

The 2012 Basque Country Regional Election: Back to Nationalist Rule in the Context of the Economic Crisis.

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The PNV won the 2012 Basque regional election which put an end to the first non-nationalist Basque regional government in three decades. The election was also characterised by the good result of the coalition EH-Bildu which included the former Batasuna. In this article we examine the background to these elections in an attempt to evaluate the impact of the economic crisis on the result. We conclude that this impact may have been more limited than a first examination of the aggregate result would suggest.

Keywords: Basque Election; economic crisis; nationalism; terrorism; PNV; EH-Bildu.

Regional elections were held in the Basque Country on 25 October 2012. The PNV (*Partido Nacionalista Vasco*, Basque Nationalist Party) won the election with 35 per cent of the vote and a new nationalist minority government was formed shortly afterwards. Thus, the 2012 elections put an end to the first non-nationalist Basque government led by the PSE (*Partido Socialista de Euskadi*, Basque Socialist Party) -the Basque Branch of the PSOE (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, Spanish Socialist Workers' Party- since the process of decentralization started more than three decades ago.

However, the PNV won the election despite a slight fall in its share of the vote and the loss of three seats in the Basque parliament. The “incumbent” PSE experienced a much greater loss in votes and seats while the conservative PP (*Partido Popular*, Popular Party) also suffered a moderate electoral setback. Thus, one feature of the 2012 Basque elections was the simultaneous loss of votes and seats by both the governmental and the main opposition parties.

This brief overview of the 2012 result is completed with the successful story of a new coalition, *EH-Bildu* (*Euskal Herria Bildu*; Basque Country Gather) which gained 21 seats, becoming the second largest political group in the Basque Parliament. The coalition included two small Basque nationalist parties and a splinter party from the IU-EB (Izquierda Unida-Eker Batua, United-Left). However, the largest part of the new coalition comprised former members of *Batasuna* (Unity) –the political wing of the terrorist organisation *Euzkadi ta Azkatasuna* (ETA, Basque Homeland and Freedom) – that had been banned in the previous 2009 election.

In sum, the 2012 elections led to a significant reconfiguration of the Basque Party System. Below we examine the background to these elections; paying special attention to the prolonged economic crisis (2008-2012) that preceded them, in an attempt to evaluate to what extent the latter had an impact on the result. However, two further interrelated factors that characterised these elections will also be taken into account in our analysis. This was the first regional election after ETA's declaration of a general and permanent end to its terrorist attacks in October 2011. Second, these were the elections in which the former *Batasuna* -now renamed *EH-Bildu*-, the political branch of ETA, re-entered the electoral competition after its effective banning in the previous 2009 polls. After its exceptional results in both the local and the general elections of the previous year, there was some expectation about how its participation in the regional election might reconfigure the power balance within the Basque Parliament.

We start this article with a section on the historical antecedents of the Basque devolution process, paying particular attention to the main political events and recent evolution of the Basque Party System in the period 1998-2009. Next, we provide an account of the first non-nationalist government (2009-2012). We then review the campaign and election results in more detail. In our last section we analyse vote transfers between the main parties trying to determine whether voter choices in 2012 were related to the economic crisis or can be more easily attributable to other factors. We conclude by summarizing our main results.

Historical antecedents and the recent evolution of the Basque party system

The Basque Country has a long tradition of territorial distinctiveness within the Spanish State. Until the nineteenth century the three Basque Provinces (Alava, Biscay, and Gipuzkoa), together with the neighbouring province of Navarre, enjoyed a series of pre-modern political and economic privileges that came to be known as the *fueros vascos*. The attempts by liberal governments to abolish this regime led to a series of armed conflicts, known as the *Carlist Wars*, which had their main battlefield in the Basque Provinces and Navarre. In the 1870's, after the last of these wars, most

privileges associated with the *fueros* were abolished; however a form of fiscal autonomy, known as the *conciertos*, was preserved for the Basque Provinces and Navarre and survived into the democratic period. In this respect it is important to note that this autonomous fiscal regime pertains to the elected provincial government (*diputaciones forales*) and not to the Basque Government. The *conciertos* give these territories an institutional and economic distinctiveness in the country, even when compared with other territories with strong regional identities, such as Catalonia.

The first Basque nationalist party, the PNV, was founded in the last decade of the nineteenth century by Sabino Arana. At the time, the Basque Country was going through an extremely rapid process of industrialisation. This entailed the arrival of a first wave of immigrants from other, poorer, regions of Spain. Thus, the origin of Basque nationalism has been explained as a reaction to the rapid social changes brought about by this process of rapid economic growth (Corcuera, 1979:8; Granja Sáinz, 1995:25). The early PNV was characterised by xenophobic ideas based upon concepts such as the ‘purity of Basque ancestry’, rather than the defense of the region’s unique language. However, by the 1970’s the PNV had definitively abandoned this arguably racist stance and substituted it with greater emphasis on linguistic policies and the return of fiscal autonomy. Nonetheless, an individual’s origin (whether a person has an immigrant background or not) and mother tongue are, to this day, strong predictors of the vote: nationalist vs. non-nationalist (Pérez-Nievas and Bonet, 2006).

Until the late 1950’s, The PNV was the dominant political organisation –and for long periods the only one- within Basque Nationalism. Since its foundation the PNV has been ambiguous about its ultimate political goals with regard to self-government. On the one hand, a pro-autonomy strategy has been dominant for most of the party’s history (at least as far as day-to-day activity is concerned); on the other, pro-independence tendencies have always been present and have even gained predominance among party elites in specific periods.

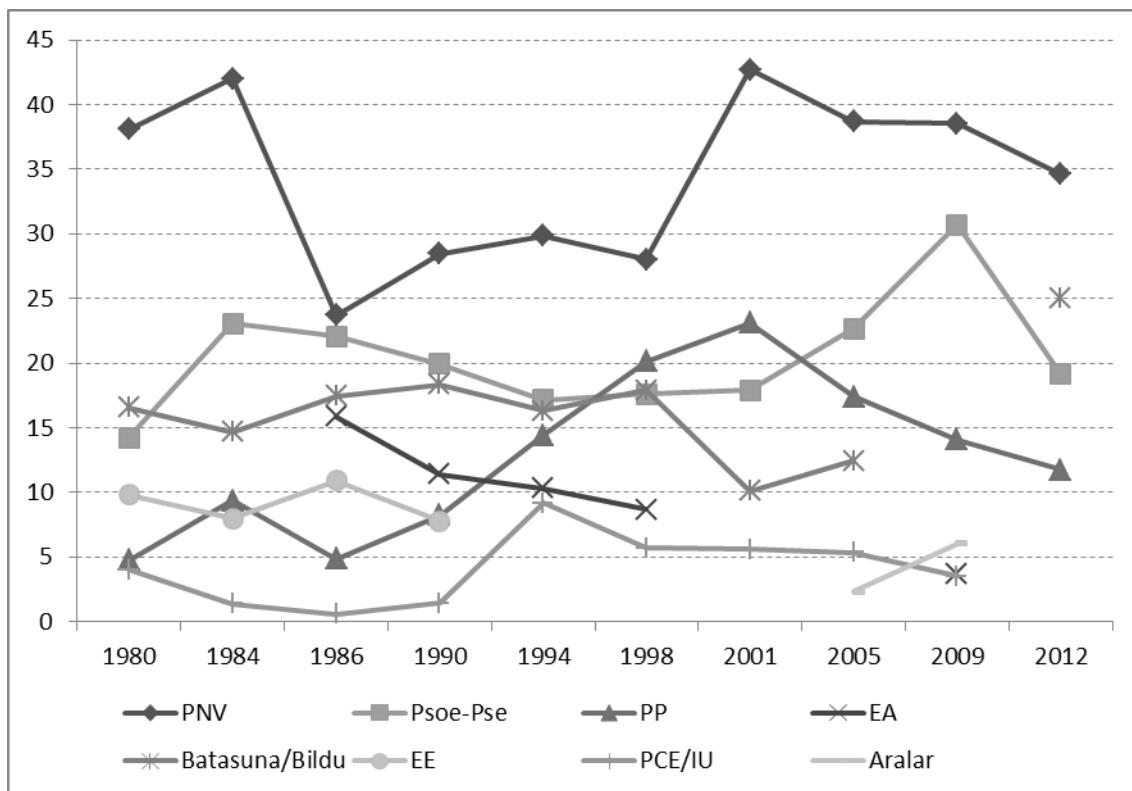
The Francoist dictatorship (1939-75) had a long-lasting impact in the Basque Country. The regime suppressed not only elements of cultural distinctiveness like the use of the Basque regional language in schools and public places; but also those of symbolic value, such as the display of flags or the singing of hymns that represented Basque nationhood. In 1959, ETA was founded with the clear aim of achieving secession of the Basque Country. The new organisation turned to terrorist acts in the late 1960’s and has continued pursuing these until its recent declaration to permanently abandon violence in October 2011. In its four decades of existence ETA has killed hundreds of people and converted terrorism into a constant feature of Basque Politics. This presence of political violence in Basque politics has included, of course, intense

party political debate about its possible end: whether by police intervention, political negotiation, or a combination of both.

The reaction of Franco's regime to ETA terrorism, by indiscriminately repressing broad sections of the population, led to social mobilisations that were met with further state repression, thus igniting a climate of extreme political confrontation that would continue well beyond the death of the dictator. Thus, when the transition to a democratic regime started in the mid-1970's, the Basque Country population was the most disaffected with the new regime. As a result, the new Constitution was least supported in the Basque Country: only 31 per cent backed it in the December 1978 referendum, as compared with 59 per cent across Spain as a whole (De la Calle and Sánchez Cuenca 2009: 213)

The first two general elections held in the late 1970's -prior to the establishment of the Basque regional government- produced a very fragmented party system, with political competition structured along two dimensions: the common left-right axis; and the territorial one, often referred to as the 'centre-periphery cleavage' (Alonso 2012). The PNV obtained around one third of the vote becoming the largest single party in the region. Regarding the centre-periphery cleavage, the PNV competed on its most radical stance together with the political parties linked to the two branches of ETA that existed at the time: the EE (*Euskadiko Ezkerra*, Basque Country Left), connected to ETA-PM (which was dissolved in the early 80s); and HB (*Herri Batasuna*, Popular Unity), connected to ETA-M which has survived to this day. Along the same axis, on its more moderate -or autonomist flank- the PNV predominantly faced the PSOE-PSE since the PP did not gain relevant electoral support until the 1990's (see Figure 1). The high level of fragmentation of the party system together with the centrality of the PNV on both dimensions gave this party greater political leverage than would be expected from its electoral weight. Thus the PNV played a central role in negotiations for the *Estatuto de Gernika*, the framework for self-government in the region which gained greater support (58 per cent voted 'yes' to devolution in the 1979 referendum) than the new Constitution; and thus became a source of legitimacy for the new democratic regime in the Basque Country. In the early years of the implementation of devolution, however, the level of conflict between the central and the first minority governments led by the PNV remained high.

Figure 1: Evolution of the Basque Party System in regional elections, 1980-2012, (Percentage of the vote to each party)



Source: Basque government (<http://www.euskadi.net>)

In 1986 the PNV suffered a split and a new party emerged, known as the EA, which initially took a third of the vote. This precipitated a change in Basque politics by clearly moderating the PNV on the centre-periphery dimension. Thus, from 1986 to 1998, this more moderate approach allowed the PNV to lead stable coalition governments at regional level, with the PSE as the only or predominant partner for most of the period. This was also a period of cooperation between the PNV and state-wide parties in the political isolation of *Herri Batasuna* whose support, nonetheless, remained stable at around 17 per cent of the vote.

The year 1998 marked a turning point in Basque politics as a consequence of a number of converging factors: first of all, the replacement of the PSOE by the PP in central government, resulting in a far greater emphasis on Spanish nationalism from Madrid; second, the electoral growth of the PP within the Basque Country, which made it the second largest party in the region (De la Calle 2005); and third, the attempt, by a section of the PNV's leadership to accelerate the end of ETA's terrorism by attracting *Batasuna* into parliamentary politics. The most significant expression of this reconfiguration of Basque politics was the signing by the PNV, EA, *Batasuna* and IU/EB of the so-called *Pacto de Estella*, which proposed political negotiation between Basque parties and central government on the issues of self-determination for the region. The *Pacto de Estella* was signed only a few months after the break-up of the PNV-PSE coalitional government; and only a few weeks before ETA's announcement of a ceasefire. In the following years, the PNV profoundly modified its official stance

on self-government in its official documents and Party Manifestos, unambiguously placing Basque sovereignty and the right to self-determination in the centre of its new political programme.

The result of all these changes was a return to the strong political polarisation of the Basque Party System. After the 1998 elections the PNV and EA formed a minority government with the external parliamentary support of *Batasuna* (refounded now as *Euskal Herritarok* or EH, Basque Citizens). When, at the beginning of 2000, ETA resumed terrorist attacks against PSE and PP politicians, the PNV was forced to break their parliamentary agreement with EH and call for an early regional election in 2001. Facing a Constitutional Block led by the PP, the nationalist premier Juan José Ibarretxe proposed that the Basque electorate be consulted about the future status of the region. As a result, the 2001 regional elections were strongly polarised around Basque and Spanish identities. They were also very competitive elections with a turnout of 79 per cent: the highest in Basque electoral records. The PNV-EA coalition won the election, but only by a small margin (just a few thousand votes ahead of the PP and PSE votes when added together). This victory was possible because the PNV-EA coalition was able to attract the support of voters deserting EH/*Batasuna* -which had its worst result in two decades: see Figure 1- in the context of ETA's reassumed terrorism (Pérez-Nievas 2006).

In the 2001 and 2005 regional elections the PNV formed an electoral coalition with its former splinter group. From 2001 to 2009, all Basque governments included a clear predominance of Basque nationalists (with only a small representation of IU/EB). The Ibarretxe government launched an initiative to reform the *Estatuto de Gernika* –the so called *Plan Ibarretxe*- that would give the region the status of an “associated free state” to Spain, thus incorporating the right to self-determination. This was passed by the Basque parliament in December 2004; and was presented to the Spanish Parliament in January 2005, where it was widely rejected. Ibarretxe then called regional elections in April 2005 as a plebiscite on his government’s proposal for reform. However, the *Plan Ibarretxe* did not gain sufficient support, particularly among former *Batasuna* voters that the PNV-EA coalition wanted to retain. Additionally the *Plan Ibarretxe* antagonised some of the PNV’s moderate voters who began to switch to the PSE in the 2005 regional elections (Pérez-Nievas 2006). Consequently, the PNV-EA coalition lost 4 per cent of the vote and 4 seats in the Basque Parliament; while the PSE -under the new leadership of Patxi López- gained 5 percentage points and gained 5 seats, becoming once again the second largest party in the Basque Country.

The 2005 electoral result introduced a number of divisions within the PNV leadership: while Ibarretxe wanted to call a referendum to consult the Basque population on the Reform Proposal, the newly elected President of the party, Josu Jon Imaz publicly opposed this by arguing it would be inadequate to address ETA’s terrorism. In parallel, the PNV parliamentary group in Madrid assisted the Zapatero minority government with regard to the peace process (including ETA’s second

announcement of a ceasefire in 2005 - broken once again in January 2007); but also providing parliamentary support to its economic and social policy: the PNV, in fact, supported every National Budget in the period 2005-2010.

The 2009 regional election created heightened interest for several reasons. First, in the general election a year before, the PSE had surpassed the PNV by 10 percentage points, thus also creating expectations of significant electoral growth at regional level. Also, after nearly ten years of stable partnership, the PNV-EA electoral coalition broke up, because the EA accused the PNV of not giving sufficient emphasis to issues of sovereignty. Third, for the first time since the approval of the ‘Law of parties’ it was clear that *Batasuna* would be legally prevented from presenting lists in regional elections (or supporting ‘clean’ legal lists as happened in 2005); and this would necessarily imply a reconfiguration of the Basque Party System (De la Calle y Sánchez Cuenca, 2009). Although Ibarretxe was maintained as candidate, during the campaign the PNV –now under the party leadership of Iñigo Urkullu- moved away from issues of sovereignty and self-determination and focused on the management of the economy. In the event, the PNV gained the most votes and obtained the same electoral result as the coalition PNV-EA in the previous election. However the collapse of the EA as an independent party, the electoral advance of the PSE, and the reconfiguration of the Basque Party System (in the absence of *Batasuna* or any of its affiliations in the regional Parliament) allowed the formation of a PSE minority government with the external support of the Basque branch of the PP. Thus, after nearly thirty years leading Basque governments, the PNV was ousted from power.

The PSE Basque Regional Government, 2009-2012

The new Basque Government led by Patxi López, was elected on May 5 with the vote of the PP parliamentary group in the Basque Parliament. Thus, while the new PSE minority government could count on the parliamentary support of the PP, the latter was to remain out of the Basque government under a formula that was formally agreed between the two parties. The prospect of a PSE-PP coalitional government was quite unpopular with the electorate at large (in fact, opinion polls showed that a PNV-PSE coalition was a much more preferred formula, also among socialist voters)¹. Also, a coalition government would have been difficult to explain to voters in the rest of Spain where the PP and the PSOE are fierce opponents. Nevertheless, even the formula of a socialist minority government sustained by the PP enjoyed little popularity, creating a legitimacy deficit for the PSE government from the very start.

The new Basque government’s priorities were announced shortly afterwards: the implementation of policies to reverse the economic crisis; the end of ETA’s terrorism through police intervention -while working at the same time for the political isolation of the individuals and groups who still supported it-; and the continued support for welfare state policies despite the context of the recession.

The antiterrorist front is where the López government was most successful in the medium term. The most characteristic action of the new Basque government was the harassment of ETA's social and political milieu, beyond the ordinary police persecution of the organisation itself. Public subsidies for associations formed by relatives of the imprisoned members of ETA -that had flowed to these entities for decades of nationalist rule- were reduced or cut altogether; as was aid for all organisations that did not condemn violence. In addition, the López government acted determinedly to eradicate the visibility of ETA and *Batasuna* on the streets. In an intense campaign in the summer of 2009, the Basque Police removed most posters or graffiti expressing support for the terrorist group or its related organisations, as well as the photographs of the imprisoned members of ETA that were displayed in public places. During the previous decades of the PNV rule, all these signs of support for ETA had become part of the common landscape in the historical centres of large cities or in the main squares of many small towns. In this respect, the 2009 summer campaign made the change of regional government quite noticeable for the average Basque citizen. The Basque government also worked to give greater visibility to the victims of ETA.

This strategy of political isolation of *Batasuna* followed by the Basque government eventually bore fruit. A process of ideological revision was undertaken by the party elite to put pressure on ETA to stop violence. As part of that strategy a new party was created, *Sortu*, to compete in the May 2011 local elections; however this was also banned by the Supreme Court. Following an alternative plan a new coalition formed by independents as well as candidates from EA and *Alternatiba* was created. The Constitutional Court allowed *Bildu* to compete only a few weeks before the election was due. The coalition had an extraordinary electoral result, winning 25.4 per cent of the vote and becoming the second largest political party in the Basque Country. This result precipitated ETA's decision to end their terrorist strategy, announcing the "definitive" end to violence on 20 October 2011. This was just before the November 2011 general election in which *Amaiur*, a new coalition built around the *Batasuna* elite, consolidated the strong result obtained by *Bildu* a year before (26 per cent of the vote in the Basque Country and seven seats in the Spanish Parliament). Thus, the PSE could claim that the end of terrorism had been achieved under its administration, even if it was not the only actor involved in this.

The new government also paid attention also to linguistic policy, a key issue for the PP. The right of parents to 'effectively' choose the main language of education (Basque, Bilingual, or Spanish) for their children was guaranteed, disregarding the previous attempt by the Ibarretxe government to establish Basque as the main language of education.

With regard to economic policy, however, the new Basque government faced greater restrictions both from above as well as from within the Basque Country. One first restriction came from Madrid where Zapatero had renewed his mandate in March 2008. In the early stages of his government, López requested from the central

government the transfer of responsibility for the INEM (*Instituto Nacional de Empleo*, National Employment Institute). The *Estatuto de Gernika* had envisaged that power to make policies related to employment and unemployment would be transferred from central government to the Basque region. This had in fact been a constant demand by Basque executives led by the PNV since the 1980's, becoming a bone of contention between the two governments (central and regional) over decades.

However, the demand for the transfer of the INEM backfired on the López administration. Eventually, the transfer was approved by central government in a negotiated pact with the PNV in exchange for the latter's support for the 2010 National Budget. This left the PSE regional government in an awkward position, with the nationalists from the PNV claiming credit for this long-requested demand. This was a clear example of how the multilevel coalition activities of the socialist minority governments led by Zapatero (Field 2009) were often detrimental to the interests of the regional governments of his own party.

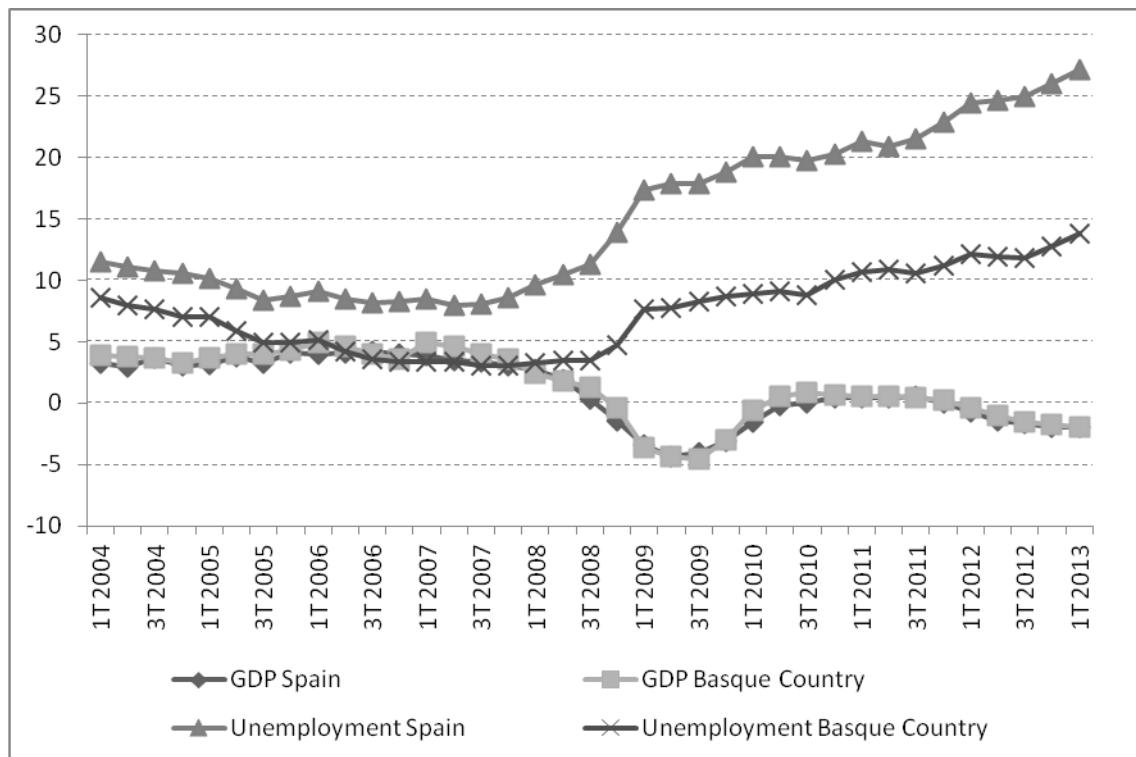
A further significant external restriction was the new turn taken by the global financial crisis at the end of 2009 -after the Greek bail-out- with increasingly dark prospects for southern European economies (Boscco and Verney 2012). The first PSE Budget reacted to the economic crisis by following expansionary policies, as did the Zapatero government in Madrid; however, after the May 2010 U-turn of the latter, the Basque government was also forced to introduce measures to cut its public deficit. The PSE government tried to do this through administrative reform rather than cuts to welfare state services. When, after the November 2011 election, the new Rajoy (PP) administration began to introduce cuts to welfare state services this became an increasing cause of friction between the PSE and the Basque branch of the PP. In fact, it was the PSE's growing criticism of the PP cuts to education and health services that ultimately provoked the rupture between the two parties and brought the PSE government to an end, forcing López to call an early election.

Before that, however, one last restriction over PSE autonomy in its economic policy arose from the Basque Country itself. Through the system of *conciertos* the Basque Country enjoys greater fiscal autonomy than any other region in Spain, particularly with regard to income tax. However, the *conciertos* pertain to the elected provincial governments and tax reforms have to be coordinated with them: the PNV control of the most relevant of these governments -that of Biscay- blocked all initiatives coming from the PSE Basque "central" administration: an issue that emerged again during the campaign (see below).

Nevertheless, and despite these restrictions, the fact remains that the recession has had some singularities in the Basque Country. As shown in Figure 2, although the fall in GDP in the region is similar to that of Spain as a whole, the unemployment rate – which clearly differentiates Spain from other European countries hit by the recession-, is remarkably lower in the Basque Country. As a result, there is a growing gap among the Basque population in their perception of the economic situation at the regional and

the national level. In the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (CIS) preelectoral survey, 61 per cents of the sample had negative evaluations (“bad” or “very bad”) of the Basque economy in contrast with the 90 per cent figure for the Spanish Economy.

Figure 2: GDP and Unemployment rate in Spain and Basque Country (2004-2013)



Source: INE: National Institute of Statistics (<http://www.ine.es/>) and Eurostat: Basque Institute of Statistics (<http://www.eustat.es>)

The campaign and the results of the elections ²

Despite the new circumstances surrounding the end of terrorism, the 2012 campaign was quite low-profile in comparison with the three prior regional elections. Previous polls were quite accurate in their forecasts: an additional sign that there was relatively little uncertainty about the result. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of both the general and local elections of the previous year in the Basque Country, most surveys predicted a slightly better result for *EH-Bildu*, and slightly worse for the PSE, than the actual result.³

In the context of the deep recession, it was reasonable to expect the campaign to be dominated by economic issues. In fact, following the data provided by the Regional Manifesto Project, this is what we find in party manifestos, with the exception of *EH-Bildu* where references to decentralisation or self-government were predominant (19.5 per cent). By contrast, in the PNV manifesto references to the economy (31.6 per cent)

or to the welfare-state (16.6 per cent) were more frequent than issues concerning self-government (12 per cent). Both the PSE and the PP also devoted large sections of their manifestos to the economy (29.3 and 26.3 per cent respectively), and the welfare state (14.1 per cent in the case of the PSE, and 20.2 per cent for the PP). These findings are consistent with other available data. For instance, the preelectoral survey undertaken by the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (CIS) included an open question about the two key problems perceived in the Basque Country: 84 per cent of respondents pointed to “unemployment” as either their first or second choice; whereas 47 per cent highlighted “the economy”. By contrast, 8 per cent of respondents referred to terrorism or the “end of violence”, and only 5 per cent mentioned self-government.

However, if we look at media coverage during the campaign, the economy and the welfare state had a much less privileged position in electoral debates. One important factor explaining why the campaign came to focus on issues related to sovereignty and self-determination originated outside the Basque Country. On September 11, on the National Day of Catalonia, there was a huge demonstration on the streets of Barcelona demanding independence for the region. After a failed attempt to negotiate fiscal autonomy with central government, Mas dissolved the Catalan Parliament and called for new elections with the promise of holding a referendum on Catalan independence if he was re-elected. Thus the issue of sovereignty and self-determination entered the Basque Campaign through the back door of the Catalan electoral pre-campaign that was taking place at the same time.

Following our data on media coverage we can see the issue was taken up by the Basque branch of the PP in particular. In most of its acts and rallies during the campaign, the Spanish oriented conservatives accused Iñigo Urkullu -the PNV candidate- of sustaining a pact with their Catalan Nationalist parties to hold a unconstitutional referendum in both regions on the question of independence. The PSE also used this strategy with the aim of forcing Urkullu and the PNV to better define their position on questions of Basque sovereignty and self-determination. In doing this, both the PP and the PSE drew on the relatively recent memory of the Ibarretxe government and its attempts to hold a referendum on its project for reform (a possibility that had been discarded by the Constitutional Court in 2008) with the apparent goal of preventing moderate voters to switch back to the PNV.

In turn, both parties’ insistence on this question forced the PNV to devote a much greater share of its electoral campaign to issues related to decentralisation and self-government than it had proposed in its party manifesto. In this, Urkullu clearly followed a moderate line, defining the Basque Country as a European nation whose past trajectory was based on the tradition of pacting with others, and ‘neither excluding, nor imposing’ (*El Correo*, 05/10/2012). On the question of political status for the region, Urkullu referred in his public statements to the proposal included in the PNV manifesto to hold a parliamentary debate in 2015 on the reform of the *Statute of Gernika* –thus, leaving aside the *Plan Ibarretxe*- with the aim of broadening the political support the

latter had gathered back in 1979. Nonetheless, in his public speeches, the PNV candidate also insisted that economic recovery would be a priority over further decentralisation in his future governments, thus detaching the economic recovery from the issue of self-government; exactly the opposite that Artur Mas was doing at the same time in Catalonia. Urkullu also referred to the Catalan question as “a path already trodden by the Basque Country”: an ambiguous statement that could denote both the fiscal autonomy already enjoyed by the Basque region – and now demanded by Catalonia-, but also the recent experience of the *Plan Ibarretxe* and the failed attempt by previous nationalist governments to consult the Basque Population on it.

Nonetheless, the economic crisis maintained its relevance during the campaign, particularly in the electoral acts organised by the PNV and the PSE. There were also some differences in their treatment of the economy: the PNV put greater emphasis on the harshness of the crisis and the difficulty in balancing out tax revenues and public expenditure, thus hinting at the idea of further cuts by a future regional government. The PSE, on the one hand, continued its harsh criticism of welfare state cuts introduced by the PP central government; while, on the other, the party put forward a new proposal for fiscal reform that would increase tax rates for higher income groups and revenues. At the very end of the campaign the PNV also took up the idea of fiscal reform which, in turn, provoked a bitter reaction by López who accused the PNV of putting forward proposals for reform they themselves had blocked when they had been presented by the PSE government. Even *EH-Bildu* made references to the economic crisis during the campaign insisting on the idea that fiscal autonomy was insufficient for the specific economic difficulties of the Basque Country.

Turning now to the results of the elections, and given the exceptionality that *Batasuna* could not participate in 2009, Table 1 shows the results for the regional elections in 2012 and 2009, calculating the percentages over total vote (the sum of valid and invalid ballots) so that the data are comparable for the two elections (see also De la Calle and Sánchez Cuenca 2009 for the same procedure). Turnout decreased by nearly one percentage point: the lowest since 1994 but quite similar to that of the previous election. The PNV won the 2012 election with 34.6 per cent of the vote; but it lost two per cent decimals, nearly fifteen hundred electors and three seats in relation to its 2009 result. As expected, the governmental PSE suffered much greater losses: nearly 9 percentage points; over a hundred thousand voters, and nine seats in the Basque Parliament. For its part, the PP lost one percentage point of the total vote, a little more than fifteen hundred voters, and three seats (see Table 1). Nevertheless, the PSE remained the largest of the state-wide parties in the region

Table 1: Comparison of electoral results in the Basque regional elections in 2012 and 2009^a

	2012	2009
Census	1,775,351	1,776,059

Abstention (%)	36.04	35.32
Votes	1,135,568	1,148,697
	Votes cast ²	% of total votes
Non-valid votes	9,168	0,01
Nationalist parties		
PNV ¹	384766	34.6
EH BILDU	277923	25.0
EA		38,198
Aralar		62,514
PCTV		
Non-nationalist parties		
PSE	212809	19.1
PP	130584	11.8
EB	17,345	1.56
IU-EA	30318	2.73
UPD	21539	1.9
Seats ³		
	100,939	8.8
	399,600	34.8
	21	30
	318,112	27.7
	146,148	12.7
	0	3.2
	0	1
	22,232	1.9

Source: Basque government (<http://www.euskadi.net>)

Of course, the loss of parliamentary seats by the PNV, PSE and PP is also attributable to the need to accommodate *EH-Bildu* which won 25 per cent of the total vote and 21 seats. This was an outstanding electoral breakthrough, even if we take into consideration the number of invalid votes in 2009 (most of them from *Batasuna* voters who followed the party's instruction to cast an invalid vote). As a matter of fact, the result by *EH-Bildu* in 2012 was eight percentage points and 75,000 voters more than the total number of votes won by EA, ARALAR and the invalid votes cast in the previous regional elections. As can be inferred from the CIS post electoral survey (see the section below) much of this extra vote obtained by *EH Bildu* in 2012 came from previous non-voters and former PNV electors.

One last aspect worth mentioning about the 2012 Basque election results is that the small parties fared poorly. This was particularly so in the case of IU-Ezker Anitza. This is an interesting divergence from other southern European elections that have taken place in the context of the debt crisis (Martin and Urquiza, 2012). To a great extent this was a problem of party supply: IU-EB -that had been reduced to only one seat in the Basque Parliament in 2009- broke into three splinter groups: IU-EA, that remained federated to IU at the national level; IU-EB that became a Basque-based party; and *Alternatiba* that joined the coalition *Bildu* when this was formed. A majority of previous polls forecasted a few seats for IU-EA that would thus benefit from a punishment vote against the PSE; but these predictions did not materialize

Transfers from the 2009 to the 2012 Elections. Issues related to changes in Vote Options: Is the economic recession behind the 2012 electoral result?

In this section we examine vote transfers, moving from the 2009 to the 2012 elections. We base our analysis on the Post Electoral Survey undertaken by the CIS.⁴ In the first half of the section we examine patterns of loyalty in party choice between elections and then we move on to identify those vote transfers that were more numerous and can better explain the 2012 result in relation to the previous regional election. Based upon this first descriptive assessment, in the second half of this section we focus on transfers involving the “incumbent”, the PSE; the main opposition party, the PNV; and the “new” player in Basque Politics: *EH-Bildu*. With the data from the post electoral survey and through bivariate analysis we test the correlation of a number of issues with these different transfers, trying to determine whether vote choices in 2012 were related to the economic recession; or, on the contrary, whether they can be more easily attributable to other traditional dimensions of party competition in the region.

In order to describe the patterns of party choice loyalty between elections we cross tabulated the question on vote choice for 2012 with the 2009 vote recall (see Table 2). For the purpose of our analysis we have also considered as loyal voters those who opted for ARALAR, EA or an invalid vote in 2009 and voted for *EH-Bildu* in 2012. Thus, taking as reference the 2009 vote recall, and going from the highest to the lowest rates of vote loyalty we first find those who cast an invalid vote in 2009 (84 per cent), followed by the PNV (78 per cent), the PP (76 per cent), ARALAR-EA (64 per cent) and the PSE (61 per cent). Thus, as might be expected in an election in times of economic crisis, the incumbent PSE suffered the greatest electoral punishment among the three main parties. But, where did PSE voters go and why?

Table 2: Transfers from the 2009 to the 2012 Elections^a

2009	2012									
	PNV	EH-Bildu	PSE-EE	PP	UpyD	IU-Ezker Anitza	Others	Null	Blank	Abst
PNV	78 (302)	8 (31)	3 (11)	1 (2)	0 (1)	2 (6)	1 (2)	0 (1)	1 (3)	7 (28)
PSE-EE	13 (34)	1 (3)	61 (159)	3 (8)	2 (5)	2 (6)	2 (4)	-	1 (5)	15 (38)
PP	5 (3)	-	2 (1)	76 (50)	2 (1)	-	-	2 (1)	-	15 (10)
Aralar-EA	2 (9)	17 (64)	0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (3)	1 (3)	0 (1)	1 (2)	1 (3)
IU-EB	4 (2)	4 (2)	2 (1)	-	-	70 (39)	7 (4)	-	2 (1)	13 (7)
UpyD	-	-	-	25	-	-	25	25	-	25

	(1)				(1)		(1)	(1)	(1)
Others	10 (7)	56 (38)	3 (2)	1 (1)	-	4 (3)	12 (8)	-	1 (1)
Null	3 (2)	84 (53)	2 (1)	-	-	-	3 (2)	2 (1)	0 (0)
Blank	5 (2)	21 (9)	10 (4)	-	2 (1)	2 (1)	10 (4)	-	17 (7)
Abst.	9 (33)	13 (48)	5 (20)	1 (5)	1 (3)	2 (8)	3 (13)	0 (1)	3 (10)
									63 (241)

^a Percentages in rows (with the absolute number in brackets). The Table shows the distribution of the 2009 vote on the 2012 vote.

Table 2 also shows us the largest vote transfers in absolute numbers (in brackets). Thus, the most significant transfers from the 2009 elections to the 2012 election were the following (the N for each transfer is shown in Table 2, here we add the percentage they represent for the receiving vote choice in 2012): abstention-*EH-Bildu* (N:48 which represents 13 per cent of the total vote received by *EH-Bildu* in 2012); PSE-abstention (N:38, 15 per cent); PSE-PNV (N:34, 13 per cent); PNV-*EH Bildu* (N:31, 8 per cent); and PNV-abstention (N: 28,7 per cent). The remaining transfers are negligible and have not been included in our voters' profile analysis below. It is remarkable, however, the insignificant number of PSE deserters (only 3 cases in our data set) who voted for *EH-Bildu* –after all, a left-wing party as well as a nationalist one-, well below those who decided to abstain; or opted for the PNV.

Although the 2012 result for the PNV was very similar to that in 2009, the CIS data show this aggregate in fact hid a loss of voters to both *EH-Bildu* and to abstention, which were, in turn, compensated with gains from former PSE voters. Finally, our data confirm that the good result for *EH-Bildu* cannot be explained solely by the loyalty of former *Batasuna* voters; but also by the support of 2009 abstainers and former PNV voters.

In order to find out what motives can account for these vote transfers we have done several bivariate analysis in which we have considered the following explanatory variables: the political and economic evaluations of both the Basque Country and Spain as a whole; the Spanish and Basque government evaluations; and for the latter case, our analysis was also disaggregated into evaluations of different governmental areas: the economy, unemployment, housing, health, education, crime, immigration, the environment, the infrastructures, self-government, the Basque language (*Euskera*), terrorism, and the end of violence ⁵; the evaluation of Patxi López as *lehendakari* (Basque premier); the preferences towards the Basque Country as an independent state, and finally, the respondents' self-placement on the Left-Right (1-10) scale and the nationalist scale (1-10).⁶

Based on the evidence above, we start our analysis by looking at transfers involving the 2009 PSE voters. In Table 3 we have selected three groups of voters: those who voted socialist in both elections (i.e. loyal voters); and those who in 2012 either moved to abstention or transferred to the PNV. In the Table we show the main variables in which differences between groups have a statistical significance: the evaluation of the Basque Government ($F: 8.93$; $Sig.: 0.000$), the evaluation of Patxi López ($F: 6.20$; $Sig.: 0.002$); the preferences towards the Basque Country as an independent state ($F: 4.42$; $Sig.: 0.013$); and the self-placement on the nationalist scale ($F: 7.84$; $Sig.: 0.001$). The first two factors account for differences between the 2012 PSE voters and the other two groups. We can therefore conclude that those who left the PSE in 2012 (whether to abstain or to vote for the PNV) had significantly lower evaluations of the Basque Government and its premier (Patxi López) than those who remained loyal PSE voters. However, looking at the evaluations of the Basque government for specific policies (these results are not displayed) the two groups of PSE deserters show significantly lower values than the loyal voters, not only in areas related to the recession such as the management of the economy or unemployment; or in welfare state policies such as health and education; but also in areas like terrorism and the end of violence; or even in those more specific to the Basque Country such as self-government or the Basque Language. By contrast we did not find significant differences between groups in policy areas such as housing, infrastructures, crime, immigration or the environment. Our overall conclusion is that the lower evaluations of the Basque Government by former socialist electors who switched their vote in 2012 was based not only on issues related to the economic recession but they seemed also to reflect a more generalised discontent that stretched to other policy areas. The other two variables included in Table 3 reflect the centre-periphery cleavage and they clearly distinguish PNV switchers from the other two groups (loyal voters and abstainers). This suggests that the degree of attachment to Basque nationalism seemed an important conditional factor for 2009 PSE voters who were discontent with the Basque Government: those with higher levels of attachment to Basque nationalism were more likely to vote for the PNV; those with lower levels were more likely to abstain. By contrast, self-placement on the ideological scale was not statistically significant to distinguish among groups.

Turning now to transfers from the main opposition party, the PNV, we have included, also in Table 3 (see rows below) three types of voters: the PNV loyal voters; and those who either transferred to *EH-Bildu*; or who decided to abstain in 2012. The variables that in this case differentiate with statistical significance between the three groups are the following: the evaluation of the central government ($F: 5.69$; $Sig.: 0.004$); preferences towards the Basque Country as an independent state ($F: 5.98$;

Sig.:0.003); self-placement on the nationalist scale (F: 5.52; Sig.: 0.004); and self-placement on the Left-Right Scale (F: 9.28; Sig.: 0.000). It is more difficult in this case to find one variable (or type of variables) that can simultaneously account for transfers in both directions. PNV loyal voters and *EH-Bildu* switchers are not differentiated on the nationalist scale. However, the latter group show a significantly greater preference for the Basque Country as an independent state and are also considerably more positioned to the left than the PNV loyal voters and the PNV-abstainers. Thus, these seem Basque nationalists with a clear preference for the independence of the Basque Country who are also clearly positioned to the left of the PNV. Since *EH-Bildu* dedicated a great deal of its manifesto and focused its campaign on the issues of Basque sovereignty and the right to self-determination for the region –far more so than the PNV as we saw in the section on the campaign--; and as it stands as a left-wing party, it seems rational for these voters to switch to *EH-Bildu*. Even more so if we consider that the PNV has moved to a less radical position on the centre-periphery cleavage over the last few years. However, on the evidence of the contrast between this group and *EH-Bildu* loyal voters (see below) this conclusion must be treated with some caution.

One additional reason that might have reinforced this vote transfer is ETA's declaration of an end to terrorism. In the past, the association of *Batasuna* with political violence was a deterrent to many Basque nationalists to vote for it. In the 2012 regional elections, this deterrent had almost entirely disappeared. This argument is reinforced in the contrast between PNV-*EH-Bildu* switchers and *EH-Bildu* loyal voters since the former group are significantly differentiated from the latter one in their attitudes towards terrorism and violence (Table 4).

There is one last aspect that is worth underlining about PNV-*EH-Bildu* switchers: although their evaluation of central government is lower than that of PNV loyal voters, it is not a statistically significant difference (this exists only in relation to the PNV-abstainers). There are no significant differences, either between the two groups on other items such as the evaluation of the economic or political situation of the Basque Country, or Spain as a whole, so it is difficult to see this vote transfer as a protest vote linked to the economic or political consequences of the recession. Finally, although the transfer from the PNV to abstention is less significant in the CIS data, the more noteworthy feature about this group is that they are significantly less nationalist than the PNV loyal voters.

Table 3: Differences between loyal voters (PSE and PNV) and vote switchers. 2009-2012

Basque Government Evaluation			Patxi López Evaluation		Basque Country independence		Nationalism Scale	
PSE	M (SD)	95% CI	M (SD)	95% CI	M (SD)	95% CI	M (SD)	95% CI
Loyal	3.26(0.71)	[3.2, 3.4]	3.44(0.75)	[3.3, 3.6]	1.63(0.69)	[1.5, 1.8]	2.84(1.73)	[2.6, 3.1]
PNV-PNV	2.79(0.65)	[2.6, 3.0]	3.14(0.67)	[2.9, 3.4]	2.09(0.97)	[1.7, 2.4]	4.40(2.46)	[3.5, 5.3]
PSE-ABS	2.87(0.67)	[2.7, 3.1]	3.01(0.75)	[2.8, 3.3]	1.64(0.78)	[1.4, 1.9]	3.17(2.34)	[2.4, 3.9]
Central Government Evaluation		Basque Country independence		Nationalism Scale		Left-Right Scale		
PNV	M (SD)	95% CI	M (SD)	95% CI	M (SD)	95% CI	M (SD)	95% CI
Loyal	1.80(0.69)	[1.7, 1.9]	2.82 (0.94)	[2.7, 2.9]	7.16 (2.28)	[6.9, 7.4]	4.88 (1.29)	[4.7, 5.0]
PNV-Bildu	1.54(0.61)	[1.3, 1.8]	3.32 (0.76)	[3.0, 3.6]	7.57 (2.22)	[6.7, 8.4]	3.81 (1.44)	[3.3, 4.4]
PNV-ABS	2.19(1.10)	[1.7, 2.6]	2.45 (1.03)	[2.0, 2.9]	5.76 (2.35)	[4.8, 6.7]	4.48 (1.21)	[4.0, 5.0]

Note. M (SD): Mean (Standard Deviation); CI = confidence interval

Source: MD7712, Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (Spanish Centre of sociological research)

Table 4: Differences between loyal voters and new voters (from the PNV and abstention) to EH-Bildu, 2009-2012

EH-Bildu	Basque Government Evaluation in:				Patxi López Evaluation				Basque Country independence		Left-Right Scale	
	Terrorism		End of violence		M (SD)		95% CI		M (SD)		95% CI	
	Loyal	PNV-Bildu	ABS-Bildu	PNV-Bildu	ABS-Bildu	M (SD)	95% CI	M (SD)	95% CI	M (SD)	95% CI	M (SD)
Loyal	2.22 (0.91)	[2.0, 2.4]	2.23 (0.94)	[2.1, 2.4]	2.13 (0.84)	[2.1, 2.3]	3.81 (0.43)	[3.7, 3.9]	2.47 (1.17)	[2.3, 2.7]		
PNV-Bildu	2.73 (1.00)	[2.4, 3.1]	2.73 (1.02)	[2.3, 3.1]	2.54 (0.77)	[2.3, 2.8]	3.32 (0.76)	[3.0, 3.6]	3.81 (1.44)	[3.3, 4.4]		
ABS-Bildu	2.35 (0.89)	[2.1, 2.6]	2.50 (0.81)	[2.3, 2.7]	2.18 (0.65)	[2.1, 2.4]	3.48 (0.88)	[3.2, 3.7]	2.63 (1.33)	[2.2, 3.0]		

Note. M (SD): Mean (Standard Deviation); CI = confidence interval

Source: MD7712, Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (Spanish Centre of sociological research)

Our last analysis focuses on transfers to *EH-Bildu* as shown in Table 4. Although the coalition as such had not contested a regional election, it was formed by several pre-existing political organisations, so we have added together all the voters for these different parties, including those who cast an invalid vote in 2009, into one single category that, for the purpose of analysis, we take as *EH-Bildu* loyal voters. Nevertheless, this so-called loyal group does not account for the good result of the coalition in October 2012. So to better understand the outcome of the election we compare these loyal voters with the main sources of extra votes obtained by *EH-Bildu*: those who transferred from the PNV; and those who came from abstention (see Table 4). The three groups are not differentiated on the nationalist scale and their position on it is similar to that of the PNV voters. In this respect, the nationalist scale does not seem so useful in explaining intra-block transfers (within Basque nationalist parties) as it is in explaining inter-block ones (between the PNV and the PSE; and from the PNV to abstention, as we saw above). We have found in this case five variables that differentiate with statistical significance between the three groups of voters: the Basque government evaluation in the areas of terrorism (F: 3.7; Sig.: 0.027) and the end of violence (F: 3.88; Sig.: 0.022); the evaluation of the performance of Patxi López as *lehendakari* (F: 3.30; Sig.: 0.039); the preferences towards the Basque Country as an independent state (F: 9.73; Sig.: 0.000); and the respondent's self-placement on the Left-Right Scale (F: 13.23; Sig.: 0.000).

The group emanating from the PNV is significantly differentiated from the loyal voters in their higher evaluations of the Basque government's fight against terrorism and also in the related item of the end of violence; and even in their evaluation of Patxi López. As argued above, this denotes a different attitude towards political violence from loyal voters. Thus in the context of ETA's announced end of terrorism this barrier falls and vote transfers between the two parties are facilitated (this logic cannot be applied to previous abstainers who voted *EH-Bildu*). However, it is difficult to affirm with security that once the barrier fell transfers took place because these voters are closer to ideologically to *EH-Bildu* than to the PNV: even after the change of vote, the group's positioning on the Left-Right Scale is closer to that to the PNV loyal voters; and their preference for independence is right in the middle between groups. Although this is more speculative on our part and we have no evidence to support it, there is probably a vote of support for the normalisation of Basque politics after the end of terrorism and

the legalisation and electoral participation of *Bildu*. Once this process is consolidated some of these voters are likely returners to the PNV.

EH-Bildu voters that come from abstention are in some respects different. They are also differentiated from the loyal voters in their evaluation on the end of violence; whereas that of terrorism is very similar to that of loyal voters. As in the case of former PNV voters their preferences towards the independence of the Basque Country is not as strong as it is among *EH-Bildu* loyal voters. However, their positioning on the Left-Right Scale is more or less the same as the loyal group. This suggests that previous abstainers may be more attracted to *EH-Bildu* because of its left-wing character and somewhat less for its position on issues of self-government. Thus, it is easier to see the mobilization of this group in connection with the economic crisis.

Summing up our results with regard to *EH-Bildu* we would argue that the success of the coalition is not mainly explained by its novelty in the circumstances of the recession; except, as just mentioned, for a certain mobilization of previous abstainers. Economic and political crises usually work to the benefit of new or small parties (Bosco and Verney 2012). However, *EH-Bildu* is neither small nor can it be regarded properly as a new party. It is rather a political force that has been normalised in Basque politics after its long-standing association with political violence and terrorism. The announced end of terrorism by ETA -in a complex process in which *Batasuna* elites also took part- generated that climate of normalisation. Most likely, in the absence of an economic recession; but with a similar process of political normalisation, *EH-Bildu* would have had a similarly (good) electoral result.

Conclusions

In a first assessment, the results of the 2012 Basque regional election seem to have been determined, to a great extent, by the economic recession. First of all, the governmental PSE suffered a considerable electoral blow, losing about one third of its 2009 voters. Second, as in other “crisis elections” in Southern Europe, the incumbent loss was not the official opposition’s gain: in fact, the winning PNV suffered a moderate electoral setback in relation to its previous result in a regional election.

However, the impact of the economic crisis on the result of the election may have been more limited than this evidence suggests. Of course, the Basque Country was

severely hit by the recession. However, the region's unemployment rate has remained considerably lower than that of Spain as a whole, and, accordingly, citizens' evaluations of the Basque economy were not as dreadfully negative as those of the Spanish one. The economy was, nonetheless, a significant issue in the election, particularly in parties' manifestos; and, to a lesser extent, during the electoral campaign. However, after an examination of vote transfers in greater detail, it is difficult to conclude that the economic recession was the main factor determining the result.

First of all, although the incumbent PSE suffered the greatest electoral loss, the negative government evaluations of those former socialist voters who switched their vote in 2012 concerned not only policy areas related to the economy or the welfare state, but also issues more closely linked to the centre-periphery cleavage such as terrorism, the end of violence, or linguistic policy. Attachment to Basque nationalism – and not self-placement on the Left-Right Scale- also played a relevant role for those who switched their vote from the PSE to the PNV. The latter were, in fact, the largest number among former socialist voters who changed their vote in 2012. By contrast, very few 2009 PSE electors opted for *EH-Bildu*.

Voters coming from the PSE compensated the PNV's substantial losses to *EH-Bildu*. However, we did not find evidence to support the hypothesis this vote transfer was mainly based on perceptions of the economic crisis. On the one hand, PNV-*EH-Bildu* switchers were not significantly differentiated from PNV loyal voters on their economic or political evaluations of the Basque Country (or those of Spain as a whole). On the other, these switchers are significantly differentiated from *EH-Bildu* loyal voters in their attitude towards terrorism and the end of violence so we can conclude they would not have voted for the coalition in the absence of ETA's announcement of an end to terrorist actions. In sum, some of the new *EH-Bildu* voters may have chosen this option because their preferences in the nationalist axis or in the left-right scale are closer to that of the coalition; but there seems to be also a component of support for the normalisation of Basque politics following the end of terrorism and the legalisation of *Bildu*.

Finally, unlike other southern European elections that have taken place in the context of the economic recession, there was little support for small or new parties given that *EH-Bildu* cannot be considered to be a new party, nor a small one. In this respect the 2012 Basque election led to a reconfiguration of Basque politics, but in the direction of less - not more- party fragmentation.

Of course this is not to say that the economic crisis did not have an impact on voters' decisions. In an imagined counterfactual of a 2012 Basque election without the economic recession but with a similar process of political normalisation (.i.e. the end of ETA's terrorism and the legalization of the former *Batasuna*) we believe the result would have been better for the PSE, and slightly worse for the PNV. Also, fewer former abstainers might have mobilized to support *EH-Bildu*. However, we dare to guess that the balance of power in the Basque Parliament would have been similar to the one that emerged from the October 2012 election.

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¹ The pre-electoral survey of the Basque regional elections of 2009 carried out by the CIS shows that 30.4 per cent interviewees preferred a coalition between the PSE and PNV, while only 6.9 per cent chose the one between the PSE and PP.

² In this section we have used three different sources of data. For the Party Manifestos we have used the Regional Manifestos Project (<http://www.regionalmanifestosproject.com/>) whose main objective is to measure political parties' preferences at the sub-state level using the content analysis of their manifestos as the source of data (Gómez et.al). Secondly, to analyse the electoral campaign, we have taken our data from the two principal mass media in the Basque Country: the Basque television channel, EITB2, and the newspaper “El Correo”. We chose the news related to the electoral campaign covered in these media and we have classified it by type of issue and party, looking at the percentages they represent of the total collected news.

³ The Survey by the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (CIS) -a reference of these kinds of polls in Spain- forecasted 27 seats for the PNV, 21-22 seats for EH-Bildu, 14 seats for the PSE, 9-10 for the PP, and 3 seats for IU-Ezker Anitza.

⁴ This survey is part of a panel study carried out before the elections [(between the 10th and the 25th of September) and after them (between the 26th of October and the 4th of January), among residents with the right to vote in the Basque Country autonomic elections. The final sample was 2,898 in the pre-electoral study and 1,898 in the post-electoral one.

⁵ This question refers to the government evaluations on issues related to the permanent dissolution of ETA and the policy towards its imprisoned members among other questions that are still open after ETA's declaration of a permanent end to terrorist acts

⁶ For the political and the economic evaluation of Spain and the Basque Country as well as for all government evaluations we have used a battery of questions in which the interviewee assesses these issues from 1 (very good) to 5 (very bad). In relation to the preferences towards the Basque Country as an independent state, the interviewee, following the same procedure, was asked if he or she would be in favour or against an independent Basque State, with four answers that go from “completely in favour” (1) to “completely against” (4). To facilitate the interpretation of the results, we recoded all these variables so that all of them go from 1, as the most negative value, to 4 or 5, depending on the case, as the most positive. Finally, to measure the respondent's ideology and his or her degree of attachment to Basque nationalism, we have used two self-placement scales, the Left-Right one which goes from left (1) to right (10); and the nationalist scale, that goes from a minimum attachment to Basque nationalism (1) to maximum attachment (10).