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SPS 2009/01

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

PARTY COMPETITION IN THE SPANISH REGIONS

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EUI Working Paper **SPS** 2009/01

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ISSN 1725-6755

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Printed in Italy
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)
Italy
www.eui.eu
cadmus.eui.eu

Abstract

Party politics in multi-level systems has become a growing research field in political science (see Hough et al, 2003; Hough and Jeffery, 2006), but has rarely focused on comparing structures of multi-level party competition. Regional party competition is particularly important in political systems where state decentralisation has significantly shifted the electoral and coalitional incentives available to party actors, whether statewide or non-statewide. This paper will compare structures of party competition in the Spanish regions, using three principal dimensions of analysis: electoral support for statewide parties in regional elections; patterns of coalition formation at regional level; and patterns of alternation in regional government. The paper finds that multi-level party competition in Spain displays 'vertical' (central-regional) and 'horizontal' (inter-regional) incongruence (Thorlakson, 2006; 2007). This incongruence has never undermined party competition at central level, due partly to the weakness of systemic linkages between regional and central party systems. The main exception is Catalonia, where systemic linkages with Spanish politics are so strong that all parties (statewide and non-statewide) have sought to pursue a strategy of coalitional congruence. Divergent patterns of regional party competition have encouraged some regional branches of statewide parties to become more autonomous from the central leadership, both in their electoral strategies and coalitional choices, while others have remained closely integrated with the central leadership. This has significantly reinforced the degree of internal asymmetry in the multi-level organisation of statewide parties in Spain.

Keywords

Spanish Politics; Party Competition; Political Parties; Multi-level Politics; Regionalism

Introduction: Statewide Parties and Multi-level Party Competition

Party behaviour in multi-level political systems is a subject of growing research interest, particularly in established democracies undergoing extensive processes of state decentralisation (Deschouwer, 2003; Hopkin, 2003). These have transformed centralised unitary states into more decentralised systems with federal features (Moreno, 1997; Stepan, 2001), and are driven by bottom-up pressures from political actors in regions with nationalist cleavages (Keating, 2001). Decentralisation poses a dual challenge to parties that compete across the state territory ('statewide parties'). Statewide parties (SWP) may face an internal challenge from regional politicians, who will use the enhanced resources of regional governments to develop their own powerbase, and may demand greater autonomy or recognition from the central leadership. SWP may also face an external challenge from parties that compete exclusively in a restricted territory ('non-statewide parties'). Non-statewide parties (NSWP) can defend the interests of the territory more powerfully than SWP, since they are not bound by ties with a central leadership, and do not need to balance the interests of competing regions. Internal and external challenges can potentially undermine the effectiveness of SWP in decentralised political systems, and may encourage them to develop competitive responses that involve greater autonomy for regional party branches (Roller and van Houten, 2003). Yet party leaders may be unwilling to pursue this option because it was precisely the 'nationalisation' of electoral politics that allowed party organisations in Western Europe to create stable party systems (Caramani, 2004), making internal party decentralisation a risky process with uncertain gains. Pressures for organisational decentralisation will therefore be primarily bottom-up, as regional politicians develop organisational strategies that allow them to compete effectively in regional party systems. This can include the pursuit of innovative coalitions, the consolidation of strong regional party leaders, the formulation of policies that exclusively serve regional interests, and the articulation (or defence) of strong territorial demands. While these may benefit the regional party branch, they may also place the relationship with the central party under strain, particularly if they undermine party objectives at central level. The extent to which central and regional party interests can be reconciled needs to be understood in light of the competitive features of central and regional party systems. Yet regional party competition is very rarely compared, although it forms a component of more general case studies (see Hough et al, 2003; Hough and Jeffery, 2006).

This paper will analyse and compare structures of regional party competition, adapting the framework used by Lori Thorlakson (2006, 2007) to compare the relative congruence of multi-level party systems. Thorlakson compares party systems in their 'vertical' congruence (i.e. differences between central and regional level) and 'horizontal' congruence (i.e. differences between regional party systems). Thorlakson (2006) advances three dimensions of party system congruence: similarity of competing parties; similarity of core party system structures; and similarity of aggregate electoral behaviour. These need to be evaluated in different political contexts, characterised not only by variations in the level and type of state decentralisation, but also strong variations in the internal characteristics of political parties, which may possess very different organisational linkages between territorial levels. Multi-level systems can be characterised by the collapse of SWP and their fragmentation into NSWP (e.g. Belgium); the existence of SWP with weak or inexistent organisational linkages between territorial levels (e.g. Canada); or the existence of strong SWP with close organisational linkages between territorial levels (e.g. Germany). The question of organisational linkages in multi-level politics is closely related to the question of systemic linkages (i.e. the relationship between different party systems), which remains an entirely unexplored theme in the multi-level politics literature. The relationship between decentralisation and political parties is by no means unidirectional, since parties can mould decentralising processes *to serve their political interests*. This may have unintended consequences, as evident in the United Kingdom where the Labour Party has suffered intra-party disputes ever since it created devolved governments in Scotland and Wales, and instituted a directly elected mayor of London (Hopkin and Bradbury, 2006).

The complex relationship between decentralisation and political parties is most fascinating in multi-national states where SWP with strong organizational linkages compete against NSWP that exploit territorial cleavages. Party competition in these multi-level systems will produce significant pressures for SWP to adjust their organisational structures and strategies (Roller and van Houten, 2003), which may affect their positions on the territorial organisation of the state. This is more likely in federalising systems where no real consensus exists on state design, and where the decentralising process is open-ended and asymmetrical (Moreno, 1997). An ideal case for studying regional party competition is Spain, where SWP dominate politics at central level and retain hierarchically structured organisations (Biezen and Hopkin, 2004), but must compete with NSWP that are powerful actors in regional politics, partly through their control over political institutions (Hamann, 1999; Pallares and Keating, 2003). Decentralisation in Spain was part of a broader process of elite bargaining during the democratic transition, deemed necessary to 'hold together' the Spanish state by accommodating demands for self-determination emerging from Catalan and Basque nationalists (Stepan, 2001), channelled largely through their NSWP. There has never been a consensus on the outcome of a flexible decentralising process in Spain, characterised not only by 'vertical conflicts' between regions and the centre, but also 'horizontal conflicts' between different regions (Colomer, 1998). Spanish parties negotiated the process of democratic transition, so their organisations were initially elitist and highly centralised (Biezen and Hopkin, 2004), yet they soon faced pressures to adjust in response to state decentralisation. The Spanish regions saw a huge devolution of policy competences and financial resources in the 1990s (Aja, 2001; Gunther et al, 2004), partly as a response to the vocal territorial demands of NSWP, whose parliamentary support was necessary for the survival of PSOE and PP minority governments (Colomer, 1998). State decentralisation has placed a huge strain on SWP leaders in Spain, who need to contend with external challengers such as powerful NSWP in Catalonia and the Basque Country (Roller and van Houten, 2003), as well as powerful internal challengers, such as regional 'party barons' in the PSOE organisation (Colomer, 1998; Mendez, 2006).

This paper undertakes a comparison of regional party competition in Spain, whose core structures are compared in 'horizontal' (inter-regional) and 'vertical' (central-regional) terms (Thorlakson, 2006). The paper compares relative support for SWP and NSWP in regional elections, thereby updating earlier analyses (Hamann, 1999; Pallares and Keating, 2003). It argues that trends in regional elections can be explained through the political strategies of regional party branches of SWP, and the shifting (often asymmetrical) relationship between these branches and the central leadership. Subsequent sections focus on coalition formation and government alternation in the Spanish regions. Government alternation is a recognised indicator that adequately measures structures of party competition (Mair, 1997), while coalition formation is a competitive bargaining process that can determine access to government, so creates significant potential for divergence between central and regional party branches. It can also be used by political parties to experiment with regional coalitions, prior to enacting (or rejecting) these options at central level (Downs, 1998).

Party Competition at the Spanish Level

The Spanish party system has undergone various stages of transformation since the first general elections (1977 and 1979) were won by a centrist party, Union for a Democratic Centre (UCD). UCD underwent an organisational and electoral collapse in the early 1980s, splintering into small parties that never endured (Hopkin, 1999). The 1982 general election was won convincingly by the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE), which proceeded to govern with an absolute majority in the Spanish parliament. Under the powerful leadership of Felipe Gonzalez, PSOE won the following three general

elections (1986, 1989, 1993), although it lost its absolute parliamentary majority in 1993. PSOE successfully marginalised the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), which had been the stronger left-wing party during the Franco dictatorship (Ramiro, 2000), and was able to exploit popular distrust surrounding the democratic credentials of Popular Alliance (AP), a right-wing party of notables whose leader Manuel Fraga was closely associated with the Franco regime (Hopkin, 1999). Fraga proceeded to re-found AP as the Popular Party (PP) in 1989, installing Jose Maria Aznar as a younger successor largely untainted by association with the Franco dictatorship. Aznar was able to transform PP into a centre-right 'catch-all' party, characterised by a highly centralised 'presidential' organisation (Ramiro, 2005; Astudillo and Garcia-Guereta, 2006). PCE formed a strategic alliance with other left-wing movements, known as United Left (IU). IU campaigned against NATO entry in a nationwide referendum held in 1986, and proceeded to field an electoral coalition for the 1986 general election. IU subsequently developed independent structures as a party federation, subsuming the electoral and institutional functions of PCE. The latter still exists as a separate party organisation, but has rather limited functions because it does not select candidates for public office, nor does it participate independently in governing institutions (Ramiro, 2000; 2004).

The core feature of the Spanish party system since the early 1990s has been the intensification of bipolar competition between PSOE and PP, leading to wholesale alternation in government (PSOE to PP in 1996, PP to PSOE in 2004). Bipolarisation is highlighted through the combined vote share held by PSOE and PP in general elections (Table 1), which has increased progressively from 73.6% (1993) to 83.7% (2008), accompanied by a substantial decline in IU support since 1996. Intense bi-polar competition has generally prevented either party from obtaining an absolute majority in the Spanish parliament, leading to the formation of minority governments after 4 of the last 5 general elections (1993-2008). These minority governments have all been reliant on parliamentary support from NSWPs, in particular the Catalan nationalists Convergence and Union (CiU) or Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC). CiU offered parliamentary support to minority governments led by PSOE (1993-6) and PP (1996-2000), while ERC offered parliamentary support to a minority government led by PSOE (2004-8).¹ NSWPs in Spain have deliberately refrained from forming coalition governments at Spanish level, and only provide parliamentary support to minority governments (Colomer, 1998). In the event of hung parliaments, only Catalan parties have been determined governing majorities in the Spanish parliament,² since most NSWPs obtain few seats (or none) in general elections, and therefore have limited influence (or none) on government formation. The coalitional weight of NSWPs at Spanish level is enhanced by the disappearance of centrist parties from the parliament since 1993, and the weak parliamentary representation of IU. Small statewide parties in Spain are heavily penalised by the electoral system used for general elections,³ because the provincial allocation of seats privileges large SWPs or strong NSWPs (Hopkin, 2005).

¹ The PP minority government (1996-2000) was also supported by Canary Coalition (CC), and in the first year after election by the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV). The withdrawal of support from PNV in 1997 had no impact on government stability because the coalitions with CiU and CC were upheld. The PSOE minority government (2004-2008) was additionally supported by IU and its Catalan counterpart IC-V.

² CiU was also responsible for triggering an early general election in 1996, after withdrawing its support for the PSOE minority government led by Felipe Gonzalez.

³ The national electoral system is proportional representation (PR), with a d'Hondt method of allocation on the basis of 52 provincial constituencies. The provincial allocation of seats is also imbalanced and clearly favours rural areas (Hopkin, 2005), a factor that further weakens the parliamentary representation of IU, whose support is concentrated in urban areas.

Table 1: Elections to Spanish Congress and Government Formation (1993-2008)

Party	1993-1996 Vote (Seats)	1996-2000 Vote (Seats)	2000-2004 Vote (Seats)	2004-2008 Vote (Seats)	2008-2012 Vote (Seats)
PSOE	38.8% (159) <u>Min. Govt.</u>	37.6% (141)	34.2% (125)	42.6% (164) <u>Min. Govt.</u>	46.3% (169) <u>Min. Govt.</u>
PP	34.8% (141)	38.8% (156) <u>Min. Govt.</u>	44.5% (183) <u>Maj. Govt.</u>	37.7% (148)	40.1% (153)
IU	9.6% (18)	10.5% (21)	5.5% (9)	5.0% (5)	3.8% (2)
PSOE + PP	73.6% (300)	76.4% (297)	78.7% (308)	80.3% (312)	83.7% (322)
PSOE +PP +IU	83.2% (318)	86.9% (318)	84.2% (317)	85.3% (317)	87.5% (324)

Note

- 1) Total number of seats in Congress is 350. Absolute majority is 176 seats.
- 2) Electoral data obtained from Ministry of Interior website (www.mir.es)
- 3) Elections to the Lower House (Congress) are significantly more important than concurrent elections to the Upper House (Senate), which has weaker powers.

Party Competition at the Regional Level

This part addresses whether regional elections are conforming to the pattern of bipolarisation evident in general elections, by comparing the vote share of SWP and NSWP in regional elections. Table 2 displays the vote share obtained by SWP in regional elections over the last 5 sets of regional elections (1989-2008).⁴ Regional elections partially confirm the bipolarising trend evident in general elections. The combined PSOE-PP vote share has increased progressively over the timeframe, while the combined vote share of all SWP (PSOE, PP, IU) is now over 80%. IU has maintained a stable level of support (mean of 5.2% in last three regional elections), contrasting with its steady decline in general elections (see Table 1). Inter-regional variations are also strong. Nine of the seventeen regions have seen the vote share held by the main SWP (PSOE, PP, IU) increase to over 90%, far higher than in general elections because NSWP are weak or absent in these regions. The other regions display rather different trends. Two regions see a consistent increase in SWP support, although this never exceeds 60% (Canary Islands) or 80% (Aragon), while four regions see no linear trend over the timeframe and no consistent increase in SWP support. Although SWP account for a majority of votes in these regions, they rarely exceed 70% in Navarre; never exceed 80% in Cantabria and the Balearic Islands; and rarely exceed 80% in Galicia. This indicates the enduring presence of strong NSWP in these regions (Annex 4), which prevent a wholesale drift towards bipolarisation between competing SWP.

⁴ Data for regional elections obtained from *Informe de Comunidades Autonomas* (Barcelona) and website of regional parliaments (Andalusia, Basque Country, Galicia). Data for government/coalition formation (1991, 1995, 1999, 2003) obtained from Alcantara and Martinez (1998) and Marquez Cruz (2007). Data for government/coalition formation (2007) obtained from *El Pais* website (www.elpais.com).

Table 2: Electoral Support for Statewide Parties in Regional Elections (1989-2008)

Statewide Parties (%) = PP + PSOE (+IU)⁵

Region	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007
Andalusia ⁶	72.7 (91.7)	77.6 (91.1)	81.8 (89.9)	81.6 (89.7)	87.8 (94.9)
Aragon	60.6 (67.3)	62.9 (72.1)	68.5 (72.3)	68.2 (71.2)	72.1 (76.2)
Asturias	70.9 (85.6)	75.1 (91.4)	77.8 (86.7)	83.2 (94.2)	83.2 (93.1)
Balearic Islands	76.9 (79.2)	68.3 (74.9)	65.6 (71.0)	68.8 (73.7)	73.2 (N/A)
Basque Country ⁷	28.1 (29.3)	30.8 (39.7)	37.0 (42.6)	40.5 (46.0)	39.9 (45.3)
Canary Islands	45.7 (57.9)	53.7 (58.7)	50.6 (53.3)	55.7 (57.0)	59.1 (59.6)
Cantabria	48.8 (53.2)	57.1 (64.4)	75.0 (78.7)	71.8 (75.5)	65.8 (67.7)
Castile-Mancha	87.4 (93.5)	89.4 (97.0)	93.2 (96.6)	93.8 (96.8)	94.4 (97.8)
Castile-Leon	79.2 (84.5)	81.1 (90.6)	82.9 (88.3)	84.6 (88.0)	86.9 (90.0)
Catalonia ⁸	33.3 (39.8)	37.9 (47.6)	47.3 (51.2)	43.0 (50.3)	37.4 (47.0)
Extremadura	80.6 (87.5)	82.9 (93.4)	88.0 (94.0)	90.4 (96.7)	91.7 (96.2)
Galicia ⁹	77.0 (80.8)	76.0 (79.1)	78.0 (78.9)	74.7 (75.4)	79.4 (80.2)
La Rioja	83.4 (87.9)	83.0 (90.2)	86.1 (90.0)	86.1 (88.8)	89.2 (92.2)
Madrid	78.8 (90.8)	80.4 (96.4)	87.1 (94.8)	87.2 (95.7)	86.8 (95.7)
Murcia	78.0 (88.1)	83.4 (95.8)	88.2 (95.2)	90.0 (95.6)	90.2 (96.4)
Navarre	67.8 (73.3)	51.8 (61.1)	61.1 (67.9)	58.5 (66.7)	64.7 (69.1)
Valencia	70.3 (77.8)	76.4 (87.9)	81.3 (87.3)	82.6 (88.9)	86.4 (94.4)
Mean	62.4 (74.6)	68.7 (78.3)	73.5 (78.7)	74.2 (79.4)	75.8 (81.0)

NSWP in Spain display very different electoral and organisational characteristics, which shape the competitive dynamics of their regional party systems. Canary Coalition (CC) is a federation of island-based parties, and remains one of the largest NSWP in Spain since its creation in 1993 (see Annex 4), adopting a centrist positioning based on continued control over regional institutions (Alcantara and Martinez, 1998). Island-based parties are less unified in the Balearic Islands, where they include the Socialist Party of Mallorca and Menorca (PSM), as well as the centrist Mallorcan Union (UM). In Galicia the only NSWP to have endured is the Galician Nationalist Bloc (BNG), a party federation that is nationalist in character and leftist in political orientation (Pallares and Keating, 2003; Pallares et al, 2006a). Aragon contains both centre-left and centre-right regionalist parties, the Chunta Aragonesista (CHA) and the Aragonese Party (PAR) respectively. In contrast the Regionalist Party of Cantabria (PAR) maintains a centrist positioning. The main regionalist party in Navarre, Union for a People of Navarre (UPN), has substituted organizationally for PP since 1993 (Pallares and Keating, 2003), through a stable pact of collaboration that sees common candidates fielded for general and regional elections. However a splinter group of UPN, Centre for a Democratic Navarre (CDN), became an entirely independent regionalist party. Navarre also contains a range of Basque nationalist parties, which form an electoral coalition (Na-Bai) that competes in general elections (2004, 2008) and

⁵ For data on individual statewide parties see Annexes 1-3. For the main non-statewide parties see Annex 4.

⁶ Regional elections in Andalusia were held in 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008.

⁷ Regional elections in the Basque Country were held in 1990, 1994, 1998, 2001 and 2005.

⁸ Regional elections in Catalonia were held in 1992, 1995, 1999, 2003, and 2006.

⁹ Regional elections in Galicia were held in 1989, 1993, 1997, 2001, and 2005.

regional elections (2007). NSWP heavily shape the competitive dynamics of their respective regional party systems, which in some cases have become less bipolarised. In Cantabria, successive increases in PRC support (2003, 2007) reduced the vote share held by SWP. In Navarre, support for SWP has fallen over the timeframe, as both Navarran regionalists and Basque nationalists have changed their organisational structures and increased their vote share.

The regional party systems that deviate most sharply from the central level are those of Catalonia and the Basque Country, where NSWP account for a majority of the vote share (Pallares et al, 1997; Linz and Montero, 2001; Pallares and Keating, 2003; Gunther et al, 2004). These are mainly Catalan and Basque nationalist parties (Pallares et al, 1997), whose principal objective is self-determination within a pluri-national state (Keating, 2001), although radical Basque nationalists openly favour secession (Gillespie, 2000). Catalonia contains nationalist parties divided along the left-right spectrum: CiU is on the centre-right while ERC is on the left. The Basque Country contains a more complex range of nationalist parties, which vary in their moderation or radicalisation on the issue of self-determination, as well as their position on the left-right spectrum. Relative moderates include the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), a large party on the centre-right, and Eusko Alkartasuna (EA), a smaller party on the centre-left. PNV and EA have formed an electoral and governing coalition since 1994.¹⁰ More radical Basque nationalists (many associated with ETA) are located on the far left, while an anti Basque nationalist party (Alavan Union) exists on the centre-right. The Basque party system is characterized by polarised pluralism (Llera, 1999), with the presence of counter-posing anti-system parties (Sartori, 1976). Radical Basque nationalists oppose any form of association with Spain so refuse to participate in the Basque government, while PP is (self)-excluded from the Basque government because of its hostility towards the moderate Basque nationalist parties that dominate it.

Given the strength of nationalist parties in Catalonia and the Basque Country, we could assume neither region is conforming to general trends. Yet the combined vote share of SWP in these regions increased substantially during the 1990s and early 2000s (Table 2): SWP accounted for over 50% of the vote share in the 1999 and 2003 Catalan elections, and over 45% of the vote share in the 2001 and 2005 Basque elections. Support for individual SWP also varies considerably from the Spanish average in general elections. In the Basque Country, support for PP and PSOE remains far below the Spanish average, while support for IU is generally above the Spanish average. In Catalonia, support for PSC (Catalan partner of PSOE) is much higher than support for PP. Support for IC-V (Catalan counterpart of IU) is well above the Spanish average (see Annexes 1-3). Recent trends also deviate considerably from the general pattern. In the 2006 Catalan election, IC-V increased its vote share while PSC and PP both lost ground (Lago et al, 2007). In the 2005 Basque election, PSOE increased its vote share but did so largely at the expense of PP, while IU support remained stable (Pallares et al, 2006b). Turnout for regional elections is generally lower than in general elections, while dual voting is a permanent feature that benefits NSWP in regional elections and benefits SWP in general elections (Pallares et al, 1997; Hamann, 1999; Pallares and Keating, 2003). In Catalonia PSC always obtains a plurality of votes in general elections, while CiU generally obtains a plurality of votes in regional elections,¹¹ an outcome largely explicable through a combination of dual voting and differential non-voting (Colome, 1989; Montero and Font, 1991; Perez-Nievas and Fraile, 2000; Riba, 2000; Lago et al, 2007). Whereas dual voting favours PSC in general elections and CiU in regional elections, differential non-voting clearly favours CiU in regional elections. Non-voting in Catalan elections is up to 20% higher than in comparable general elections, with a very disproportionate share of PSC voters (to a lesser extent PP

¹⁰ This electoral coalition was discontinued for the 2009 Basque election, although PNV and EA are still generally expected to form a governing coalition after this election.

¹¹ The sole exceptions are the 1999 and 2003 Catalan elections, where PSC obtained more votes than CiU but fewer seats because of imbalances in the regional electoral system (Lago et al, 2007). In the other 6 Catalan elections CiU has obtained more votes and seats than PSC.

voters) turning up exclusively for general elections. These voters are mainly Spanish immigrants to Catalonia with a low sense of Catalan identity (Colome, 1989; Pallares et al, 1997; Perez-Nievas and Fraile, 2000; Riba, 2000; Lago et al, 2007). Differential abstention is also relevant in the Basque Country, where a disproportionate share of PSOE and PP voters, mainly Spanish immigrants with a low sense of Basque identity, vote exclusively in general elections. SWP in the Basque Country perform better in general elections, although still with a minority of the vote share (Pallares et al, 1997; Pallares et al, 2006b). Dual voting is less common in the Basque Country, where voters are clearly aligned into nationalist and anti-nationalist camps (Llera, 1999; Gillespie, 2000). Neither dual voting nor differential abstention fully explains why trends in support for individual SWP deviate so much from the general pattern. This requires us to evaluate the organisational strategies adopted by regional branches of SWP, and their varying relationship with the central leadership.

An unusual feature of all SWP in Spain is the asymmetrical levels of autonomy granted to particular regional party branches, which also affects organisational strategies and the behaviour of voters in regional and general elections. The best known example is the Catalan Socialist Party (PSC). PSC has always wielded greater autonomy than other regional party branches, under the terms of a 1978 agreement (Protocol of Unity) that granted PSC full autonomy in the Catalan sphere, in exchange for close alignment with PSOE in the Spanish sphere (Biezen and Hopkin, 2004). PSC is formally an independent party, created through the merger of the Catalan federation of PSOE with two socialist parties based exclusively in Catalonia (PSC-R and PSC-C), which had more regionalist ('Catalanist') positions. Organisational tensions were characteristic of PSC since its inception, and initially made PSC unable to adopt more radical Catalanist positions, because the Catalan federation of PSOE remained a permanent minority and many PSC voters identified primarily with PSOE and its leader Gonzalez (Colome, 1989). PSC became rather subordinated to PSOE under the leadership of Gonzalez, who was both PSOE secretary-general and Prime Minister of Spain between 1982 and 1996 (Roller and van Houten, 2003). The internal dynamics changed after PSOE lost control over the Spanish government (1996) and Gonzalez resigned as secretary-general (1997), triggering a serious party crisis and encouraging PSC to distance itself from PSOE by adopting more openly Catalanist positions. This was particularly marked after Pasquall Maragall became PSC President (1999-2006). Maragall came from a long and prominent experience in local politics as Mayor of Barcelona (1982-1997), so was not closely aligned to the PSOE elite at Spanish level. Maragall pushed PSC into Catalanist positions on the issue of self-determination, and in doing so diverged frequently from the positions of the PSOE leadership.¹² Yet the strength of PSC has always depended on the ability to bridge the divide between native Catalans and those born outside Catalonia (Colome, 1996). PSC obtains a majority from voters with a dual identity ('as Catalan as Spanish'), and a majority from voters with an exclusively or mainly Spanish identity (Pallares et al, 1997). The political strategy pursued by Maragall sought additional support from weakly aligned voters with a mainly Catalan sense of identity, who backed regional self-determination and tended to vote for CiU in regional elections. However Maragall also mobilised core working-class voters with a mainly or exclusively Spanish sense of identity, by holding out the promise of a more left-wing regional government when elected to office. This was necessary to stem the disproportionate abstention of these voters from regional elections, which had heavily contributed to earlier PSC defeats (Perez-Nievas and Fraile, 2000; Riba, 2000). This strategy proved largely successful in the 1999 and 2003 Catalan elections, as PSC finally obtained a plurality of votes amidst a substantial reduction in non-voting. After the 2003 election, PSC succeeded in forming a coalition government with ERC and IC-V. The coalition government proved to be highly conflictual, and focused mainly on constitutional questions to the

¹² Strong experience of sub-national government made the 'Catalanist' strategy adopted by Maragall more credible. Previous PSC leaders had been parliamentarians at Spanish level, with limited experience of sub-national government and closely associated with the PSOE leadership elites.

neglect of socio-economic issues. This contributed to a loss of PSC Support during the 2006 Catalan election, and a substantial increase in levels of non-voting (Lago et al, 2007).

The asymmetrical autonomy of PSC is rare but not unique in Spain. Catalan Left-Greens (IC-V) is the independent counterpart of IU. IC-V broke all formal organisational ties with IU in 1997 (Biezen and Hopkin, 2004), after the PCE-dominated leadership of IU imposed anti-PSOE coalitions at all levels of government, while IC-V was keen to develop local and regional coalitions with PSC (Ramiro, 2000). IC-V has radical though never secessionist positions on Catalan self-determination, locating it somewhere between PSC and the Catalan nationalists ERC on this dimension (Colome, 1996; Perez-Nievas, 2000). IC-V has developed a constructive relationship with PSC and the Catalan nationalists ERC, performing a stabilising function in their 'tripartite' governing coalitions (Orte and Wilson, 2008). Over the last two regional elections IC-V more than doubled its electoral support (3.9 to 9.6%), in sharp contrast with the decline of IU in general elections. The Basque counterpart of IU, Euzkerra Batua (EB) also straddles the nationalist and non-nationalist camps (Llera, 1999), and has become highly autonomous from the IU leadership (Stefuriuc and Verge, 2008). This has generated remarkable stability in EB support (5.4-5.6% in last three regional elections), unaffected by the broader electoral decline of IU. Participation in the regional government and greater autonomy from the central leadership has allowed regional branches of IU to develop 'niche' positions in the Catalan and Basque party systems, helping them to stabilize or expand their electoral support.

The other Spanish regions are characterised by more integrated SWP organisations, although IU regional federations are usually more autonomous than those of PP and PSOE (Stefuriuc and Verge, 2008). In the Basque Country, PP and PSOE branches are tightly integrated to the central party. This is partly because Basque politics is more polarised than in Catalonia, with nationalist and non-nationalist voters grounded in two competing blocs (Llera, 1999).¹³ The increase in PSOE and PP support can be attributed to the polarisation of conflict in the Basque Country since the ETA ceasefire in 1998 (Gillespie, 2000), with the resulting increase in turnout disproportionately benefiting SWP in regional elections (Pallares et al, 2006b). The more aggressive stance towards Basque nationalism adopted by PP has reaped electoral dividends, with its support almost trebling in regional elections between 1994 and 2001 (see Annex 2). Growth in PSOE support was more contained over this period, partly because PSOE adopted a more constructive approach towards the Basque conflict (even forming governing coalitions with Basque nationalists until 1998), so suffered from its subsequent polarisation (Gillespie, 2000). In this tense political environment, autonomist strategies from regional branches of SWP may be highly counter-productive. Any distancing from the positions of the central leadership would lose support from voters concerned about the secessionist direction of Basque nationalism, who could abstain or shift their support to a rival SWP. The incentives for more autonomist strategies are also lower because SWP cannot realistically expect to gain control over the Basque government, since the party system is dominated by Basque nationalists. PP has instead made the crusade against Basque nationalism a key plank of its nationwide electoral strategy. This partly explains the willingness of PP to grant higher levels of autonomy to UPN, a regionalist party which substitutes organizationally for PP in Navarre. A major *raison d'être* for UPN is precisely its opposition to the irredentist claims of Basque nationalism, thus reinforcing the strategic alignment with the PP leadership. UPN also dominates the regional government, which has tended to make the PP leadership unwilling to interfere with its autonomy. Yet significant tensions have recently emerged in the relationship between PP and UPN. While UPN has sought to develop more centrist positions in the regional party system, as well as more independent positions in Spanish politics, PP has responded by starting to construct its own separate organisation in Navarre. PP branches in the Basque Country and Catalonia have always wielded very limited autonomy, with constant intervention by the central leadership in their internal

¹³ Although EB does straddle these competing blocs, its support base is that of a niche party (just over 5%), and most vote shifts in regional elections occur within these blocs (e.g. between PSOE and PP).

affairs and leadership selection (Astudillo and Garcia-Guereta, 2006). PP obtains its lowest electoral support in Catalonia (under 15%), where it remains excluded from the regional government due to its perceived anti-Catalan positions. This process of exclusion was particularly evident during negotiations over the Catalan Statute of Autonomy reform, where PP was shut out from key decisions at the regional level (Orte and Wilson, 2008). PP support is now stronger in the Basque Country, where it nevertheless remains excluded from the regional government, and has adopted the contours of an anti-system party inflexibly opposed to any form of Basque nationalism. In both cases the exclusion of PP from the regional government has reinforced the dependency of its regional branches on the national party for visibility, financial resources and career advancement. In summary regional party systems in Spain are not only characterised by strong variations in support for SWP, they are also characterised by clear differences in the strategies of regional party branches and their relationship with the party leadership. These strategies are influenced by (and heavily affect) the prevailing structures of regional party competition.

Coalition Formation at the Regional Level

Regional party systems in Spain are characterised by the prevalence of governing coalitions between SWP and NSWP, which account for around 1/3 of all regional governments (Linz and Montero, 2001). There is no precedent for governing coalitions at central level, where parliamentary coalitions structure the political relationship between SWP and NSWP (Gunther et al, 2004). The most remarkable feature of regional governing coalitions in Spain is their tendency to incorporate PSOE, which has formed 39 governments at regional level over the timeframe (1989-2008), with an almost even split (21:18) between single party and coalition governments. PP meanwhile has formed 42 regional governments, with a heavily uneven split (29:13) in favour of single party governments (69%). PP has opposed coalitions with nationalist parties in the Spanish regions, although it has often supported coalitions with regionalist parties.¹⁴ This contrasts sharply with PSOE, which formed several coalitions that include nationalists (Basque Country, 1986-90, 1991-8; Catalonia, 2003-, Galicia, 2005-), complementing the numerous coalitions with regionalist parties.. PP has seen its governing coalitions with regionalist parties terminated in several regions: Aragon (1995-), Cantabria (2003-) and the Balearic Islands (1999-2003 and 2007-), where its former coalition partners have decided to ally with PSOE (Table 3). PSOE has entered government in 16 of the 17 Spanish regions, and is only excluded from the PP 'fiefdom' of Castile-Leon. PP has entered government in only 12 regions, and is excluded from the regional governments of Catalonia, the Basque Country, as well as three PSOE 'fiefdoms' in southern Spain (Andalusia, Castile-Mancha, Extremadura). Yet PSOE is increasingly dependent on support from NSWP to form regional governments, as evident from 6 regions where PSOE has only entered the regional government through such coalitions during the timeframe (Aragon, Balearic Islands, Basque Country, Cantabria, Catalonia, Galicia).

¹⁴ The distinction between 'regionalist' and 'nationalist' parties is clarified in Pallares et al, 1997.

Table 3: Government Formation in the Spanish Regions (1989-2008)

M= Majority Government

Min = Minority Government

Region	1991-1995	1995-1999	1999-2003	2003-2007	2007-
Andalusia ¹⁵	PSOE (Min)	PSOE-PA (M)	PSOE-PA (M)	PSOE (M)	PSOE (M)
Aragon	PP-PAR (M) 1991-3; PSOE (Min) 1993-5	PP-PAR (M)	PSOE-PAR (M)	PSOE-PAR (M)	PSOE-PAR (M)
Asturias	PSOE-IU (M) 1991-3, PSOE (Min) 1993-5	PP (Min)	PSOE (M)	PSOE-IU (M)	PSOE (Min)
Balearic Islands	PP-UM (M)	PP (M)	PSOE-UM- PSM-IU (M)	PP-UM (M)	PSOE-UM-PSM- IU (M)
Basque ¹⁶ Country	PNV-EA-EE (Min) 90-91; PNV-PSOE (Min) 91-3; PNV-PSOE-EE (Min) 93-4	PNV-PSOE-EA (M)	PNV-EA (Min)	PNV-EA-IU (Min)	PNV-EA-IU (Min)
Canary Islands	PSOE-AIC (Min) 1991-3; CC(Min) 93-5.	CC (Min)	CC-PP (M) 99- 2001; CC (Min) 2001-2003	CC-PP (M) 2001- 3; CC (Min) 2005-7	CC-PP (M)
Cantabria	UPCA-PP (M)	PP-PRC (M)	PP-PRC (M)	PSOE-PRC (M)	PSOE-PRC (M)
Castile-Man.	PSOE (M)	PSOE (M)	PSOE (M)	PSOE (M)	PSOE (M)
Castile-Leon	PP (M)	PP (M)	PP (M)	PP (M)	PP (M)
Catalonia ¹⁷	CiU (M)	CiU (Min)	CiU (Min)	PSC-ERC-ICV (M)	PSC-ERC-ICV (M)
Extremadura	PSOE (M)	PSOE (Min)	PSOE (M)	PSOE (M)	PSOE (M)
Galicia ¹⁸	PP (M)	PP (M)	PP (M)	PP (M)	PSOE-BNG
La Rioja	PSOE-PR (M)	PP (M)	PP (M)	PP (M)	PP (M)
Madrid	PSOE (Min)	PP (M)	PP (M)	PP (M)	PP (M)
Murcia	PSOE (M)	PP (M)	PP (M)	PP (M)	PP (M)
Navarre	PP (Min)	PSOE 95-6; PP 96-9 (both Min)	PP (Min)	PP-CDN (M)	PP-CDN (Min)
Valencia	PSOE (M)	PP-UV (M)	PP (M)	PP (M)	PP (M)

¹⁵ Legislatures in Andalusia are 1994-1996, 1996-2000, 2000-2004, 2004-2008, and 2008-2012.

¹⁶ Legislatures in the Basque Country are 1990-1994, 1994-1998, 1998-2001, 2001-2005 and 2005-2009.

¹⁷ Legislatures in Catalonia are 1992-1995, 1995-1999, 1999-2003, 2003-2006, and 2006-2010.

¹⁸ Legislatures in Galicia are 1989-1993, 1993-1997, 1997-2001, 2001-2005, and 2005-2009.

IU has formed eight governing coalitions in four different regions: Catalonia (2003-6; 2006-), Balearic Islands (1999-2003; 2007-), Asturias (1991-3; 2003-7), and the Basque Country (2001-5; 2005-). The willingness of IU to form regional governing coalitions is directly linked to the election of Gaspar Llamazares as general coordinator (party leader) in 2000. Llamazares narrowly defeated the incumbent Francisco Frutos,¹⁹ who remained PCE secretary-general and continued to lead a hostile faction within the IU party executive. Llamazares actively encouraged the participation of IU in sub-national governments, while decentralised IU structures allowed regional federations to pursue their own coalitional preferences. Yet the integrative capacity of the central leadership was severely constrained, not only because Llamazares faced a divided party executive, but also because his personal re-election was heavily dependent on continued support from regional coordinators. This made the IU leadership unwilling and unable to interfere in the activities of its regional federations (Stefuriuc and Verge, 2008). The positioning of IU on the far left of the political spectrum has usually confined it to coalitions where PSOE is strong but does not obtain a majority of seats (Asturias, Balearic Islands, Catalonia). The main exception is the governing coalition with more centrist Basque nationalists, which has caused significant tensions within the IU organisation (Pallares et al, 2006b).

Regional coalition formation in Spain is characterized by the absence of governing coalitions between PP and PSOE, because any regional accommodation between these parties might undermine their bipolar competition at central level. However the combined opposition of both parties to the current direction of Basque nationalism has produced exceptions to this general rule, not only in the Basque Country but also in the adjacent region of Navarre. In the 2001 Basque election campaign, PSOE and PP made a joint pledge to govern together if necessary to overthrow the incumbent regional government led by Basque nationalists, although this option never materialised after a surge in support for moderate nationalists (Pallares and Keating, 2003; Pallares et al, 2006b). After the 2005 election produced no clear majority in the Basque parliament, PP backed the investiture of a PSOE candidate for regional president, as an alternative to the Basque nationalist incumbent Juan Jose Ibarretxe (PNV). This was only unsuccessful because radical Basque nationalists offered the necessary votes of investiture to the Ibarretxe government (Pallares et al, 2006b). Although radical Basque nationalists have generally abstained from regular proceedings of the regional parliament, they have supported the investiture of moderate Basque nationalist governments (Alcantara and Martinez, 1998), allowing the latter to dominate the regional government despite growing support for SWP in regional elections (see Table 1). As a result of Basque nationalism, PP and PSOE now also cooperate in Navarre, especially since the 2007 regional election produced a hung parliament. On this occasion the PSOE leadership excluded the option of a majority governing coalition with the Basque nationalists (Na-Bai), leaving three undesirable options: a 'grand coalition' government with UPN to counter Basque nationalism; parliamentary support for a minority government led by UPN; or continued political paralysis in Navarre. A limited parliamentary coalition with UPN was chosen by the central PSOE leadership as the lesser evil, yet their close collaboration since this regional election has caused significant intra-party tensions between UPN and PP.

¹⁹ Frutos formed part of a traditionalist PCE faction that controlled IU during the 1990s. This PCE faction was opposed to IU supporting governments that included PSOE, which it categorised as 'corrupt' and 'right-wing'. Due to the far left positioning of IU on the political spectrum, this effectively implied exclusion from every government at every territorial level. The strategy produced huge tensions in the multi-level party organisation, and was abandoned after heavy defeats for IU in the 1999 local and regional elections. Its architects were punished in the 2000 IU leadership selection. Llamazares was elected as part of a broader IU faction that supported coalitions with PSOE and was willing for IU to become a governing party (Ramiro, 2000; 2004).

Government Alternation at the Regional Level

Patterns of government alternation are useful empirical indicators because they highlight the competitive dynamics of the party system (Mair, 1997). Government alternation at regional level in Spain is closely linked to processes of coalition formation. Spanish regions display patterns of government alternation that diverge from each other ('horizontal incongruence'), as well as from the central level ('vertical incongruence'). This sheds considerable doubt on the distinction between 'genuine regional party systems' (Basque Country, Catalonia, Navarre) and 'statewide sub-party systems' (all other regions), advanced by several scholars in the field (Linz and Montero, 2001; Gunther et al, 2004). It also partially disconfirms the view that "third parties are either marginal or becoming irrelevant" in most Spanish regions (Linz and Montero, 2001, 184), since many small NSWP have become 'hinge' actors in regional party systems, necessary for government formation and able to remain in office by forming varied coalitions with PP or PSOE ('partial alternation'). This contrasts with the majority of Spanish regions, characterised by non-alternation in government, as well as the central level, where wholesale alternation prevails. Only three Spanish regions are characterised by wholesale government alternation, and only one possesses structures of party competition broadly analogous to the central level. Regional structures of party competition are therefore diverging significantly in 'horizontal' and 'vertical' terms (Thorlakson, 2006).

Ten of the seventeen Spanish regions are characterised by the lack of alternation in government. Six of these have been continuously controlled by PP, either since the 1995 regional elections (Madrid, Murcia, Valencia, Navarre, La Rioja), or since the first regional election in 1983 (Castile-Leon). In these regions PP has won at least four consecutive elections; remains the largest party in electoral terms; and generally governs through an absolute majority in the regional parliament. The case of Navarre is slightly more complex. Although UPN has formed the basis for all stable regional governments since 1993, and remains the largest party in electoral terms, it always needs to form parliamentary or governing coalitions to secure an absolute majority in the regional parliament. Yet the polarized nature of the regional party system, which includes not only rival statewide parties (SWP) but also Navarran regionalists and Basque nationalists, has prevented the formation of any coalition that excludes UPN. Although PSOE did form an unstable minority government with the support of Basque nationalists *and* Navarran regionalists after the 1995 election, this collapsed after 13 months and was replaced by a UPN minority government (Alcantara and Martinez, 1998) that governed until 2003. Since then UPN has governed in coalition with CDN, a splinter party from its own organisation. This coalition government lost its majority in the 2007 regional election, but was restored to power because PSOE proceeded to support UPN in the regional parliament.

Three regions have been continuously governed by PSOE since the first regional elections were held in 1982 (Andalusia) or 1983 (Extremadura, Castilla-La-Mancha). In these regions PSOE has won 7-8 consecutive elections; remains the largest party in electoral terms; and generally governs through an absolute majority in the regional parliament. Although PSOE lost its absolute majority in the Andalusian parliament between 1994 and 2004, it continued to dominate the regional government by forming a coalition with the much smaller Andalusian Party (PA). PSOE restored its absolute majority in the 2004 election, repeating this outcome after the 2008 election, where PA lost all its parliamentary seats. Another region characterised by non-alternation is the Basque Country, where PNV has dominated all Basque governments since the first regional election in 1981. PNV has formed an electoral and governing coalition with EA since 1994, which has obtained a plurality of votes in every regional election. The polarised character of the Basque party system makes it impossible for coalitions to be formed without PNV (Llera, 1999). PNV has been able to dominate the regional government through coalitions with junior partners, not only other Basque nationalists but also SWP

such as PSOE (1986-90; 1991-98) or IU (2001-). SWP remain a minority in the Basque parliament, unable to develop a united front against Basque nationalism, while radical Basque nationalists have offered their vote to ensure moderate nationalist governments are formed (Alcantara and Martinez, 1998; Pallares et al, 2006b).

Four regions in Spain are characterised by partial alternation in government (Aragon, Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Cantabria). These contain regionalist parties who remain in government by forming varied coalitions with the main SWP (PP or PSOE). The latter are unable to obtain absolute majorities but cannot form coalitions with each other, since this would undermine party competition at Spanish level. These regionalist parties can therefore direct patterns of coalition formation, despite often being subordinate in electoral terms to PP or PSOE. In Aragon, PAR has remained in the regional government since 1987 by forming governing coalitions with PP (1987-1999) or PSOE (1999-), although PAR obtained under 15% in the last three regional elections. In Cantabria, PRC has led the regional government since 1995, and formed governing coalitions with both PP (1995-2003) and PSOE (2003-), although PRC is usually subordinate to both parties in electoral terms. In the Balearic Islands, PP remains the largest party, but can rarely govern without the support of UM, whose 2-3 seats are necessary for an absolute majority in the regional parliament. Although PP formed a governing coalition with UM during the 1991-1995 legislature, the 1999 election saw UM form an alternative coalition government with PSOE, IU, and PSM. PP was abruptly displaced from the regional government, despite remaining the largest party in the regional parliament (28/59 seats). After the 2003 election, UM chose to re-establish the governing coalition with PP, consigning its former partners to opposition. The 2007 election saw UM once more abandon PP and re-establish the governing coalition with PSOE, IU and PSM. In the Canary Islands, CC has remained in firm control of the regional government since 1993, either by forming majority governing coalitions with PP, or by forming minority governments reliant on parliamentary support from PSOE. The latter finally surpassed CC as the largest regional party in the 2007 election, but was again excluded from the regional government by a CC-PP governing coalition. PP was initially preferred as a regional coalition partner by CC, because this reflected the external support offered by CC to the PP minority government at Spanish level (1996-2000).

The remaining Spanish regions are characterised by wholesale alternation in government (Asturias, Catalonia, Galicia), although only in Asturias are the structures of competition broadly analogous to those of the Spanish level. In Asturias PP and PSOE have increased their combined vote share in regional elections, but neither party has obtained an absolute majority in the regional parliament since 1987. This has led to the formation of PSOE minority governments (1987-1991; 1993-5; 2007-); PSOE-IU governing coalitions (1991-3; 2003-2007); and a PP minority government (1995-1999). Two characteristics of the Asturian party system are quite different from the Spanish level, the coalitional strength of IU (strong in Asturias, weak at Spanish level) and the coalitional relevance of NSWP (weak in Asturias, strong at Spanish level). In Galicia and Catalonia, wholesale alternation in government has instead occurred through the removal of a predominant governing party, whether statewide (PP in Galicia) or non-statewide (CiU in Catalonia), and its replacement with a governing coalition that includes PSOE and nationalist parties.

In Galicia, PP won four successive regional elections with an absolute majority (1989, 1993, 1997, 2001), but narrowly lost this majority in the 2005 regional election. Although this election clearly confirmed PP as the largest regional party in electoral terms, it led to an alternative coalition government being formed between PSOE and the leftist BNG. This was an expected outcome of coalitional negotiations, because PSOE and BNG had previously allied at local levels to terminate PP-led governments (Pallares et al, 2006a). In Catalonia, CiU was the sole party of government between 1980 and 2003, winning 6 consecutive regional elections and holding either an absolute (1980-1995) or relative (1995-2003) majority in the regional parliament. CiU relied on parliamentary coalitions

with PSOE (1995-6) and PP (1996-2003) to retain its control over the regional government, which CiU reciprocated by supporting their minority governments at Spanish level. In the 2003 Catalan election, CiU and PP lost their combined majority in the regional parliament, allowing PSC to form a regional governing coalition with ERC and IC-V. As in the Galician case this regional governing coalition had been tested out at local levels, but nevertheless proved to be highly conflictual, with PSC and ERC clashing over reform of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy, leading to the withdrawal of ERC from the regional government. This led to an anticipated election in 2006 where PSC and ERC both lost ground, while IC-V increased its share of votes and seats, allowing the same governing coalition to be re-constituted under a new PSC leader (Lago et al, 2007; Orte and Wilson, 2008). The Catalan party system remains rather open in terms of coalition formation, since alternative governing coalitions (PSC-CiU and ERC-CiU) were contemplated during the 2006 electoral campaign and its aftermath (Lago et al, 2007). A 'grand coalition' between PSC and CiU was rejected by their respective party leaders, while a 'nationalist coalition' between CiU and ERC was rejected by the ERC leadership (its members were divided). ERC preferred to be the only nationalist party in the Catalan government, and to reiterate a leftist coalition government (Orte and Wilson, 2008).

Although structures of competition in Galicia and Catalonia vary considerably from the Spanish level, they are also characterised by patterns of bipolarisation. In Galicia, PP and PSOE-BNG constitute competing blocs whose combined support accounts for virtually a totality of votes (Pallares et al, 2006a), especially since the disappearance of other NSWP and the collapse of IU Galicia (Alcantara and Martinez, 1998). In Catalonia competing blocs are formed around the largest parties, which are centre-left (PSC) and centre-right (CiU) in political orientation (Colome, 1996). The remaining parties are located on the left (ERC and IC-V) or centre-right (PP) of the political spectrum, and must decide whether to support PSC or CiU on the basis of the left-right axis or the nationalist axis. This is a complex choice, because ERC is closer to CiU on the nationalist axis but closer to PSC on the left-right axis, while PP is close to CiU on the left-right axis but distant on the nationalist axis. Coalitional choices have been influenced by the Catalanist strategies of PSC and IC-V, whose leaders have moved closer towards ERC on the nationalist dimension, leading to the formation of successive governing coalitions between these parties. CiU has sought to exploit divisions among the governing parties, by making siren calls for a 'nationalist coalition' with ERC, or for a 'grand coalition' with PSC. During the bargaining process over the Catalan statute of autonomy, CiU consistently exploited differences within the governing coalition (Orte and Wilson, 2008). Meanwhile PP has moved further away from CiU on the nationalist dimension, and has become an increasingly marginal actor in Catalan politics.

Conclusion: Multi-level Systemic Linkages in Spain

Structures of party competition in the Spanish regions demonstrate 'vertical' (central-regional) and 'horizontal' (inter-regional) incongruence, despite the presence of statewide parties (SWP) with close organizational linkages between territorial levels. This incongruence has rarely undermined party competition at Spanish level, which revolves around the intense bi-polar competition between PSOE and PP. To explain this apparent paradox we must consider the strength of systemic linkages between territorial levels (Thorlakson, 2006; 2007). Non-Statewide Parties (NSWP) are powerful actors in the Spanish regions, not only because of their electoral weight but also due to their 'hinge' position in regional party systems. By contrast most NSWP are unable to obtain sufficient seats in the Spanish parliament to have an effect on government formation or policy. The proliferation of governing coalitions between SWP and NSWP at regional level therefore have few direct implications for politics at Spanish level, which confirms the weak linkages between central and regional party systems

in Spain. The main exception to this rule is Catalonia, whose NSWPs are strong and crucial to determining governing majorities in the Spanish parliament. SWPs are also crucial coalitional actors in Catalan politics, forming governing or parliamentary coalitions with NSWPs. As a result all Catalan parties have sought to ensure coalitional congruence between territorial levels. Despite the close systemic linkages between Spanish and Catalan politics, organisational linkages within SWPs have actually weakened in Catalonia. The Catalan counterparts of PSOE and IU have become much more autonomous from the central leadership, and their distinct 'Catalanist' strategies have affected the outcome of regional elections and ensuing patterns of coalition formation. The adoption of Catalanist strategies reflects the fluid and dual character of Catalan identity, with PSC and IC-V appealing to both Spanish immigrants and many native-born Catalans (Colome, 1996). In contrast the regional branch of PP in Catalonia has low autonomy and is tightly controlled by the central leadership, partly because PP is permanently excluded from the Catalan government, so its regional leaders have few resources and incentives to deviate from the party line. PP also contains a significant asymmetrical exception, with its Navarran counterpart (UPN) becoming even more autonomous from the PP leadership.

The conflict between SWPs and Basque nationalism has become the most destabilising factor in the political system of Spain (Gunther et al, 2004), but its effects on multi-level party politics have been rather modest, due to the weak systemic linkages between territorial levels. Basque nationalists have limited coalitional weight at central level, and generally wield low blackmail or coalition potential in the Spanish parliament, while SWPs are either excluded from the Basque government or confined to the role of junior coalition partners. The competitive dynamics of the Basque party system, with the exclusion of PSOE and PP from the Basque government since 1998, has made it unnecessary to coordinate government formation at central and regional levels. Exclusion from the Basque government has reinforced the tight integration between the regional branches of PP and PSOE and their party leadership, whereas inclusion in the regional government has encouraged the Basque counterpart of IU to become almost independent from the central leadership. The Basque political spectrum is sharply polarized into nationalist and anti-nationalist camps (Gillespie, 2000; Pallares et al, 2006b), although IU has carved out a 'niche' position by straddling these camps (Stefuriuc and Verge, 2008). Regional branches of PSOE and PP have fewer incentives to adopt autonomist positions that distance them from the central leadership, because this might be perceived by their (mainly anti-nationalist) voters as a compromise with Basque nationalism, leading to vote transfers in favour of rival SWPs. Although the Basque conflict has encouraged some cooperation at regional level between PP and PSOE, this has not undermined bi-polar competition at Spanish level for two reasons. Firstly, it has been initiated with the insistence of the central leadership, so is not an independent initiative of regional branches. Secondly, it has failed to undermine the Basque nationalist government, so the prospect of a PSOE-PP regional government has never been realised. The principal constraining factor in regional coalition formation is precisely the absence of governing coalitions between PSOE and PP. Partly for this reason PP and UPN are currently engaged in organizational conflict, as UPN moves towards more independent and centrist positions that do not exclude a governing coalition with PSOE in future. In summary the coalitional behaviour and organizational strategies of SWPs in Spain have become increasingly affected by the dynamics of party competition in the Spanish regions.

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Annex 1: Electoral Support for PSOE in Regional Elections (1989-2008)

Region	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007
Andalusia	38.5 (1994)	43.8 (1996)	44.0 (2000)	50.0 (2004)	48.2 (2008)
Aragon	40.1	25.6	30.5	37.7	41.0
Asturias	40.7	33.5	45.7	40.2	41.5
Balearic Islands	29.9	23.8	21.9	24.4	27.2
Basque Country	19.9 (1990)	16.7 (1994)	17.3 (1998)	17.7 (2001)	22.6 (2005)
Canary Islands	32.9	22.9	23.7	25.3	34.7
Cantabria	34.5	24.9	32.8	29.7	24.3
Castile-Mancha	51.8	45.4	53.1	57.4	51.9
Castile-Leon	36.1	29.4	32.8	36.5	37.5
Catalonia (PSC)	27.4 (1992)	24.8 (1995)	37.8 (1999)	31.1 (2003)	26.8 (2006)
Extremadura	53.8	43.7	48.2	51.7	52.9
Galicia	32.8 (1989)	23.9 (1993)	25.1 (1997)	22.2 (2001)	33.6 (2005)
La Rioja	42.0	33.9	35.1	37.9	40.5
Madrid	36.4	29.6	36.3	38.9	33.5
Murcia	44.8	31.6	35.7	33.8	31.8
Navarre	33.1	20.7	20.1	19.8	22.4
Valencia	42.6	33.8	33.7	35.7	34.2
Mean	37.5	29.9	33.8	34.7	35.6

Annex 2: Electoral Support for PP in Regional Elections (1989-2008)

Region	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007
Andalusia	34.2 (1994)	33.8 (1996)	37.8 (2000)	31.6 (2004)	38.6 (2008)
Aragon	20.5	37.3	38.0	30.5	31.1
Asturias	30.2	41.6	32.1	38.9	41.7
Balearic Islands	47.0	44.5	43.7	44.4	46.0
Basque Country	8.2 (1990)	14.1 (1994)	19.7 (1998)	22.8 (2001)	17.3 (2005)
Canary Islands	12.8	30.8	26.9	30.4	24.4
Cantabria	14.3	32.2	42.2	42.1	41.5
Castile-Mancha	35.6	44.0	40.1	36.4	42.5
Castile-Leon	43.1	51.7	50.1	48.1	49.4
Catalonia	5.9 (1992)	13.1 (1995)	9.5 (1999)	11.9 (2003)	10.6 (2006)
Extremadura	26.6	39.2	39.8	38.7	38.8
Galicia	44.2 (1989)	52.1 (1993)	52.9 (1997)	52.5 (2001)	45.8 (2005)
La Rioja	41.4	49.1	51.0	48.2	48.7
Madrid	42.4	50.8	50.8	48.3	53.3
Murcia	33.2	51.8	52.5	56.2	58.4
Navarre (UPN)	34.7	31.1	41.0	38.7	42.3
Valencia	27.7	42.6	47.6	46.9	52.2
Mean	29.5	38.8	39.7	39.2	40.2

Annex 3: Electoral Support for IU in Regional Elections (1989-2008)

Region	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007
Andalusia	19.0 (1994)	13.5 (1996)	8.1 (2000)	7.5 (2004)	7.1 (2008)
Aragon	6.7	9.2	3.8	3.0	4.1
Asturias	14.7	16.3	8.9	11.0	9.9
Balearic Islands	2.3	6.6	5.4	4.9	N/A ²⁰
Basque Country	1.2 (1990)	8.9 (1994)	5.6 (1998)	5.5 (2001)	5.4 (2005)
Canary Islands	12.2 ²¹	5.0	2.7	1.3	0.5
Cantabria	4.4	7.3	3.7	3.7	1.9
Castile-Mancha	6.1	7.6	3.4	3.0	3.4
Castile-Leon	5.3	9.5	5.4	3.4	3.1
Catalonia (IC-V)	6.5 (1992)	9.7 (1995)	3.9 (1999)	7.3 (2003)	9.6 (2006)
Extremadura	7.1	10.5	6.0	6.3	4.5
Galicia	3.8 (1989)	3.1 (1993)	0.9 ²² (1997)	0.7 (2001)	0.8 (2005)
La Rioja	4.5	7.2	3.9	2.7	3.0
Madrid	12.0	16.0	7.7	8.5	8.9
Murcia	10.1	12.4	7.0	5.6	6.2
Navarre	5.5	9.3	6.8	8.2	4.4
Valencia	7.5	11.5	6.0	6.3	8.0 ²³
Mean	7.6	9.6	5.2	5.2	5.1

²⁰ IU joined an electoral coalition led by PSM (a regional socialist party) that obtained 9.0%.

²¹ IU competed as part of an electoral coalition that included relatively larger NSWP.

²² IU regional leadership formed an electoral coalition with PSOE. This was rejected by the national IU leadership, which proceeded to fielded a competing list that split the IU vote (Alcantara and Martinez, 1998).

²³ IU competed as part of an electoral coalition that included relatively smaller NSWP.

Annex 4: Electoral Support for Main NSWP in Regional Elections (1989-2008)

Region	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007
Andalusia	PA-5.8	PA-6.6	PA-7.4	PA-6.1	PA-2.9
Aragon	PAR-24.5 CHA-2.5	PAR-20.3 CHA-4.8	PAR-13.2 CHA-11.0	PAR-11.1 CHA-13.6	PAR-12.1 CHA-8.2
Asturias	CA-2.7	PAS-3.2	URAS-7.1	None	None
Balearic Islands	PSM-8.0 UIM-2.5	PSM-12.0 UM-5.3	PSM-11.6 UM-7.3	PSM-7.9 UM-7.4	PSM-9.8 UM-6.8
Basque Country	PNV-28.5 EA-11.4 HB-18.3 UA- 1.4 EE-7.8	PNV-29.2 EA-10.1 EH-15.9 UA-2.7	PNV-27.5 EA- 8.5 EH-17.6 UA-1.2	PNV-42.2 (inc. EA) EH-10.0	PNV-38.6 (inc. EA) Ehak-12.5 Aralar-2.3
Canary Islands	CC-12.6 AIC-20.5	CC-32.5 PCN-3.0	CC-36.5	CC-32.7 FNC-4.8	CC- 23.1
Cantabria	PRC- 6.3 Upca- 33.3	PRC- 14.4 Upca-16.5	PRC-13.4	PRC-19.3	PRC-28.9
Castile-Leon	None	UPL-2.5	UPL-3.7	UPL-3.8	UPL-2.7
Catalonia	CiU-46.0 ERC-7.9	CiU-40.8 ERC-9.5	CiU-37.6 ERC-8.7	CiU-30.9 ERC-16.4	CiU-31.5 ERC-14.1 Ciut-3.0
Galicia	BNG-8.0 PSG-3.8 CG-3.7	BNG-18.5	BNG-25.1	BNG-22.9	BNG-18.9
La Rioja	PRP-5.3	PRP-6.7	PRP-5.7	PRP-6.8	PRP-6.0
Navarre	HB-11.1 EA-4.0	HB-9.2 EA-4.5 CDN-18.4	EH-15.5 EA-5.4 CDN-6.8	Aralar-7.2 EA-7.0 CDN-7.2	NaBai - 23.5 CDN- 4.4
Valencia	UV-10.3	UV-7.0	UV-4.7	UV-4.7	None.