in the democratic institutions can help to introduce in the political system a higher degree of good instability in the political results that characterizes real democracies.

The work presented here is very preliminary and more effort is needed to try to assess the merits of the neo-downsian model by applying the hypothesis derived from its assumptions to the electoral behaviour of the Basque voters and parties.

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