

Elites, Citizens and Identity Discourse Changes in the Basque Country

Francisco José Llera. University of the Basque Country (UPV-EHU)
francisco.llera@ehu.es

Rafael Leonisio. University of the Basque Country (UPV-EHU)
rafael.leonisio@ehu.es

Sergio Pérez Castaños. University of the Basque Country (UPV-EHU)
sergio.perezc@ehu.es

*Paper prepared for the Workshop
'The Dynamics of Nationalist Evolution in Contemporary Spain',
Barcelona, 25-26 September 2014*

Is there any difference between elite discourse and society opinion? In this paper, we would like to compare the discourses of the Basque elites (parliamentary speeches, electoral programs, etc.) with the Basque public opinion regarding centre-periphery issues such as regional status, independence and reinforcement of the Basque Autonomy. So, using content analysis methodology we would explore the nationalist parties. In the same line, we would seek for information to compare the citizenship position in this same issues, looking forward to compare both of them to conclude if exist any coherence within the Basque population in general, and the voters of concrete parties in particular, and their political representatives.

Introduction

In general terms, nation-building processes in the European states were carried out from a nationally and linguistically homogeneous “center” that marginalized the “periphery”, which was culturally or linguistically different from the model employed to build the nation; generally, such peripheral minorities were national or ethnic. In this way the so-called center-periphery cleavage emerged¹, with the appearance of centralist parties and, above all, parties that defended the periphery; in this respect, Spain is one of the best examples due to the quantity, variety and importance of the latter². The presence of this type of parties has given rise to research that has advanced on two lines: the first refers to an acceptance that parties of an ethnic or nationalist type tend to exacerbate conflict³; the second specifies that parties of an “ethnic” type do not necessarily inflame conflict⁴, and can even cause the emergence of opportunities for improving political coexistence between groups⁵.

On this line, the construction of Spanish national identity since the end of the XIX century has encountered an obstacle in the strong presence of nationalist movements in several of its peripheral territories, principally Catalonia and the Basque Country⁶. This has continued to be a live issue throughout the entire democratic period

inaugurated with the Constitution of 1978⁷, in spite of the extraordinary political decentralization carried out over this period of time⁸. In the Catalan and Basque cases we find the existence of two models of nationalism that we could classify as moderate and radical. The former term refers to parties like the Basque Nationalist Party (*Partido Nacionalista Vasco* – PNV) and, historically, Basque Solidarity (*Eusko Alkartasuna* – EA) in the Basque case and to Convergence and Union (*Convergència i Unió* – CiU) in the Catalan case. The term radical refers to the Basque Patriotic Left (*Izquierda Abertzale* – IA)⁹ in the Basque Country, while Republican Left of Catalonia (*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* – ERC) would fit that perspective in this territory.

At the same time, there is the question of the relation between the political positioning of the political elite and the citizenry, where two ideal situations can be configured. On the one hand, it is the evolution of public opinion that determines the discourse of the elites¹⁰ and, on the other, it is the elites that influence the attitudes and values of citizens.¹¹ Thus, for example, in recent years there have been changes in Catalan public opinion with respect to its insertion in the Spanish state, while the positioning with respect to independence rose from 13.6% in 2005 to 54.7% in 2013¹². This has been accompanied (cause, consequence, or both at once) by a turn in the discourse of the political leaders of the Catalan nationalist formations, and even within some parties not considered to be nationalist, which raises questions about the influence of the discourse of the political elite's discourse on public opinion.

Research on how elites influence public opinion (and viceversa) has been summarized in several studies that seek to find the connection between the two and explain how the relationship of dependence between citizenry and elite is structured. On this line, there are several studies that tend to confirm the existence of a direct relation between the communicative patterns of political leaders and the change of attitude of the citizenry in general, and voters in particular, with respect to key issues in voting or questions of clear political relevance¹³.

In this respect, it can be underscored that the majority of the existing literature has been developed in a search to understand the capacity of politicians to exercise an influence over the mass media and how public opinion is influenced through the latter. Special mention is merited by the work of Schneider and Jacobi, who conclude that the change of perception of the North American citizenry regarding welfare spending is influenced by the discourse of the political elite: “*elite political discourse is the key factor in accounting for this change in public opinion*”, although not in a homogeneous way in the population, as “*the structure of elite influence varies markedly depending upon individual levels of attentiveness to politics and public affairs*”¹⁴. In this paper, we intend to test this hypothesis of the influence of the discourse of elites on the political attitudes of citizens (both of society in general and of different groups within it), through a case study centered on the Basque Country. Thus, following this line of research, our starting hypothesis is precisely how the discursive turn of moderate nationalism (PNV and EA) from the 1990s onwards influenced public opinion concerning particular attitudes and values related to the center-periphery cleavage.

In elaborating our analysis we combine content analysis of the discourse of the Basque political elites with data on public opinion obtained by the Euskobarómetro¹⁵ research team, in order to understand the influence of the former on the latter. Finally, we will note down a series of conclusions.

Data and method

After the fall of the Francoist dictatorship, one of the greatest innovations brought by the Spanish democratic transition was a rapid and intense decentralization that combined the cohesion of a unitary state with the functionality of advanced federalism with an asymmetrical character¹⁶. In this way the Basque Country obtained autonomy in the year 1979 with the approval of the Statute of Gernika in a referendum. This text, and therefore the autonomy it inaugurated, obtained a broad political consensus, with only the non-nationalist right-wing Popular Alliance (*Alianza Popular* – AP)¹⁷ and the more radical sector of the Basque Patriotic Left (Popular Unity – *Herri Batasuna* – HB)¹⁸ remaining outside this consensus. Thus, during the 1980s and most of the 1990s, HB was the only political force that opposed the *status quo* of the Autonomy Statute, while the other forces, including the nationalists, supported it in a more or less qualified way. Focusing on the latter, it must be said that PNV defended the Statute for almost two decades. In this way, for example, in 1981 it said that, “We do not doubt that all of those who occupy these [parliamentary] seats value the Statute as the feasible course for solving and satisfying the problems and aspirations of the Basque people”¹⁹, and in 1989 it considered it to be “the most valid instrument, and the only one existing, available to this people”²⁰. Even in 1992 when, as advance notice of what was to come later, PNV warned that facing nonfulfillment of the transfer of competencies it might in future opt for going beyond the existing political framework²¹, it continued to clearly support the autonomous charter: “The Statute is not exhausted. It is not an outdated formula and, facing adventures with an unclear horizon, it continues in our opinion to be a space where the majority can come together”²².

But not only PNV; EA too, in spite of its more markedly pro-independence character in contrast to the ambiguities of PNV²³, supported the autonomous *status quo* from its emergence. Thus, for example, in 1989 it firmly defended the Statute: “I have to say, drawing a balance of the attitude and commitment of my party to self-government... that if anyone has believed in the Statute, we are the ones. We do not deny this to anyone, but say that if anyone has believed in it, we are the ones”²⁴. That defense of the Statute was at times accompanied by the option of going further in an unspecified future: “From this view of things, from EA’s clear and unambiguous declaration that it considers the Statute to be a political commitment to be respected so long as it is not replaced by another commitment that is more ambitious and more in line with [EA’s] defense of the self-government and sovereignty of the Basque Country”²⁵. Nonetheless, as we shall shortly see, appeals to go beyond the framework of self-government barely found room in its discourse (or in that of PNV), and in general the main claim of EA consisted in the development, or integral fulfillment, of the Statute: “We resume our attempt to advance self-government, fulfilling at least one incontrovertible aim: the development of today’s statutory framework”²⁶; “While the minimum self-government contained in the Statute is not attained, and in the terms in which it was interpreted in 1979, this demand, posed in these terms, will continue to be a basic and permanent political question with a priority character for us”²⁷.

This attitude ended in the late 1990s when both PNV and EA embarked on the attempt to go beyond the autonomous *status quo* by means of three concrete projects. The first was the Assembly of Municipalities of the Basque Country or *Udalbiltza*, which was the form taken by the “*single and sovereign institution for the whole of the Basque Country*” that ETA had called for in its communiqué of September 1998 announcing a truce. However, what was intended to be the first Basque national institution split after the truce was broken; it lost all relevance and nationalist unity around this institution came apart.

The second project was the “Proposal for a Political Statute of the Community of Euskadi”, better known as the “Ibarretxe Plan” This involved going beyond the Statute and replacing it with another document that would recognize Basque national identity and the capacity of the Basque Country to decide its own future, including independence, although in this case the proposal was for the free association of Euskadi with a plurinational Spanish state, leaving the door open to the incorporation of Navarre (only cooperation agreements were envisaged for the French Basque Country). It established Basque nationality and the capacity of Euskadi to opt for any type of new status of relation with the Spanish state. It was approved by the Basque Parliament in December 2004 and rejected by the Spanish Parliament in February 2005. This rejection and the fall in electoral support for the PNV-EA coalition in the autonomous elections held immediately afterwards led to the plan’s being shelved and replaced by a third project.

The Consultation Bill, presented in 2007, was also centered on the right to decide. Ibarretxe presented two alternatives for October 25 2008: either Basque citizens would go to the ballot boxes to ratify a political agreement between Euskadi and the state based on rejection of violence and the state’s commitment to incorporate respect for the will of Basque society into its juridical regulations; or they would do so to transfer a “*binding mandate to all sides (ETA, Government and Basque political parties)*” with the aim of developing a process of dialogue and negotiation that would result in the end of violence and “*the solution of the conflict of political normalization*”. However, the Constitutional Court prohibited the consultation and PNV, after the socialists had taken office in the Basque Country, abandoned its more pro-sovereignty discourse, while EA formed an electoral coalition with the Basque Patriotic Left in 2011 and became diluted as a party with a distinct voice from then onwards²⁸.

What importance or weight did this project of going beyond the autonomous framework have in the discourses of the Basque nationalist parties? One way to answer this question is to make a content analysis of these discourses in order to obtain the percentage of time dedicated in them to defending self-government, independence or any project that might signify going beyond the Autonomy Statute and be related to the so-called “right to decide” of the Basques or their sovereignty in general. This form of measuring the object of study enables the creation of a quantitative variable that can be visualized and, in addition, treated statistically.

When the methodology of content analysis is used, one of the most important decisions is choosing the texts that are to be analyzed. In order to study the discourse of a political party there is a huge quantity of documentation that could be used *a priori*: speeches by leaders at meetings or in other contexts, parliamentary speeches, congress resolutions or electoral programs. Facing the impossibility of accessing the whole

universe of data, it is necessary to elaborate a sample. Bearing in mind that our aim is to determine the percentage of time nationalist political parties dedicate to the defense of going beyond Basque self-government, we would need texts that meet two basic conditions: 1) they must reflect the party's official discourse at that moment in time, and 2) they must be as general as possible.

Are there texts in our context that meet these conditions? The answer is affirmative: speeches during the debates on the general political situation and during the investiture in the Basque Parliament, as they are general (there is no issue on which the person speaking is obliged to speak *a priori*, and he or she dedicates time to different issues according to his or her choice; this can therefore provide a measure of the importance that a political party gives to a particular question) and the person speaking is generally the leader of the party or, failing that, the spokesperson of the parliamentary group (that is, always an authorized person who transmits the official discourse).²⁹ We begin our analysis in 1987, that is, with the investiture session of the third parliamentary term, and we conclude it with the debate on general policy of 2011, the last date for which data are available.

We therefore apply the technique of content analysis to a series of texts (investiture speeches and speeches on general policy in the Basque Parliament) in order to determine the percentage of the same dedicated to going beyond Basque autonomy. As these texts are a representative sample of the official discourse of each political party, such quantification enables us to approach the importance that this issue has held for the Basque nationalist parties since the mid-1980s, thanks to which we are able to check whether indeed from the late 1990s there was a (quantitative) change of discourse in both PNV and EA.

The texts were hand-coded with the help of the NVivo content analysis program. Manual content analysis is the most employed methodology for analyzing political texts and basically consists in hand-coding the texts to later obtain the required data (these can be political positions or percentages of issues dealt with in the texts) by means of counting the frequencies of coded registration units. Its disadvantages, against proposals to analyze political positions from a more or less computerized and automatized point of view³⁰, are its high cost (in both time and money) when tackling a large quantity of texts, and its lack of reliability³¹. Conversely, it is the technique that best ensures the validity of results, besides giving greater precision to the latter³².

[Graph 1 about here]

The coding results are shown in graph 1. In order to facilitate analysis, in addition to PNV and EA, we have added the speeches of the Basque Patriotic Left (HB, EH and EHAK) and the United Left (IU – *Izquierda Unida*). For better visualization of the data, we have grouped the speeches of each party by parliamentary term, with the figure for each given by the average of the three or four speeches delivered by each party in each specific term³³.

The first thing that draws attention is the figure for the Basque Patriotic Left, always above the rest of the parties except in the 2005-2008 parliamentary term, where

it was only surpassed by EA³⁴. This is in keeping with what we have set out above: the Basque Patriotic Left from the outset opposed the Basque autonomous framework and proposed going beyond it. However, the most interesting data are for PNV and EA. As can be seen, the average time dedicated in the first three terms to defending aspects related to self-determination, independence or a change in the autonomous *status quo* in terms of more sovereignty for the Basque Country is really small. A slight rise can be seen in the 1994-1997 parliamentary term, but the data have a merely anecdotic character: 2.2% for PNV and 3.9% for EA. As we have already seen, during that period so-called democratic or institutional nationalism diligently defended the Autonomy Statute and was not characterized by arguing to go beyond it, which can be clearly appreciated in graph 1. The great change comes from 1998 onwards and, above all, from 2001. In the first parliamentary term of Ibarretxe, EA triples and PNV quadruples the time dedicated to this question. We should recall that these are the years of nationalist unity³⁵ around the Lizarra Pact and the frustrated assembly of Basque municipalities. This is something that, as the graph shows, is not exclusive to these two parties since the Basque Patriotic Left made sovereignty the most important issue in its discourse and even IU increased the time it dedicated to the right to decide. In the 2001-2005 parliamentary term, the period of development of the debate on the Ibarretxe Plan, PNV and EA once again notably increased the time they dedicated to defending questions related to Basque sovereignty (to a large extent this was specifically in defense of the Ibarretxe Plan), reaching 1/5 in the case of the former and 1/3 in that of the latter. The Basque Patriotic Left continued the tonic of the previous legislature (dedicating more than half of its time to this) and IU exceeded 20%, both defending the right to self-determination and its self-government project, termed “free-adhesion federalism”, which differed from the Ibarretxe Plan³⁶. There are no great changes in the 2005-2008 parliamentary term, with a slight rise in PNV, more pronounced in EA and falls in IU and the Basque Patriotic Left. In any case, it can be appreciated that going beyond the political framework continues to be one of the principal issues in Basque political discourse. Finally, in the 2009-2011 parliamentary term there is a spectacular fall in all the parties. Although we do not know the cause, we can speculate that this was greatly influenced by both the arrival of the economic crisis and the Basque Socialist Party (PSE – *Partido Socialista de Euskadi*) taking government office, which from its position of greater influence was able to contribute to setting different priorities from those of the other political parties.

In short, for three parliamentary terms the moderate nationalist parties PNV and EA defended the Statute of Autonomy of the Basque Country and therefore the self-government model that this promoted. However, from 1998 onwards, and for three parliamentary terms, these two parties made a turn in their discourse and came to defend going beyond the Statute in terms of sovereignty. That turn was not only qualitative but also quantitative, that is, this question began to have an important specific weight in their discourse. Finally, in the last parliamentary term for which we have data (2009-2012) there was a new evolution and, although the discourse did not change qualitatively (PNV and EA continued to defend higher levels of self-government), it did do so in quantitative terms, losing all its weight and returning to parameters prior to 1998.

Having reached this point, we can ask: how has this double discursive change of the Basque nationalist parties influenced Basque public opinion?³⁷ Our principal hypothesis, as we noted in the introduction, is that such a pronounced discursive turn by

two such influential parties (we should recall that PNV has won all the Basque elections and that EA has on occasion obtained as much as 20% of the vote) must have had consequences on citizens' attitudes. We test our hypothesis from two points of view: values and attitudes. In the first place, we study whether that discursive turn might have had an influence on the ideology and identity of the Basques (that is, "producing" more Basque nationalists and a greater weight of Basque identity with respect to Spanish identity), but also on more conjunctural attitudes like support for the Statute of Gernika and desires for independence.

Results: Values and attitudes

Bearing in mind values in the first place, we now analyze whether the radicalization of the moderate (up until then, at least) nationalist parties affected in some way or other the ideological-identity structure of Basque society. We therefore test this hypothesis by analyzing two variables: the evolution of those who consider themselves to be Basque nationalists, and the evolution of those who define themselves as "only Basque" and "more Basque than Spanish"³⁸.

[Graph 2 about here]

In the first place, graph 2 shows that in relation to Basque nationalist ideology, the discursive turn of the elites did not influence Basque society in the sense of radicalizing it and "creating" new nationalists. From 1998, the year, we should recall, when the radicalization of moderate nationalism began, the division between Basque nationalists and non-nationalists seems very stable, with slight rises and falls depending on the context (or for reasons of the sample) but in any case without great variations, following two almost parallel lines. The only change seems to take place precisely from 1998 onwards, with the change of hegemony from nationalists to non-nationalists, which might perhaps lie behind the discursive change of PNV and EA. Nonetheless, this is a question we will not deal with as it falls outside our analysis, remaining as a research question for future studies.

[Graph 3 about here]

In second place, we obtain the same conclusion from graph 3, since the radicalization of PNV and EA does not seem to have affected the identity sentiment of the Basques. The sum of those who consider themselves only Basque and more Basque than Spanish barely undergoes any changes, with the graphs tracing a very stable line around 50% of citizens. There are indeed variations in the evolution of both groups when analyzed separately but, in any case, there is no clear tendency and, besides, observing the line that represents the sum of both it seems clear that the rises and falls are due to the two groups feeding each other. That is, if there are more citizens who consider themselves "only Basque", it is at the cost of those who consider themselves "more Basque than Spanish" and vice versa, and not of those who combine both identities or in whom Spanish identity comes first. In any case, what the stability of the upper line on the graph shows is the slight influence that the discourse of the elites had on the identity sentiment of the Basques. That is, the radicalization of PNV and EA did

not result in a part of the Basque citizens changing a pro-Spanish or dual sentiment in favor of a greater identification with the Basque nation.

So far we have found that the discourse of the elites has not caused any change in ideology and identity (with respect to the center-periphery cleavage). However, these are in general two stable variables that, if they do change, do so in the long term, normally as a result of more structural changes like generational change-overs or deep changes in the political system³⁹. Nonetheless, attitudes towards particular political objects or projects can be more permeable to a change in the discourse of the political elites. This is the hypothesis that we will now try to confirm through two variables: satisfaction with the Statute of Autonomy and the desires for independence of the Basques. Bearing in mind that what PNV and EA advocated was to go beyond the Statute of Gernika, it makes sense to analyze the attitude towards that political object, previously extolled (see above) and later rejected as insufficient, to see if that turn in the discourse had an influence on Basque public opinion. On the other hand, that rejection of the self-government model did not find expression in a clear positioning in favor of independence. While EA did openly defend this as a final goal, it supported the status of free association between Euskadi and the state expressed in the “Ibarretxe Plan” in the 2001-2005 parliamentary term. Besides focusing on this status, the PNV centered its discourse on the “right to decide” but it never explicitly advocated independence in an official way. In spite of that, we expect an increase in the number of pro-independence Basques in the period of greater questioning of the Statute of Gernika, due to the climate of greater nationalist assertion encouraged by the parties of that political spectrum. Finally, we expect that this increase (and the fall in support for the Statute) will be found to a larger extent in the potential targets of PNV and EA, that is, in those who consider themselves nationalists, in those who consider themselves “only Basque” and “more Basque than Spanish” and in the voters of the two parties.

Graph 4 shows the evolution of the desires for independence of the Basques since 1989 and support for the Statute since 1998, years since when data have been available. The clearest information refers to support for the Statute of Gernika⁴⁰. The text begins in 1998 with a support of 45% (a figure, we should recall, from before the start of the radicalization of moderate nationalism), falling gradually and tracing a concave line that reaches a low point in the years following the debate on the Ibarretxe Plan and in the midst of the discussion on the Consultation Bill. From the end of the decade, and coinciding with the fall in the percentage dedicated to going beyond the Statute in the discourses of PNV and EA, the support it receives once again increases significantly to exceed 35% for the first time in 10 years. This relation, which can be intuited in the graph, receives statistical backing when support for the Statute is correlated with the PNV discourse ($R = -0.714$, sig.0.003, $N=15$) and with that of EA ($R = -0.701$, sig.0.005, $N=14$)⁴¹.

[Graph 4 about here]

In the second place, the data referring to desires for independence are much less clear⁴². Although there is a curve, convex in this case, around the years of the “Ibarretxe Plan”, this is less pronounced than that referring to support for the Statute. There is clearly an evolution in agreement with our hypothesis from 2001 onwards, since the

increase of the weight of the pro-sovereignty discourse is reflected in an increase in pro-independence sentiment and vice versa, abandonment of this discourse at the end of the first decade of the XXI century is reflected in a slight fall in those who express desires for independence. However, with the data prior to 2001 the evolution goes against our hypothesis. Thus, from 1999 to 2001 there is a very clear fall (in spite of the increase of the weight of the pro-sovereignty discourse) while from 1989 to 1996 there is a rise and a fall in spite of the discourse remaining stable⁴³.

Did this change affect all social sectors equally, or the voters of PNV and EA to a greater extent?⁴⁴ Or, even, the potential voters of these two parties to a greater extent – that is, those who define themselves as nationalists and consider themselves “only Basque” or “more Basque than Spanish”? Graph 5 shows the evolution of support for the Statute amongst these five categories. It can be appreciated that the five categories do indeed describe a very similar curve to that of the society. Those who stand out are PNV voters, those who consider themselves “more Basque than Spanish” and Basque nationalists; those who stand out less are those who define themselves as “only Basque” and, above all, EA voters. There is a plausible explanation for the latter, which is that these two groups were already critical of the Statute beforehand⁴⁵ and thus less permeable to changes of discourse by the elites.

[Graph 5 about here]

On the other hand, the same groups are represented in graph 6, but in this case with the evolution of desires for independence. On this occasion it is once again possible to appreciate a curve for the central years of the graph (that is, a growth of pro-independence sentiment at those times when moderate nationalism most insists on going beyond the Autonomy Statute) for PNV voters, those who define themselves as Basque nationalists and those who define themselves as “more Basque than Spanish”. Although once again, as in the case of the data for society as a whole, the data prior to 2001 do not seem to follow a logical sequence from the point of view of the discourse of the political elites.

[Graph 6 about here]

Finally, we will focus on the only variable that seems to be influenced by the discourse of the moderate nationalist parties (satisfaction with the Autonomy Statute). To statistically check the conclusions that we have extracted from the graphs, we turn to table 1. On it we find the correlations between the discourse of PNV (equivalent to EA, we should recall) and support for the Statute of different sampling sets (voters of different parties, groups of Basques according to subjective identity and to their definition as nationalists or not). While previously we had only correlated (and graphically expressed) the evolution of those who were fully satisfied, on table 1 we also add those who are partially satisfied (those who say they are “in part” satisfied) and those who are dissatisfied (those who answer “no” to the question about whether they are satisfied with the Autonomy Statute). The majority of the results that can be observed on the table are in accordance with the hypotheses we formulated, although there are results that are surprising and interesting, since the discourse of the nationalist

elites not only influences their voters or potential “clienteles”, but other categories like socialist voters or those with a dual Basque-Spanish identity. If we focus on the column of those satisfied alone, we can see how the discourse of PNV does indeed influence the full satisfaction of different social groups with the Statute. Thus, when the pro-sovereignty discourse is greater, full satisfaction falls significantly in society (as we saw above), in PNV voters, in those who consider themselves “only Basque” or “more Basque than Spanish” and in those who define themselves as Basque nationalists. But not only in those groups, there is also a significant negative relation with the voters of the PSE and the Basque Patriotic Left, with those who consider themselves “as much Basque as Spanish” and with those who define themselves as non-nationalist. With voters of the Popular Party (PP – *Partido Popular*) there is also a significant relation but a positive one: when the pro-sovereignty discourse is greater, there is greater satisfaction in the PP electorate.

Nonetheless, the meaning of the influence is not the same in all the groups, and it is possible to distinguish three types of influence. In the first place, in the PNV electorate the pro-sovereignty discourse influences the two extremes: the greater the pro-sovereignty discourse of this party, the less fully is its electorate satisfied with the Statute and there is more dissatisfaction; and vice versa, in the periods when PNV dedicates little attention to aspects related to the right to decide, full support for the Statute grows in its electorate and the negative evaluation falls. In the second place, we find, besides society as a whole, the PSE voters, those who consider themselves “more Basque than Spanish” and “as Basque as Spanish”, and those who say they are not nationalist. In these groups the fall in net satisfaction with the Statute as a result of the influence of the position of moderate nationalism does not find a correlate in an increase in full dissatisfaction; what grows instead are the partially satisfied. That is, the discourse contrary to the model of self-government has an influence by reducing full satisfaction with Basque autonomy in those groups, but the result is not dissatisfaction, as occurred with the PNV electorate, but that of taking refuge in the more ambiguous position of partial satisfaction. Finally, there is a third group (only Basques, Basque nationalists and voters of the Basque Patriotic Left and PP) in which the discursive turn of moderate nationalism only influences the negative evolution of full satisfaction with the Statute (positive in the case of the PP), while the change of the partially satisfied and dissatisfied is not significant. This means that those who cease to be fully satisfied with the Statute do not join any of the other two groups in a significant way (or, in the case of the PP, the increase of satisfaction does not proceed significantly from either of the other two groups).

[Table 1 about here]

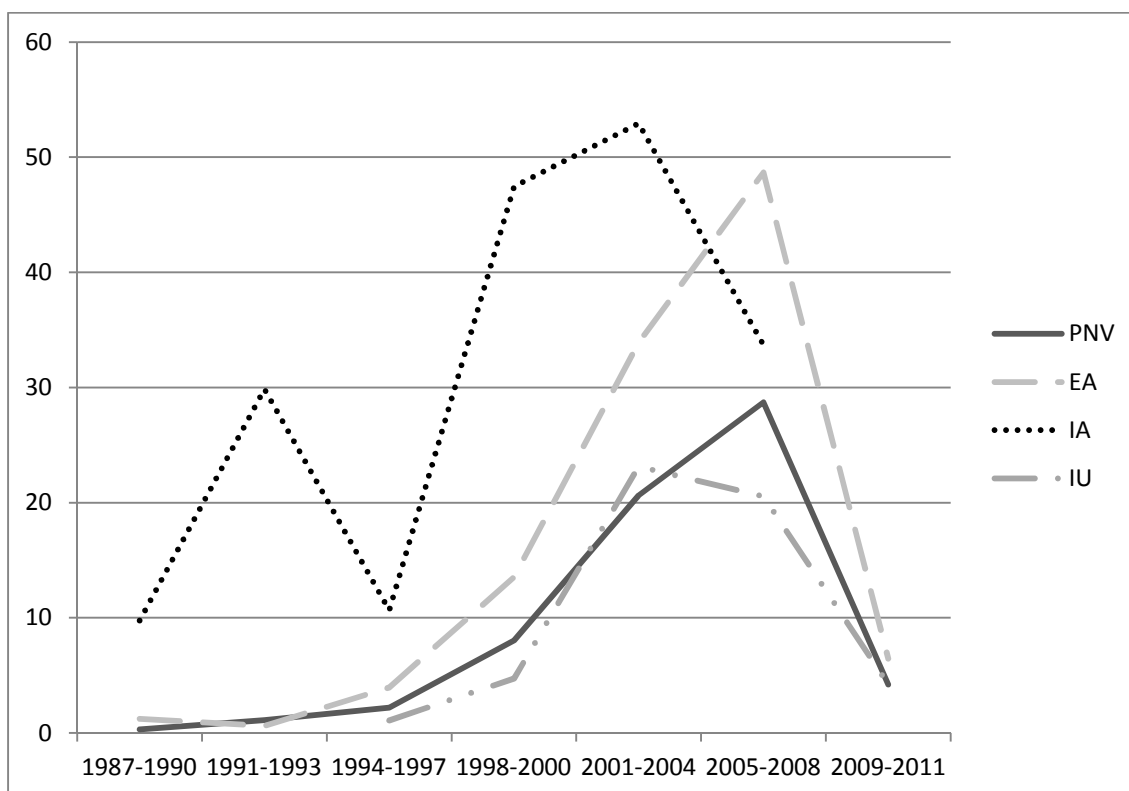
Conclusion

The main aim of this work was to test, through a case study, the hypothesis of the influence on public opinion of the discourse and positioning of the political elites. The Basque Country is an especially relevant political arena for checking this hypothesis due to the discursive turn made in the late 1990s by moderate nationalism (PNV and EA) with respect to the self-government model, discarding the Autonomy Statute that they had defended until then in order to opt for the right of self-determination.

The data presented in this article have shown that the change of discourse by these parties had a certain influence on the political behavior of the Basques. While it had no effect on values (there was no growth in the number of Basque nationalists or any increase in Basque identity) and its influence on desires for independence was not very clear, there does seem to be a direct relation between changes in discourse and attitude towards the Autonomy Statute, concretely with respect to satisfaction with the latter. There appears to be an influence on society in general and on different groups within it, not necessarily those closest to these parties (PNV or EA voters, Basque nationalists or those with a strong Basque identity) but those who are less close like PSE and PP voters (the latter in the opposite direction) or those with a dual Basque-Spanish identity.

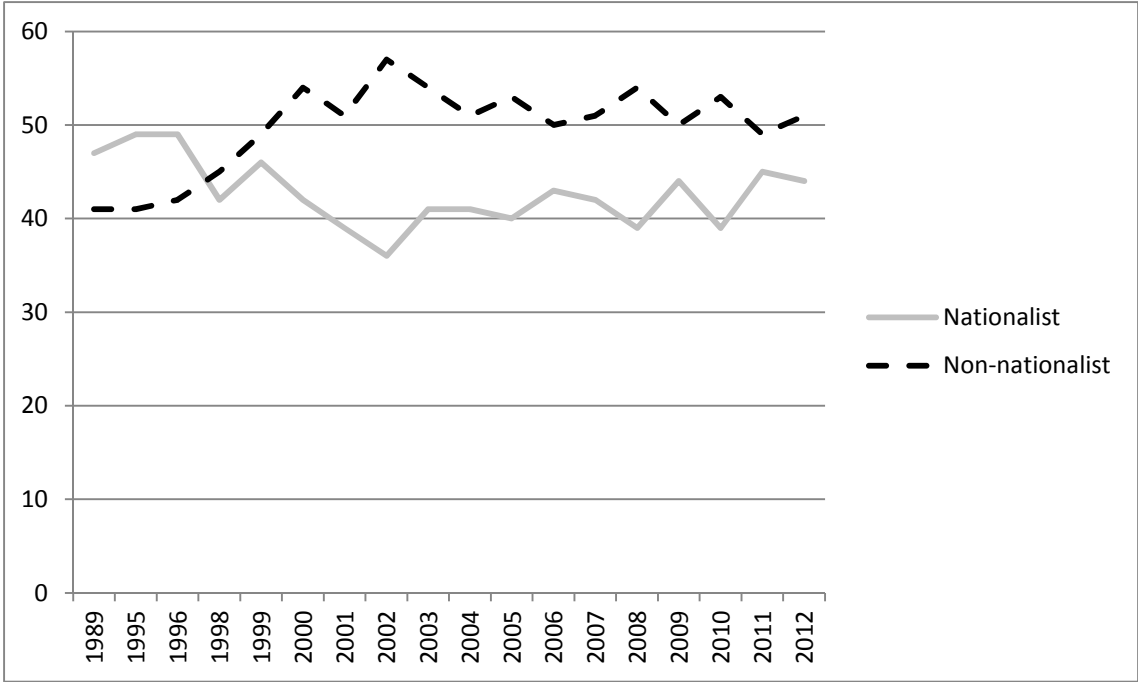
We should stress that the conclusions provided here are necessarily provisional given that we have only carried out a bivariate study of the available data. In the future, we propose to construct more complex models to confirm the tendency noted in the relations between the changes of the discourse of moderate nationalism and satisfaction with the Autonomy Statute of Basque society in general and the different social and political groups of which it is formed in particular.

Graph 1: Evolution of the percentage of time dedicated to promoting going beyond the juridical framework in the investiture speeches and speeches on general policy of PNV, EA, IU and the Basque Patriotic Left, grouped by parliamentary term, 1987-2011.



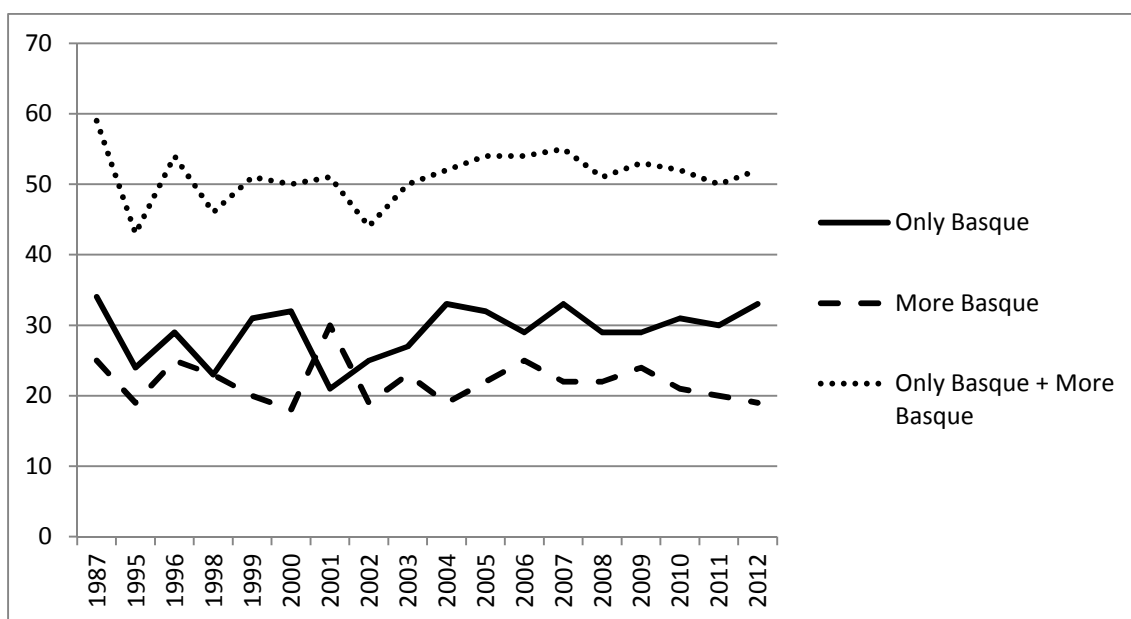
Source: Own elaboration

Graph 2: Evolution of the nationalist sentiment of the Basques, 1989-2012



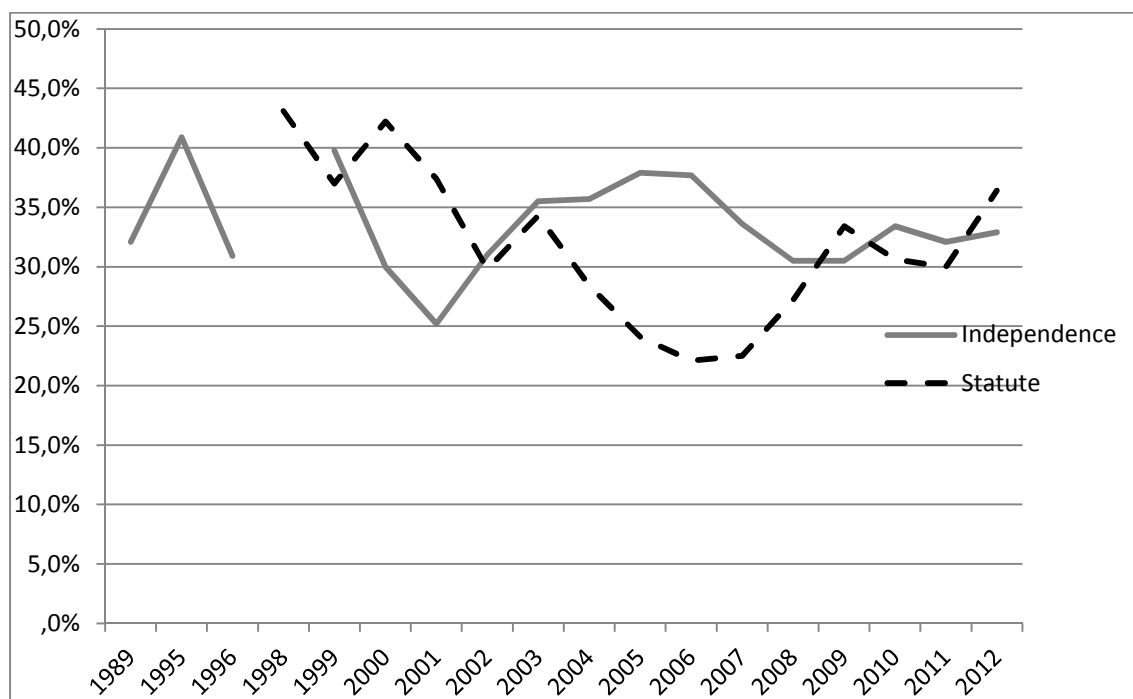
Source: Euskobarómetro

Graph 3: Evolution of the subjective national identity of the Basques, 1987-2012



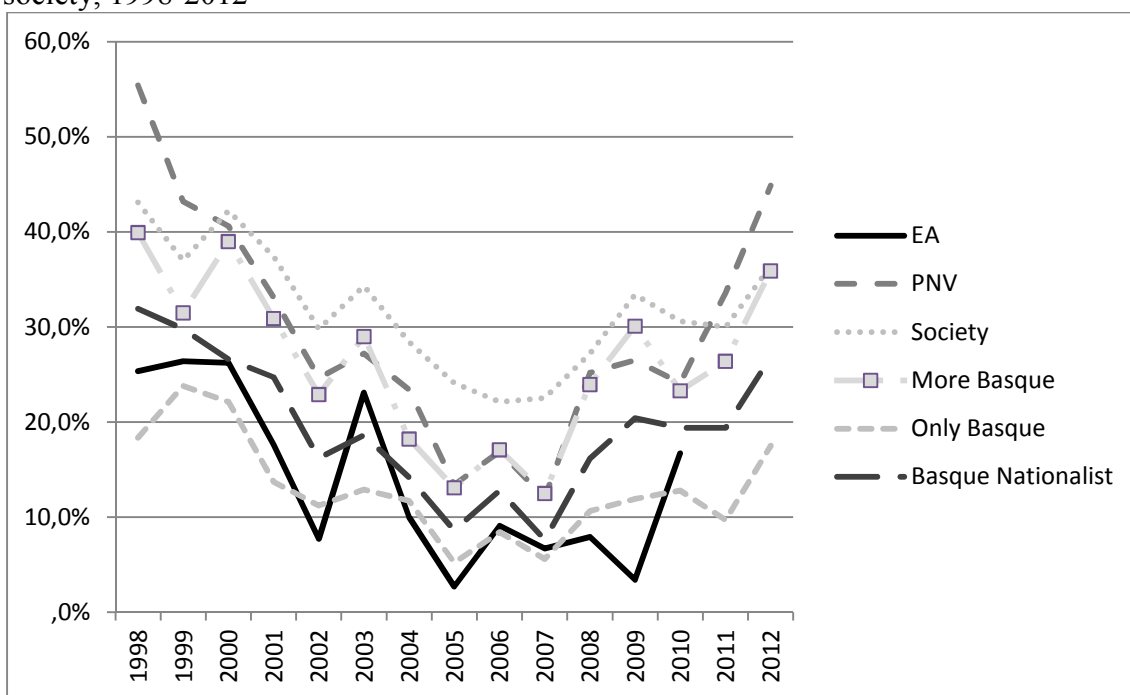
Source: Euskobarómetro

Graph 4: Evolution of desires for Independence and full satisfaction with the Statute in the Basque Country, 1989-2012



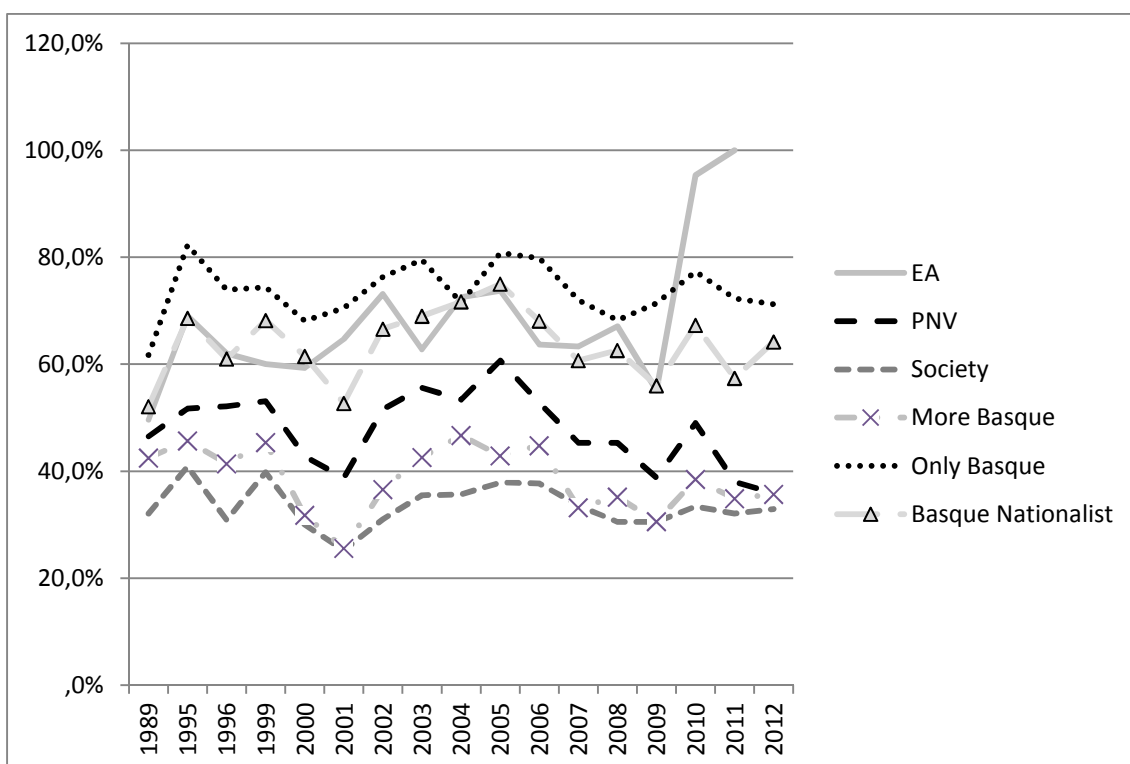
Source: Euskobarómetro

Graph 5: Evolution of full satisfaction with the Statute in different categories of Basque society, 1998-2012



Source: Euskobarómetro

Graph 6: Evolution of desires for independence in different categories of Basque society, 1998-2012



Source: Euskobarómetro

Table 1. Correlations of the evolution of the PNV discourse with satisfaction with the Autonomy Statute, according to vote, subjective national identity and nationalist sentiment.

	Satisfied	Partially satisfied	Dissatisfied
Society	-0.714**	0.659**	0.171
PNV	-0.749**	0.469	0.669**
EA	-0.354	0.187	0.251
IA	-0.603*	-0.097	0.184
PSE	-0.882**	0.760**	-0.044
PP	0.525*	-0.198	-0.254
Only Basque	-0.649**	0.221	0.364
More Basque	-0.743**	0.565*	0.336
As Basque as Spanish	-0.737**	0.612*	-0.093
More Spanish	-0.314	0.453	-0.286
Only Spanish	-0.113	0.408	-0.399
Nationalist	-0.769**	0.394	0.485
Non-nationalist	-0.695**	0.662**	-0.146

Source: Euskobarómetro and own elaboration according to the hand-coding of texts

** p<0.01 *p<0.05

Appendix

In the following chart you can find the 50 most frequent words of the encoded text. As it can be seen, most of the words with an explicit political content (right, query, to decide, Statute, Self-determination, proposal, willingness or conflict) are related to the analysed issues. In this way, we can confirm that the hand-coding has been made in the correct way.

Appendix I. Most frequent Words in analyzed texts

Words	Frequency	Words	Frequency	Words	Frequency
Derecho (Right)	274	Voluntad (Willingness)	139	Partido (Party –political)	108
Pueblo (People)	270	Vascos (Basques)	138	Nacional (National)	107
Político (Political)	261	Conflicto (Conflict)	135	Autodeterminación (Self-determination)	106
País (Country)	231	Ser (To be)	134	Propuesta (Proposal)	106
Estado (State)	210	Nuevo (New)	133	Son (They are)	105
Política (Politics)	208	Hacer (To do)	131	Años (Years)	101
Euskal (Basque)	181	Todo (All)	128	Proceso (Process)	101
Herría (Country)	179	Decir (To say)	123	Futuro (future)	100
Marco (Frame)	167	Acuerdo (Agreement)	122	Políticos (Politicians)	98
Vasco (Basque)	158	Tenemos (We have)	122	Democrática (Democratic)	96
Consulta (Query)	151	Puede (Can)	119	Izquierda (Left)	96
Debate (Debate)	151	Soberanía (Sovereignty)	118	Popular (Popular)	96
Hoy (Today)	150	Derechos (Rights)	116	Euskadi (Basque Country)	95
Sociedad (Society)	147	Estamos (We are)	116	Proyecto (Project)	95
Vasca (Basque)	146	Estatuto (Statute)	115	Momento (Moment)	94
Decidir (To decide)	144	Español (Spanish)	109	Claro (clear)	93
Tiene (It has)	142	Mayoría (Majority)	108		

Note: They are only showed the 50 first words. Stop Words (prepositions, determinants, pronouns, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs, etc.) have been excluded.

Source: Own elaboration

¹ Seymour M. Lipset & Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage structures, party systems, and voter alignments: An introduction", in Seymour M. Lipset & Stein Rokkan, (eds.), *Party systems and voter alignments*, (Nueva York: Free Press, 1967), 1-63.

² Regarding to identity issues in Spain see Llera "Spain: Identity Boundaries and Political Reconstruction", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 15 (3-4), 305-335 (2009). Into the Basque Country special case, the classic work of Juan Linz et al., *Conflicto en Euskadi, Estudio sociológico sobre el cambio político en el País Vasco 1975-1980* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1984) is very interesting, continued by Francisco J. Llera, "Conflicto en Euskadi revisited," in Richard Gunther (ed.), *Politics, Society and Democracy. Vol. I The Spanish Case* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 169-95; and Francisco J. Llera, "Basque Polarization: Between Autonomy and Independence," in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 5 (3-4), 101 - 120 (1999).

³ Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Alvin Rabushka & Kenneth Shepsle, *Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability* (Columbus, OH: Merrill, 1972).

⁴ John Ishiyama, 'Do Ethnic Parties Promote Minority Ethnic Conflict?', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 15(1), 56-83 (2009).

⁵ Johanna K. Birnir, *Ethnicity and Electoral Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Kanchan Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Headcounts in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁶ The Basque Country, or Euskadi, is a Spanish autonomous community formed by the provinces of Vizcaya, Guipúzcoa and Álava. One of the claims of the Basque nationalists is for the incorporation of Navarre, a province which they consider to be culturally Basque. In this paper when we speak of the Basque Country we are, in general, referring to the autonomous community, without this supposing the adoption of any ideological position.

⁷ Regarding this, Diego Muro & Alejandro Quiroga, in their article 'Building the Spanish Nation: The Centre-Periphery Dialectic', *Studies in Ethnic and Nationalism*, 4(2), 18-37, (2004), explain which it is the Spanish Nation building process and how the peripheral nationalism oppose to the different tries into the attempts of including them.

⁸ Eliseo Aja, *El estado autonómico: federalismo y hechos diferenciales* (Madrid: Alianza, 1999, 14).

⁹ We have opted to use the general term Basque Patriotic Left (*Izquierda Abertzale*) since over time there has not been a sole political acronym associated with this form of understanding the Basque political field.

¹⁰ Patrick Dunleavy & Hugh Ward, 'Exogenous Voter Preferences and Parties with State Power: Some Internal Problems of Economic Theories of Party Competition', *British Journal of Political Science*, 11, 351-80, (2011); Tetsuya Matsubayashi, 'Do Politicians Shape Public Opinion', *British Journal of Political Science*, 43(2), 451-78, (2013); Warren E. Miller & Donald E. Stokes, 'Constituency Influence in Congress', *American Political Science Review*, 57, 45-56, (1963)

¹¹ Kevin Deegan-Krause and Zsolt Enyedi, 'Agency and the structure of party competition: Alignment, stability and the role of political elites', *West European Politics*, 33(3), 686-710, (2010); Hugh Ward, 'Preference Shaping and Party Competition: Some Empirical and Theoretical Arguments', in Judith Bara and Albert Weale, eds, *Democratic Politics and Party Competition* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 245-70.

¹² Data available in Centro de Estudios de Opinión (CEO) in its website: <http://ceo.gencat.cat/>

¹³ Thomas M. Carsey and Geoffrey C. Layman, 'Changing sides or changing minds? Party conversion, issue conversion and partisan change on the abortion issue', *American Journal of Political Science*, 50 (2), 464-77 (2006); Elizabeth R. Gerber & Jeffrey B Lewis, 'Beyond the Median: Voter Preferences, District Heterogeneity, and Political Representation', *Journal of Political Economy*, 106, 1364-83, (2004); Elizabeth R. Gerber & John E. Jackson, 'Endogenous Preferences and the Study of Institutions', *American Political Science Review*, 87, 639-56, (1993); Lawrence R. Jacobs & Robert Y. Shapiro, *Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Geoffrey C. Layman and Thomas M. Carsey, 'Party polarization and conflict extension in the American electorate', *American Journal of Political Science*, 46 (4), 786-802 (2002);

Enric Martínez-Herrera & Thomas J. Miley, 'The constitution and the politics of national identity in Spain', *Nations and Nationalism* 16(1), 6-30, (2010); Sandra K. Schneider & William G. Jacoby, 'Elite Discourse and American Public Opinion: The Case of Welfare State', *Political Research Quarterly*, 58(3), 367-79, (2005).

¹⁴ Sandra K. Schneider & William G. Jacoby, op. cit. p.377.

¹⁵ El equipo de Investigación Euskobarometro, adscrito a la Universidad del País Vasco, realiza estudios de opinión pública de carácter semestral desde 1995. www.ehu.es/euskobarometro

¹⁶ Francisco J. Llera, "La dimensión territorial e identitaria y la competición partidista y la gobernabilidad españolas", Francisco Murillo & José Luis García de la Serrana (eds.), *Transformaciones políticas y sociales en la España democrática*, (Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, 2006a), 239-317.

¹⁷ Although it is true that shortly afterwards its position changed to one of support. For example, as early as 1980 it defined the Statute as "a valid instrument for the definitive insertion of the different Spanish regions in the national ensemble" (Speech by Florencio Aróstegui, representative of AP in the Basque Parliament during the investiture of Basque President Garaikoetxea, 22-4-1980).

¹⁸ The other branch of the Basque Patriotic Left (Left of the Basque Country – *Euskadiko Ezkerra* – EE), at that time the political wing of ETA-pm, supported the document, as did PNV, UCD (Union of the Democratic Center – *Unión de Centro Democrático*, the party in office in Spain at the time), PSE (Basque Socialist Party – *Partido Socialista de Euskadi*) and PCE (Communist Party of Spain – *Partido Comunista de España*).

¹⁹ Speech by Emilio Guevara, representative of PNV during the debate on the general political situation in the Basque Parliament, 22-9-1981.

²⁰ Speech by Juan María Ollora, representative of PNV during the debate on the general political situation in the Basque Parliament, 29-9-1989.

²¹ "To the degree that PNV might consider it necessary, following a long and verified experience of nonfulfillment of the Statute by the government of the state, we could – gathering the sufficient consensus – opt, or try to opt, for another type of formula of relation", Speech by Juan María Ollora, representative of PNV during the debate on the general political situation in the Basque Parliament, 25-9-1992.

²² Ibid.

²³ Rafael Leonisio, "Parliament on the center-right, Government on the left: Explaining the Basque exceptionalism", *Regional and Federal Studies* 22: 45-60 (2012a).

²⁴ Speech by Juan Porres, representative of EA during the debate on the general political situation in the Basque Parliament, 29-9-1989.

²⁵ Speech by Carlos Garaikoetxea, representative of EA in the Basque Parliament during the investiture of Basque President Ardanza, 29-12-1994.

²⁶ Speech by Carlos Garaikoetxea, representative of EA during the debate on the general political situation in the Basque Parliament, 27-9-1995.

²⁷ Speech by Juan Porres, representative of EA during the debate on the general political situation in the Basque Parliament, 30-9-1988.

²⁸ At the time of writing these lines, PNV has promoted a commission in the Basque Parliament to discuss a possible reform of Basque self-government, and it is still not clear what position this party will adopt on this issue. In any case, it falls outside our field of analysis which only reaches 2011.

²⁹ We decided to only analyze the first speech of each group in the plenary session because we consider that it best represents the position of each party, since responses and counter-responses are more "contaminated" by the context of the debate itself. We therefore consider that the first speech is always closest to the "official" discourse of the party. The parliamentary speeches were obtained on the website of the Basque Parliament (<http://www.parlamento.euskadi.net>).

³⁰ For example, Michael Laver & John Garry, "Estimating policy positions from political texts", *American Journal of Political Science* 44: 619-634, (2000); Michael Laver, Kenneth Benoit & John Garry "Extracting Policy Positions from Political Texts Using Words as Data", *American Political Science Review*, 97, 311–331, (2003); Sara B. Hobolt & Robert Klemmensen, "Responsive government? Public opinion and government policy preferences in Britain and Denmark", *Political Studies* 53: 379-402, (2005); Sven-Oliver Proksch & Jonathan B. Slapin, "Position-taking in European Parliament speeches", *British Journal of Political Science* 40: 587-611, (2009).

³¹ To clarify doubts about a lack of reliability in our hand-coding see the appendix.

³² This is not the place to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the different techniques of content analysis. For a comparison between computer based and hand-coding techniques, see Michael Laver (ed.), *Estimating the policy position of political actors*, (London: Routledge, 2001), or Andrea Volkens, "Strengths and weaknesses of approaches to measuring policy positions of parties", *Electoral Studies* 26: 108-120, (2007).

³³ With the exception of the Basque Patriotic Left for the first three terms of the graph. In the first two it only took part in the investiture ceremony (1987 and 1991), while for the third there are two data (1994 investiture and 1997 general policy session). From 1998 onwards the Basque Patriotic Left normalized its presence in the Basque Parliament, which meant that it took part in the same debates as the rest of the parties.

³⁴ This percentage might be influenced by the fact that the parliamentarians were not from Batasuna but from EHAK, a communist party that the Basque Patriotic Left had called its supporters to vote for as its own candidates had been banned.

³⁵ Which also took shape in a legislative agreement between the minority government of PNV-EA with EH (Euskal Herritarrok, We the Basques), a coalition which succeeded HB.

³⁶ In spite of not being its project, IU supported the Ibarretxe Plan in the final vote in Parliament.

³⁷ We omit IU from this point of analysis, as it is not nationalist and in addition it is a very small party thus has a very reduced capacity of influence. Nor do we analyze the Basque Patriotic Left as there was no appreciable change in its discourse and it had no parliamentary representation in the last parliamentary term.

³⁸ Datos obtenidos de la página web del Equipo Euskobarómetro: <http://www.ehu.es/es/web/euskobarometro/serieak>

³⁹ Ej: Martínez Herrera & Miley 2010 pp. 17-23

⁴⁰ In the surveys of Euskobarómetro the Basques are asked if they are satisfied, partly satisfied or dissatisfied with the Statute of Gernika. The line of the graph only represents the former.

⁴¹ The fact that both the discourse of PNV and that of EA are correlated in such a similar way with support for the Statute is due to the fact that both variables correlate almost perfectly ($R=0.9999$ sig. <0.001 , $N=17$). Thus, to simplify the analysis from here onwards we shall only use the discourse of the PNV in the correlations, in this way gaining one case as there is no information on EA in 2012, as it forms part of the EH Bildu coalition. In all the calculations we have taken the average of the parliamentary term of each discourse and not the concrete detail of each year since we believe that the average is closer to the political position of the parties in each period. This decision affects the correlation between discourses, obviously increasing it.

⁴² The line represents those who express very great or fairly great desires for independence.

⁴³ This means that there is no correlation ($R=0.051$, sig. $=0.847$, $N=17$) between the desires for independence and the discourse of the PNV. Taking the data since 2001 the R rises, although much less than that referring to satisfaction with the Autonomy Statute, and besides it is not significant, due to the limited number of cases ($R=0.273$, sig. $=0.391$, $N=12$).

⁴⁴ Due to the fact that in two elections (2001 and 2005) PNV and EA stood as a coalition, for those years we have not taken into account recollection of voting but voting intention, since Euskobarómetro asked questions about the two parties separately.

⁴⁵ Those who consider themselves "only Basques" are logically the most nationalist sector of Basque society. On the other hand, since EA has defended independence since its emergence, it attracted sectors with a more pro-sovereignty sentiment who were opposed to the ambiguity of PNV in this aspect.