

Ethnic Media, Repression, and the Mobilization of Ethnic Identity

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Abstract

Can media fuel support for ethnic parties? The nature and reach of modern mass media enable them to influence the political salience of cultural traits, a pre-requisite of ethnic politics; yet their effects on the political behavior of minorities appear mixed. I argue that non-political ethnic media can help coalesce grievances against the state along identity boundaries, favoring ethnic mobilization. I study the case of the Basque Country in the late phase of the Franco regime, where an independent radio station operated by pro-nationalist local clergy promoted the revival of regional language. Using a variety of contemporary and archival data, I show that exposure to ethnic radio increased support for new independentist parties, and that the effect is driven by linguistically hispanified municipalities with low historical support for Basque nationalism. I also show that radio increased bilingualism in subsequent generations, and contributed to the progressive ethnification of radical opposition.

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1 Introduction

Ethnic identity is an important driver of political behavior, but how it becomes decisive is in many respects unclear.¹ Ethnic cleavages often emerge when group demography makes an identity pivotal for electoral success and distribution (Chandra 2004; Posner 2005; Huber 2017), or when a shared cultural membership can be used to coordinate losers from state policy (Mor 2022). Whether their origin is driven by civil society or elites, such cleavages are thus contingent to particular geographic and historical junctures. Yet, identities are harder attributes to switch than hats, and their political organization requires an appropriate technology.

Several pieces of evidence point to the means of information as a potentially powerful catalyst of identity politicization. Since the changes brought by the printing press on ethnic and national landscapes (Anderson 2006 [1983]; Pengl et al. 2021), modern mass media have often been instrumental to promote or defuse particular cultural identities. In Rwanda, public media reduced inter-ethnic prejudice (Blouin and Mukand 2019), while in Zambia radio stations helped create current linguistic groups (Posner 2003), and in the United States they favored immigrants assimilation (Russo 2020). The degree to which media effects translate into political behavior has been more discussed. Research shows that outlets producing content for minorities have mixed effects on their political participation, often depending on their content: political information can mobilize, while entertainment potentially demobilizes (Oberholzer-Gee and Waldfogel 2009; Velez and Newman 2019; Zonszein 2020).

In this paper, I study the effects of ethnic media, media with an ethnic content, on minor-

¹I refer to "ethnic identity" in the terms of Chandra (2006), as a membership linked to descent-based attributes.

ity mobilization within a nation-state. My key argument is that ethnic media, even if they do not provide political content, can affect political behavior by favoring the coalescence of political claims against the state along identity lines. State policies that generate grievances among some demographic group may lead to an ethnic cleavage (Mor 2022), but sustaining a cleavage requires increasing the salience of ethnic boundaries, meaning the set of markers and practices that delimit membership to the in-group (Barth 1969). The diffusion of ethnic cultural traits such as language makes group membership more salient, and political entrepreneurs can then successfully use group identity for mobilization.

To test this argument, I study the case of the Spanish Basque Country², a notable example of peripheral nationalism.³ After the Spanish civil war (1936-1939), the regime led by Francisco Franco (1939-1975) repressed regional minorities, outlawing non-Spanish identity (Balcells and Villamil 2020). In the 1960s, during a partial liberalization of the radio market, the regime allowed the creation of local radio stations controlled by the Catholic Church. Under the institutional protection of the Church, journalists and local clergy running *Radio Popular de Loyola* (RPL, Popular Radio of Loyola) began producing daily broadcasts in the Basque historical language, euskera, with the goal of promoting its revival (Agirreazkuenaga 2012). I study the political consequences of exposure to RPL, an ethnic media outlet, on the support for Basque ethno-nationalist parties after the democratic transition. To this purpose, I compiled a dataset which combines municipal data on voting behavior, language use, party infrastructures, and war violence over more than 90 years of Basque history, with detailed information on RPL programs hand-collected from archival sources.

²By Basque Country I refer to the current Basque Autonomous Community, comprised by the provinces of Biscay, Gipuzkoa and Alava.

³I use interchangeably the concepts of "ethnic" and "national", as Basque nationalism can be thought of having the ethnic component of a territorial motherland (Chandra 2006).

I first characterize, using archival material, the typical content RPL listeners were exposed to. I document that RPL targeted both bilingual and Spanish-speaking Basques, and that its goals were to favor the daily practice of euskera among those who spoke it *and* to enlarge its boundaries by teaching it to hispanified listeners. Moreover, even in programs realized in Spanish, RPL transmitted folklore songs in euskera and explanations of the distinct ethnic origin of surnames. By contrast, the radio could not cover national politics, which was monopolized by state-owned channels, and thus could not provide political or anti-government information. I then study the political effects of RPL broadcasting. I use information on the location and technical characteristics of the transmitter, and an engineering software, to compute the predicted reception of RPL signal across municipalities, exploiting the highly irregular Basque topography to isolate exogenous variation in signal strength due to terrain shape and unrelated to local political inclination. I find that villages with better reception of RPL transmissions gave consistently higher support to Basque independentist parties after the Spanish democratic transition, and lower support to conservative centralist parties. When studying effect heterogeneity, I find that the results are driven by the behavior of municipalities with low historical strength of Basque nationalism and a lower share of euskera speakers in the late Franco years. Moreover, support for the traditional, more moderate, nationalist party did not increase, and if anything could have decreased: the new ethnic constituencies supported instead radical Basque parties born after the dictatorship and tied to the terrorist group *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA). I find consistent results using vote shares and turnout in referendums where radical parties called for rejection or abstention.

Additional analyses at the municipal and individual level help probe the mechanisms. First, using language use data I show that radio increased euskera adoption over time,

consistent with the salience of ethnicity being a driver of the results. Second, data from six rounds of regionally representative surveys reveal a progressively stronger correlation, among younger generations, of left-wing ideology and Basque nationalism. Together with the voting outcomes, these results suggest that for individuals born and socialized during and after the dictatorship, ethnic nationalism not only increased, but became bundled with other dimensions of ideological opposition to the regime. New ethnic constituencies were thus more likely to support parties with independentist and socialist agendas, a process to which ethnic media likely contributed.

The first contribution of this paper is to provide direct evidence on the role of media in ethnic politics; the second is to propose an argument for how non-political media can interact with social grievances to promote the politicization of identities.

2 Theoretical framework

The existence of cultural diversity does not directly imply its political organization. The degree of politicization of a cultural category over space and time co-varies with the category's relative salience: a category is more salient for a person when she identifies with it more than with others she could legitimately belong to. The salience of ethnic identities may depend on the manipulation by politicians for instrumental reasons like, famously, among the Chewa and Tumbuka in Malawi and Zambia (Posner 2004); although it is also influenced by macro-historical processes such as colonialism (Ali et al. 2019).

A purely instrumentalist approach may lead to focus solely on processes of identity manipulation conducted by electorally motivated politicians. My argument is that formally

non-political and non-partisan media outlets which diffuse ethnic culture can have political effects, and may do so depending on the context in which they operate. Even if they do not provide coverage of politics, mass media expose their consumers to a given language, a selection of topics and arguments, and potential role models. By virtue of these features, they influence the formation of social preferences (La Ferrara et al. 2012). Media which produce "ethnic" informational content, can thus increase the salience of attributes and practices that determine inclusion in the group, what the sociological literature refers to as the group boundaries (Barth 1969; Wimmer 2013). Moreover, one may expect ethnic media to have different effects among different subgroups: preserve ethnic identification among those where it is already strong, and strengthen it among those where it is weaker.

2.1 Identity salience and ethnic voting

Despite their effect on identity formation, non-political media *per se* may not necessarily affect voting behavior. This is because a cultural category may not be politically relevant absent a social cleavage around it.

In this paper I focus on cleavages generated by a repressive authoritarian state. State repression affects democratic competition by reshaping political affiliations in opposition to the original perpetrator (Rozenas et al. 2017; Dehdari and Gehring 2022; Martinez 2022). If people of similar ethnic background share the same grievances against a repressing state, they may express them coordinating around their shared identity (Horowitz 2000; Giuliano 2011), leading to the ethnification of political claims originally not based on identity (Huber and Suryanarayanan 2016).

If the state allows conditions for ethnic divisions to arise, non-political ethnic media

can have political consequences, as a common cultural identity becomes a fertile ground for actors willing to organize collective action.

3 The politics of Basque identity

At the end of the Spanish Second Republic in 1936, the political system of the Basque Country was tripartite. The Left and Right blocs represented conflicting interests over land redistribution and religion, and the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) advocated for regional autonomy and cultural rights of the ethnic Basques, while being conservative on social and religious issues (De La Granja Sainz 2009). The increasing polarization, and the intransigence of the Right about centralism, led the Basque nationalists to take the side of the Republic after the coup led by general Francisco Franco, and the civil war than ensued (Watson 2007). After Franco's victory in 1939 and the onset of his authoritarian regime, the Basque provinces entered a state of violence. In the post-war phase, the regime repressed regions of linguistic minorities in order to impose a unique Spanish identity: the measures language bans, book fires, mandated translation of names, and purges of priests and school teachers (Clark 1979; Balcells and Villamil 2020).

Overall, the regime's effort to dilute ethnic identities was a failure: display of cultural traits entrenched in the private sphere but did not disappear. Ethnographic accounts show that family and church remained safe spaces for "being Basque" (Pérez-Agote 2006), and survey data don't reveal meaningful differences in the language spoken in the parental household between cohorts born before and after the dictatorship (Appendix G).

In the long run, it became clear that even Franco's goal of erasing *political* identities had

been missed. The generations with living experiences of the war and of post-war repression refrained from politics (Pérez-Agote 2006), but their sons and grandsons did not. Young people born under the dictatorship grew increasingly dissatisfied with state policies, and opposed to Franco's regime both ideologically (becoming more left-wing) and in national terms, a process that sociologists refer to as the radicalization of Basque nationalism (Pérez-Agote 2006). The emergence of the terrorist organization ETA, initially founded by students, is perhaps the main symbol of this tendency: many segments of the civil society supported the organization's use of violence and its agenda of territorial secession and economic socialism. Far from being a prerogative of sons of nationalists, many Basques with non-ethnic political backgrounds, outside of the traditional PNV constituency, became close to radical nationalism (De La Calle 2015).

Two broad trends contributed to this historic political realignment. First, the state of indiscriminate repression during the dictatorship: early activities by ETA and other groups caused the police to raid whole neighborhoods or settlements (De La Calle 2015), perpetrating brutalities and ultimately contributing to the loss of legitimacy of the central state (Pérez-Agote 2006). Second, the revival of Basque culture and language promoted by social elites, most notably local clergy, through social networks and church-owned media.

3.1 The role of language

The core of cultural agitation during Franco's rule was the diffusion of euskera, a language that was ultimately minoritarian in the region: in 1972, outside of the three biggest cities, only between 30% and 40% of Basques spoke it in addition to Spanish, while the others

were only Spanish speakers.⁴. To characterize the role of euskera in ethnic and political identities, I analyze survey data from the democratic period (Appendix G). The data show that, at least in the 1990s, language was not perceived as a rigid boundary: a majority of respondents do not think that speaking euskera is necessary for considering oneself Basque, while "willingness to be Basque" has the highest agreement. However, a striking majority of respondents indicates language as the first main difference between the Basque Country and the rest of Spain, and, at the individual level, bilingualism is positively correlated with the relative strength of Basque over Spanish identity ($\rho=0.46$). The descriptive evidence suggests that being only a Spanish speaker is associated with a less salient Basque identity, although it is not an exclusionary ethnic marker. It also suggests that the diffusion of euskera may have plausibly increased the perceived differences between the regional homeland and the Spanish nation.

4 Independent media and the activities of RPL

The radio environment during the authoritarian period was under government control. Only state-owned radio stations were allowed to use transmitters of power above 2 kW (CdIS 1970; Arregui 2011), therefore most private stations operating in Spain at that time only had a provincial reach. Only the state network, *Radio Nacional de España*, could report national news. After the *Ley de Prensa* of 1966, the regime shifted from preventive censorship of media content to a more paternalist approach based on ex-post sanctions (Clark 1979; Cisquella et al. 2002), which lead to a partial liberalization of the media market.

⁴Estimates based on Yrizar (1973)

In this context, the regime granted the catholic Church frequencies for approximately one private radio station per province. This led to the creation of the *Radio Popular* (RP) network, affiliated to the Church's network COPE. Radio stations were typically owned and managed independently by provincial bishoprics. RP stations in the Basque Country were in Bilbao (RPB), San Sebastián (RPS) and in Loyola Jesuit sanctuary (RPL). From the early transmissions in 1961, Jesuits running RPL decided to use to promote Basque culture and traditions (Pérez-Agote 2006; De Pablo et al. 2011; Agirreazkuenaga 2012); in particular, they produced content in euskera. The production in euskera started with religious programs, and was later expanded to other general-interest programs. Over time, the radio station came to produce in both languages. RPL was an exception even among other COPE radio stations in the Basque Country: the main station RPB transmitted only in Spanish until the last few years of the regime, RPS was acquired by the Jesuits and merged with RPL in 1971, after which programs in euskera increased, but before that the use of the Basque language was extremely marginal and just "symbolic" (Agirreazkuenaga 2017). Affiliation with the Church, paired with the period of relatively higher tolerance, granted RPL some institutional protection against state repression. This fragile equilibrium is recounted by a former RPL editor(Arregui 2011). From 1961 to 1964 RPL transmitted in AM from a transmitter located behind a monastery. In 1964 the government took advantage of the mandated transition from AM to FM waves to exclude RPL from the distribution of frequency bands. Thanks to the intervention of the local bishop, the radio re-opened in 1965 with an FM transmitter, in a new location that had to be found in the countryside.

RPL was almost the only radio station where it was possible to regularly listen to programs in euskera, since smaller, sometimes amateur, stations following the same path had

been shut down in the early 1960s (Agirreazkuenaga 2017).⁵ Thanks to the efforts by RPL in promoting ethnic culture, by the first democratic elections many Basques had enjoyed a daily exposure to the traditional language of their region (Agirreazkuenaga 2012, p. 500).

4.1 Language use

RPL broadcast in FM since 1966. It was a professional radio, whose content was prepared by several journalists in addition to Jesuit priests. To characterize qualitatively and quantitatively its content, I present results from the manual coding and analysis of a random sample of original radio transcripts that I accessed at the library of the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa, and complemented with information from secondary sources (Arregui 2011; Agirreazkuenaga 2012; Agirreazkuenaga 2017). The details of the data collection and coding criteria, and additional accounts and descriptive statistics, are reported in Appendix E.

Every morning and afternoon, RPL offered general interest programs with discussions of religion, sport, or information for women. These programs were mostly in Spanish, and a few of them were bilingual. Other programs had an entertainment and cultural content, and were entirely in euskera. These could be discussions of agricultural work and farmers' life, reading of verses and songs by Basque poets (*bertsolari*), or radio dramas where the main characters had recognizable Basque traits. There are few doubts that these programs were realized for an audience already fluent in euskera. Some programs had an explicit

⁵An exception was Radio Euskadi, which transmitted anti-Franco propaganda from Venezuela. For my purposes, it is enough that its reception was not systematically correlated with that of RPL. This assumption is plausible: first, due to its short-wave technology, Radio Euskadi potentially reached the whole Spain, but at the cost of signal instability. Second, because the nature of the programs was political, the frequency was constantly modified to avoid signal disturbance by the government (Arrieta 2015).

educational content: they were intended to help children and students practice the language, for instance they encouraged them to write and read essays in euskera. Given the difficulties a native Spanish speaker would have in learning euskera, a language unrelated to any other European one, it is most likely that the intended audience of these shows were children and teenagers in basque-speaking families who were forced to use Spanish at school and were at risk of abandoning the native tongue. Some shows tried instead to teach basic elements of euskera, like the meaning and correct pronunciation of some words, as shown in figure 1: the intended audience were probably Basque children and adults whose main language was Spanish. Finally, there were shows in which the radio speaker provided information on the origins of ethnic Basque surnames, replying to letters from the listeners. Even in these shows, which were often in Spanish, the replies emphasized the tradition of the Basque Country and its distinct historical origin relative to Spain.

Monolingual euskera programs tended to be allocated to evening time slots (figure 2, right panel): this supports the conjecture that they were conceived as consumption goods for the family, including children and teenagers that were home from school. Music had a large weight in RPL production, and the station's repertoire was highly heterogeneous. A large share of the musical production consisted in Basque folklore songs, and their share was generally similar or superior to that of Spanish songs (Appendix E). RPL also introduced advertisements in euskera, another novelty at the time (Agirreazkuenaga 2017).

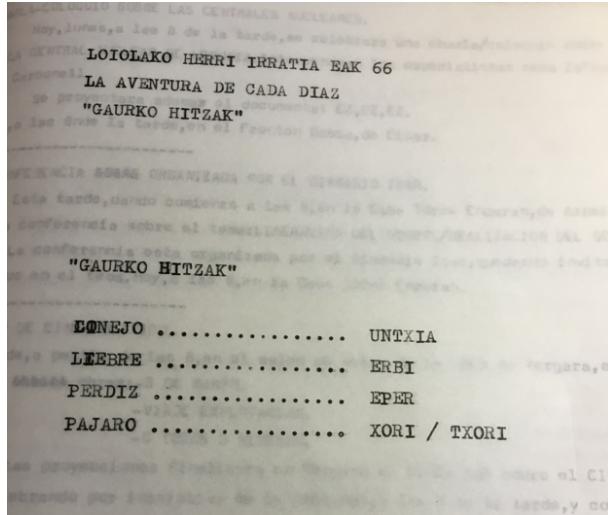
National news could only be given by state-owned channels, so the information content produced was only local. Local news were mostly announcements of forthcoming social events in Basque villages, that the radio received from listeners and collaborators: activities in local schools, sports, cultural or religious meetings. It also gave weekly bulletins of local food

markets and prices (see Appendix E). News announcements could be in Spanish, euskera, or bilingual (in which case the same piece of news was reported in both languages): the proportion of local news read in euskera varied substantially across days in the same month, but on average it was increasing over the years (figure 2, left panel).

4.2 Who listens

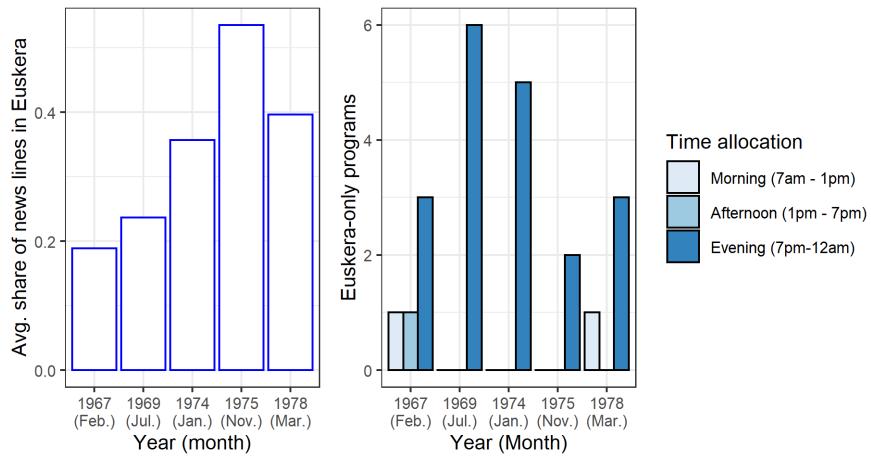
It is clear that the goal of RPL was to promote the diffusion of ethnic culture, for listeners with a strong ethnic identity, and others with plausibly more ambivalent attitudes, at least in terms of linguistic assimilation. What were the incentives for this latter sub-population to turn on the radio and listen to RPL, despite part of the content be of difficult comprehension for them? Certainly the presence of entertainment programs covering, among others, sport and local affairs in both languages was probably appealing in a period where radio had an important social role. Another possibility is that the radio attracted many listeners who were primarily interested in the religious content. In Basque society, the correlation between religiosity and nationalist ideology had been historically tenuous at most: survey data in Appendix G show that generations born before the dictatorship, which plausibly raised their family during the early RPL activity, had generally very strong Catholic feelings irrespective of their nationalist ideology, a pattern that changes visibly only for people born in the transition. Religion could thus have allowed to attract audiences of all backgrounds.

Figure 1: Basque educational content in RPL



Note: Example of elements of Basque teaching. Feature called "Words of the day", within the predominantly Spanish-language show "Everyday's adventure". Names of animals with the corresponding euskera translation. *Source:* photo by the author, courtesy of Koldo Mitxelena Library

Figure 2: Language use in RPL



Note: The left panel shows the average share of news lines in euskera over the total of lines in local news read every day for five randomly chosen months. The right panel shows the number and distribution of shows in euskera over the daily schedule, in the same months. See Appendix E for details on sampling and coding procedure.

5 Data and Design

To study the effects of RPL on political outcomes I compiled municipal-level data from public and archival sources. Variables are aggregated at the town boundaries of the 1970s (details on aggregations in Appendix A).

5.1 Operationalizing and interpreting radio exposure

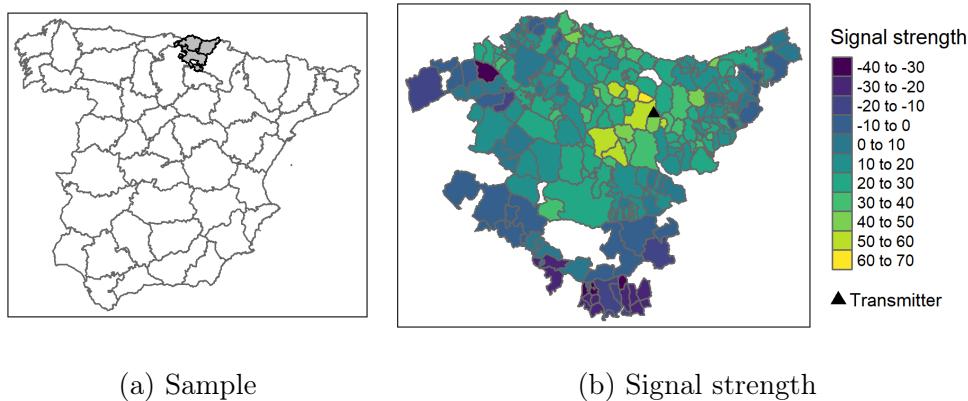
The theoretical object of interest is the effect of listening to RPL during the Franco era on individual behavior in the short and long-run. I cannot observe individual media consumption, thus I rely on municipal-level information. Following a literature on the effects of media initiated by Olken (2009), I estimate media consumption with its supply. Specifically, I compute the received signal strength of RPL at the centroid of each municipality. Differently from studies that can identify compliers (Peisakhin and Rozenas 2018), I am unable to model actual reception as a (possibly non-linear) function of signal strength, so I rely on a linear approximation. This also means that an exogenous signal strength is an encouragement to treatment: a causal effect scaled by the share of compliers.

I compute predicted signal strength using the Irregular Terrain Model (Longley and Rice 1968). The formula for signal strength uses technical parameters of the originating transmitter, such as power and frequency, the distance between the the transmitter and the receiving antenna, and any topographic obstacles that the waves encounter, derived from a terrain map. I collected information on the original transmitter used by RPL in the 1960s and 1970s from Arregui (2011): which reports indications of how to reach the transmitter, on mount Itxumendi. I geo-referenced and validated the transmitter location using Google

Earth, Google Maps, a website that geo-locates mountains (Peakvisor.com), and an online directory of radio antennas (fmplist.org). Following the literature, I use the ITM algorithm to also compute the predicted signal strength in free space, that is the strength of the signal that would be received at a given point in absence of any terrain obstacle. The signal in free space captures the deterministic component of reception, which is due to non-random factors such as the technical parameters and the relative location of the transmitter: conditioning on it, and on other geographic characteristics, isolates a stochastic component that is due to differences in the shape of terrain, plausibly unrelated to political inclinations (Durante et al. 2019; Crabtree and Kern 2018). The predicted signal strength in $\text{dB}\mu\text{V}$ is standardized to the support $[0, 1]$ by the formula $S_i = \frac{s_i - \min_i(s_i)}{\max_i(s_i) - \min_i(s_i)}$ for interpretability. To validate the measure in absence of listenership data, I use archival data on voluntary contributors and local collaborators of RPL in 1978; both measures are positively correlated with signal strength (Appendix A).

Figure 3(b) shows predicted signal strength in the Basque Country and Navarre.

Figure 3: Sample and estimated radio reception



To better qualify theoretically this estimand, note that the status of RPL as a unique ethnic media outlet vanished after the democratic transition, as Basque public radio and

television chose to be bilingual, and thus appeals to ethnicity became pervasive in the media environment. The long-run effects of RPL on political outcomes should thus be interpreted as the effect of a continued historical treatment of 10-15 years during the dictatorship on democratic political behavior.

5.2 Outcomes

To measure support for ethnic-nationalist and other parties, I use vote shares in the elections for the Spanish parliament in the years 1979 to 2019.⁶ Specifically, I use vote shares for the two Basque nationalist blocs, the PNV and the radical nationalists, as well as the Spanish conservatives (PP) and socialists (PSOE), which embody, respectively, opposition to regional separatism, and the more traditional left-right cleavage. Not all parties are present in each election, most notably the radical nationalists were banned between 2002 and 2008 due to their ties with ETA. Appendix H reports the party coding and the years used. I use also data on vote shares and turnout in constitutional and autonomy referendums during the transition. All data are available from the governments of the Basque Autonomous Community and the Chartered Community of Navarre. Since turnout was also a mobilization strategy, vote shares are computed over the eligible voters. Although in general support for radical nationalism is a good proxy of support for ETA (De La Calle 2015), I also digitized data on the place of birth of affiliated prisoners in 1974 from an ETA activist (Forest 1974).⁷

⁶One may argue that in Spanish autonomous communities regional elections are more salient for policy. However, in the political surveys used in this paper, ~ 91% of respondents who reported the two votes voted for the same party in regional and national elections.

⁷Appendix A discusses the use of data from politically non-neutral sources.

5.3 Additional variables

Population data come from the digitized Spanish Censuses, available from the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística*, while municipal-level geographic variables are provided by the *Centro Nacional de Información Geográfica*. To measure pre-Franco politics, I collected online and archival electoral outcomes for the Spanish Second Republic (1931-1936) and digitized data on nationalist organization branches from Solano (1993). I use individual-level data on victims of Francoist repression during the civil war compiled by the non-profit organization *Euskal Memoria*, using the town of birth of the victims to match them to municipal boundaries. Linguistic composition of Basque municipalities has not been measured in Censuses until the 1980s, therefore I use a newly digitized linguistic survey by Yrizar (1973), who collected the number of euskera speakers from parish priests. For the post-Franco period, I obtained from the Basque statistical institute municipal-level data on language composition from 1981 to 2016. Summary statistics for all the variables are in Appendix A.

5.4 Design

I estimate models of the form

$$y_{ip} = \alpha_p + \beta Radio_{ip} + X'_{ip}\theta + \epsilon_{ip} \quad (1)$$

where $Radio_{ip}$ is the predicted signal strength in municipality i and province p , X_{ip} is a vector containing signal strength in free space and demographic and geographic controls, while α_p is a province fixed effect. The standard error ϵ is assumed to be spatially correlated

within a bandwidth of 30 km (Conley 1999).⁸

I also estimate interactive models including Z_{ip} , a moderator.

$$y_{ip} = \alpha_p^m + \beta^m Radio_{ip} + \gamma^m Z_{ip} + \delta^m (Radio_{ip} * Z_{ip}) + X'_{ip} \theta^m + \epsilon_{ip}^m \quad (2)$$

To check the main identifying assumption, I run balance tests where I regress pre-treatment variables that could be correlated with political preferences on signal strength and covariates.

$$x_{ip} = \alpha_p^b + \beta^b Radio_{ip} + M'_{ip} \theta^b + \epsilon_{ip}^b \quad (3)$$

Conditioning on signal in free space, covariates, and province fixed effects, RPL reception is not significantly correlated with civil war victims, vote shares for the Left and Right blocs (De La Calle 2015), distance from provincial capitals, and the share of Basque speakers (table 1); it is also not correlated to several measures of PNV mobilization capacity, such as party branches, Basque centers (*batzoki*), youth or alpinist clubs. The correlation with pre-war vote share of PNV is positive and significant, which raises the concern that RPL's transmitter was placed in an area more favorable to nationalism. For this reason, in the main analysis I always include the PNV 1933 vote share among the covariates.⁹ After this adjustment, the only variable which remains unbalanced is the presence of a Patriotic Women club, although the correlation is negative. Appendix C reports the main results controlling also for the share of euskera speakers.

⁸In Appendix C I show that results hold using wild cluster bootstrapped standard errors at the district (*comarca*) level.

⁹The other elections held in the 1930s are more difficult to use (Appendix H).

Table 1: Balance tests

Dep. Var.	Without PNV			Including PNV			
	Coef.	SE	p	Coef.	SE	p	N
Civ. victims [0/1]	-0.205	(0.167)	0.22	-0.216	(0.174)	0.218	234
Civ. victims p.c.	-0.455	(0.464)	0.328	-0.485	(0.477)	0.31	234
Executions p.c.	0.68	(0.611)	0.267	0.794	(0.638)	0.215	234
% PNV 1933	0.652	(0.236)	0.006	-	-	-	234
% Left 1933	-0.335	(0.627)	0.594	-0.006	(0.749)	0.994	234
% Right 1933	-0.405	(0.654)	0.536	0.062	(0.55)	0.911	234
% Yes 1933	0.359	(0.219)	0.102	0.077	(0.317)	0.809	233
Basque speakers 1972	0.643	(0.474)	0.176	0.515	(0.399)	0.198	231
Log(Dist. capital)	-1.335	(0.918)	0.147	-1.188	(0.87)	0.173	234
PNV local branch 1933 [0/1]	0.3	(0.222)	0.178	0.245	(0.215)	0.258	234
Batzoki 1933 [0/1]	0.024	(0.107)	0.82	-0.044	(0.131)	0.737	234
Basque Youth 1933 [0/1]	0.027	(0.223)	0.904	0.03	(0.214)	0.887	234
Alpinism group 1933 [0/1]	0.148	(0.277)	0.594	0.152	(0.288)	0.597	234
Patriotic Women 1936 [0/1]	-0.187	(0.087)	0.034	-0.232	(0.075)	0.002	234

Note: Regressions of pre-treatment variable on RPL signal strength and controls. In the left panel regressions include signal in free space, log of municipal area and height, log of 1970 population, and province fixed effects. In the right panel, PNV 1933 vote share is included among the covariates. Continuous outcome variables are standardized. 95% Confidence intervals with Conley standard errors (30km) displayed.

6 Radio and ethnic mobilization

I first estimate the average effects of exposure to ethnic media on voting behavior, with model 1. Results are reported in table 2. Column 1 implies that increasing the quality of the signal from 0 (no reception) to 1 (perfect reception) increases the average post-Franco vote share for radical nationalist parties by about 11 percentage points, or about 1.27 standard deviations. This is a very large effect, but as noted by Peisakhin and Rozenas (2018), it refers to an extreme counterfactual. In terms of standard deviations, one standard deviation increase in signal strength increases support for radical nationalist parties by about 1.6 percentage points. Similarly, estimates in column 3 imply that exposure to RPL depressed the vote share of PP by about 7 p.p. (1 p.p. for a standard deviation increase). The estimated

effect on support for the nationalist but moderate PNV is negative but not statistically significant at conventional levels (column 2). The effect on votes for the Spanish left is both close to 0 and non-significant (column 4). Overall, RPL exposure is associated to an increase in support for radical ethnic parties and a decrease in support for centralist parties, while there appears to be no association to non-ethnic left-wing parties.

Table 2: RPL exposure and voting behavior in national elections 1977-2019

	Rad. Nat. (Avg) (1)	PNV (Avg) (2)	PP (Avg) (3)	PSOE (Avg) (4)
Signal strength	0.1116*** (0.0333)	-0.0896 (0.0576)	-0.0705*** (0.0265)	-0.0067 (0.0184)
Observations	228	228	228	228
R ²	0.56471	0.63745	0.71887	0.66904
Within R ²	0.33592	0.42855	0.33506	0.65097
Covariates	✓	✓	✓	✓
Province FE	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: Covariates include signal in free space, log of municipal area and height, log of 1970 population, and PNV 1933 vote share. Conley standard errors in parentheses (30km).

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

To put the results in the context of the existing research, these average effects are similar in magnitude to those that the literature attributes to strongly biased media (Peisakhin and Rozenas 2018; Grossman et al. [forthcoming](#); Li and Martin 2022). Differently from other studies, however, this treatment represents an exposure during a time in which elections were not held and in absence of a party system. Thus, it captures how much an ethnic media outlet made individuals more responsive to the appeals of certain parties during democracy. In Appendix C I show that results are not sensitive to the exclusion of particular municipalities or to the exclusion of the more extreme observations at the top and bottom of the distribution of signal strength. Moreover, they are robust to replacing signal in free

space with logarithms of municipality coordinates.

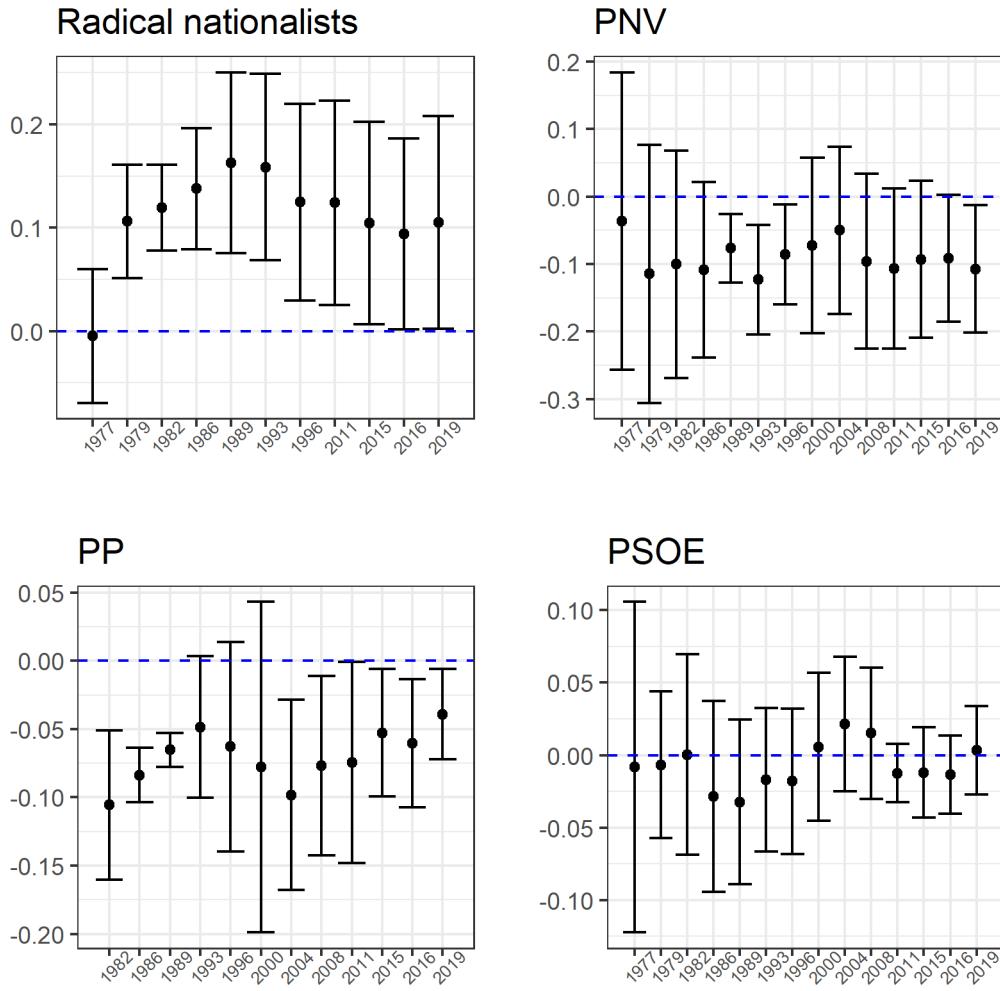
Figure 4 reports the results for each election individually. Results are consistent across years and not driven by few outlier elections. The only election where ethnic voting seems uncorrelated to radio reception is the first democratic election of 1977. It is possible that the null estimated effect for this year is related to the high initial fragmentation of the radical nationalist bloc, which had not run united. The lack of a unitary actor able to mobilize effectively at the dawn of the new party system may explain this difference. In partial support of this hypothesis, in 1977 all the radical lists combined gained on average 8% of the votes at the municipal level, while in the following election in 1979, the unitary list Herri Batasuna gained an average vote share of 11.7%. Figure 4 also shows that the association between RPL and electoral results of radical nationalists and the PP becomes progressively closer to zero over time after about 30 years from the start of broadcasting.

6.1 Additional mobilization measures

In this section I study the effect of exposure to RPL on other measures of ethnic mobilization beyond party support. Basque nationalists used vote and turnout indications to coordinate the electorate and send signals to the central state. One instance where such strategies could be naturally applied were the referendums held in the first years after the transition.

In the constitutional referendum of 1978 the PNV called for abstention (El País 1978a), while the radical nationalist parties called for a rejection vote (El País 1978b); I use the turnout rate and the vote share for No (as all the others, it is computed over eligible voters). Instead, in a referendum over regional autonomy the year after, the PNV called for approval,

Figure 4: RPL exposure and voting behavior in every national election



Note: Coefficients of predicted signal strength of RPL in regressions where the outcomes are vote shares in each single election. All models include include signal in free space, log of municipal area and height, log of 1970 population, PNV 1933 vote share, and province fixed effects. 95% Confidence intervals with Conley standard errors (30km) displayed.

while the radical nationalists promoted abstention (El País 1979); here I use turnout and the vote share for Yes. I also run models with a measure of much more extreme behavior: joining the terrorist separatist group ETA. This variable is the log number of ETA prisoners captured by the Spanish authorities in 1974 and born in a given municipality. Results in table 3 show that RPL exposure is associated with lower turnout in the constitutional referendum and not significantly with the No share (columns 1 and 2). This is partially at odds with the party vote results, as it implies that exposure to RPL benefited mobilization for the PNV stances. However, the same variable is negatively and significantly correlated with both turnout and the Yes share in the autonomy referendum (columns 3 and 4), consistent with the boost in support for radical nationalists starting from 1979. In this referendum, going from no reception to perfect reception (increasing signal strength by one standard deviation) decreased turnout by 22 p.p. (3.2 p.p.). I don't find significant effects of radio on ETA prisoners. This may be due to self-selected nature of the sample, but also to the fact that joining a terrorist group is a far more extreme outcome than voting, and other social and individual-level characteristics are probably more decisive.

6.2 Heterogeneity

While on average prolonged exposure to RPL appears to have increased the propensity to mobilize behind radical ethnic parties, the effects may not be homogeneous across the sample. If ethnic media affect political behavior through the salience of identity, it is plausible that they will operate along the margin where ethnic boundaries are more porous to begin with, whereas in communities where ethnic identification is generally strong, support for ethnic parties can be expected to be high even without media. The history of Basque

Table 3: RPL exposure and non-party outcomes: post-Franco referenda and ETA membership

	Turnout '78 (1)	No share '78 (2)	Turnout '79 (3)	Yes share '79 (4)	ETA pris. (5)
Signal strength	-0.1225* (0.0630)	0.0206 (0.0360)	-0.2200** (0.0882)	-0.1990** (0.0945)	0.0717 (0.2272)
Observations	229	229	228	228	234
R ²	0.72743	0.27767	0.16074	0.17382	0.48560
Within R ²	0.47252	0.08155	0.13738	0.15615	0.44501
Covariates	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Province FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: Covariates include signal in free space, log of municipal area and height, log of 1970 population, and PNV 1933 vote share. Conley standard errors in parentheses (30km). *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

politics suggests two observable measures of the relative importance of ethnic identity versus a Spanish one. One is the past support for Basque nationalism, a variable that tends to be persistent over time (De La Calle 2015); the other is the use of euskera, which is a correlate of ethnic nationalism (Strijbis et al. 2021). Consequently, I estimate model 2 using as moderators the PNV vote share in 1933 and the share of Basque speakers in 1972. Tables 4 and 5 report the results. The effects of exposure to RPL on voting are statistically significant and consistent with the coefficients in table 2 when the moderators are 0 (non-interacted coefficient of *Signal strength*), while increasing the value of the moderators (i.e. the interacted coefficients) lowers them towards 0. This specification relies on the assumption of linear marginal effect in the moderator values, therefore in Appendix C I use the binning estimator proposed by Hainmueller et al. (2019), which relaxes it, finding similar results.

These results jointly suggest that ethnic media influenced electoral behavior primarily among strata of population that were linguistically assimilated and less likely to support

Table 4: Heterogeneous effects of RPL exposure on voting behavior by PNV 1933 vote share

	Rad. (1)	Nat. (Avg) (2)	PNV (Avg) (3)	PP (Avg) (4)	PSOE (Avg)
Signal strength	0.1559* (0.0798)	-0.1145** (0.0535)	-0.1980*** (0.0657)	-0.0679 (0.0489)	
PNV '33	0.1336* (0.0706)	0.0561 (0.0656)	-0.2532*** (0.0328)	-0.1600*** (0.0253)	
Signal strength * PNV '33	-0.1085 (0.1220)	0.0612 (0.0818)	0.3127*** (0.0689)	0.1500* (0.0823)	
Observations	228	228	228	228	
R ²	0.56634	0.63786	0.74067	0.67409	
Within R ²	0.33840	0.42921	0.38664	0.65629	
Covariates	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Province FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Note: Covariates include signal in free space, log of municipal area and height, log of 1970 population, and PNV 1933 vote share (reported). Conley standard errors in parentheses (30km). *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

ethnic parties in the past; instead, in communities with a strong Basque identity radio had no apparent effect. This finding is consistent with the accounts of a new "cultural constituency" of nationalist youth born under the dictatorship (De La Calle 2015; Pérez-Agote 2006). Moreover, the analysis suggests that the uneven effects within the nationalist bloc are driven by the behavior of these new ethnic constituencies, which supported the new radical parties and, if anything, penalized the more moderate PNV.

Table 5: Heterogeneous effects of RPL exposure on voting behavior by share of Basque speakers in 1972

	Rad. (1)	Nat. (Avg) (2)	PNV (Avg) (3)	PP (Avg) (4)	PSOE (Avg)
Signal strength	0.1071* (0.0571)	-0.1962*** (0.0414)	-0.0978** (0.0457)	0.0090 (0.0437)	
Sh. Basque speakers	0.1068 (0.0669)	-0.1367*** (0.0444)	-0.0833* (0.0479)	-0.0865 (0.0557)	
Signal strength * Sh. Basque speakers	-0.0382 (0.0710)	0.2654*** (0.0320)	0.0938* (0.0537)	0.0060 (0.0686)	
Observations	225	225	225	225	
R ²	0.60539	0.65329	0.72689	0.74087	
Within R ²	0.39498	0.45100	0.34319	0.72732	
Covariates	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Province FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Note: Covariates include signal in free space, log of municipal area and height, log of 1970 population, and PNV 1933 vote share. Provincial capitals excluded. Conley standard errors in parentheses (30km). *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

7 Discussion

7.1 Neighboring Basque communities

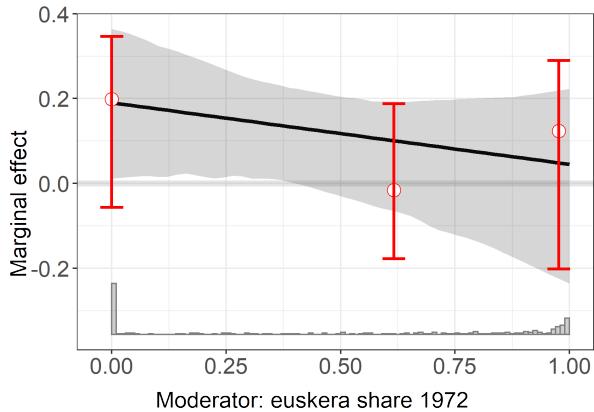
The presence of ethnic Basques outside the borders of the Basque Country allows to further test the effect of RPL exposure. The neighbor province of Navarre is considered part of the historical Basque homeland, and nationalist parties regularly run in elections. This province cannot be included in the main analysis, because of its different history and party system, and because most municipalities were not meaningfully reached by the signal. Under these caveats, I can estimate the effects of RPL exposure on votes for radical nationalist parties in Navarre. The results in Appendix D show a positive and marginally significant effect of RPL on votes only in the 1979 election, but the statistical relationship becomes non-distinguishable from zero in the following elections.

7.2 Language adoption

If radio exposure made Basque identity particularly salient, and this in turn increased ethnic voting, one would expect to observe behavioral patterns correlated with voting, but purely expressive of group identity. In the context of this study, a natural behavioral outcome is the adoption of euskera. After school reforms in the post-Franco era, school curricula are available in Spanish, euskera, or both, but the choice of teaching language is made by the family: therefore the proportion of individuals fluent in Basque is a measure of community preferences over identity. Using contemporary data on language composition of municipalities, I compute the absolute difference between the share of Basque speakers in 2016, the most recent year for which official data are available, and the share in 1972 used in the paper. I then use this measure as an outcome, and the share of euskera speakers in 1972 as moderating variable. In this way I estimate the marginal effect of RPL exposure at different levels of the baseline share. This is important because the baseline share in 1972 constrains mechanically the growth over time: in municipalities where no-one (everyone) is a speaker, the share can only increase (decrease) in time (Appendix F).

Figure 5 shows that the marginal effect of RPL exposure on Basque language adoption is positive, although not strongly significant, for the sub-group of municipalities with lower number of initial speakers. This provides at least suggestive evidence in favor the mechanism of stronger Basque identity that lasted across generations.

Figure 5: Marginal effect of RPL exposure on change in euskera use, 1972-2016.



Note: Marginal effect of predicted signal strength of RPL on difference between Basque speaker shares in 2016 and 1972, using the binning estimator in Hainmueller et al. (2019). The model includes signal in free space, log of municipal area and height, log of 1970 population, PNV 1933 vote share, and province fixed effects. 95% Confidence intervals displayed, with standard errors block bootstrapped at the district level.

7.3 Identities and ideologies

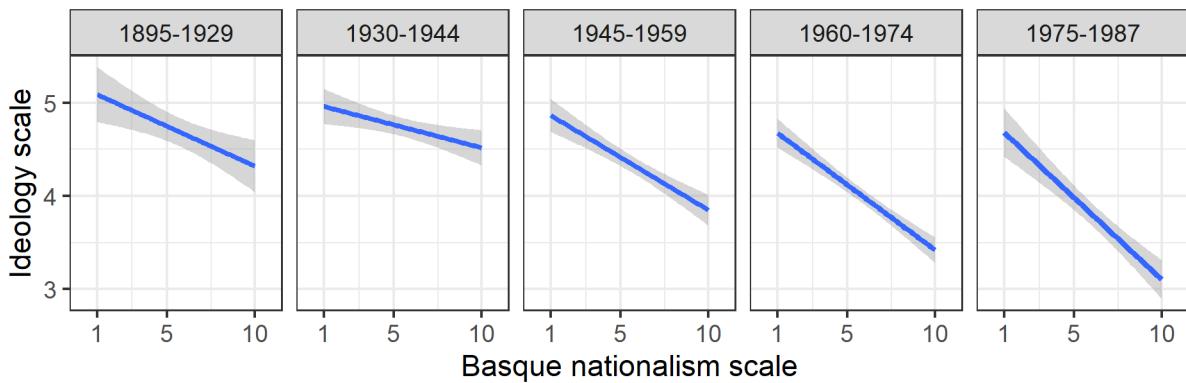
The finding that RPL increased voting for radical ethnic parties and not for others might appear counter-intuitive, especially in light of the religious lining of RPL. How does ethnic identity generate radical politics? To answer this question it is important to consider the circumstances of political conflict that politicize identity in the first place. By the end of the Spanish regime, the conflict between the center and the Basque periphery had strongly radicalized. Indiscriminate repression and police brutality had aggrieved young people and undermined their belief in the very legitimacy of the state. Moreover, the transition happened under difficult economic conditions, and with waves of labor unrest. Ethnic identity may thus have aggregated other cleavages that put "the Basques" against the central government.

This realignment of political attitudes across generations is well described in the socio-logical literature (Pérez-Agote 2006). To characterize it quantitatively, I use six rounds of surveys on culture and politics from the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (1993-2005),

and use the birth year to categorize respondents into cohorts of roughly 15 years size. In all waves respondents are asked to place themselves on a 10-points scale of Basque nationalism and on a 10-points left-to-right scale.

Figure 6 shows the raw correlation between these two self-reported dimensions of political identity for each cohort. For individuals born under and after the dictatorship, Basque nationalism is progressively more strongly associated with being on the ideological far left.

Figure 6: Nationalist identification and left-right identification, raw correlation by cohort



Note: On the x-axis, the individual positioning on the Basque nationalism scale [1-10]. On the y-axis, the individual positioning on the Left-Right scale [1-10]. Blue line is a linear fit.

7.4 Direct mechanisms

The relationship between ethnic media and voting tested in this paper revolve around the salience of identity, an essentially indirect effect. Media can however influence vote directly, through political communication, coverage of campaigns, or propaganda. It is difficult to tell how RPL covered politics after media liberalization, but some at least partial information can be retrieved from the transcripts of local news realized in 1978, after the end of Franco's rule. The analysis, described in Appendix E, shows a relatively high frequency of mentions of radical nationalist parties and unions, but also of PNV politicians and of Spanish left parties.

Among the topics, labor and social movements, along with economic themes, receive most of the coverage. It would however be plausible that attention to these highly salient topics was given by all regional media, and not just RPL. Even if the data don't allow to fully rule out this possibility, the hypothesis that RPL slanted its coverage in favor of radical nationalist parties more than other media outlets during democracy is unlikely.

8 Conclusion

Due to their broad reach and the capacity to expose large audiences to the same messages, modern media can influence political and group identities. In this paper, I have proposed that even media with non-political content can shape the politicization of ethnicity. A radio station airing cultural and entertainment content in a minority language can increase the salience of group identity, favoring the coalescence of political conflicts with the state along ethnic lines. This effect appears to be heterogeneous and contingent. First, it is stronger where ethnic identity is initially less salient. Second, the effect manifest when state policies, such as indiscriminate repression, create opportunities to coordinate grievances along group lines: this may cause ethnicity to be bundled with other ideological inclinations shaped by the conflict. If repression makes identity politics radical, ostensibly peaceful ethnic media can lead to more radical politics.

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Ethnic Media, Repression, and the Mobilization of Ethnic Identity

Appendices

A Municipal-level data

A.1 Municipal boundaries

The units of analysis are municipalities in the 1970s, to match the timing of treatment allocation and the level at which political outcomes are measured. I aggregate current municipalities at the level of the boundaries of the time, including geographic variables from CNIG. Signal reception is computed at the centroid of the town polygon. For towns that have been split after 1979 I merge their polygons and use the centroid of the merged geometry. For towns that were separate and have been aggregated after 1979 I use Wikipedia and Google Earth to identify the geographic position of the old towns. For those reconstructed towns I aggregate geographic data by compiling lists of all the settlements (sub-municipalities) that formed the old towns and using a more granular geographic dataset of all Spanish settlements provided by CNIG. Area of settlements is not provided, so area of the dissolved towns has been estimated from population data and assuming equal population density. Similarly, all historical violence and political variables are aggregated at the 1970s boundaries. Between 1977 and 1978 elections a few towns are dissolved into larger towns, disappearing from one election to the other. In these cases the principle I adopt is to preserve all the information

Table A.1: Summary statistics for the Basque Country sample

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Signal strength (stand.)	234	0.598	0.147	0.173	0.526	0.691	1.000
Signal strength in f.s.	234	64.402	5.189	55.754	60.112	67.510	84.243
Log(height)	234	4.991	1.187	1.386	4.290	6.035	6.736
Log(area)	234	7.556	1.004	4.739	6.891	8.272	10.228
Log(pop. 1970)	234	7.481	1.511	4.344	6.411	8.457	12.925
Rad. nat. vote share (Avg)	228	0.164	0.088	0.018	0.099	0.221	0.686
PNV vote share (Avg)	228	0.264	0.098	0.088	0.190	0.330	0.497
PP vote share (Avg)	228	0.072	0.069	0.000	0.026	0.093	0.361
PSOE vote share (Avg)	228	0.087	0.069	0.002	0.025	0.136	0.265
Turnout ref. 1978	229	0.387	0.176	0.064	0.261	0.506	0.826
Turnout ref. 1979	228	0.588	0.103	0.000	0.545	0.650	0.864
No share ref. 1978	229	0.121	0.061	0.000	0.082	0.142	0.470
Yes share ref. 1979	228	0.537	0.100	0.000	0.482	0.603	0.854
Eta prisoners (raw)	234	0.889	2.803	0	0	0	31
Civilian victims (dummy)	234	0.406	0.492	0	0	1	1
Civilian victims p.c.	234	0.001	0.003	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.029
Executions p.c.	234	0.002	0.003	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.018
PNV vote share 1933	234	0.495	0.229	0.000	0.369	0.654	0.969
Left vote share 1933	234	0.158	0.161	0.000	0.048	0.211	0.804
Right vote share 1933	234	0.343	0.206	0.000	0.186	0.472	0.942
Yes share ref. 1933	233	0.754	0.309	0.007	0.641	0.967	1.234
Basque speakers share 1972	231	0.500	0.415	0.000	0.000	0.923	1.000
Log(dist. capital)	234	3.083	0.597	0.000	2.756	3.507	4.097
Δ Basque speakers 1972-2016	225	0.065	0.202	-0.462	-0.100	0.251	0.451
PNV branch 1933	234	0.658	0.475	0	0	1	1
Batzoki 1933	234	0.530	0.500	0	0	1	1
Alpinist group 1933	234	0.278	0.449	0	0	1	1
Patriotic Women 1936	234	0.585	0.494	0	0	1	1

available in the electoral data: therefore I treat the smaller towns as separate towns in the election year before they are dissolved.

A.2 Basque speakers in the Franco period

Data about the municipal distribution of Basque speakers in 1972 come from the linguistic survey conducted by Yrizar ([1973](#)). The author collected data on the number of Basque speakers from priests or local administrators in Basque towns and villages. Respondents received a letter with population figures of their village taken from the 1970 Census and returned an estimate of Basque speakers either as an absolute number or as a share over the population. In several cases respondents also updated the population data from the Census. It is crucial to note that the survey was only conducted in municipalities in *expected* Basque-speaking areas, based on previous historical surveys. Moreover, since the goal of the study was to count speakers of sub-dialects, the answers to the survey focused on local natives only. Because of these design features, both the aggregate figures *and* the municipal-level estimates of Basque speakers could be an under-count, although, since several municipal-level figures are approximated by respondents, the net direction of measurement error is ambiguous.

Where the final population figures provided by survey respondents are identical to the Census ones, I computed the share of Basque speakers in a municipality by dividing the total number by the Census population. When the population figure was higher than the one published in the Census, I used the survey figure, as it is more recent. When the population figure was lower than the Census one, I used the survey figure only in cases where the difference was justified by the author in the notes. Otherwise, I used the Census figure to avoid inflating the shares, because in some municipalities only a few settlements

were surveyed. I code the provincial capitals as missing, because counts of Basque speakers in these large towns are either missing or limited to few areas. Besides the capitals, to all municipalities not included in the survey results I assign the value of 0 Basque speakers, as this is the implicit assumption of the author.

A.3 Discussion of the sources

The measures of repression used in this paper come from micro-level data originally compiled by organizations or individuals connected to independentist parties or organizations and, in some cases, to a terrorist group (ETA). A possible concern is that the political inclination of the sources could led to an over-reporting of the number of victims of repression.

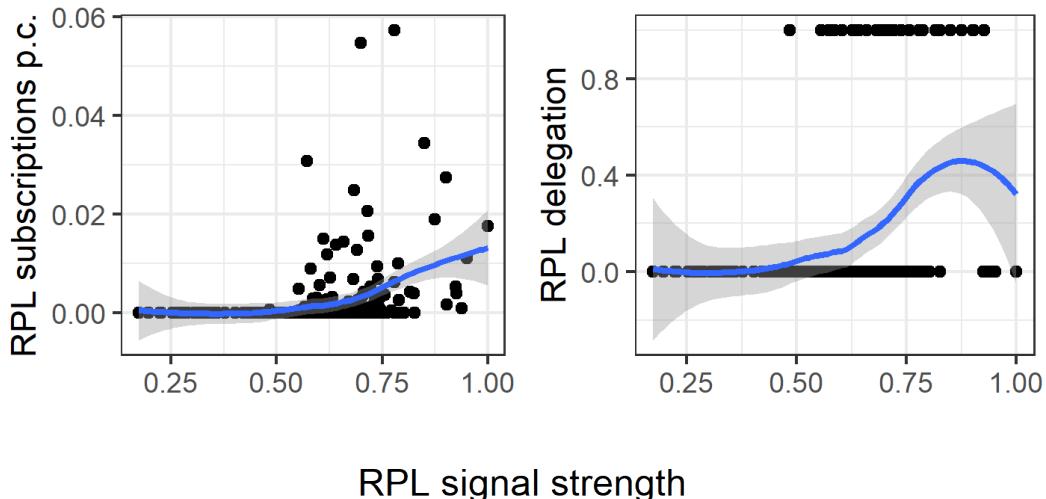
From the organization *Euskal Memoria*, I use data on people killed during the civil war. This list has been compiled using local archives and private documents, and is an effort to document cases of people who were victimized by the Franco side, either in bombings of civilians or in executions. As such, it is unlikely that false positives are a problem. There exists the possibility that the quality of documents varied across villages, which could lead to measurement error in civil war repression, possibly correlated with other variables. I cannot fully rule out this possibility, although I acknowledge this limitation.

The data on ETA members arrested come from a book by an ETA activist, originally published under pseudonym. Beyond the self-selected nature of these data, it is unlikely that the list contained false positives. If anything, given that it is a snapshot at a certain moment in time, it is certainly an underestimate of the total number of people (affiliated to ETA or not) arrested by the Spanish authorities.

B Additional maps and pictures

This section presents additional figures not present in the main text. Figure B.1 depicts the correlation between predicted RPL signal strength and two municipal-level measures of radio penetration, both measured in 1978: paid subscriptions (monetary donations to the radio) over 1970 population, and an indicator for whether a municipality had a local collaborator (delegation). Collaborators were private citizens or local business owners who cooperated with RPL to provide local news and information about the municipality. Both measures are taken from a booklet about RPL activity between 1978 and 1979, consulted at Koldo Mitxelena Library.

Figure B.1: Correlates of RPL reception



Notes: Measures of local RPL penetration in 1978, as a function of predicted signal strength. The left panel plots the per capita paid subscriptions (over 1970 population), the right panel plots a dummy for the presence of a local delegation.

Figures B.2 and B.3 show historical printed ads of RPL programs, from the early 1980s. Figure B.4 shows the geographic distribution of the two moderator variables used in the paper.

Figure B.2: Ad booklet of Radio Popular de Loyola and San Sebastián



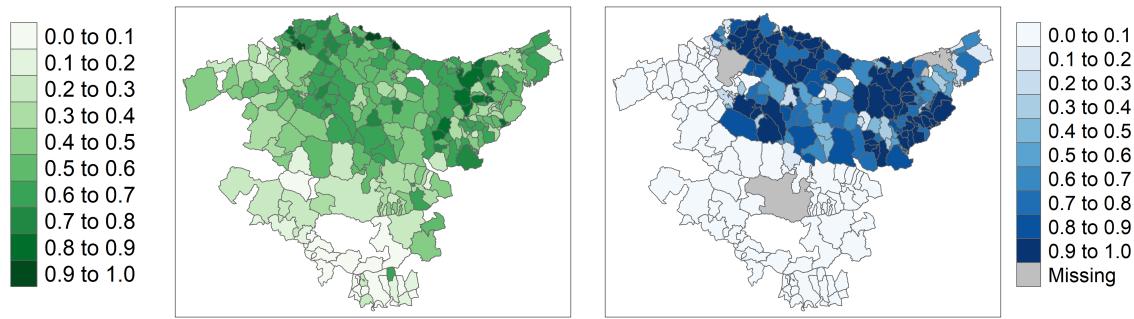
Source: Koldo Mitxelena Library

Figure B.3: Programs in Spanish and Euskera, Radio Popular de San Sebastián, circa 1981



Source: Koldo Mitxelena Library

Figure B.4: Measures of Basque identity



C Robustness

Table C.1: Results on vote averages, controlling for share of Basque speakers

	Rad. Nat. (Avg) (1)	PNV (Avg) (2)	PP (Avg) (3)	PSOE (Avg) (4)
Signal strength	0.0933*** (0.0317)	-0.1000* (0.0530)	-0.0639** (0.0260)	0.0112 (0.0186)
Observations	225	225	225	225
R ²	0.60499	0.63748	0.72296	0.74085
Within R ²	0.39436	0.42598	0.33373	0.72731
Covariates	✓	✓	✓	✓
Province FE	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: Covariates include signal in free space, log of municipal area and height, log of 1970 population, PNV 1933 vote share, and share of Basque speakers in 1972. Provincial capitals excluded. Conley standard errors in parentheses (30km). *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table C.2: Results on vote averages, using town coordinates

	Rad. Nat. (Avg) (1)	PNV (Avg) (2)	PP (Avg) (3)	PSOE (Avg) (4)
Signal strength	0.1088*** (0.0075)	-0.0121 (0.0442)	-0.0549*** (0.0200)	-0.0105 (0.0170)
Observations	228	228	228	228
R ²	0.59439	0.64228	0.76227	0.67833
Within R ²	0.38120	0.43616	0.43772	0.66076
Covariates	✓	✓	✓	✓
Province FE	✓	✓	✓	✓

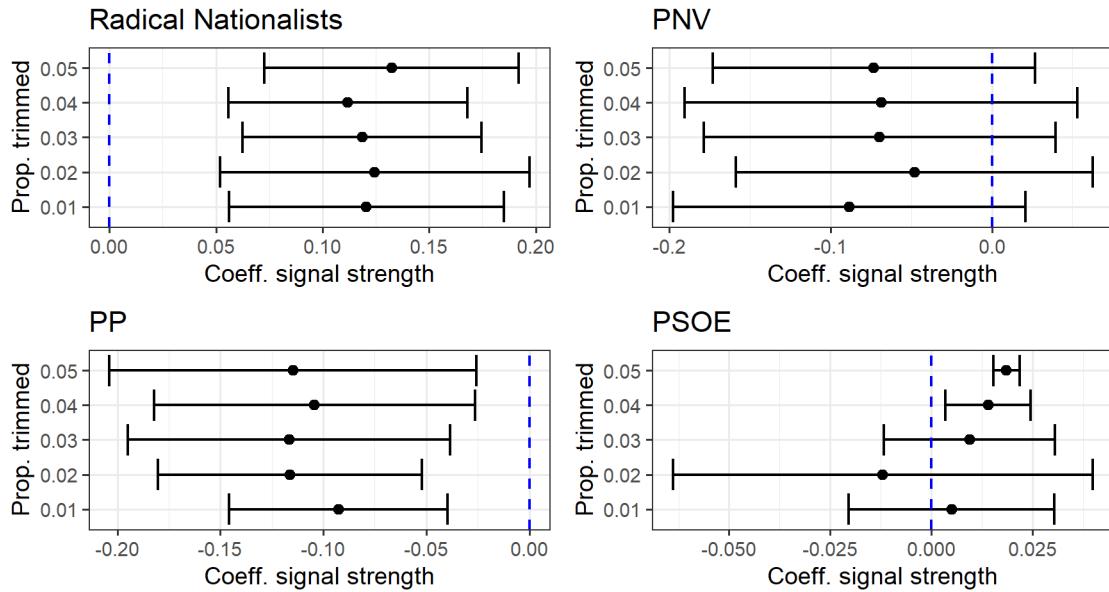
Note: Covariates include log of town latitude and longitude, log of municipal area and height, log of 1970 population, and PNV 1933 vote share. Conley standard errors in parentheses (30km). *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table C.3: Results on vote averages, wild cluster bootstrap

	Coeff.	p-value
Rad. Nat. (Avg)	0.112	0.021
PNV (Avg)	-0.090	0.082
PP (Avg)	-0.070	0.052
PSOE (Avg)	-0.007	0.831

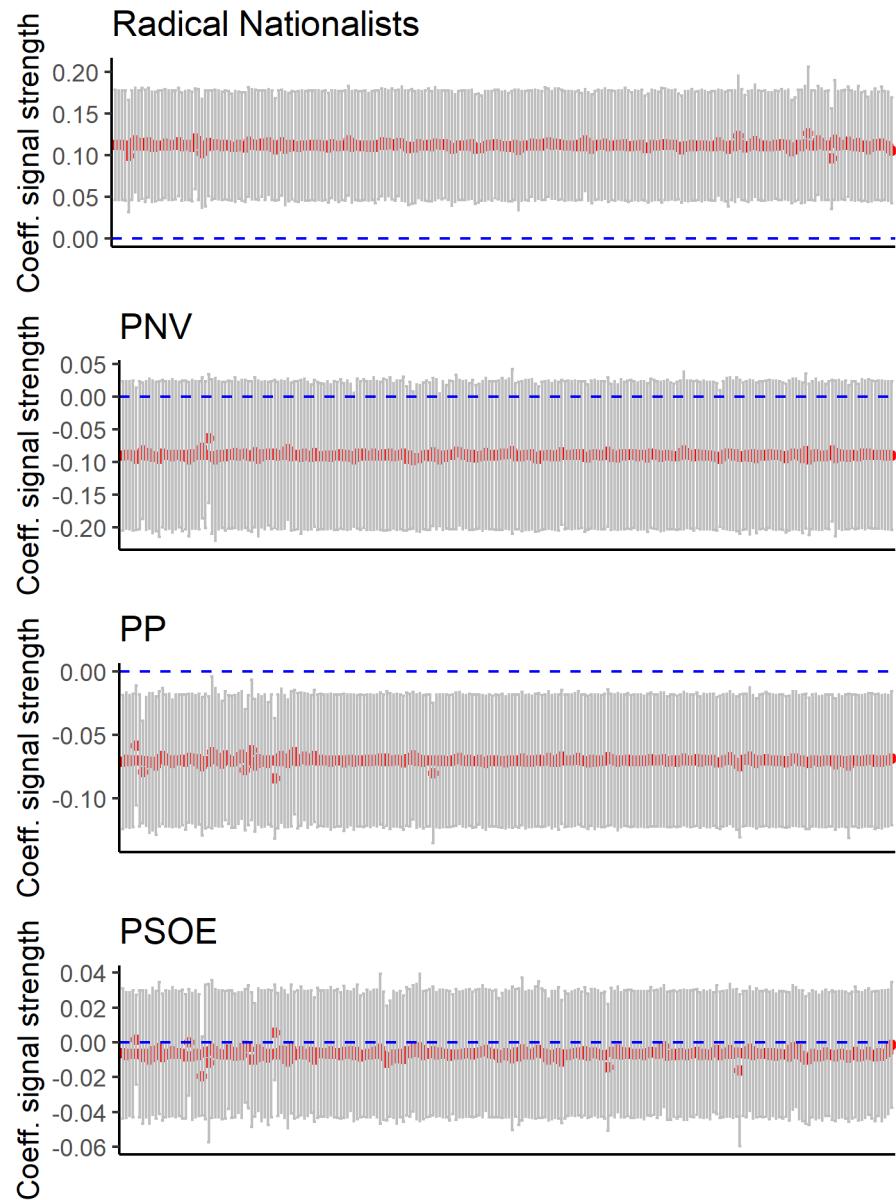
Estimates from the same models reported in table 2, with p-values from wild cluster bootstrap at the district level.

Figure C.1: Results on vote averages, trimming the distribution of signal strength



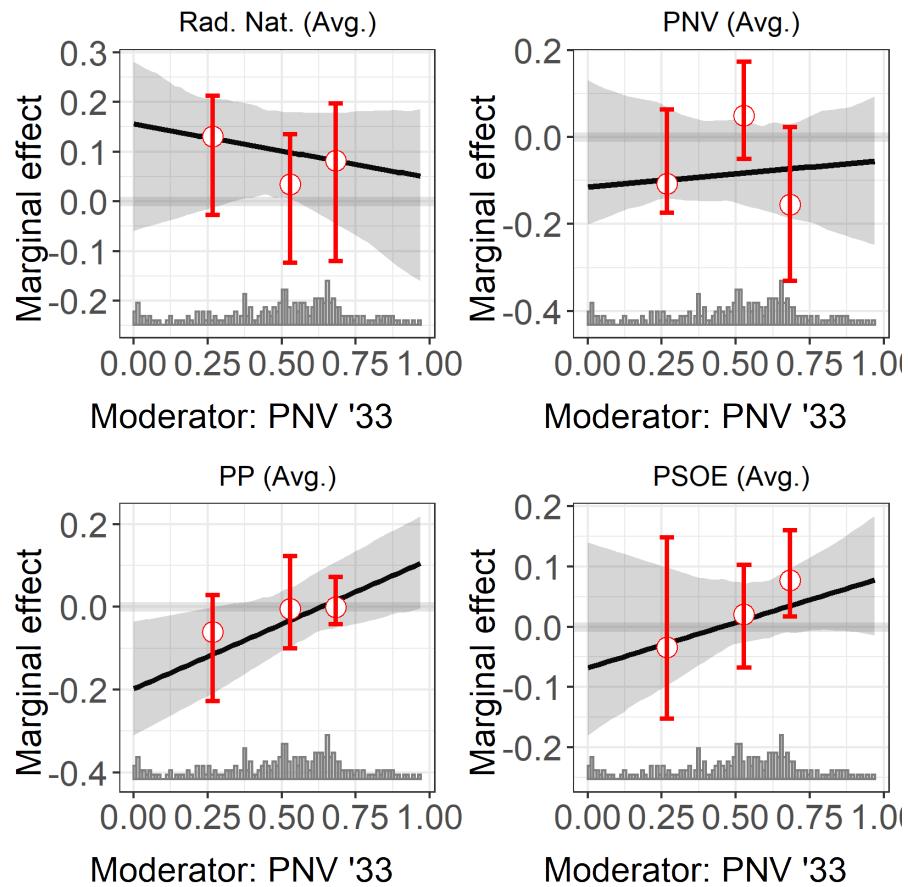
Note: Coefficients from the models reported in table 2, removing the top and bottom extreme observations in the distribution of RPL signal strength. 95% Confidence intervals with Conley standard errors (30km) displayed.

Figure C.2: Results on vote averages, sequential exclusion of municipalities



Note: Coefficients from the models reported in table 2, removing one municipality at a time. 95% Confidence intervals with Conley standard errors (30km) displayed.

Figure C.3: Marginal effect of RPL exposure on voting behavior, binning estimator

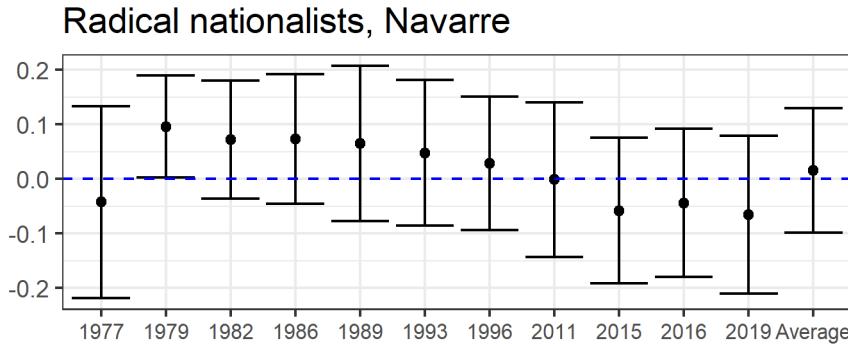


Note: Marginal effect of predicted signal strength of RPL on average vote shares, by terciles of PNV 1933 vote share, using the binning estimator in Hainmueller, Mummo, and Xu (2019). All models include signal in free space, log of municipal area and height, log of 1970 population, PNV 1933 vote share, and province fixed effects. 95% Confidence intervals displayed, with standard errors block bootstrapped at the district level.

D Results on other Basque regions

I ran models for the effect of RPL exposure on voting for radical nationalist parties in the province of Navarre. Navarre neighbors the Basque Country and is considered part of the broader historical Basque homeland (*Euskal Herria*). In the analysis, I do not include it in the main sample for a few reasons. First, Navarre's institutional history within Spain has been largely separate from that of the Basque Country: as a consequence the party system and the territorial cleavages are different. Second, patterns of repression during the dictatorship were probably different, because in Navarre support for Franco's insurgency was much higher. Third, most of the province's municipalities are not meaningfully reached by RPL signal.

Figure D.1: RPL and radical nationalist vote in Navarre



Note: Coefficients of predicted signal strength of RPL in regressions where the outcomes are vote shares for radical nationalist parties in each single election. The sample includes only the province of Navarre. All models include signal in free space, log of municipal area and height, log of 1970 population, and PNV 1933 vote share. 95% Confidence intervals with Conley standard errors (30km) displayed.

E Content of RPL

E.1 Sampling and data collection

During summer 2021, I consulted original scripts of RPL programs held in San Sebastián, at the Koldo Mitxelena Library of the provincial government of Gipuzkoa. The transcripts are part of the archival fund Herri Irratia/Radio Popular: they are organized in monthly volumes covering almost all the period 1967-2011. Due to the massive amount of material and logistical limitations to consultation, I randomly sampled 5 months of transmission for the period of analysis using stratified sampling to ensure uniform time coverage: first, I defined two consecutive time periods of (almost) equal length, 1967-1972 and 1973-1979. I randomly sampled two years from the first period and three years from the second one. Then, for each year I randomly sampled one month. If transcripts were not available for a month-year I chose the following month of the same year.

E.2 Language coding

For each volume, I went through all transcript pages and coded each daily program. I coded whether the program type was information or cultural, as well as the category (e.g. sport, religion or general interest) and the language. In case the program was bilingual, I estimated the time devoted to each language by counting the text lines in Spanish and those in euskera in the same program transcript and computing the shares over the total number of lines. Figure E.1 plots the language composition of local news each day, and the monthly averages used for figure 2.

It is important to note that the documents available are those used by radio speakers,

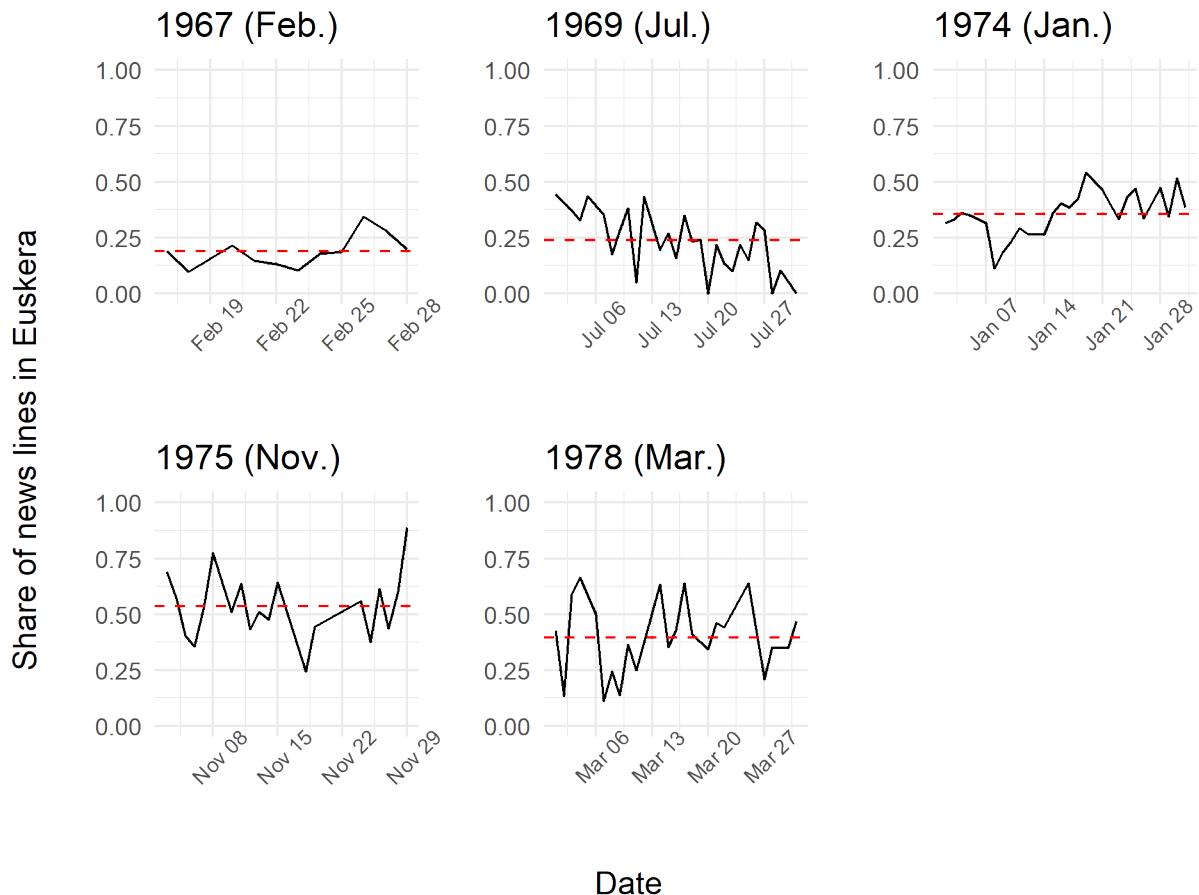
not ex-post verbatim transcripts of recorded files. Therefore, for some programs there are texts that the hosts read while on air, while for others there is no trace of what was said, and only generic information is provided, e.g. the list of songs to be aired, or the announcements of some interview. Generally, text is available for the main cultural programs in Basque produced by RPL and for local (bilingual) news. The amount of information available varies with time: in the earlier years it happens to have missing days in the transcripts. In the months surveyed, there are no transcripts of national news, which during the Franco era were read by the state-owned network, or of pre-recorded contributions.

E.3 Songs

For each program, there was a list of the songs or music pieces aired, together with the language of each song (except for classical music). This is very convenient, because it avoids relying on the language of the song title as measure, since several titles of foreign songs were translated in Spanish to make them understandable. I recorded for each program the total number of songs and music pieces aired in each language: Spanish, Euskera, and Other, a residual category that contains both songs in foreign languages and pieces without lyrics. In a minority of cases there was no indication of the language of the song. I then evaluated each case considering the context: songs inside monolingual Basque programs, or introduced in the transcript as being from the region were coded as Euskera; similarly, songs introduced as from Spain were coded as Spanish. When contextual information was not present in the transcript, songs were coded based on the title language or the regional origin of the author.

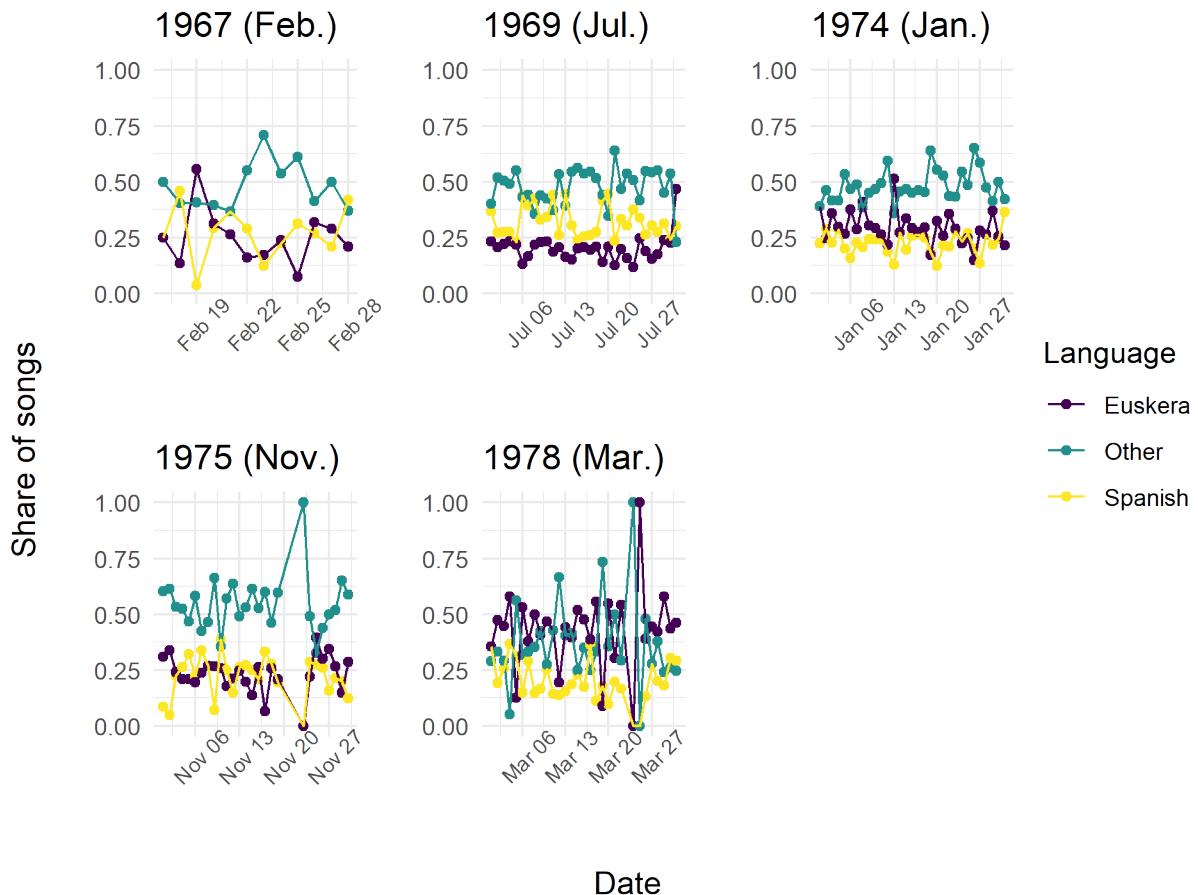
Figure [E.2](#) plots the language composition of songs every day.

Figure E.1: Language composition of local news in RPL over time.



Note: Share of local news lines in euskera over time in each of the months of broadcasts coded. The dashed line is the monthly average. Monthly averages are used to produce figure 2.

Figure E.2: Language composition of songs aired by RPL over time

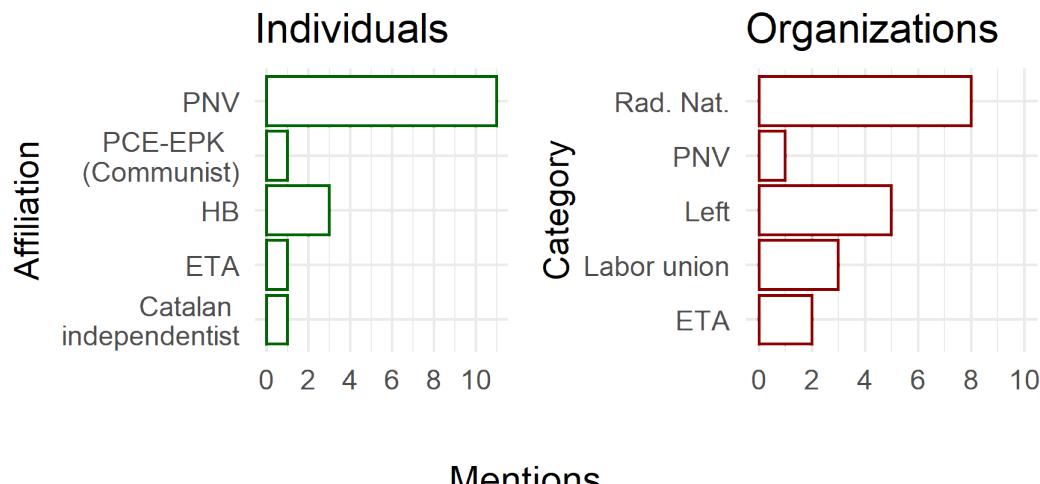


Note: Share of songs and music pieces by language over time in each of the months of broadcast coded. "Other" includes songs in foreign languages (e.g. English) or music without lyrics.

E.4 Political coverage after Franco

While I do not have data on coverage of national politics in RPL after the end of Franco's rule, I collected data about one month of programs (March 1978) aired during the transition. I can thus study the coverage of social and political events at the local level. I read closely all the local news transcripts of this month, and coded the main topics of the news, the names of groups and organizations, and any person mentioned. I then recovered the identity and affiliation of each person whose name appeared. Figure E.3 shows the distribution of individuals and organizations appearing in local news in March 1978. Most of the people appearing in the news are PNV members, and the second most frequent affiliation is Herri Batasuna (the main radical nationalist coalition). On the other hand, most organizations and group mentioned are part of the radical nationalist camp (parties but also nationalist labor unions). Left-wing parties and non-nationalist labor unions are also frequently mentioned, while ETA and the PNV are less frequent. When it comes to the topic of each news, their distribution is depicted in figure E.4. Topical issues of the period, such as anti-nuclear protests, labor demonstrations, and strikes, receive most of the coverage. Much attention is also given to the economic situation, and the unemployment.

Figure E.3: Mentions of individuals and organizations in local news, March 1978



Notes: Characterization of individuals and organizations mentioned in local news during March 1978. The left panel shows the frequency of mentions by affiliation of the person mentioned. The right panel shows the frequency of mentions by political or social area of the organization mentioned.

Figure E.4: Topics covered in local news, March 1978

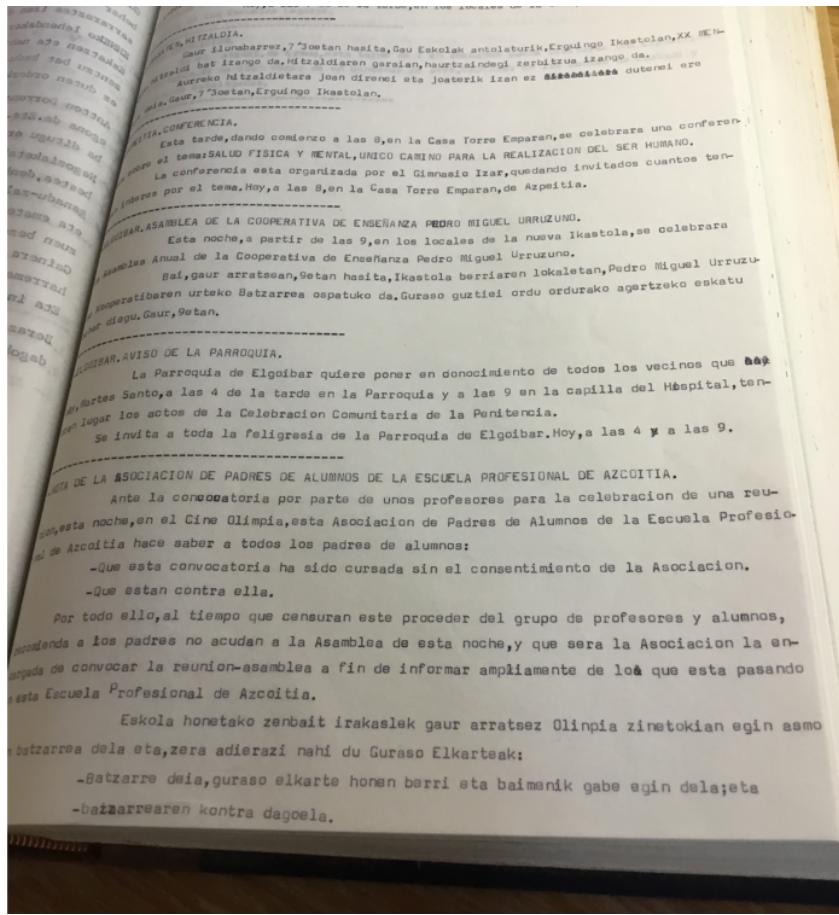


Figure E.5: Local news in RPL: food prices at the market in the town of Azpeitia

LISTA DE PRECIOS DE LOS ALIMENTOS		Año 1.975
MERCADO SEMANAL DE	Azpeitia	Niñarbolle
DIA	11-17-75	IES
HUEVOS	62-80-96-42	
POLLOS	145	
GALLINAS	60	
BONEJO	110	
CORDERO	180	
PICHIJONES		
QUESO DE OVEJA	400	
QUESO DE VACA	170	
		PLANTAS
LECHUGA	14	
BERZA	10	
CEBOLLAS	16	
TONATE	12	
PILENTEOS	30	
ACELGAS	18	
PUERROS	36	100000
PATATA	9	
VAINAS	40	
ALUBIA ROJA	375	100000
ALUBIA BLANCA	98	
HABAS	40	
BERZA	10	
LECHUGA	13	
TONATE	12 - 85 del pan	
PILENTEOS	30 K.	
GUINDILLAS		
CEBOLLAS	16	
TANATORIAS	16	
PUERROS	35	
ACELGAS	18	
AJOS	2'50 cada	
ESPINACAS	30	
ONIFLOR	15-30	
SCAROLAS	5	
CACIOFAS		
ISINTES	X	
		FRUTAS
HAMANAS		20
PERAS	20	
UVA	34 Blanca - 20	
CEREZAS	X	
PLATANOS	42	
NARANJAS	28-20-18	
MANDARINAS	28-20	
HELICOTON	X	
MELON	26 K. 10	
LIMON	60	
MUECES	95	
AVELLANAS	X	
ALBARICOQUE	X	
FRESAS	X	
ALMENDRUCO	X	
ACEITUNAS	96-69-74-50-218	

Source: Photo by the author, courtesy of Koldo Mitxelena Library

Figure E.6: Local news in RPL: mono- and bilingual announcements

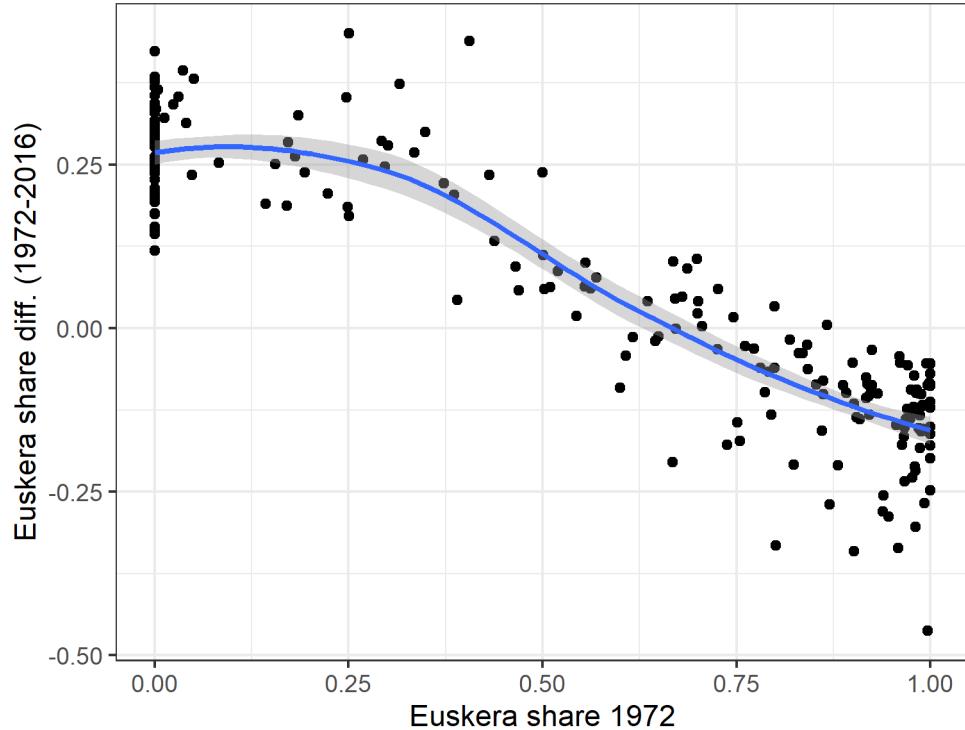


Source: Photo by the author, courtesy of Koldo Mitxelena Library

F Language change

Figure F.1 shows the change in the use of euskera between 1972 and 2016, computed as the difference in shares of speakers, against the baseline share in 1972. Figures of 2016 come from the Basque statistical institute, figures of 1972 are from Yrizar ([1973](#)).

Figure F.1: Change in use of euskera over time by base levels in the Franco period



Note: Growth in the share of population speaking euskera at the municipal level, calculated as the difference between the 2016 share and the 1972 share, over the share of speakers in 1972. Blue line is a local linear fit.

G Individual-level results

This section reports descriptive results using survey data. I use regionally representative surveys realized by the public opinion research institute *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas*. I use the following survey waves:

- Language use in bilingual communities - Basque Country: S. 2052 (1993), S. 2296 (1998)
- Social and political situation in the Basque Country: S. 2096 (1994), S. 2282 (1998), S. 2047 (2001), S. 2593 (2005)

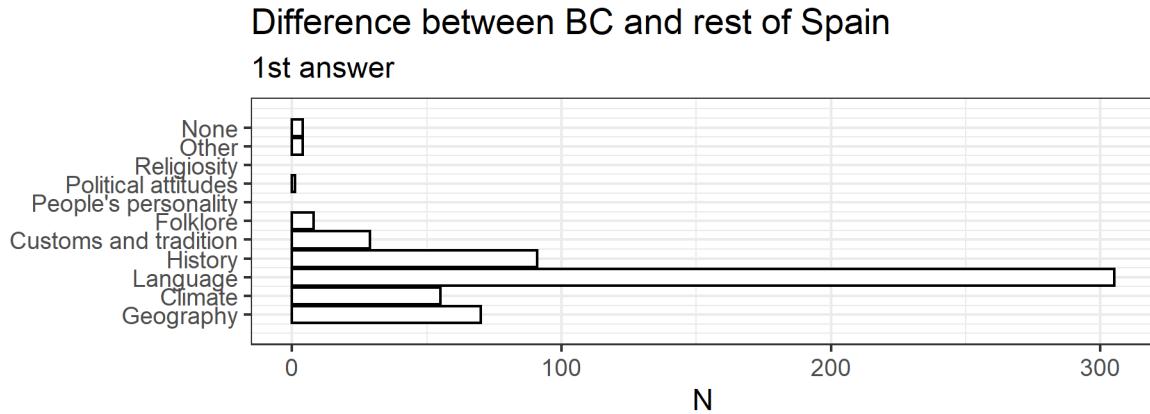
G.1 Language and identity

What is the role of euskera in Basque identity? To answer these questions I use the two Basque rounds of the survey "Language use in bilingual communities", which contains a rich battery of questions on language preferences, linguistic background, ethnic, religious, and political identification. They were run in 1993 ($N = 615$) and 1998 ($N = 615$).

Respondents were asked to choose, from a list of items, the three which differentiate more the Basque Country from other regions and nationalities of Spain. As shown in figure G.1, a plurality of respondents selected "Language" as the most salient difference ("Customs and tradition" is the most selected among the second answers). Even if euskera is seen as the most salient distinctive trait, it is not perceived as a hard ethnic boundary. Figure G.2 shows that a plurality of respondents don't think that speaking euskera is a necessary condition for considering oneself Basque; on the other hand, "willingness to be Basque" is

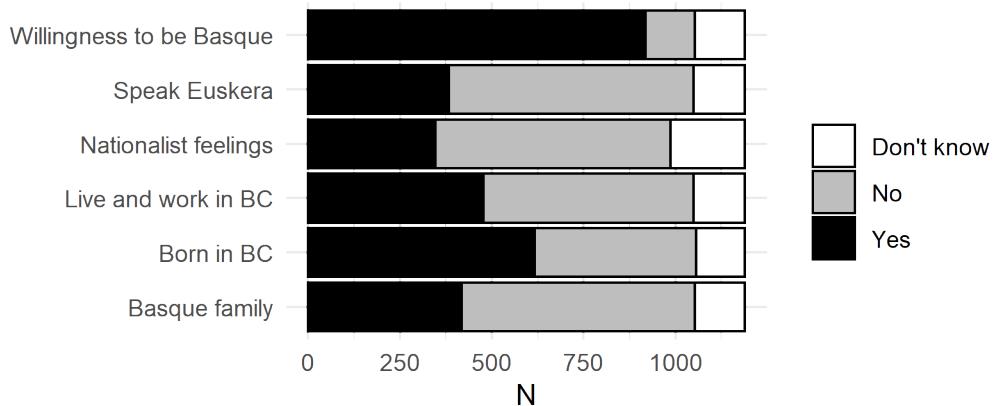
the condition with the highest consensus. Being born in the region is the second most agreed upon condition, higher than having a Basque family or living and working there.

Figure G.1: First perceived difference between Basque Country and other parts of Spain



Note: Original question: "What are, in your opinion, the three elements which differentiate the Basque Country from the other regions and nationalities of Spain?"

Figure G.2: Agreement over conditions for Basque identity

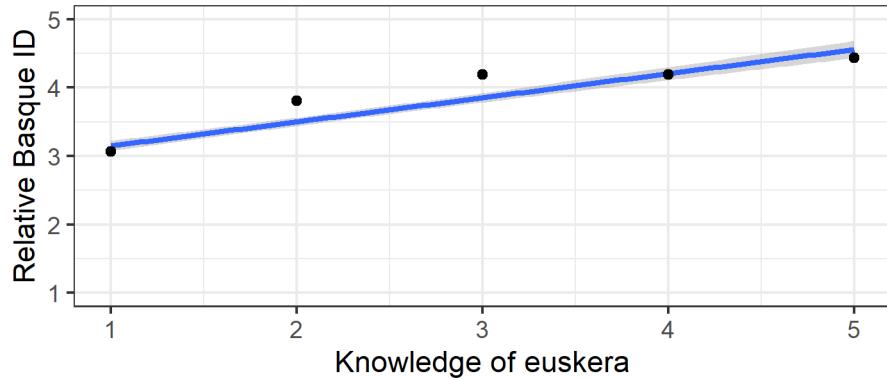


Note: Original question: "Tell me now if you think that each one of these conditions are necessary for a person to consider herself Basque"

On the other hand, while there is agreement that Spanish speakers can legitimately be Basque, actual language knowledge is associated with the relative salience of Basque identity. Figure G.3 shows that there is a positive correlation between the level of proficiency in euskera and the choice of Basque over Spanish identity. Individuals who use Basque (either as mother

tongue or from later adoption) have on average a stronger ethnic identity than those who do not.

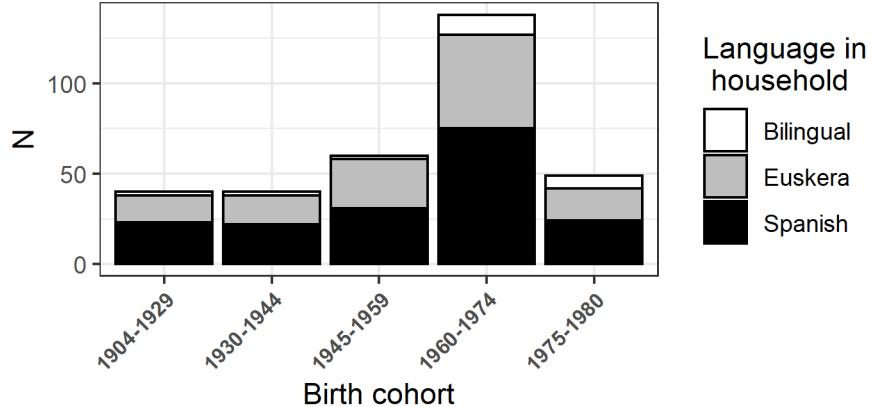
Figure G.3: Language proficiency and ethnic/national identification



Note: On the x-axis, the answer to the question: "Could you tell me your level of knowledge of euskera?" [Don't speak nor understand/Understand/Understand and speak/Understand, speak, and read/Understand, speak, read, and write]. On the y-axis, the answer to the question "Which of the following sentences you would say expresses your feelings most accurately?" [I feel only Spanish/More Spanish than Basque/Equally Spanish and Basque/More Basque than Spanish/Only Basque]. The dots are the average (binned) values of identification scale for each value of the language scale. The blue line is a linear fit.

Another relevant question is the change in the domestic use of euskera over time. Figure G.4 shows the distribution of self-reported language used at home during childhood. There do not seem to be clear patterns in the language used at home across cohorts. Individuals born and raised during the dictatorship report Spanish as the main household language, followed by euskera, just as former cohorts. If anything, people born in the later phase of the dictatorship and after the democratic transition have a higher propensity to report a bilingual household. Overall, it is not clear that under cultural repression Basque language was abandoned in the domestic domain.

Figure G.4: Language used at home during childhood, by cohort

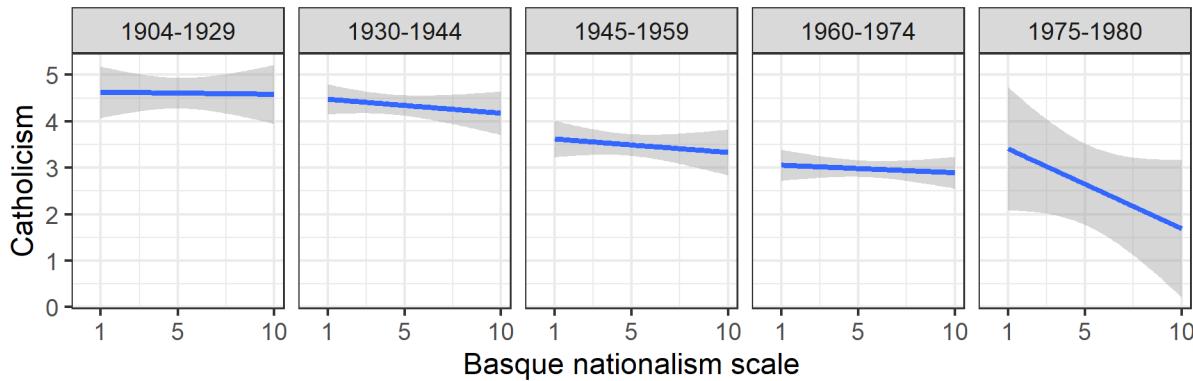


Note: Original question: "What language was spoken in your house when you were a little boy/girl?"

G.2 Religion and identity

Could non-nationalist listeners be attracted to religious radio programs irrespective of their Basque content? To answer this question I use the 1993 wave of the survey "Language use in bilingual communities", where, differently from the later wave, the question of Catholic identification has a discrete scale for the answers. Figure G.5 plots for each cohort the raw correlation between self-placement on a 10-points nationalism scale and the strength of attachment to the Catholic religion. For most of the cohorts, born before or during the Franco era, the relationship between nationalism and religiosity is flat or at most weakly negative. Therefore, non-nationalist parents during the dictatorship were almost as likely to be practicing Catholic as the most nationalist ones. Interestingly, this pattern appears to change for individuals born in 1975 (the youngest who could appear in this wave), for which nationalism is negatively correlated with religiosity. Even if this result is only suggestive due to small sample size and lack of age variation in the last cohort, it resonates with the rise of the radical nationalist parties.

Figure G.5: Nationalism and Catholic religion, raw correlation by cohort



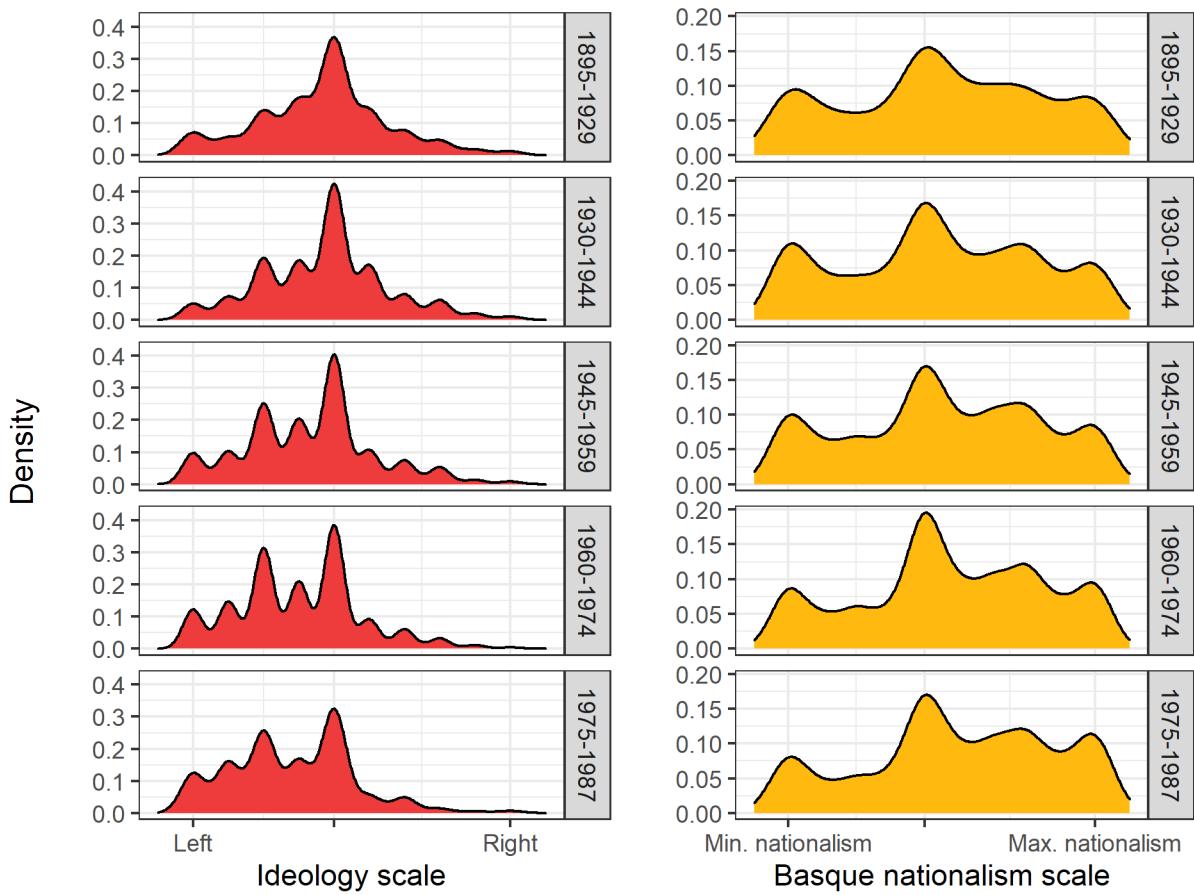
Note: On the x-axis, self-reported individual position on the Basque nationalism dimension [0-10]. On the y-axis, self-reported individual catholicism. Original question: "Personally, how do you consider yourself on religious matters?" [Atheist/Indifferent/Not practicing Catholic/Little practicing Catholic/Practicing Catholic/Very good Catholic]. Since religiosity was measured on a scale only in the first wave of the language use survey (1993), in this plot the cohort 1975-1980 only includes respondents born in 1975, which were 18 years old at the time of the interview.

G.3 Ideological cohort shifts

In this section I provide additional descriptive statistics on the ideological changes and the bundling of ethnic identity and left-wing ideology.

To this purpose I use four waves of an additional survey, "Social and political situation in the Basque Country", run in 1994 ($N = 1579$), 1998 ($N = 2099$), 2001 ($N = 2482$), and 2005 ($N = 1499$). Pooling all the data from the six surveys, I plot in figure G.6 the cohort-specific distribution of respondents along the Left-Right and nationalist scale respectively. The figure shows that later cohorts, born during and after the dictatorship, tend to be more left-wing and more nationalist.

Figure G.6: Distribution of individuals on left-right dimension and nationalist dimension, by cohort



Note: The left panel plots the cohort-specific ideological distribution, on the left-right scale [1-10]. The right panel plots the cohort-specific ideological distribution on the nationalism scale [1-10].

H Political parties

H.1 Parties in post-Franco elections

Table H.1: Names of the parties used for average shares

Party/Bloc	Party names
Radical Nationalists	Sum of all rad. nat. lists (1977), Herri Batasuna (1979-1996), Amaiur (2011), Euskal Herria Bildu (2015-2019)
PNV	Partido Nacionalista Vasco (1977-2019)
PP	Coalición Popular (1982-1986), Partido Popular (1989-2019)
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (1977-2019)

Table H.2: Radical nationalist parties and lists in 1977

Region	Party	Name
Euskadi	EE	Euskadiko Ezkerra - Izquierda para el Socialismo
Euskadi	ESB	Partido Socialista Vasco - Euskal Sozialista Biltzarrea
Euskadi	EAE/ANV	Eusko Abertzale Ekintza - Acción Nacionalista Vasca
Euskadi	Ind.14	Independent list
Navarra	UNAI	Union Navarra de Izquierdas

H.2 Parties in the Second Republic, 1933

Elections in the Second Republic (1931-1936) in the Basque Country were dominated by three factions: the Left (Republicans, Socialists and Communists), the Right (Carlists, Monarchists) and the Basque nationalists. The electoral system was multi-member district with plurality rule and open lists. Voters could cast a number of votes equal to 80% of the seats to be allocated. Parties thus formed coalition lists with a number of members generally equal to the 80% of seats to be allocated (De La Granja Sainz 2009). There was generally low variation in the number of preferences within list, as voters tended to give a preference to all candidates on a list. The vote share for a coalition (PNV, Left, Right) is computed as

the total of preferences for all candidates in the list over the total of preferences cast for all candidates.

The general election of 1933 is probably the only one where it is possible to fully separate the PNV from other parties: in the 1931 election the PNV ran in a single list with the Right, and in the 1936 election, the last of the Republic, the Right withdrew its candidates from one province. Following De La Calle (2015) I use only 1933 results to quantify support for Basque nationalism.

Note a slight abuse of party names: the vote share of the PNV includes that of ANV, an electorally marginal nationalist party that in 1933 ran only in the Gipuzkoa, gaining a small number of votes. Table H.3 reports the parties competing in 1933 in the Basque Country and in Navarre.

Table H.3: Parties in the 1933 parliamentary election

Bloc	Party
Nationalists	Partido Nacionalista Vasco
Nationalists	Acción Nacionalista Vasca
Right	Comunión Tradicionalista
Right	Renovación Española
Right	Unión Navarra
Right	Católicos independientes
Left	Partido Radical
Left	Partido Federal
Left	Republicanos de Guipuzcoa
Left	Partido Republicano Radical Socialista
Left	PRRS independiente
Left	Acción Republicana
Left	Partido Socialista Obrero Español
Left	Partido Comunista de España