The Salience of Decentralisation in Party Competition

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Abstract

In this paper, we examine when and why state-wide parties address the issue of decentralization. We consider three sets of factors at the party and country-level. We expect that decentralization will be more salient: i) for parties that put greater relative emphasis on the cultural and European ideological dimensions; ii) in countries with greater regionally-based ethnic diversity and stronger regionalist parties; iii) for parties with greater policy 'credibility', i.e. for pro-decentralist, economically and culturally liberal parties. To test our hypotheses, we conduct a time-series cross-section analysis using data from the Comparative Manifesto Project from 1945 to 2010. Overall, our study provides a thorough analysis of the ideological and strategic factors that influence whether state-wide parties decide to emphasise decentralization. We demonstrate that decentralisation is more salient in parties' programmes the greater relative importance they assign to the Cultural and to the European ideological dimensions. We also show that decentralisation is more salient among parties that compete in countries with territorial diversity. Finally, we show that parties which emphasise the cultural dimension will only pay greater attention to decentralisation when responding to the actual electoral threat of regionalist parties. Moreover, parties which are pro-decentralist, as well as economically and culturally liberal, increase the salience of decentralisation when responding to territorial diversity. These findings have implications for the literature on issue competition by highlighting the conditions under which institutional issues, often only weakly related to the predominant (left-right) ideological dimensions, become salient for political parties as well as for the literature on multi-level governance by showing when and how the reorganisation of the territorial allocation of power becomes politicised, according to parties' ideology and the articulation of different territorial identities.

Key words:

decentralisation, political parties, issue salience, politicisation, comparative manifestos project

I. Introduction

The transfer of power to regions has been one of the singularly most important sources of transformation in the authority of states over recent decades. In a number of countries, such as Spain and Belgium, this process is a salient issue of debate among political parties. In these countries, parties debate the just redistribution of resources, the equitable treatment of territorial entities as well as the legitimacy of the multiple identities of different groups inhabiting the same political system. In other countries, for example France, the issue of decentralisation has been neglected by parties, even in periods of significant change such as the 2010-11 fiscal reforms. What explains this variation observed across countries and parties in the importance attached to decentralisation?

We investigate this topic because knowing about the 'mind-set' of political actors, appreciating the importance they attach to decentralisation and grasping how this issue is then politicised are necessary for understanding the processes of institutional change that shape the distribution of authority in system of multi-level governance. A number of studies have sought to demonstrate how the preferences of actors shape the negotiations surrounding constitutional reforms as well as their substantive outcomes (Behnke and Benz 2009; Benz and Colino 2011), but little has been done to investigate how the political will to undertake such reforms comes about in the first place. Why does decentralisation become a topic of partisan debate? Which parties seek to 'mobilise bias' (Schattschneider 1960) in favour of decentralisation, that is, to make it a dominant topic on the political agenda, and what are their reasons for doing so?

If we are to understand the circumstances under which allocation of power to regions becomes a politicised question, it is therefore necessary to examine when and why certain political parties will emphasise and compete on the issue of decentralisation. That is the purpose of this paper. Following the encouragement of Marks and Hooghe (2000: 811) to "bring politics into the study of institutional change", we argue first that, much like EU integration, decentralisation is a political issue that is sensitive to partisan preferences and thus to partisan ideology. Second, we claim that the importance assigned to decentralisation will also vary in function of the strategic context in which parties compete, in particular, the degree of territorial diversity and the strength of regionalist parties. Third, we contend that the salience of decentralisation is also conditioned by mainstream parties' policy 'credibility', that is, by the positions that they adopt on the economic, cultural and centre-periphery issues.

In the next section, we assess the state of the current literature on this topic. The third section develops the theoretical framework and the reasoning underlying our claims. In the fourth section we describe the data, measures and statistical models that we employ to assess these claims. The fifth section describes the results. The conclusion summarises the findings, discusses their relevance to the study of multi-level governance and issue competition, and points to avenues of further research.

II. Literature Review

The politicisation of multi-level governance

The allocation of political authority has increasingly become a *politicised* question: the level at which decision-making takes place is now a controversial and divisive issue of debate for political elites and the mass public. The level and scope of competences transferred from national governments to the European Union and to regional governments over the last 30 years touches on policy areas that are close to the hearts of citizens, such as social policy, health and education. This means that the fundamentals of politics, what Laswell (1936) defined as 'who gets what, when, and how', have begun to be affected by matters of institutional change, that is, the level of governance at which decision-making should take place.

The politicisation of multi-level governance has been widely studied in the case of European integration since the rising expression of popular dissent that followed on the heels of the Maastricht Treaty referenda held in the 1990s (Franklin et al. 1994). The jurisdictional allocation of authority has become subject to domestic political contestation because integration has reached into areas that create economic winners and losers and because the EU has adopted a political mantle that potentially challenges citizens' national identities (van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; Marks and Steenbergen 2004). The advancement of economic and political integration is therefore now sensitive to: mass public preferences and the emergence of a new cleavage in national elections (Gabel 2000); the positioning and unity of national political parties towards the EU (Marks and Wilson 2000; Marks et al. 2002a; Marks et al. 2002b; Marks et al. 2006); and the interactions between mainstream and entrepreneurial Euro-sceptic parties that 'prime' the question of Europe in the minds of voters (Taggart 1998; Hooghe 2007; De Vries and Edwards 2009). Studying how domestic factors determine the importance that parties assign to the European Union (Spoon 2012) has thus become central for understanding why and when governments choose to delegate powers to the EU.

Comparable questions have arisen in decentralizing countries, where conflicts over the recognition of pluri-nationalism in Spain, the inter-territorial redistribution of wealth in Germany, or the territorial integrity of the UK have also become salient topics of debate in the mass public and issues of contestation between partisan elites. But existing theories of regionalism and federalism do not provide many clues about the conditions under which these questions become politicised. Neo-classical theories of authority (Bolton et al. 1996; Bolton and Roland 1997; Alesina and Spolaore 1997), structuralist theories of federalism (Livingston 1956; Erk 2007) and functionalist explanations of decentralisation (Schakel 2010) have all pointed to the pressures for change – whether functional pressures for creating optimal number of jurisdictions or societal pressures for establishing 'congruence' between territorial diversity and political institutions – but at the cost of considering the role of political actors, thus hampering any explanation about the politicisation of decentralisation. Theories that do consider the role of political parties have privileged the influence of party organisation in shaping the incentives of territorial actors to change the allocation of authority in federations (Riker 1964; Garman et al. 2001; Filipov et al. 2004) but, in doing so, they have overlooked how partisan ideology and strategic interactions shape the decision of parties to politicise the issue of decentralisation, prior to any attempt to modify state structures.

Decentralisation as issue competition

From the perspective of political parties, the decision of whether or not to decentralise power is one among a set of policy *issues* – i.e. the questions and problems that affect the public interest, as well as their answers and solutions – over which they compete for electoral support on the basis of their contrasting programmatic visions. The transformation of party systems induced by the weakening of social structures and traditional cleavages (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Dalton 2006), the emergence of new cleavages and voter preferences (Inglehart 1990; Kitschelt 1994; Kriesi et al. 2008) and the volatility of electoral behaviour (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Franklin et al. 1992) have witnessed a concomitant diversification of partisan programmatic offering (Thomassen 2005) and rise in issue voting and competition (Carmines and Stimson 1993; Mair et al. 2004; Green-Pedersen 2007), in which *issues* such as the environment, immigration and multiculturalism, the EU and decentralisation have become increasingly influential in shaping voter choice and party strategy.

Scholarly works in this incipient field have treated two distinct aspects of political party strategy toward territorial reform: *position* and *salience* (Toubeau and Massetti 2013). Recent efforts at assessing the determinants of party positioning are constrained by the limited availability of cross-national expert surveys to a single point in time and by the consequent static nature of the analysis, as well as by their strict focus on the stance that parties adopt, rather than on their decision to politicise the issue of decentralisation (Toubeau and Wagner 2013).[1] Importantly, the position a party takes on an issue is not necessarily related to the emphasis it places on it.[2] The question of issue salience is therefore separate from that of issue positions.

The study of the salience has been undertaken by Mazzoleni (2009) and Alonso (2012), who seek to understand the 'contagion' of support for decentralisation across national party system, using the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) as evidence.[3] Both works present a set of party-level and state-level variables that explain why certain parties emphasise the issue of decentralisation. Mazzoleni's (2009) account indicates that electoral shocks (defeat and/or a forced exit from office) and the electoral threat of regionalist parties may play an important role in determining the salience of decentralisation. Alonso (2012) also identifies a conditioning effect of ideology, or policy 'credibility', in shaping the responses of mainstream parties and points out that competition between regionalist and mainstream parties takes place simultaneously along the territorial and the left-right dimensions. She also adds that territorial reforms affecting the structures of the state may increase the salience of centre-periphery issues.

We build on and extend these arguments in three ways. First, we make it explicit that decentralisation forms part of state-wide parties' overall ideology and consider how the importance assigned to decentralisation is conditioned by the emphasis placed on other issue-dimensions (economic, cultural, European) which constitute the 'package' of party policies. Second, we look at how statewide parties respond to strategic incentives across a wider universe of cases. Mazzoleni (2009) and Alonso (2012) apply their arguments to a select number of West European countries (Belgium, France, Italy, Spain and the UK), where the territorial cleavage and decentralisation processes have

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[1] The same critique applies to recent expert surveys that assess party positioning along the 'ethnonational' dimension, i.e the position that parties take towards establishing congruence between the territorial boundaries of the state and the boundaries defining ethno-national groups (Szocizk and Zuber 2012).

[2] However, there is evidence that some parties emphasize their more extreme positions (Wagner 2012).

[3] Other scholars have sought to improve the quality of the CMP data-set by recoding the values assigned to parties on different dimensions of decentralisation (e.g. the institutional dimension pertaining to legislative or fiscal powers and cultural dimension pertaining to symbolic recognition of plurinationalism) in specific countries such as Belgium (Sinardet), Spain (Libbrecht &Maddens) and Italy (Basile).

been prominent. But, while the empirical verification of their arguments is suitably aligned with the scope conditions of their theory, this nevertheless means that the broader applicability of their explanation is limited and that we know little about when and why decentralisation becomes salient in different kinds of settings, i.e. heterogeneous countries or homogeneous countries, and, in the former case, whether salience driven by the threat of regionalist parties or by territorial diversity *tout court*. Third, we offer a richer analysis of how electoral competition conditions the way in which party ideology operates, by providing a broader understanding of policy 'credibility' and by studying how its effects on salience are conditional upon the strategic incentives generated by territorial diversity.

III. Why and When do Parties Emphasise Decentralisation?

The purpose of this paper is to uncover under what conditions parties politicise the issue of decentralisation. Our first main contention is that the emphasis that parties put on decentralisation will depend on their overall ideology, i.e. the set of values, goals and beliefs about societal institutions and processes that define their identity and guide their actions as mobilisers and decision-makers (Freeden 1998). More specifically, it will depend on the importance that they assign to other issues in the policy space, which, studies have shown, include three latent ideological dimensions: the *economic* and *cultural* dimensions (Kriesi et al. 2008; van der Brug and Spanje 2009), and the *European* dimension (Hix and Lord 1997; Marks et al. 2006; Bakker et al. 2012).[4]

The Economic and Cultural Dimensions

Our first claim is that parties that put greater emphasis on the *cultural dimension* relative to the *economic dimension* are more likely to emphasise the decentralisation issue. We expect this because the emergence of decentralisation as a political issue coincided with the rise of a 'New Politics' in the late 1960s and early 1970s and the emergence of Green parties in the 1980s. This trend reflected the growth in post-materialistic values among Western electorates which, as a result of rising educational levels and affluence, became concerned with their quality of life (Inglehart 1990; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Decentralisation became prominent alongside a new

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[4] The cultural dimension has also been referred to as the material/post-material dimension (Inglehart 1990), Libertarian-Authoritarian dimension (Kitschelt 1994; Kitschelt 1995), the new politics dimension (Franklin et al. 1992) and the Green/Alternative/Libertarian- Traditional/Authoritarian/Nationalist dimension (GAL-TAN) (Hooghe et al. 2002; Marks et al. 2006)

'package' of issues, such as the environment and the collective rights of non-economic groups like women, ethnic minorities or immigrants, because it was seen as a method for fostering greater participation in decision-making and granting collective rights to autonomy for particular territorial groups. As (Marks et al. 2010) note, the process of regionalisation in the 1970s coincided with a cultural shift towards post-materialism that challenged established norms such as centralised decision-making.

There occurred a parallel rise of Radical Right parties during the 1980s that emphasised the flip-side of these post-materialist issues. The main characteristic of the Green and Radical Right parties has thus been a focus on 'New Politics' issues relating to the *cultural dimension*. They adopted radically opposite stances: the culturally liberal Green parties supported women's rights, cultural diversity and local decision-making; the culturally conservative Radical-Right parties favoured traditional morality, nationalism and central state authority. State-wide parties from the 'mainstream' families, such as Social Democrats or Liberals, also articulated this dimension, given its prominence in public opinion and the electoral threat of the new 'niche' parties, but did so to a lesser degree. That is because their ideology and electoral fortunes continue to be structured by the *economic dimension*, which has retained primacy in anchoring political competition across developed democracies, due to the persistent and near-universal relevance of the left-right distinction, founded upon differences regarding the value of equality (Bobbio 1994). Given this concern, mainstream parties tend to focus on the conflicting interests of different economic groups and to emphasise 'Old Politics' issues, e.g. taxation, redistribution and economic planning vs. limited state intervention, deregulation and free enterprise. Moreover, in an uncertain political environment, characterised by volatility and new party entrants, mainstream parties will use these ideological beliefs to interpret and react to new events, generating a stable 'policy equilibrium' that reinforces their focus on the economic dimension (Budge 1994).

Of course, *all* political parties will devote some attention to *both* the cultural and economic dimension. However, the relative emphasis on the two dimensions will vary, depending on the extent to which mainstream parties have incorporated 'New Politics' issues or to which 'niche' parties have tackled traditional economic questions. This should have a direct bearing for the importance they assign to decentralisation. For instance, we expect Communist and unreformed Social Democratic parties of the 'Old Left' to concentrate almost exclusively on economic issues, such as social welfare and trade unions, and for 'New Left' or 'Third Way' Social Democratic parties to put less

emphasis on welfare and more on local participation and democracy, and decentralised government (Budge 1993; Giddens 1998).[5] So, because of the strong association between the cultural dimension and decentralisation, our first hypothesis is:

H1: The more a party emphasises the cultural dimension relative to the economic dimension, the more it will emphasise decentralisation.

The European Dimension

European integration has also become an important topic of partisan contestation that is influenced by the ideology of political parties (Hooghe et al. 2002; Marks et al. 2006). Our second claim is that political parties that emphasise European integration also make decentralisation a salient issue. That is because the two are mutually reinforcing processes (Hooghe and Marks 2001) that create new structural conflicts and patterns of opposition between parties (Kriesi et al. 2008). By weakening state boundaries, the creation of a single market and the establishment of supranational institutions have increased the exit options for territorial actors (Bartolini 2005), by making it possible for them to enjoy the benefits of access to a wide market without burdening the costs of high state-level taxation (Alesina et al. 2000). The EU has also created pressures to establish regional structures of government for the implementation of the *acquis communautaire*, in matters pertaining to regional funds (Grabbe 2003; Hughes et al. 2004), and it has empowered sub-state actors by creating a separate arena in which they can mobilise in order to influence European legislation in areas of regional competences (Marks et al. 1996; Jeffery 2000). Finally, by eroding state sovereignty and national identities, the EU has helped to produce 'post-national' thinking, in which sovereignty is becoming shared between levels of government and individuals develop multiple identities and allegiances (Keating 2001), lending greater legitimacy to the claims of stateless nations to self-determination. As a result, European integration and decentralisation are vocally supported by culturally liberal parties, who view multi-tier government as a system for efficient problem-solving and who value the cultural diversity and cosmopolitan norms that it encourages. It is for these same

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[5] The consequence of mainstream parties adopting positions on the cultural dimensions is that it has cross-cut the economic dimension, creating divisions within mainstream parties and party families. In Western Europe, the cultural and economic dimensions are oblique rather than orthogonal, as economically left-wing parties tend to be culturally liberal (and vice versa) (Kitschelt 1994; Kitschelt 1995). In Eastern Europe, the two dimensions inversely overlap, as economically left-wing parties are culturally conservative (and vice-versa).

reasons that they are vehemently opposed by culturally conservative and Eurosceptic parties, who view them as a comparable threats to nation-state sovereignty, national identity and territorial integrity. Thus, the second hypothesis is:

H2: The more a party emphasises the European dimension, the more it will emphasise decentralisation.

Party Strategy: Responses to Territorial Diversity

Our second main contention holds that parties should adjust the salience of decentralisation in their programmes in accordance with the strategic context in which they compete, in particular the territorial diversity of the society and its politicisation by regionalist parties. These two factors constitute the *potential* and *actual threat* presented by regionalist parties that will sway the reasoning of state-wide parties and increase the importance they assign to decentralisation, irrespective of their ideology.

So, decentralisation is likely to be more salient in countries with regionally-based ethnic groups, such as the Flemish in Belgium, because it is in those contexts where decentralisation is politicised, due to its ambiguous consequences.[6] On the one hand, territorial autonomy is said to reduce the intensity of ethno-political conflicts and to 'contain nationalism' (Hechter 2000), by decentralising political tensions to territorial unit (Horowitz 1985) and eliminating grievances grounded in political discrimination or exclusion (Gurr 1993; Cederman et al. 2010). The risks, on the other hand, are that ethnic conflict and secessionist claims escalate, since territorial autonomy furnishes ethnic identities with legitimacy and supplies ethnic groups with institutional support and material resources (Cornell 2002; Snyder 2002). The *size* of the regionally-based ethnic group is a key determinant underlying both their predisposition to advance secessionist claims (Sorens 2005, 2008) and the willingness of states to accommodate their demands (Walter 2006). This generates the expectation that if regionally-based ethnic groups are large, all political parties will pay greater attention to decentralisation because (a) it is a *potential threat* to the integrity of state structures and thus an unavoidable issue of contestation and (b) there may be a strategic incentive to occupy a niche area of the policy space to check the future *actual threat* of regionalist parties.

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[6] By regionally-based ethnic group, we mean a group of people living in a territorially delimited space that share a sense of commonality based on a belief in a share ancestry and a common culture, that is politically relevant insofar as it is represented in national politics by a least one political organisation (Cederman and Girardin 2007; Cederman et al. 2010).

Once this *actual threat* is present, so when there are important regionalist parties, state-wide parties have an even stronger incentive to talk about decentralisation.[7] In virtue of their presence and demands, regionalist parties introduce decentralisation as a separate issue-dimension of competition, over which they can claim 'ownership' as 'niche' political parties (Meguid 2008; Wagner 2011). They place the question of territorial reform on the agenda by exerting pressure on state-wide parties in the electoral and/or in the parliamentary and governmental arenas (Toubeau 2011; Amat and Falco-Gimeno 2013). Following Meguid's (2005; 2008) PSO theory of competition, we expect that if the size of regionalist parties is small and the *actual threat* is negligible, then all state-wide parties will dismiss the issue as unimportant and ignore it. Conversely, if the size of regionalist parties is large and the *actual threat* is therefore significant, then we expect that all state-wide parties will acknowledge the legitimacy of the issue and increase the priority they assign to decentralisation. They do this either by deploying an accommodating strategy in an attempt to challenge regionalist parties' 'ownership' of the issue, recoup electoral losses and maximise their share of the vote or by deploying an adversarial strategy and opposing regionalist claims in order to under-cut the accommodative efforts of their mainstream rivals. Our two hypotheses relating to *potential* and *actual threats* are thus:

H3a: *The larger the size of the regionally-based ethnic groups, the more parties will emphasise decentralisation.*

H3b: *The larger the size of regionalist parties, the more parties will emphasise decentralisation*

Responses to Territorial Diversity: the Role of Ideology

Our third contention holds that not all parties will respond to territorial diversity in the same way. Specifically, how parties react to *potential* and *actual threats* of regionalist parties will depend on the configuration of their ideology and, more specifically, on the importance they assign to the cultural dimension, and the positions they adopt on the territorial, economic and cultural dimensions of competition.

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[7] Regionalist parties denote parties that represent specific and territorially-bounded ethnic, linguistic, cultural groups and that seek electoral support on a limited territorial basis. They are primarily policy-seeking actors, whose main controlling goal is self-determination, i.e. the right to exert direct control over their ruler and policies, whether in the form of territorial autonomy or independence.

The first expectation is that parties are more likely to emphasise decentralisation in reaction to the *potential* or *actual threat* of regionalist parties if they already place an important emphasis on cultural issues. This is because, as discussed above, decentralisation is more strongly related to the cultural dimension. Given the importance they assign to cultural pluralism, territorial accommodation and localised decision-making or, conversely, to centralism and state authority, these parties have the requisite ideological background to address the issue of decentralisation and thus are better prepared to do so in their strategic response to territorial diversity. The consequence is that the relative emphasis on the cultural dimension is more closely tied to the salience of decentralisation in countries where the potential or actual threat of territorial diversity is higher. This generates a fourth set of hypotheses:

> <u>H4a</u>: Th e larger the size of the regionally-based ethnic groups, the more parties that emphasise the cultural dimension will emphasise decentralisation
>
> <u>H4b</u>: The larger the size of regionalist parties, the more parties that emphasise the cultural dimension will emphasise decentralisation.

The second expectation is that parties are more likely to respond to territorial diversity by emphasising decentralisation depending on the positions that they adopt. We posit that an increase in the salience of decentralisation is only likely if the party is a 'responsible' (Downs 1957), 'plausible' (Robertson 1976), or 'credible' proponent of decentralisation (Alonso 2012; Meguid 2008). The constraint of 'credibility' works in two distinct ways: on the *consistency* and *coherence* of its programmatic pledges

When a state-wide party is confronted with the *potential* or *actual threat* of regionalist parties, it should matter whether it is in favour of or opposed to decentralisation. Our broad expectation is that *pro-decentralist* parties should talk more about decentralisation, since they advocate change; *centralist* parties who wish to preserve the status quo, will avoid addressing the issue of territorial reform Moreover, we expect that these differences in emphasis should increase in response to territorial diversity: if a state-wide party has been *consistent* in adopting a *pro-decentralist position* in the past, it can respond to the *potential* or *actual threat* of regionalist parties by increasing the salience of decentralisation. Such a state-wide party can show that there is a historic tradition or an existing policy of support for territorial accommodation in order to persuade voters that it is the genuine proponent of decentralisation and that

its heightened emphasis of the issue is sincere (Bowler 1990). For example, the British Labour party focused on the issue of devolution to its advantage in the early 1990s, precisely because it had endorsed the policy throughout the 1980s. Thus, only if a party is a consistent supporter of decentralisation will it successfully claim 'ownership' over the issue and successfully increase its salience for electoral gain. Conversely, a mainstream party that is traditionally averse to decentralisation, like the British Conservative party, will find it difficult suddenly to emphasise the issue. Emphasising an anti-decentralisation position risks losing more voters in the region where regionally-based ethnic groups are present, while the alternative strategy – changing position on decentralisation – risks damaging party credibility and losing voters in the party's core regions of support, who may feel that it is sacrificing its traditional ideological values on the altar of electoral expediency. This generates a fifth set of hypotheses:

> _H5a:_ *The larger the size of regionally-based ethnic groups, the more pro-decentralist parties will emphasise decentralisation.*
> _H5b_: *The larger the size of regionalist parties, the more pro-decentralist parties will emphasise decentralisation.*

The position of parties on other issues should matter as well, because an increase in the emphasis on decentralisation has to be *coherent* with other aspects of a party's programme, otherwise the party's strategy will appear not only insincere, but also illogical, and runs the risk of being unrewarding. In a modified version of our previous argument (Toubeau and Wagner 2013), we believe that because decentralisation touches upon questions of *efficiency* and *redistribution*, as well as questions of *identity* (Hooghe and Marks 2008), political parties that adopt an *economically* and *culturallly liberal* position are more likely to emphasise decentralisation. We expect overall differences in the salience of decentralisation between liberal parties and their counterparts, but also expect these differences to increase where there is a strategic incentive to do so.

Political parties that espouse a right-wing (or liberal) economic ideology, that are committed to individual liberty and that stress the importance of market mechanisms will put higher emphasis on decentralisation. Because their world-view is shaped by the intellectual prisms of neo-classical economics and public choice, these parties place a high degree of importance on the *efficient* allocation of authority across tiers of governments and are prone to addressing changes in territorial structures. In their view,

a proper assignment of competences and resources is necessary to ensure the preservation of markets (Weingast 1995), to check the expansionary tendencies of the central bureaucracy (Brenan and Buchanan 1980), to deliver public goods that reflect local preferences (Oates 1972), to give control to regions over the powers that allow them to stimulate economic growth (Scott 1998). In contrast, political parties that espouse a left-wing economic ideology, that value equality and stress the role of state intervention for correcting market failures and *redistributing* resources will not emphasise decentralisation. Their key concern is to provide universal public services and to redistribute wealth from richer to poorer jurisdictions (Peterson 1995) and any change to the constitutional status quo is seen to limit their ability to finance social and economic programme and to result in the generation of inter-territorial inequalities (Wildavsky 1985; Prud'homme 1995; Rodrigues-Pose and Ezcurra 2010).

Culturally liberal parties will also tend to emphasise decentralisation. These parties defy conventional norms of centralised decision-making and favour change in territorial structures because it enhances the possibility for groups to participate in the governance of collective affairs and improves the quality of democracy by making rulers more accountable (Dahl and Tufte 1974). This consideration is especially relevant when social groups correspond to regionally-based ethnic groups with distinct *identities* that view decentralisation as a way of securing collective rights (Coakley 1993; Lapidoth 1997; Requejo 1999). On the other hand, culturally conservative parties will not emphasise decentralisation, because they are the defenders of the status quo and thus prefer to avoid any discussion of institutional change. They believe that it undermines deference to political authority, challenges elite-based decision-making and threatens the stability of the established constitution by encouraging mass involvement in politics (Burke 1890; Oakeshott 1962). Where structures of regional government correspond to regionally-based ethnic groups, these parties reject decentralisation as a threat to the integrity of the state and to the unity of the national political community. This produces a sixth set of hypotheses:

> *H6a: The larger the size of regionally-based ethnic groups, the more economic and cultural liberal parties will emphasise decentralisation.*
> *H6b: The larger the size of regionalist parties, the more economic and cultural liberal parties will emphasise decentralisation.*

IV. Data, Measures and Model

Dependent variable: salience of decentralization

To measure the salience of decentralization for political parties, we make use of the party manifestos coded by the Comparative Manifesto Project, now known as MARPOR (Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2007; Volkens et al. 2012). This project summarizes party manifestos quantitatively by assigning each quasi-sentence to one of 56 categories. This approach is useful for our purposes as it explicitly measures the emphasis each party places on the different issues.[8] In the CMP coding scheme, there are two categories directly linked to the topic of sub-national governance: decentralisation (per301) and centralisation (per302). Using these two codes as a measure of the salience of decentralisation would seem like an obvious approach; however, closer inspection of the data reveals that parties do not always phrase support for the national state and the central government as support for centralisation, so such quasi-sentences hardly exist at all. As a result, an aggregate measure of these two categories would only contain mentions of pro-decentralisation positions and therefore not accurately summarize the overall salience of centre-periphery issues.

We therefore follow Alonso (2012) in adding four further categories to the centre-periphery measure: national way of life (positive: per601; negative: per602) and multiculturalism (positive: per607; negative: per608). These additional categories are not exclusively related to centre-periphery issues, as they may refer to topics related to immigration or integration. But, adding them nevertheless provides us with a more valid measure of the total salience of centre-periphery, as it offers a valid measure of a party's stance towards centralisation and towards the cultural component of territorial claims. We also ran our models adding just the items related to 'national way of life', and the results remain consistent. We use the natural logarithm of the salience score as is recommended for skewed data that is zero-censored (Gelman and Hill 2007). [9]

The countries and elections included in the analysis are listed in Appendix 1.

Independent variables

Our first independent variable is the salience of the economic and cultural dimensions. To measure this, we create salience indicators for the economic and the cultural dimensions. We base these on recent work by Bakker and Hobolt (2012), who suggest how CMP categories should be assigned to each dimension. We alter their

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[8] Note that we exclude programmes classed as estimates by the CMP itself (progtype 3).
[9] 1 is added to these values as a start as taking the natural logarithm of 0 is not possible.

cultural salience measure slightly by removing codes directly linked to centre-periphery matters.[10] The final salience scales are shown in Table 1. We measure the relative salience of cultural dimension as the share of socio-cultural statements among all economic and socio-cultural statements: $salience_{culture}/(salience_{economy}+salience_{culture})$. This variable ranges from 0 to 1. We also measure the salience of EU matters. This is calculated as the share of the manifesto devoted to European integration (see Table 1). We use the natural logarithm of these values.

[Table 1]

Our measure of party position is binary. For decentralisation, we create a scale where we subtract sentences in favour of centralisation from sentences in favour of decentralization.[11] We then take the country mean of this scale. Positions greater than this country mean are coded as in favour of decentralization (relative to the context of that country), while positions lower than that mean are coded as in favour of centralization. We use the same procedure to calculate binary measures for positions on the economic and the cultural dimensions. The reason we use binary measures is that using raw salience measures has a strong disadvantage: since the total salience share in a manifesto is 1, increasing the salience of one area must lead to a reduction in the salience of other topics. Such data is termed 'compositional'. A binary indicator allows us to avoid some of the problems associated with such data (see also Spoon et al. 2012)

To measure the proportion of the population belonging to a regionally based ethnic group, we use information provided in the Ethnic Power Relations dataset (Wimmer et al. 2009) and its geographic supplement (Wucherpfennig et al. 2011). We code ethno-politically relevant groups as regionally concentrated if they are either only or partly regionally based. We exclude the largest ethno-politically relevant group, which is generally the dominant group (for example, the English in the United Kingdom). The resulting variable ranges from 0 to 1; the maximum value in the dataset is for Belgium (0.4). We also code the electoral strength of regionalist parties. To do so, we first created a list of all regionalist parties (see Appendix 2) and then gathered electoral data for these (data provided by Massetti and Schakel 2013). We use the values from the current (and not the previous) election as we believe that this best captures the threat emanating from these parties.

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[10] These are national way of life and multiculturalism as well as minority groups (per705).

[11] Specifically, we calculate: (per301+per602+per607)-(per 302+ per 601+ per608)

Controls

At the party level, we include as controls two variables that may affect the emphasis that parties place on decentralization. *Party size* is measured as the share of the vote at the election after the manifesto was written; this information is included in the CMP dataset. We expect smaller parties to emphasise centre-periphery matters more, as they may wish to occupy a niche area in the policy space by competing on non-economic issues. *Government participation* is coded as 1 if the party was in government for any amount of time (excluding caretaker cabinets) between the previous and the current election; this information is taken from the Parlgov dataset (Doring and Manow 2012), with missing cases added manually by the researchers. We expect that parties in opposition will tend to emphasize decentralisation more than parties in government, which will seek to preserve the institutional status quo.

At the country level, we include two sets of institutional variables that may shape the strategic incentives faced by political parties to emphasize decentralisation. On the horizontal dimension, we include the level of disproportionality and the effective number of electoral parties; both variables are taken from Gallagher (2012). We expect that a permissive electoral system is likely to facilitate the articulation of the territorial cleavage, the multiplication of issue-dimensions and party competitors (Anorim Neto and Cox 1997), and to generate a centrifugal dynamic in which parties seek marginal votes by moving towards dispersed voters' ideal points across a number of dimensions and by focusing on non-economic issues like decentralisation (Cox 1990; Dow 2001).

On the vertical dimension, we concentrate on the existing territorial distribution of authority, measured by the 'self-rule' value assigned by Marks et al. (2010). Self-rule is the extent to which sub-national units can run their own affairs independently of the central government. We use the value from the previous election. Our expectation is that the more powers territorial entities exercise, the more likely it is that decentralisation will be an issue of contestation. In unitary countries where only a small number of depoliticised competences are transferred, we expect that decentralisation will not be a salient issue. In contrast, in federal countries where regional governments enjoy powers over politicised areas such as health and education, welfare and taxation, we expect decentralisation to be salient.

The process of reforming the territorial distribution of authority can, however, also be contentious. So, we code whether there was a reform between the previous and the

current election: this variable is 1 if there was a change, 0 if not. We include this variable as Alonso (2012) suggests that the salience of centre-periphery matters increases immediately after (and not before) a territorial reform.

Model

We use an OLS model to predict the salience of decentralisation. Since errors may be correlated within parties, we cluster standard errors by country. To address the autocorrelation of errors from one election to another, we run our models using a Prais-Winsten transformation (as recommended by Plumper et al. 2005). We choose this method over the use of a lagged dependent variable as the latter approach arguably uses lagged values to explain much of the variance of interest. We exclude all parties coded as regionalist (see Appendix 2) from our analysis.

V. Results

The Economic and Cultural Dimensions

The results of our first analyses are presented in Table 2. To test our first hypothesis (H1) that mainstream parties that focus less on the economic dimension and more on the cultural dimension also put greater emphasis on the decentralisation dimension, we run a basic model (Model 1) that includes that variable as well as the following party- and country-level controls: ideological positions, vote share, government participation, disproportionality, party system size, the size of the regionally-based minority ethnic population, the level of self-rule and the occurrence of recent reform.

[Table 2 about here]

The results confirm H1. They show that the emphasis on the cultural dimension has a clear impact on the emphasis on decentralisation dimension. For every .01 increase in the relative emphasis on the cultural dimension, the emphasis on decentralisation increases by .76 per cent. In more substantively relevant terms, a 0.1 increase in the relative emphasis on the cultural dimension (e.g., from 0.4 to 0.5) would lead to a 7.6 per cent increase in the emphasis on decentralisation. In terms of the manifesto, this means that a party's emphasis would increase from 10 to 10.76 per cent. This effect magnitude is similar to that found in related studies (Meyer and Wagner 2012; Spoon et al. 2012). This means that we have clear support for our basic contention, namely that

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the politicisation of decentralisation is conditioned by a party's ideology. We find that those parties that highlight 'New Politics' issues are more likely to emphasise the decentralisation dimension. This would include most Green or Radical Right parties, or mainstream parties that have increasingly pinned their electoral fortunes on non-economic issues. In contrast, parties that remain concerned with questions of equity, state intervention and economic groups, for instance Communist parties or unreformed Socialist Parties, and are thus attached to competing on the economic dimension will tend to ignore the issue of decentralisation.

In Model 1 we can also see that ideological positioning in general has a considerable impact on how much parties emphasise the decentralisation issue. For instance, the emphasis of a pro-decentralisation party on the issue is about 30 per cent higher than that of an anti-decentralisation party. A party on the economic left will have an emphasis that is about 9 per cent lower. So, economic liberals emphasise decentralisation more than those on the economic left. However, we find no effect for cultural positions: both cultural liberals and cultural conservatives are about equally likely to emphasise decentralisation.

Turning to the control variables, we can see that electoral system disproportionality has an effect (significant at a 0.1 level) on decentralisation emphasis, with more disproportional systems showing higher salience. This result is not consistent with our expectation that electoral system permissiveness facilitates the articulation of cleavages and the multiplication of party competitors and issue dimensions. Recent territorial reforms also have a positive effect (significant at 0.1 level), confirming Alonso's (2012) finding that salience increases for all parties *after* reforms. The effects for other control variables do not reach conventional levels of statistical significance.

The European Dimension

Model 2 tests the hypothesis (H2) that salience of EU matters is associated with emphasis on decentralisation. The hypothesis is confirmed: parties that talk more about European integration also talk more about decentralisation. Specifically, a 1 per cent increase in the salience of European integration leads to a 0.1 per cent increase in the salience of decentralisation. For example, take a party whose emphasis on the EU is 10 per cent of the manifesto and on decentralisation also 10 per cent. If its emphasis on the EU were 50 per cent higher (i.e. 15 per cent of the manifesto), then the emphasis on decentralisation would be predicted to be 5 per cent higher (i.e. 10.5 per cent).

Therefore, in much the same way that the transfers of authority in systems of multi-level governance- to regions and to the EU- have tended to reinforce each other over time, attention to these two issues also moves in unison in the programmes of political parties.

Party Strategy: Responses to Territorial Diversity

The second set of models examines our argument that the influence of ideology on the salience of decentralisation will vary in function of the strategic context in which parties compete. First, we want to test the hypotheses (H3a and H3b) about the presence of regionally-based ethnic groups (*potential threat*) and of the strength of regionalist parties (*actual threat*). Model 1 tests the impact of a potential threat: we can see that the salience of decentralisation rises among parties in general if the size of the regionally based ethnic minority population increases. For every percentage increase, the emphasis on decentralisation rises by 0.98 per cent. So, in a country with a minority population of 15 per cent the emphasis would be predicted to be 9.8 per cent higher than in a country with a minority population of 5 per cent.

Model 3 tests the impact of an actual threat by including the vote share of regionalist parties as a predictor. This model only includes countries where there is a regionally-based ethnic group. Here, the electoral threat on its own has an effect on the salience of decentralisation across all parties that is significant only at the 0.1 level. For every percentage point increase in the vote share of regionalist parties, the emphasis on decentralisation is predicted to rise by about 1.3 per cent – the effect is thus similar to that for the size of the regionally-based minority population. Thus, by examining a wide universe of cases, we find that there are important differences between homogeneous and heterogeneous countries. Questions of decentralisation are more politicised in countries with greater territorial diversity because it is in those settings where it is deployed for the contentious purpose of diffusing ethnic tensions or accommodating the claims of regionally-based ethnic groups and regionalist parties for territorial autonomy.

Responses to Territorial Diversity: The Role of Ideology

Models 4 and 5 test our hypotheses (H4a and H4b) that the effect of the cultural dimension is conditioned by the presence of regionally-based ethnic groups (*potential threat*) and the strength of regionalist parties (*actual threat*). Model 4 therefore examines the effect of the interaction between the relative emphasis of the cultural dimension and the size of the regionally-based ethnic population on the salience of

decentralisation. We plot the effect in Figure 1 (left panel) using a marginal effects graph. As is clearly visible, the interaction effect is not statistically significant. Thus, there is no evidence supporting H5a that the salience of decentralisation is more closely associated with the salience of the cultural dimension in countries with larger minority groups. In sum, parties that compete primarily on the cultural dimension will also tend to emphasise the issue of decentralisation, irrespective of whether the country has important regionally based groups or not.

In contrast, we find that the salience of decentralisation is more closely associated with the salience of the cultural dimension where regionalist parties are electorally stronger. This provides support for H4b. To test this hypothesis, we restrict our sample to countries where there is a regionally-based ethnic group. In Figure 1 (right panel) we see that the effect of the relative emphasis on the cultural dimension increases very strongly as the level of the electoral threat from regionalist parties increases. This suggests that the effect of ideology on the salience of decentralisation is indeed conditioned by the country-context, but only insofar as the country's territorial diversity is articulated by regionalist political parties that command an important share of support. Thus, political parties concerned with 'New Politics' issues, related to local decision-making and cultural pluralism, will increase the emphasis the put on decentralisation, but only when there is a clear strategic incentive to do so, i.e. when there is a need to contest regionalist parties 'ownership' of the territorial dimension.

[Figure 1 about here]

The third and fourth set of models verify our arguments the effect of 'policy credibility' on the strategic decision of mainstream parties to make decentralisation a salient issue. Our first claim concerned the influence of the *consistency* of a state-wide parties' position on decentralisation. We suggested that mainstream parties with a *pro-decentralist position* emphasise the decentralisation issue more in the presence of large regionally-based ethnic groups and of electoral threats from regionalist parties (H5a and H5b). This is tested in models 6 and 7.

[Table 3 about here]

We find evidence in favour of both hypotheses. Thus, parties who are in favour of decentralization emphasise the issue more the larger the regionally-based ethnic group. This is illustrated in Figure 2 (left), which shows that if we go from a country with a very small minority to one where a quarter of the population is included in the minority group, the effect of the pro-decentralist position on the salience of decentralisation doubles (from a 25 per cent increase to about a 50 per cent increase). The interaction effect for the size of the electoral threat is similar, as shown in Figure 2 (right). So, where regionally-based ethnic groups and regionalist parties are strong, pro-decentralization parties are particularly likely to choose an accommodative approach and emphasise the decentralisation issue.

[Figure 2 about here]

Our final hypotheses address the conditional effect of the *coherence* of state-wide parties' position on the economic and the cultural dimension (H6a and H6b). We suggested that economically and culturally liberal parties are more likely to emphasise decentralisation in the presence of a regionally-based ethnic group and/or a strong regionalist party. The results for these hypotheses are tested by interacting the positions on the dimensions with the size of the regionally-based ethnic group (Model 8) and the strength of the regionalist party threat (Model 9). We find in Models 8 and 9 that economically left-wing parties are less likely to emphasise decentralisation as the size of the regionally-based ethnic groups increase (Model 8) and as the electoral threat from regionalist parties rises (Model 9). The precise effects are shown in the left panels in Figures 3 and 4. The interaction effect is significant only in Model 8, but the direction of the predicted effect is similar in both Models. Parties on the economic left emphasise decentralisation less than parties on the economic right, but this is only the case where there is a potential or actual regionalist threat. Finally, we find in Model 9 that socially liberal parties are more likely to emphasize decentralisation as the size of the regionalist party threat increases. (This effect is not significant in Model 8.) This confirms our expectations. Parties that are culturally liberal emphasise decentralisation matters more, but only when there is an electoral threat from regionalist parties.

[Figures 3 about here]

[Figures 4 about here]

VI. Conclusion and Discussion

In a backdrop characterised by the gradual migration of authority to regions, and a variable politicisation of this process across countries and parties, the aim of this paper has been to understand the circumstances under which it becomes a politicised question by examining when and why certain political parties will emphasise and compete on the issue of decentralisation. Addressing this topic is pertinent not only in view of the importance of such debates in a number of prominent contemporary cases, but also given that the existing literature has focused predominantly on how partisan preferences shape constitutional reform negotiations and outcomes, rather than how and why decentralisation becomes a salient topic in the agendas of parties and governments. Moreover, existing works that do tackle this topic explicitly have adopted a narrow understanding of the constraining effect of ideology and have a limited empirical scope.

This paper therefore sought to examine how the salience of decentralisation in parties' programmes is shaped by their ideology and by the strategic context in which they compete. In doing so, it sought to follow the encouragement of Marks and Hooghe (2000: 811) to "place politics – contestation about the good society – at the centre of a theory of authority allocation". In the paper, we demonstrated that decentralisation is more salient in party's programmes the greater relative importance they assign to the Cultural and to the European dimensions. We also showed that decentralisation is more salient among parties that compete in a context characterised by territorial diversity. Finally, we indicated that the effects of ideology are sensitive to strategic incentives: parties which emphasise the cultural dimension will pay greater attention to decentralisation, but only when responding to the *actual threat* (rather than the *potential threat*) of regionalist parties. Moreover, the constraints of policy 'credibility' are also important: parties which are pro-decentralist, as well as economically and culturally liberal, increase the salience of decentralisation when responding to territorial diversity

These findings advance the state of our current knowledge on the topic – one strongly shaped by the recent contribution of Alonso (2012) – by showing that a party's overall ideology, in particular the emphasis placed on the economic, cultural and European dimensions, shapes the importance that it assigns to decentralisation. Assessing our claims in a broader empirical universe of cases, that includes homogeneous and heterogeneous countries, we are also able to show that decentralisation becomes prominent as territorial diversity increases, so as both regionally-based ethnic groups and regionalist parties become larger. Finally, we are

able to demonstrate that the constraints of policy 'credibility' affect not simply the *consistency* of a party's strategy, that is, whether it had endorsed decentralisation in the past, but also the *coherence* of the party's strategy, that is, whether an emphasis on decentralisation is supported by the party's position on economic and cultural matters.

These findings also bear important implications for two strands of literature. We contribute to the literature on *issue competition* and *issue evolution* by highlighting the conditions under which institutional issues, often only weakly related to the predominant (left-right) ideological dimensions, become prominent issues of debate for political parties. We show in particular that decentralisation is likely to be more salient, as other issues linked to the Cultural dimension (such as the environment or the rights of non-economic cultural groups) and to the European dimension (such as the further political integration) are contested, while other issues linked to the Economic dimension (such as welfare) recede. We also contribute to the literature on multi-level governance by showing that a reorganisation in the territorial allocation of power in such systems cannot be limited to the narrow question of efficiency, but rather, is subject to political contestation, that will vary with the ideology of political parties and with the political articulation of the different identities of territorial groups living in a country.

TABLES

Table 1. Assignment of CMP categories to issue dimensions

	"Left"	"Right"
Decentralization	per301 per602 per607	per302 per601 per608
Economic dimension	per403 per404 per406 per504 per506 per413 per412 per701 per405 per409 per415 per503	per401 per402 per407 per505 per507 per410 per414 per702
Socio-cultural dimension	per501 per604 per502 per416 per706 per201 per201	per305 per603 per605 per606
European integration	per108	per110

Table 2. Models 1 to 5

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Rel. Emph. on socio-cultural issues	0.760*** (0.151)	0.706*** (0.171)	0.671** (0.253)	0.779*** (0.170)	0.366 (0.320)
EU salience		0.094* (0.038)			
Supports Decentralisation	0.295*** (0.064)	0.302*** (0.075)	0.339*** (0.097)	0.296*** (0.064)	0.335*** (0.096)
Economic left	-0.085* (0.042)	-0.083 (0.047)	-0.115 (0.074)	-0.086* (0.042)	-0.106 (0.073)
Socio-cultural liberal	-0.012 (0.035)	0.0008 (0.039)	-0.069 (0.054)	-0.011 (0.035)	-0.073 (0.054)
Size of reg-based ethnic pop (0-1)	0.976*** (0.288)	0.680* (0.321)		1.152 (0.687)	
Rel. emph. * Size of reg-based ethnic pop				-0.387 (1.150)	
Vote share, regionalist parties (0-100)			0.013 (0.007)		-0.027 (0.018)
Rel. emph. * Vote share, regionalist parties					0.086* (0.035)
Self rule, t-1	-0.006 (0.007)	-0.009 (0.008)	0.011 (0.009)	-0.006 (0.007)	0.001 (0.009)
Territorial reforms	0.067 (0.045)	0.0595 (0.050)	0.006 (0.062)	0.067 (0.045)	0.008 (0.062)
Party size	-0.0005 (0.002)	-0.0003 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.0005 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.003)
Disproportionality	0.004 (0.005)	0.014* (0.007)	-0.005 (0.005)	0.004 (0.005)	-0.005 (0.005)
ENEP	0.0002 (0.018)	-0.004 (0.018)	-0.037 (0.025)	0.0006 (0.018)	-0.037 (0.026)
Area, logged	0.049 (0.028)	0.032 (0.044)	0.070 (0.044)	0.048 (0.028)	0.070 (0.044)
Population, logged	-0.022 (0.021)	-0.016 (0.027)	0.021 (0.040)	-0.022 (0.022)	0.025 (0.039)
Government participation	0.030 (0.035)	0.034 (0.039)	0.008 (0.057)	0.030 (0.035)	0.016 (0.057)
Party system salience, t-1	0.238*** (0.037)	0.216*** (0.044)	0.167* (0.080)	0.238*** (0.037)	0.159 (0.080)
Constant	0.402 (0.458)	0.470 (0.576)	-0.150 (0.675)	0.393 (0.459)	-0.059 (0.671)
Observations	1811	1499	696	1811	696
R-squared	0.158	0.158	0.138	0.158	0.145

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 3 Models 6 to 9

	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Supports Decentralisation	0.250** (0.077)	0.204* (0.102)	0.292*** (0.064)	0.347*** (0.097)
Size of reg.-based ethnic pop	0.731* (0.341)		1.391*** (0.306)	
Supports Decentralisation* Size of reg-based ethnic pop	0.769 (0.402)			
Vote share, regionalist parties		0.0006 (0.010)		0.006 (0.012)
Supports Decentralisation* Vote share, regionalist parties		0.044** (0.016)		
Socio-cultural liberal	-0.009 (0.035)	-0.051 (0.053)	-0.003 (0.040)	-0.189** (0.060)
Economic left	-0.083 (0.042)	-0.112 (0.073)	-0.048 (0.049)	-0.049 (0.091)
Socio-cultural liberal* Size of reg.-based ethnic pop			-0.141 (0.255)	
Economic left* Size of reg.-based ethnic pop			-0.652* (0.288)	
Socio-cultural liberal* Vote share, regionalist parties				0.031** (0.010)
Economic left* Vote share, regionalist parties				-0.013 (0.012)
Rel. emph. on socio-cultural issues	0.750*** (0.150)	0.629* (0.241)	0.758*** (0.151)	0.678** (0.250)
Self rule, t-1	-0.006 (0.007)	0.013 (0.009)	-0.006 (0.007)	0.014 (0.010)
Territorial reforms	0.066 (0.045)	0.002 (0.063)	0.071 (0.045)	0.024 (0.060)
Party size	-0.0007 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.0005 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.003)
Disproportionality	0.003 (0.005)	-0.005 (0.006)	0.004 (0.005)	-0.003 (0.005)
ENEP	0.001 (0.018)	-0.039 (0.025)	0.002 (0.018)	-0.030 (0.026)
Area, logged	0.048 (0.028)	0.059 (0.045)	0.048 (0.028)	0.074 (0.044)
Population, logged	-0.022 (0.022)	0.026 (0.040)	-0.023 (0.021)	0.005 (0.040)
Government participation	0.029 (0.035)	0.007 (0.058)	0.028 (0.035)	0.012 (0.057)
Party system salience, t-1	0.235*** (0.037)	0.159* (0.078)	0.237*** (0.037)	0.149 (0.080)
Constant	0.439 (0.459)	-0.019 (0.688)	0.399 (0.459)	0.026 (0.703)
Observations	1811	696	1811	696
R-squared	0.161	0.157	0.16	0.151

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Figure 1 Effect of relative emphasis on socio-cultural matters conditional on the size of the regionally based minority population (left) and on the size of the electoral threat from regionalist parties (right)
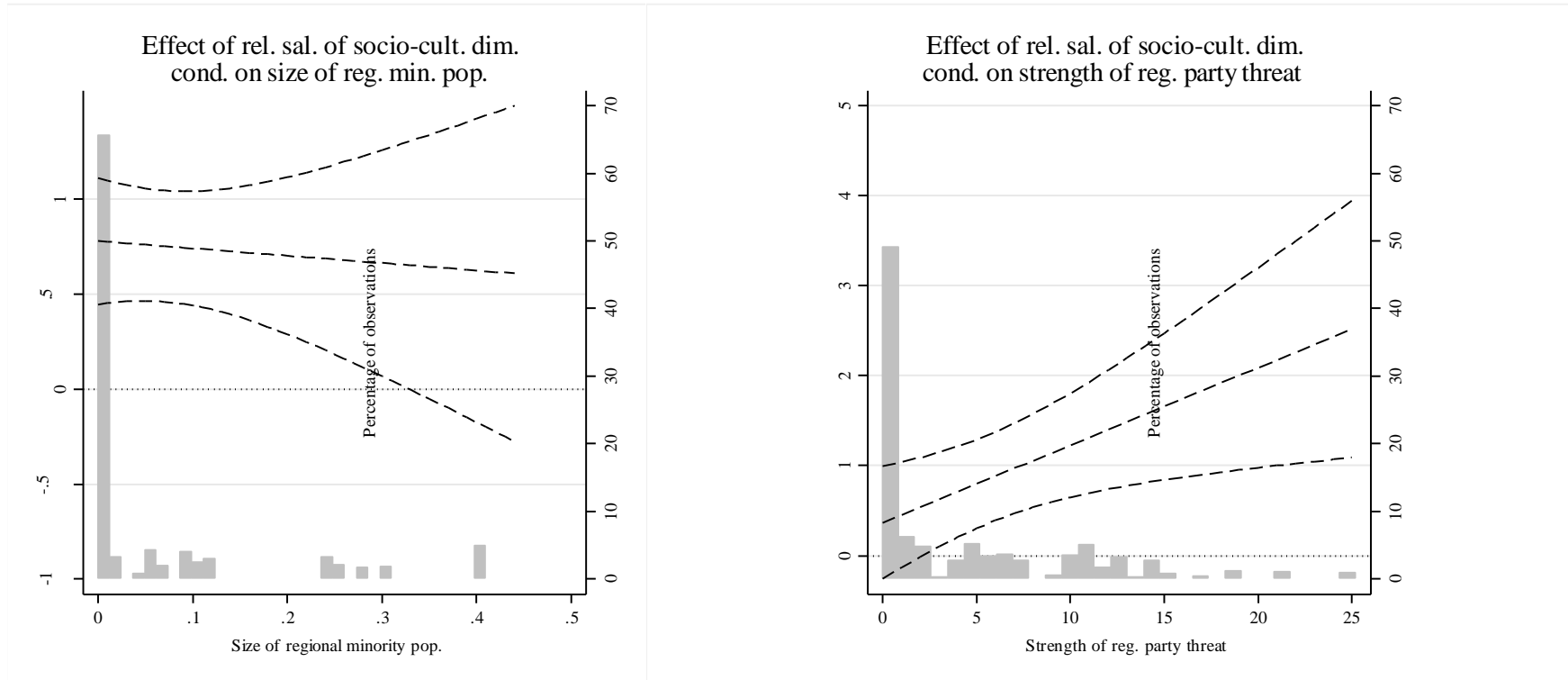
Figure 2 Effect of position on decentralization conditional on the size of the regionally based minority population (left) and on the size of the electoral threat from regionalist parties (right)
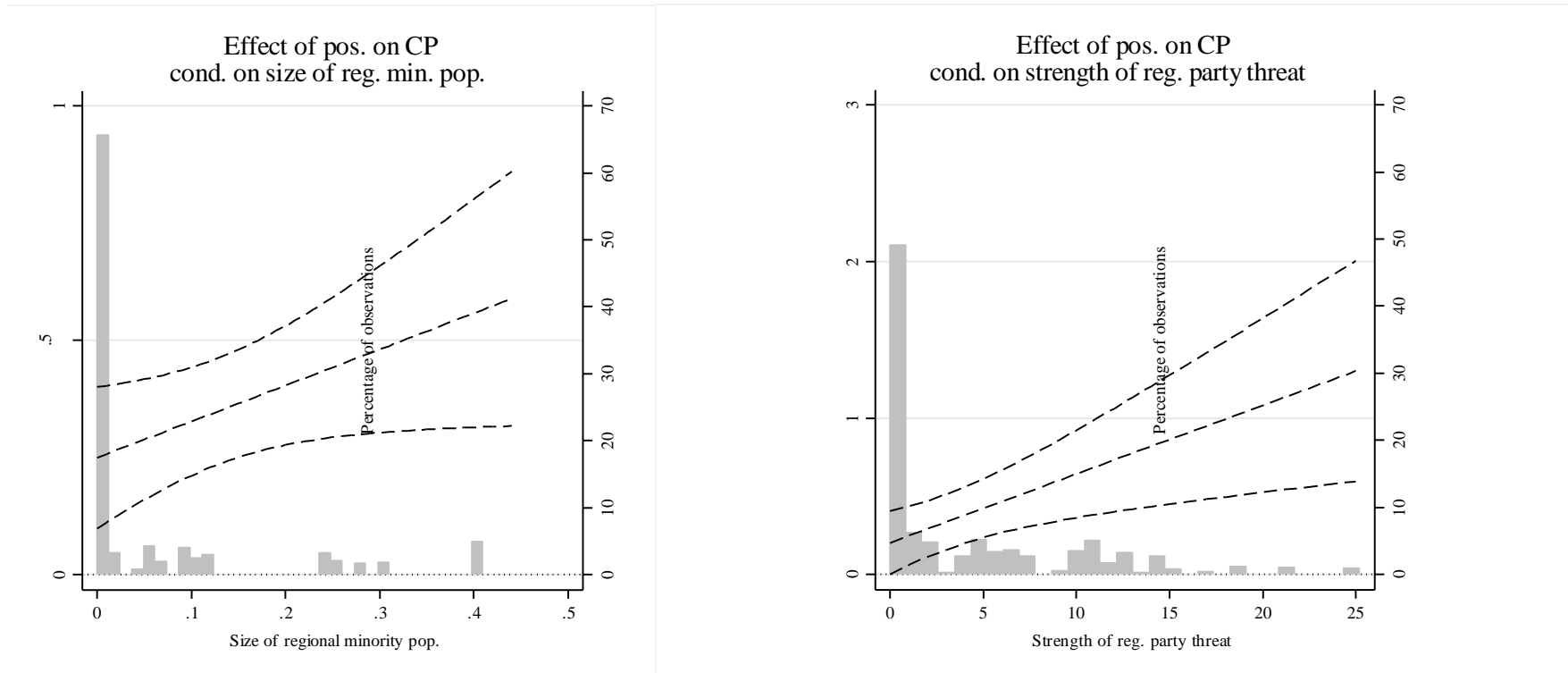
Figure 3 Effect of position on economic dimension (left) and socio-cultural dimension (right) conditional on the size of the regionally based minority population

Figure 4 Effect of position on economic dimension (left) and socio-cultural dimension (right) conditional on the size of the electoral threat from regionalist parties

Appendix 1: Elections included in the analysis (Model 1 and Model 3)

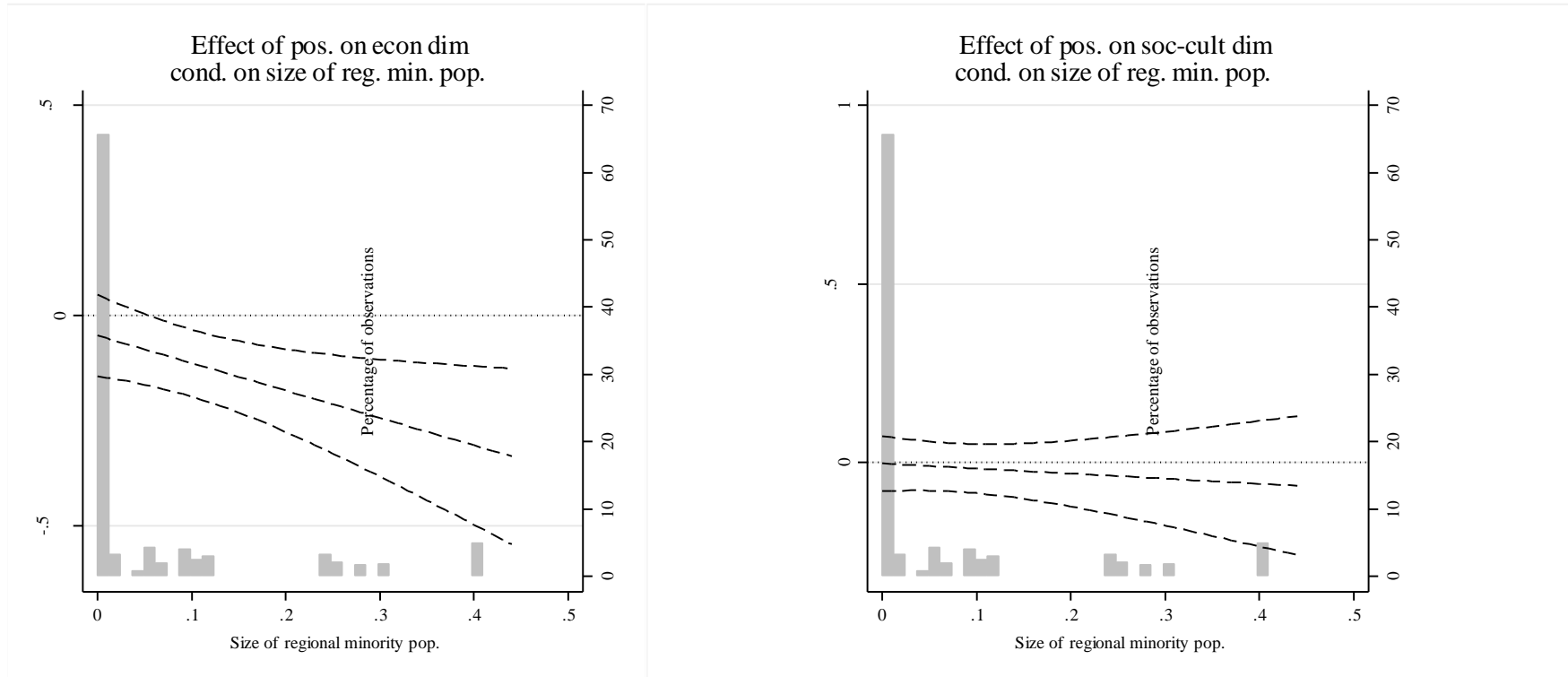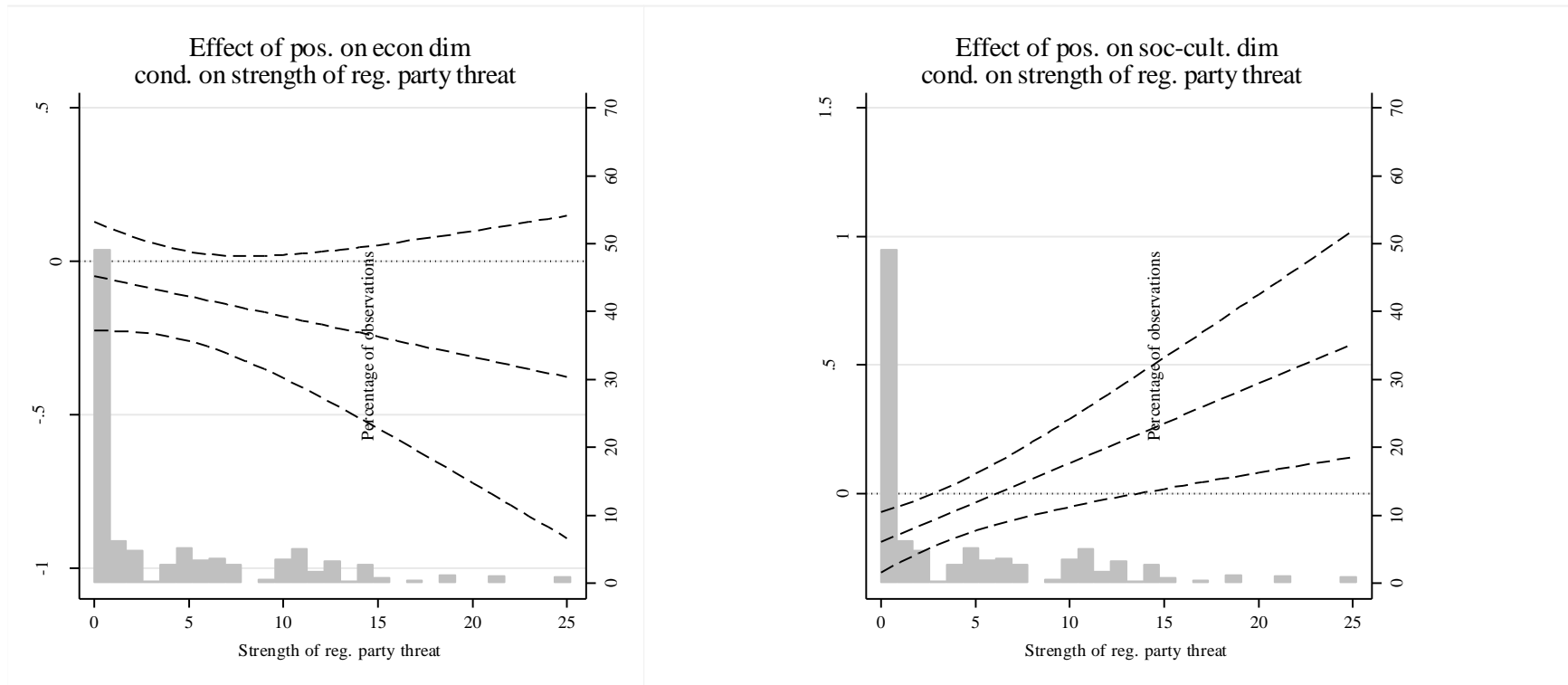| Country	Years included													
Australia	1949	1951	1954	1955	1961	1963	1966	1969	1972	1974	1975	1977	1980	1983
	1984	1987	1990	1993	1996	1998	2001	2004	2007					
Austria	**1953**	**1956**	**1959**	**1962**	**1966**	**1970**	**1971**	**1975**	**1979**	**1983**	**1990**	**1994**	**1995**	**1999**
		2002	**2006**											
Belgium	**1949**	**1950**	**1954**	**1958**	**1961**	**1965**	**1968**	**1971**	**1974**	**1977**	**1981**	**1985**	**1987**	**1995**
		1999	**2003**	**2007**										
Bulgaria	**1994**													
Canada	**1953**	**1957**	**1958**	**1962**	**1963**	**1965**	**1968**	**1972**	**1974**	**1979**	**1980**	**1984**	**1988**	**1993**
		2000	**2004**	**2006**	**2008**									
Croatia	2003													
Denmark	1950	1953	1957	1960	1964	1966	1968	1971	1975	1977	1979	1981	1984	1987
		1988	1990	1994	1998	2001	2005	2011						
Estonia	2007	2011												
Finland	**1954**	**1962**	**1970**	**1972**	**1975**	**1983**	**1991**	**1999**	**2003**	**2007**	**2011**			
France	**1956**	**1958**	**1962**	**1967**	**1968**	**1978**	**1981**	**1988**	**1993**	**1997**	**2002**	**2007**		
Germany	1953	1957	1961	1965	1969	1972	1976	1980	1983	1987	1990	1994	1998	2002 2009
Great Britain	**1951**	**1955**	**1959**	**1964**	**1966**	**1970**	**1974**	**1979**	**1983**	**1987**	**1997**	**2005**	**2010**	
Greece	**1977**	**1981**	**1985**	**1989**	**1990**	**1996**	**2000**							
Hungary	1994	2002	2010											
Iceland	1949	1956	1963	1967	1971	1974	1978	1979	1987	1991	1995	2003	2007	2009
Ireland	1951	1957	1961	1965	1969	1973	1977	1981	1982	1987	1989	1992	1997	2002 2007
Italy	1948	1953	1958	1963	1968	1976	1979	1983	1987	1992	1994			
Japan	1963	1967	1969	1972	1976	1979	1980	1983	1986	1990	1993	1996	2000	
Lithuania	**1996**	**2000**												
Netherlands	1948	1952	1959	1963	1967	1972	1977	1981	1982	1986	1989	1994	1998	2003 2010

New Zealand	**1949**	**1951**	**1957**	**1960**	**1963**	**1966**	**1969**	**1972**	**1975**	**1978**	**1981**	**1984**	**1987**	**1990**	**1999**
	2002	**2005**	**2008**												
Norway	1953	1957	1961	1965	1969	1977	1981	1985	1989	1993	1997	2001	2009		
Poland	**1993**	**1997**	**2005**	**2007**											
Portugal	1979	1983	1985	1987	1995	1999	2005	2009	2011						
Slovakia	**1998**	**2006**	**2010**												
Slovenia	1996	2008	2011												
Spain	**1989**	**1993**	**1996**	**2004**											
Sweden	1952	1956	1958	1960	1964	1968	1970	1973	1976	1979	1982	1985	1988	1994	1998
	2002	2006	2010												
Switzerland	**1951**	**1955**	**1963**	**1971**	**1975**	**1979**	**1983**	**1987**	**1991**	**1995**	**1999**				
United States	**1952**	**1956**	**1960**	**1964**	**1968**	**1972**	**1976**	**1980**	**1984**	**1988**	**1992**	**1996**	**2000**	**2004**	**2008**

Bold: Countries has a regionally-based ethnic group.

Appendix 2: Regionalist parties

Country	Regionalist parties								
Belgium	VU	VB	NVA	RW	FDF				
Bulgaria	DPS								
Canada	BQ								
Croatia	IDU	HBSS	SNS	IDS	SBHS	IDSP	IDA	HDSSB	SDSS
Denmark	GF	SI	IA	JF	SbF				
Estonia	K-EUR								
Finland	SFP								
Great Britain	SNP	PC							
Italy	UV	SVP	PDA	LN	MPA	LAM	LV	MSI	
Lithuania	LLRA	LRS							
Poland	MN								
Slovakia	SMK-MKP	MH							
Switzerland	LT								

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