

# Ethnic Media, Repression, and the Mobilization of Ethnic Identity

Giacomo Lemoli\*

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## Abstract

Can media fuel support for ethnic parties? The nature and reach of modern media enable them to manipulate the political salience of cultural traits, a pre-requisite of theories of ethnic politics; yet the effects of ethnic media on the political behavior of minorities appear mixed. I argue that ethnic media with cultural content can help coalesce grievances against the state along identity boundaries, favoring ethnic mobilization. I study the case of the Basque Country between the late Franco regime and the Spanish democratic transition, where a local radio station operated by pro-nationalist Basque clergy promoted the revival of regional language and folklore. Using a variety of contemporary and archival data, I show that exposure to ethnic media increased support for new, radical independentist parties tied to ETA, and that the effect is driven by linguistically hispanicized municipalities with lower historical support for Basque nationalism. Media can aggregate ethnic coalitions among communities threatened by cultural assimilation, especially if state violence sustains an ethnic cleavage.

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\*PhD Student, Wilf Family Department of Politics, New York University. E-mail: [g1759@nyu.edu](mailto:g1759@nyu.edu). I gratefully acknowledge financial support from the NYU Department of Politics and the Institute for Humane Studies. Sonia Townson Aguilar provided excellent research assistance. I am indebted to Arturas Rozenas and Shanker Satyanath for their advice and guidance throughout this project; Nejla Asimovic, Anna Denisenko, Dimitri Landa, Gwyneth McClendon, Rajeshwari Majumdar, Massimo Pulejo, Tara Slough, Carolina Torreblanca, Stephanie Zonszein for comments; Alejandro Lopez Peceño and Sergi Martinez for early discussions and suggestions; Javier Onaindia (Radio Popular) and Pruden Gartzia (Real Academia de la Lengua Vasca) for providing data; the staff at Koldo Mitxelena Library and the Historical Archive of the Basque Country for their kind assistance.

# 1 Introduction

Ethnic identity is an important driver of political behavior, but how it becomes decisive is in many respects unclear. Ethnic coalitions of voters can be appealing for mobilization when group demography makes an identity pivotal for electoral success and distribution (Posner 2005; Huber 2017) or when political claims offer an opportunity to coordinate around a shared group label (Mor 2022); in other words, their emergence is often contingent to particular junctures. Yet, identities are harder attributes to switch than hats, and their political organization requires an appropriate technology. The means of information could be one. Newspapers, radio, television, and social media, reach millions of individuals around the world, provide information, and influence consumption habits: their capacity to influence identities and behavior is far-reaching.

The extent to which media can sustain the politicization of ethnic identities is an open question. States can use national radio and television as homogenizing tools, to defuse ethnic identification and promote assimilation in a national culture (Blouin and Mukand 2019; Russo 2020). On the other hand, media whose content targets specific ethnic groups (ethnic media) can help the emergence of particularistic cultural identities (Posner 2003), but have mixed effects on political behavior, possibly depending on whether media convey political information or just entertainment (Oberholzer-Gee and Waldfogel 2009; Velez and Newman 2019; Zonszein 2020). The value of identity, however, is not independent of the social context: it is reasonable to expect that media have different impacts on the mobilization of ethnic groups depending on whether the circumstances make ethnicity an important cleavage to organize around.

In this paper, I study the effects of ethnic media on mobilization within a nation-state. My key argument is that ethnic media can favor the coalescence of political claims against the state along identity lines. If state policies generate a demand for opposition among a specific

demographic group, an ethnic cleavage can emerge (Mor 2022): but sustaining such cleavage requires increasing the salience of ethnic boundaries, meaning the markers and practices that delimit membership to the in-group (Barth 1969), especially when these boundaries are most porous. Media that maintain and perpetuate ethnic cultural traits can serve this function: by investing in the salience of group boundaries they bind together a political coalition, which can be successfully mobilized by political entrepreneurs challenging the state.

In the empirical application, I focus on the case of Spanish Basque Country, a notable contemporary example of peripheral nationalism. Similarly to other regional minorities on the losing side of the Spanish civil war (1936-1939), the Basques lived under a state of repression under the rule of Francisco Franco (1939-1975), which outlawed political opposition and any non-Spanish identity. In the 1960s, a partial liberalization of the radio market by the regime granted frequencies and editorial discretion to local 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) produced daily programs in the Basque historical language, euskera, banned from public use, with the goal of promoting an ethnic cultural revival in the Basque region primarily based on the salience of regional language (Agirreazkuenaga 2012).

I study the political consequences of exposure to RPL, an ethnic media outlet, on voting for Basque ethno-nationalist parties after the democratic transition. To this purpose, I compiled a novel dataset which combines contemporary and historical data on voting behavior, language use, and war violence at the municipal level over more than 90 years of Basque history, with detailed information on radio programs hand-collected from archival sources. I first 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 hispanicized listeners. I also show that, even in programs realized in Spanish, RPL tied Basque identity to its historical language and ancestral culture,

transmitting, among others, folklore songs in euskera, and explanations of the distinct ethnic origin of surnames. By contrast, the radio could not broadcast news, which were monopolized by the state-owned channels, and thus could not provide direct anti-government information.

I then study the political effects of exposure to RPL broadcasting. I use original information on the location and technical characteristics of the transmitters and an engineering software to compute the predicted reception of RPL signal across Basque 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 were consistently more likely to vote for radical Basque independentist parties after the Spanish democratic transition and less likely to vote for conservative centralist parties. Moreover, they were not more likely to vote for the mainstream moderate Basque nationalist party, which held a more cooperative stance towards the Spanish state. Results are consistent when using vote shares and turnout in referendums where radical parties advocated for abstention. When decomposing the average effects, I find that they are mostly driven by the mobilization of municipalities with low historical strength of the Basque nationalists and a lower share of euskera speakers in the late Franco years. These results indicate that, by indoctrinating about the importance of preserving a traditional culture and identity, ethnic media raised the salience of group boundaries and helped consolidate an ethnic coalition. This process was more effective in "peripheral" communities that were in part culturally assimilated in the majority and where ethnic attachment was initially weaker. By contrast, in "core" areas with strong ethnic identification, measured by past ethno-nationalist support and language use, ethnic media had little or no effect, perhaps because people were already strongly inclined to support nationalist parties. I provide additional evidence in favor of this indirect mechanism by showing that better radio reception is associated with wider adoption of euskera among municipalities at initially low levels.

These findings help clarify our understanding of the process of formation of an ethnic

constituency. When state policies create losers, like a state of repression does, the coordination of aggrieved individuals on identity to convey political claims is easier if citizens perceive differences between themselves and the out-groups to be stark. In this circumstance, ethnic media are thus instrumental to the formation of an ethnic coalition, integrating sub-groups at risk of "loss" (Smith 1986) in the community, which can be mobilized by political entrepreneurs. This paper also provides a novel perspective on the effects of ethnic media which serve as entertainment goods on the political behavior of minorities, by showing when they can favor mobilization rather than disengagement: absent political representation and under state repression, culture acquires a strong political value, because it consolidates an ethnic cleavage.

## 2 Media, repression, and ethnic politics

It is well understood that in heterogeneous countries ethnic identity can emerge as a central fault line. Research in ethnic politics has shown that group demography and institutional features crucially determine whether a cultural identity is appealing for political mobilization (Posner 2004; Chandra 2007; Huber 2017). Research on the mechanisms of ethnic mobilization has produced a variety of findings. Politicians can "play the ethnic card" to convince individuals that voting with their group will be beneficial to them (Posner 2005); while voters can coordinate around an identity if they expect it to be pivotal for future redistribution (Green 2021), social mobility (Marquardt 2018), or defense of their interests (Mor 2022).

At the same time, ethnic cleavages do not emerge in a social void. Broadly speaking, the construction of an ethnic coalition requires a perceived commonality among individuals and a clear differentiation between groups; thus mechanisms that tie voters to their identity while reifying the contrast with other identities. This can be summarized by the sociological notion of ethnic boundary, namely the set of attributes and practices that define membership

and exclusion from ethnic groups (Barth 1969; Wimmer 2013). Salient ethnic boundaries are a pre-requisite for ethnic mobilization, but they are hard to build from scratch; the process needs to rely on specific tools and locally embedded institutions such as mass media.

The reach of media in modern societies make them crucial political tools for persuasion and mobilization (Yanagizawa-Drott 2014; Adena et al. 2015; Peisakhin and Rozenas 2018; Wang *forthcoming*). But the relevance of media goes beyond the direct delivery of political information: even through non-political content, they can shape users' consumption habits and interpretation of the world, influencing their preferences (Durante et al. 2019) informing their social identities, including ethnic and national ones (Anderson 2006 [1983]; Lieberman and Miller 2021; Blouin and Mukand 2019; Pengl et al. 2021), or creating new ones (Mora 2021).

The capacity of media outlets to influence identification makes ethnic media convenient for political entrepreneurs willing to mobilize around identity. Habitual consumers of radio and television broadcasting elements of ethnic culture can be more likely to see themselves as a distinct group and to respond to ethnic appeals. Moreover, to the extent that ethnic culture coalesces a community, integrating segments at risk of loss or assimilation (Smith 1986), ethnic media with a broad reach can help consolidate ethnic identity in communities or geographic areas where otherwise it would have been less important.

This does not imply necessarily that exposure to ethnic media should increase support for ethnic parties, nor support for any party. Since consumption of information is not independent of the broader social context, it may be difficult for ethnic media to favor mobilization absent the conditions that make an ethnic cleavage possible in the first place. Without major political conflicts, language or ethnicity may remain cultural attributes without a collective organization.

This notion may explain why in some democratic contexts ethnic media are found to depress the political participation of minorities (Velez and Newman 2019): if the institutional

context (e.g. the structure of the party system) limits the politicization of specific ethnic identities, media outlets in minority language may be no more consequential than any other alternative. In deeply conflicting cases such as repressive authoritarian regimes, ethnicities can instead become focal for mobilization. In those cases, media that increase the salience of ethnic boundaries may indirectly favor mobilization: if cultural identities become contentious, the political role of culture changes radically.

### 3 Historical context

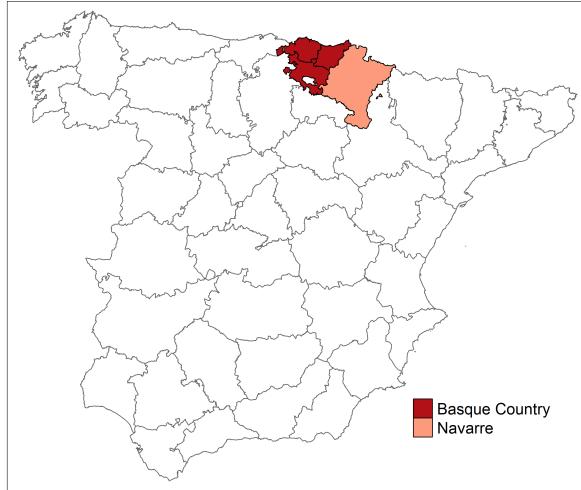
#### 3.1 The politics of Basque identity in Franco's Spain

At the end of the Spanish Second Republic in 1936, the political system in the Basque Country was tripartite.<sup>1</sup> The parties were divided in Left and Right blocs, representing conflicting interests over land redistribution and religion, plus the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), which advocated for regional autonomy and cultural rights of ethnic Basques, while being conservative on social issues (Payne 1975; De La Granja Sainz 2009). The growing intransigence of the Right on the issue of territorial integrity, however, pushed the Basque nationalists, an otherwise rural, traditionalist, and catholic constituency, towards the Left, and to military mobilization on the Republican side at the onset of the revolt led by general Francisco Franco (Watson 2007). The resistance however had no chances against the military superiority of the Francoists, backed by Germany and Italy, and once Franco took control of the state, the Basque provinces entered a phase of retributive violence. Regime repression included language bans, book fires, mandated translation of Basque names (Clark 1979, p. 137), and purges of priests and school teachers accused of anti-Spanish indoctrination

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<sup>1</sup>The name Basque Country refers to the provinces of Biscay, Gipuzkoa and Alava, the current Basque Autonomous Community. I exclude from the definition the province of Navarre, inhabited by ethnic Basques but with a distinct institutional history.

Figure 1: Basque territories in Spain



(Barruso Barés 2007; Balcells and Villamil 2020).

During the dictatorship, politics in the Basque Country had to adapt and take different forms. The new generations born after the civil war and without any political representation were exposed to the violent face of the central state, and often came to see it as illegitimate (Pérez-Agote 2006). In this circumstances, for aggrieved young Basques, ethnic identity and opposition to Spain became focal points around which to organize social life (Pérez-Agote 2006). Cultural indoctrination played an important role: priest and other social elites worked to transmit and preserve clandestinely Basque culture and traditions, to keep ethnic identity salient; in particular by promoting the use of the historical Basque language, euskera (Clark 1979; Pérez-Agote 2006; Watson 2007).<sup>2</sup> The confluence of state opposition, political claims, and cultural proselytism consolidated a new ethnic constituency, integrating many Basques with a non-nationalist family background (De La Calle 2015).

After Franco's death in 1975 and the return to party pluralism, the Basque nationalist

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<sup>2</sup>In 1972, only between 30% and 40% of Basques spoke euskera in addition to Spanish, the others were only Spanish speakers (own calculations based on Yrizar (1973)).

front was split between the PNV, which maintained a cooperative stance towards the new Spanish democratic institutions and was socially moderate, and new radical nationalist parties who had left-wing economic stances, vocally promoted independence, and maintained ties with the terrorist organization *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA).

### 3.2 Broadcasting Basque identity

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 during Franco era only had a provincial reach. Censorship limited information pluralism, with the state network *Radio Nacional de España* enjoying a monopoly over national news. With the *Ley de Prensa* (1966), the regime abandoned preventive censorship of media content and adopted a more paternalist approach based on ex-post sanctions (Clark 1979; Cisquella et al. 2002), while at the same time partially liberalizing the broadcast media environment.

From the early 1960s, 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 its inception in 1961, Jesuits running RPL decided to use it to promote Basque culture, and started to realize programs characterized by traditional folklore, and most notably by the use of euskera (Pérez-Agote 2006; De Pablo et al. 2011; Agirreazkuenaga 2012). RPL broadcast bilingual and euskera-only programs from the early years, while the other RP stations were mostly in Spanish.<sup>3</sup> Affiliation with the Church granted RPL some institutional protection

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<sup>3</sup>RPB transmitted only in Spanish until the last few years of the regime; RPS merged with RPL in 1971, after which programs in Basque language increased, but before that the use of euskera was just "symbolic"

against state repression.<sup>4</sup> Since other smaller stations which had tried to use euskera in their programs had been shut down in the early 1960s (Agirreazkuenaga 2017), RPL was almost the only radio station where it was possible to listen regularly to programs in Basque language.<sup>5</sup> Thanks to the efforts of 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 Radio content

RPL broadcast in FM since 1966. Several journalists and Jesuit priests contributed to its daily programming. In this section I illustrate qualitatively and quantitatively its defining content, based on the analysis and manual coding 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). Appendix D details the data collection and coding criteria, and provides additional quantitative and qualitative descriptions.

### 4.1 Language and culture in general interest programs

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 (Agirreazkuenaga 2017).

<sup>4</sup>The government took advantage of the mandated transition from AM to FM in 1964 to exclude RPL from the distribution of frequency bands. Thanks to the intervention of the local bishop, the radio re-opened in 1965 with a new FM transmitter (Arregui 2011).

<sup>5</sup>An exception was Radio Euskadi, controlled by exiled PNV leaders, which transmitted anti-Franco propaganda from Venezuela. It is however unlikely that local reception of Radio Euskadi was systematically correlated with that of RPL. First, due to the short-wave technology used, Radio Euskadi reached the whole Spain, at the cost of signal instability. Second, because the nature of the programs was political, the frequency was modified constantly to avoid signal disturbance by the government (Arrieta 2015).

of them were bilingual. Several programs had an entertainment and cultural content, focused on Basque folklore, 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 prototypical Basque traits. There are few doubts that these programs were realized for an audience already fluent in euskera. Other programs had an explicit *educational* content: they were intended to help children and students practice the language, for instance having them write and read essays in euskera. Given the difficulties a native Spanish speaker would have in learning euskera, an idiom 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 could not practice the language at schools, and were at risk of abandoning it. Some shows tried instead to teach basic elements of euskera, like the meaning and correct pronunciation of some words (see figure 2): the intended audience were probably Basque children and adults whose predominant 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 were disproportionately allocated to evening time slots (figure 3, right panel): this reinforces the conclusion that they were conceived as consumption goods for the family, including children and teenagers that were home from school. Music had an important role in RPL programming, and the station's repertoire was highly heterogeneous. The pieces aired varied from classical music to pop songs of the time and Basque traditional songs. As shown in Appendix D, the share of Basque songs over the total was generally equal or superior to that of Spanish ones. Another novelty introduced by RPL were advertisements in euskera (Agirreazkuenaga 2017).

## 4.2 Local news

RPL had daily information programs. 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. Weekly information on local food markets and prices were also given (see Appendix D). 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 time (figure 3, left panel).

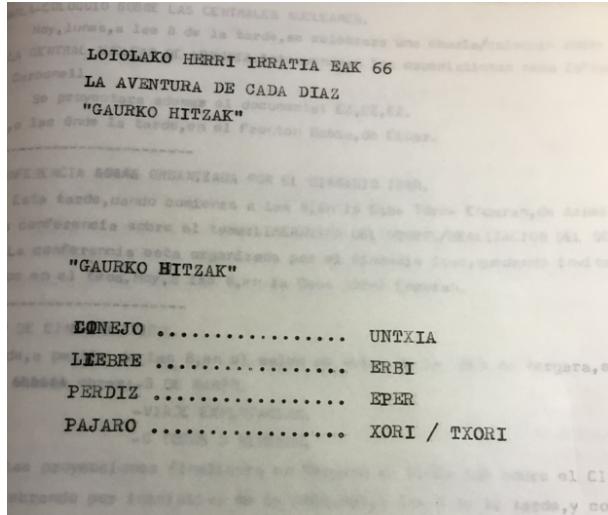
## 4.3 Radio and ethnicity

In sum, it is clear the the goal of RPL was to defend and promote the diffusion of ethnic culture. The core of this work consisted in the popularization of knowledge of Basque traditions and cultural traits, and language was the most prominent element. Moreover, language diffusion was pursued in different ways, for listeners of different ages and repertoires. On the one hand, much of the production was realized for people whose ethnic identification was plausibly already strong. On the other hand, many radio initiatives had the goal of expanding ethnic consciousness to listeners partially assimilated in the Spanish nation or at risk of becoming so.

# 5 Data and Design

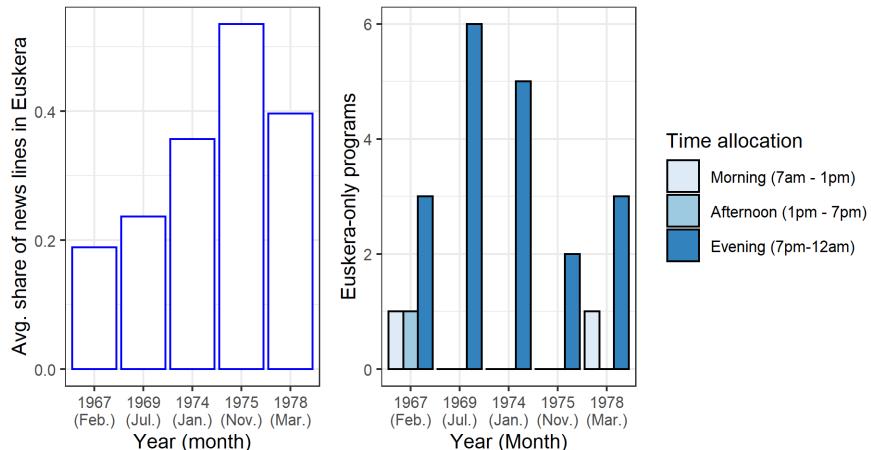
To study the effects of ethnic media on ethnic mobilization, I constructed an original municipality-level dataset of radio diffusion and historical and contemporary political behav-

Figure 2: 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 3: 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 D for details on sampling and coding procedure.

ior in the Basque Country, compiling primary and secondary data from public and archival sources. All variables are aggregated at the town boundaries of the 1970 Spanish Census (see Appendix A for details on aggregations and town splits).

## 5.1 Operationalizing and interpreting radio exposure

My theoretical object of interest is the effect on 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 municipality-level information. Following a rich literature on the effects of media (Olken 2009; Adena et al. 2015; Yanagizawa-Drott 2014), I estimate media consumption with its supply. Specifically, I compute the received signal strength of RPL at the centroid of each municipality. Signal quality increases monotonically in received signal strength, although the relationship is non-linear. Differently from studies that can identify compliers (Peisakhin and Rozenas 2018), I am unable to model actual reception as a function of signal strength, so I rely on a linear approximation. Therefore, to the extent that signal strength is exogenous, it is an encouragement to treatment, that is a causal effect scaled by the share of compliers.

I compute predicted signal strength using the Irregular Terrain Model (Longley and Rice 1968). The predicted signal strength in  $\text{dB}\mu\text{V}$  is then standardized to the support  $[0, 1]$  by the formula  $S_i = \frac{s_i - \min_i(s_i)}{\max_i(s_i) - \min_i(s_i)}$ . The formula for signal strength uses technical parameters of the originating transmitter, such as power and frequency, the distance between 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 a history of RPL written by a Jesuit priest and former editor of the station (Arregui 2011). Besides the basic technical characteristics, the book reports detailed indications of how to reach the transmitter, placed on mount Itxumendi in

the interior of the Gipuzkoa province. I geo-referenced and validated the transmitter location by combining the indications in Arregui (2011) with Google Earth, Google Maps, a website that geo-locates mountains (Peakvisor.com), and an online directory of radio antennas (fm-list.org).<sup>6</sup> Following the literature, I also use the ITM algorithm to compute the predicted signal strength in free space, that is the strength of the signal, given transmitter parameters and distance, 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 relative location of the transmitter: conditioning on it, and on other geographic characteristics, isolates a random component that is due to differences in the shape of terrain, plausibly unrelated to political inclinations (Durante et al. 2019; Crabtree and Kern 2018). Figure 4 shows predicted signal strength in the Basque Country and Navarre.

To better qualify the theoretical value of this estimand, I note that the status of RPL as a unique ethnic media outlet was confined to the Franco era: after the democratic transition, Basque public radio and television adopted bilingualism, 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 about 10 years of the dictatorship on the propensity to support ethnic nationalist (or other) parties.

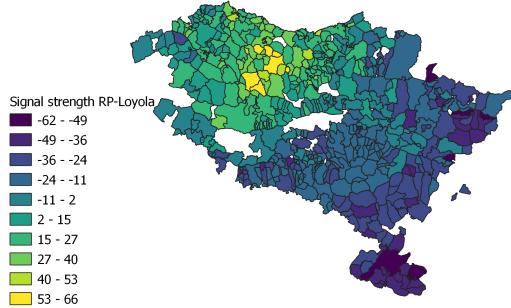
## 5.2 Outcomes

To measure support for ethnic-nationalist and other parties, I use vote shares in all elections for the Spanish parliament in the years 1979 to 2019. Since the relevant ethnic cleavage revolves around a concept of nationality, behavior in national elections should capture this cleavage better than in elections for the provincial parliament. I use vote shares for the

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<sup>6</sup>I also collected information on the transmitters of the other Basque stations: data on RPS also come from Arregui (2011), and those on RPB have been kindly provided by the current management of the radio.

Figure 4: RPL signal strength in the Basque Country and Navarre



Basque nationalist blocs, the PNV and the radical nationalists, as well as the main Spanish conservative party (PP) and the socialists (PSOE). The PP embodies centralist positions and opposition to regional separatism, the PSOE captures the traditional left-right divide in Spanish politics. Appendix F reports the parties that are coded as radical nationalists over the years: vote shares for radical nationalists are not available between 2000 and 2008, when the main party was banned due to ties with ETA. Additionally, I use data on vote shares and turnout in constitutional and autonomy referendums held after Franco's death. All electoral data for the democratic period are publicly available from the governments of the Basque Autonomous Community and the Chartered Community of Navarre. Given that the mobilization strategies of Basque parties involved both votes and turnout, vote shares are computed over the number of eligible voters.

I also use measures of support for ETA. Although in general, support for radical nationalist

parties is a good proxy of support for ETA (De La Calle 2015), to obtain a more direct measure of activism I collected data on place of birth of a sample of ETA-affiliated prisoners in 1974 from an ETA activist (Forest 1974). The list is a snapshot of the geographic origin of people captured by the Spanish authorities up to that year (Clark 1983) and thus is self-selected, therefore all analyses involving it should be read with this caveat in mind.

### 5.3 Additional variables

I use a large number of contextual variables on social and political history of the Basque Country from primary and secondary sources. Some of these variables, to my knowledge, are used for the first time in empirical work. Population data come from digitized Spanish Censuses covering the period 1920-1970, available from the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística*, while municipal-level geographic variables are provided by the *Centro Nacional de Información Geográfica*. To measure historical (pre-Franco) support for Basque nationalism, I collected electoral outcomes during the Spanish Second Republic (1931-1936) from the Basque government and the *Archivo Real y General* in Pamplona. I use individual-level data on victims of Francoist repression during and after the civil war, from lists compiled by the non-profit organization *Euskal Memoria Fundazioa*.<sup>7</sup> I use 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 municipal-level data on Basque speakers from parish priests (see Appendix A for a discussion of this data). For the post-Franco period, I instead obtained from the Basque statistical institute municipal-level data language composition at several points in time from 1981 to 2016. Summary statistics for all the variables are in Appendix A.

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<sup>7</sup><http://www.euskalmemoria.eus/es>

## 5.4 Design

I estimate models of the form

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

where  $Radio_{ip}$  is a predicted signal strength in municipality  $i$  and province  $p$ ,  $Z_{ip}$  is a moderator,  $X_{ip}$  is a vector of controls that always includes predicted signal in free space, and the log of municipal area, height, and population, while  $\alpha_p$  is a fixed effect for province. The standard error  $\epsilon$  is assumed to be spatially correlated within a bandwidth of 30 km (Conley 1999).<sup>8</sup>

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.

$$x_{ip} = \alpha_p^b + \beta^b Radio_{ip} + M'_{ip}\theta^b + \epsilon_{ip}^b \quad (2)$$

Conditioning on signal in free space, covariates, and province fixed effects, RPL reception is not significantly correlated with civil war victims (both civilian casualties of conflict and prisoners executed by Francoists, see Martinez (2021)), vote shares for the Left and Right blocs (De La Calle 2015) or distance from provincial capitals. However, it is correlated with the pre-war vote share of PNV and the share of votes for Yes in a 1933 referendum for Basque autonomy (figure 5). This raises the concern that RPL transmitter was placed in an area more favorable to ethnic nationalism. For this reason, I always include the vote share of PNV in 1933 among the covariates:<sup>9</sup> the right panel of figure 5 shows that its inclusion improves

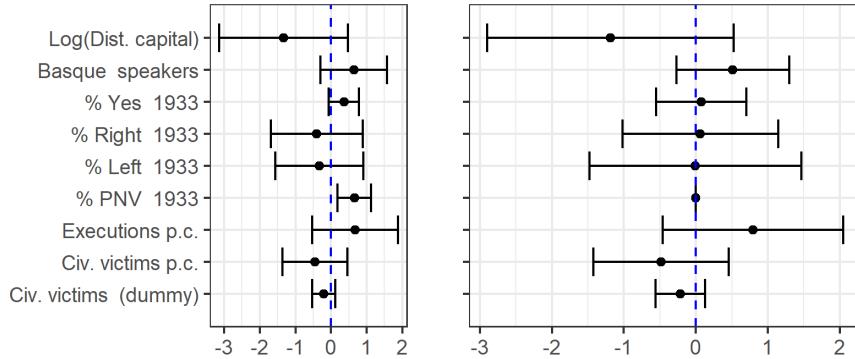
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<sup>8</sup>In Appendix C I show that results hold using wild cluster bootstrapped standard errors at the district (*comarca*) level.

<sup>9</sup>Votes in other general elections held during the Second Republic (1931 and 1936) are not equally appropriate: in 1931 the PNV ran in a joint list with the Right, so it is not possible to separate their votes, and

the balance of the other pre-war political variables.

Figure 5: Balance tests



*Note:* Coefficients of predicted signal strength of RPL in regressions where variables on the  $y$ -axis are the outcomes. 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 covariates. Continuous outcome variables are standardized for comparability. 95% Confidence intervals with Conley standard errors (30km) displayed.

## 6 Radio and ethnic mobilization

I begin by estimating average effects of exposure to ethnic media on voting behavior, that is a version of model 1 without any moderator. Results are reported in table 1. 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 Peisakhin and Rozenas (2018) note, it refers to an extreme counterfactual. In terms of standard deviations, a one standard deviations in signal strength increases support for radical nationalist parties by about 1.6 percentage points. Similarly, estimates in column 3 imply in 1936 the Right withdrew its candidates from one province (De La Calle 2015, ch.4).

that exposure to RPL depressed the vote share of PP by about 7 p.p., while 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 1: 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 <sup>2</sup>	0.56471	0.63745	0.71887	0.66904
Within R <sup>2</sup>	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

These average effects are similar in magnitude to those that the literature identifies as caused by strongly biased media (Peisakhin and Rozenas 2018). Nonetheless, in this case the treatment represents an historical exposure, during a time in which elections were not held. Thus, it captures how much an ethnic media environment made individuals more responsive to the appeals of ethnic 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 top and bottom more extreme observations in the distribution of signal strength. Moreover, they are

robust to replacing signal in free space with logarithms of municipality coordinates.

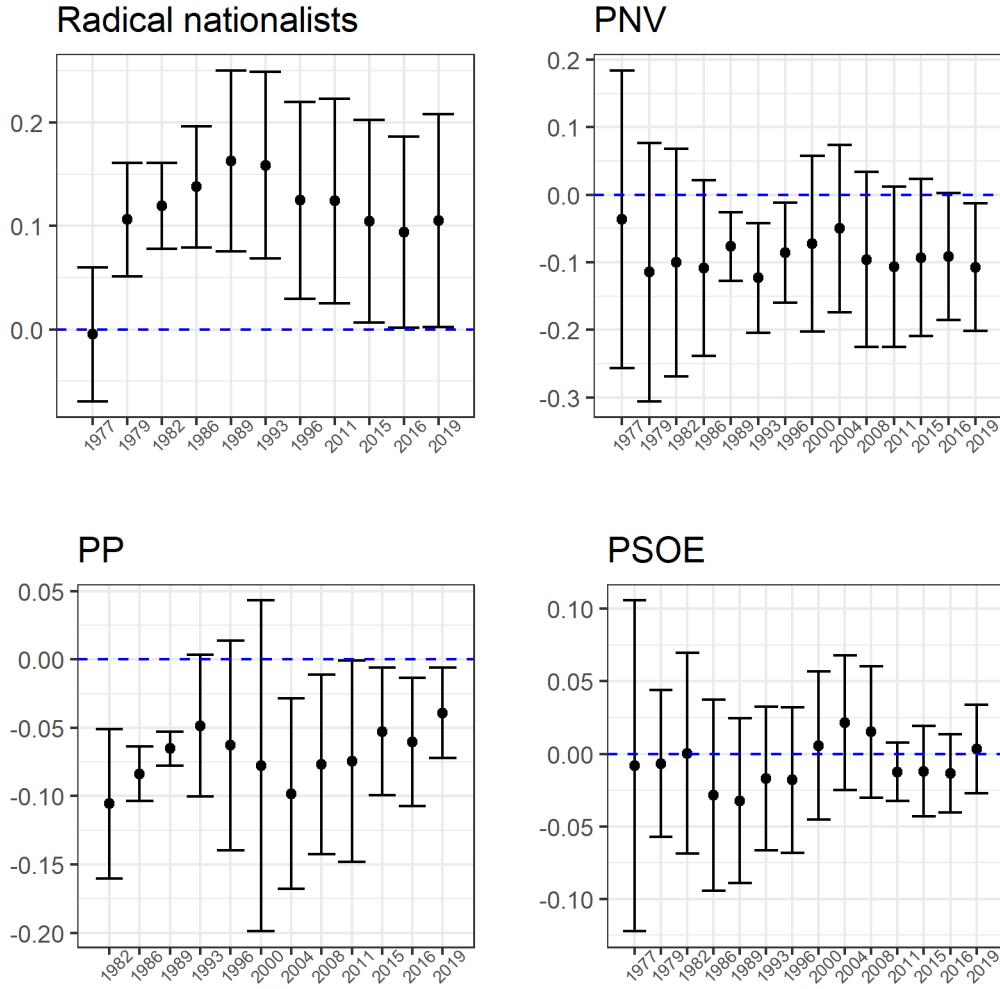
Figure 6 reports the results for each election individually. Results are consistent across years and not driven by few outlier elections. The only election where ethnic voting seems unrelated to radio reception is the 1977 one, the first of the post-Franco era. In that election the radical nationalist bloc was fragmented in many small parties, many of which did not run in all Basque provinces. The null result may be explained by the lack of a unitary party able to mobilize identity voting in the wake of the dictatorship. From 1979 instead, radical nationalist lists were aggregated in the Herri Batasuna (HB) coalition, which run alone in the following names, changing names but remaining recognizable to the electorate (see Appendix F). This interpretation would be consistent with the hypothesis that ethnic media can increase the salience of identity, but that to be translated into behavior, the latter needs actors that capitalize on it.

## 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. In the post-Franco era, 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.

I use two of these: in the constitutional referendum of 1978 the PNV advocated for abstention (*El País* 1978a), while the radical nationalist parties advocated for the No (*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 advocated for the Yes, while the radical nationalists promoted abstention (*El País* 1979): here I use turnout and the Yes share. I run models with a measure of much more extreme

Figure 6: 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. Radical nationalists did not receive votes between 2000 and 2008 due to a party ban.

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, and is subject to the caveats described before. Results in table 2 show that exposure to 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), confirming the pattern of boosted support for radical nationalists starting from 1979. Going from no reception to perfect reception (increasing signal strength by one standard deviation) decreased turnout by 22 p.p. (3.2 p.p.). On the other hand, there is not significant effect on representation among ETA prisoners. This may be due to self-selection issues, but also to the fact that violent activism relies more decisively on different patterns of socialization than just ethnic awareness.

Table 2: 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 <sup>2</sup>	0.72743	0.27767	0.16074	0.17382	0.48560
Within R <sup>2</sup>	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

## 6.2 Heterogeneity

While on average prolonged exposure to RPL appears to have increased the propensity to mobilize along ethnic lines, the effects may not be homogeneous across the sample. If ethnic media fuel political behavior through the salience of identity, we can expect 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, under the same conditions, support for ethnic parties can be expected to be high even without media. The history of Basque 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 (De La Calle 2015). The other is fluency in euskera, which is a correlate of ethnic attachment (Strijbis et al. 2021). Consequently, I estimate model 1 using as moderators the PNV vote share in 1933 and the share of Basque speakers in 1972.<sup>10</sup> Tables 3 and 4 report the results. The results imply that the effects of exposure to RPL are strong and significant when the moderators are 0 (non-interacted coefficient of *Signal strength*), while increasing the value of the moderators (interacted coefficients) brings them to 0. Since this specification relies on an assumption of linear marginal effect in the moderator values, in Appendix C I run the same models with the binning estimator proposed by Hainmueller et al. (2019) finding similar results.

These results confirm the qualification of the effects: ethnic media seem to be more effective at promoting the integration in the ethnic constituency of "peripheral" sub-populations that were at the margin of it, rather than at increasing mobilization in "core" ones. Contextually, they also resonate with the observation advanced in the literature that radical parties in the Basque Country were able to mobilize a novel constituency coalesced during the Franco era (De La Calle 2015): this section indicates that cultural revival by radio was one such

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<sup>10</sup>Technically, the PNV vote share is computed by including also the vote share of another Basque party, but the latter ran only in one province and was quantitatively irrelevant.

Table 3: Heterogeneous effects of RPL exposure on voting behavior by PNV 1933 vote share

	Rad. Nat. (Avg) (1)	PNV (Avg) (2)	PP (Avg) (3)	PSOE (Avg) (4)
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 <sup>2</sup>	0.56634	0.63786	0.74067	0.67409
Within R <sup>2</sup>	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

Table 4: 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 <sup>2</sup>	0.60539	0.65329	0.72689	0.74087	
Within R <sup>2</sup>	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

mechanism.

## 7 Discussion and mechanisms

### 7.1 Party differences

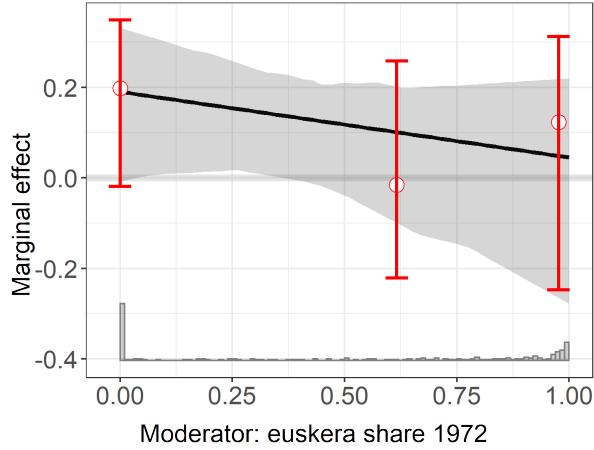
As the previous sections have shown, exposure to RPL programming boosted support for ethnic parties, but not to all in the same way. Radical parties born in the wake of the Franco regime benefited the most, while support for the moderate PNV did not increase and in some elections was decreased. This uneven pattern may be explained by the greater ability of the radical nationalists to represent the new generations of aggrieved voters that the dictatorship had produced: the increasingly adversarial politicization of identity turned many against the traditional symbols of Basque nationalism, such as the PNV and its exiled leaders, accused of being too moderate (Pérez-Agote 2006). New parties born out of the civil society and with a more solid experience of daily life under Franco were able to catalyze these new segments of ethnic constituency into political activism.

### 7.2 Language adoption

If radio exposure made Basque identity particularly salient, and this in turn increased ethnic voting, we could expect to observe behavioral patterns consistent with voting, but purely expressive of group identity. In context of this study, a possible one is the adoption of euskera. As the previous discussion has emphasized, Basque nationalists have consistently proposed euskera as the most important marker of ethnic identity: thus, language use is a strong predictor of ethnic voting not only historically but also today (Strijbis et al. 2021). Importantly, school reforms in the 1980s introduced bilingual and euskera-only curricula besides Spanish ones in public schools, but did not make them compulsory. Therefore, even

if learning euskera was made considerably easier in the post-Franco era, actual language adoption remained the outcome of the choices of families. I test whether exposure to RPL programs during the dictatorship increased the rates of euskera use in the long-run. Using data on the the language composition of municipalities over time, 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) speaks euskera the share can only increase (decrease) in time, as is shown in Appendix E.

Figure 7: 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.

Figure 7 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 further evidence in favor a catalyst effect on Basque identity that lasted over time and encompassed voting behavior.

### 7.3 Direct mechanisms

The hypothesis I formulate revolves around an *indirect* link between ethnic media and ethnic mobilization, based on the salience of identity. This mechanism excludes *direct* effects such as the use of ethnic media by politicians for communication, campaigns, or propaganda. In the case of the Basque Country, this possibility was ruled out by the absence of a party system and of free information during the Franco regime. Things however changed with the democratic transition: the media environment became independent from the state, and political discussions, with plausibly more attention being given to the activities of nationalist parties, entered the daily programming of RPL and other stations. It is however unlikely that the effects of RPL reception can be attributed to better information about Basque parties after the transition: the new provincial government established public radio and television stations in euskera ([Agirreazkuenaga 2012](#)), and since then every inhabitant of the region could be exposed to the same political information. Therefore, differences in exposure to direct ethnic appeals between places with better or worse reception of RPL were probably negligible.

## 8 Conclusion

Theories in comparative politics argue that a pre-requisite of ethnic mobilization is an increase in the political salience of group boundaries. Given their broad reach and the possibility of exposing large audiences to repeated messages, modern media are in a unique position to sustain this process. Understanding the conditions under which they can do so

is thus relevant to characterize the institutional context in which multi-cultural societies live today in a more comprehensive way, as well as to address the challenges of co-habitation in the modern world. In this paper, I have proposed that media with ethnic content can fuel the politicization of identities, even if their content is non-political. By increasing the salience of group identity, and emphasizing the contraposition with others, ethnic media can benefit the mobilization efforts of political entrepreneurs who invest in ethnic divisions. This effect is heterogeneous and conditional. First, it operates where ethnic boundaries are more porous, that is in sub-populations that are partially assimilated into the out-group and that would be less inclined to vote for their identity. Second, media without a political content may not necessarily work in isolation, but require conditions under which cultural identities acquire a political value. This is the case when, for instance, geographically targeted repression allows individuals to coordinate grievances against the state along an identity label. Finally, since media are hardly separable from their political context, their effects may not benefit everyone in the same way: new ethnic constituencies may be more likely to support parties that better embody the political conflict which allowed their aggregation in the first place, even at the expense of other ethnic parties. 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 Alavese 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 available in the electoral data: therefore I treat the smaller towns as separate towns in the election year before they are dissolved.

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
$\Delta$ Basque speakers 1972-2016	225	0.065	0.202	-0.462	-0.100	0.251	0.451

## A.2 Basque speakers in the Franco period

Data about the municipal distribution of Basque speakers in 1972 come from the linguistic survey 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 *already known* 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 Census one, 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 final survey results I assign the value of 0 Basque speakers, as this is the implicit assumption of the author.

## B Additional maps and pictures

Figure B.1: Ad booklet of Radio Popular de Loyola and San Sebastián



Source: Koldo Mitxelena Library

Figure B.2: Programs in Spanish and Euskera, Radio Popular de San Sebastián, circa 1981



Source: Koldo Mitxelena Library

Figure B.3: Towns of origin of ETA prisoners

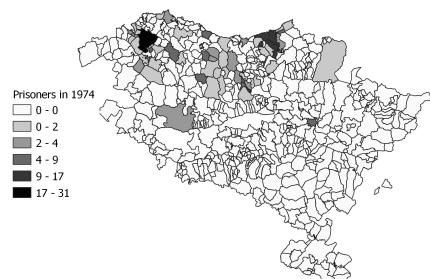
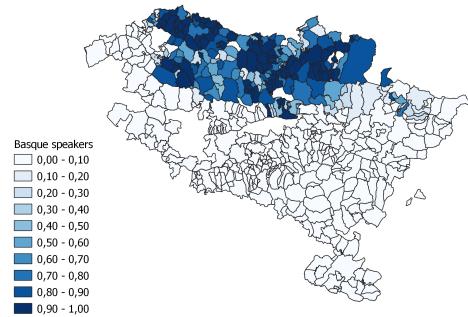


Figure B.4: Basque speakers in 1972



*Note:* Provincial capitals excluded

Figure B.5: Civilian casualties in the Spanish civil war

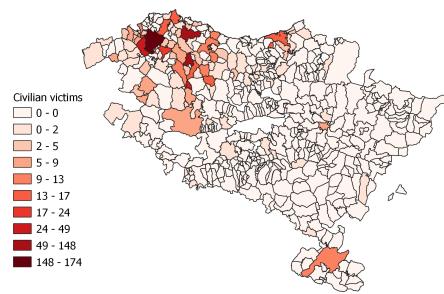
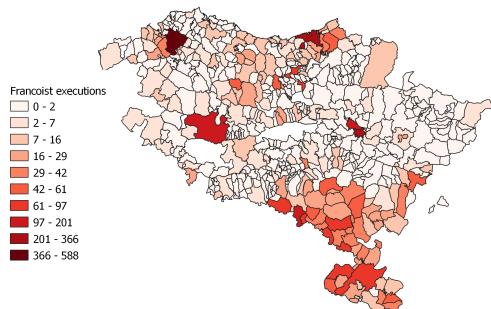


Figure B.6: People executed by the Francoists in the Spanish civil war



## 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 <sup>2</sup>	0.60499	0.63748	0.72296	0.74085
Within R <sup>2</sup>	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 <sup>2</sup>	0.59439	0.64228	0.76227	0.67833
Within R <sup>2</sup>	0.38120	0.43616	0.43772	0.66076
Covariates	✓	✓	✓	✓
Province FE	✓	✓	✓	✓

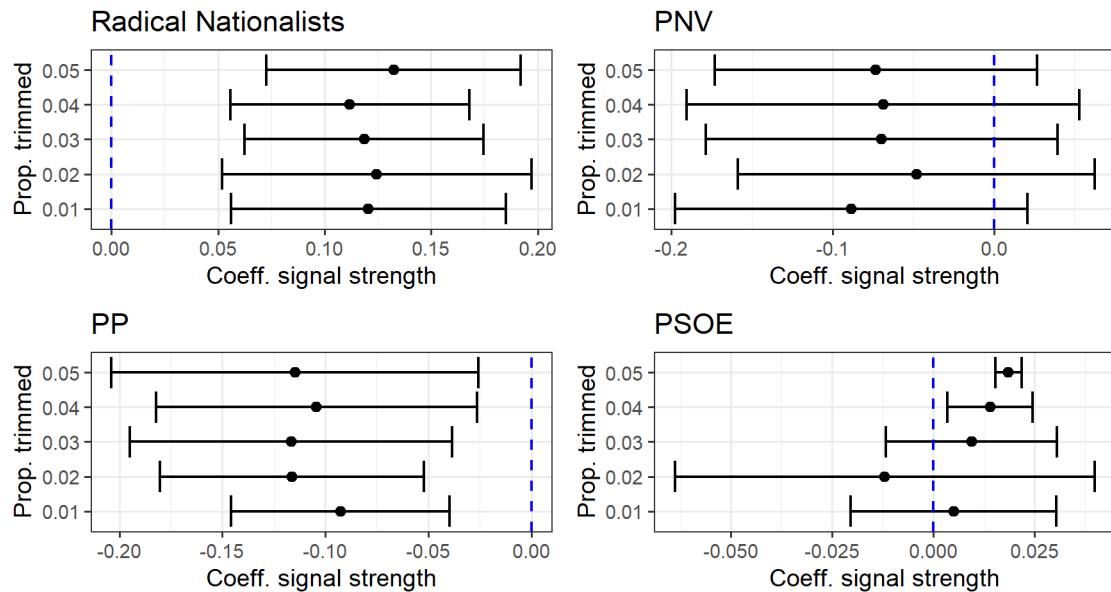
Note: Covariates include log of town latitude and longitude, log of municipal area and height, log of 1970 population, and PNV 1933 vote share. Conley standard errors in parentheses (30km). \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

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

	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

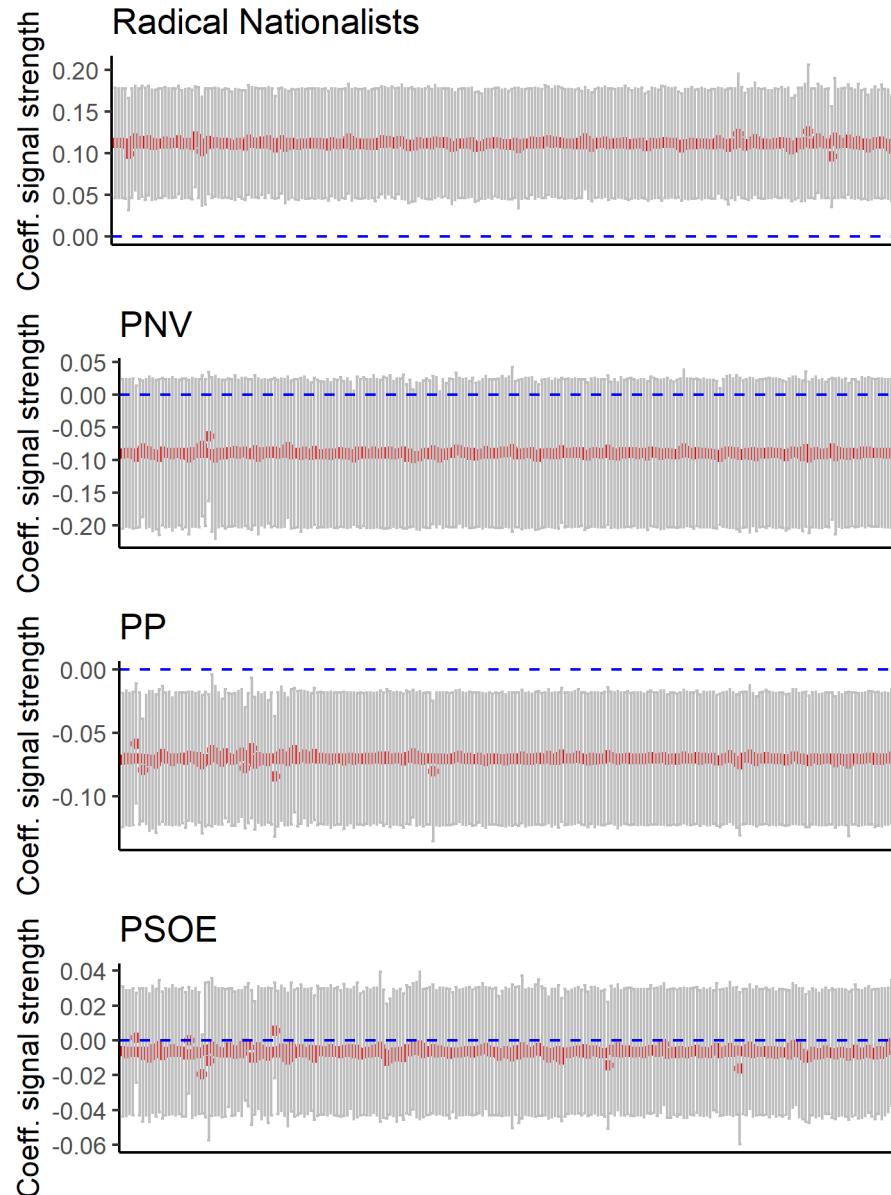
Estimates from the same models reported in table 1, with p-values from wild cluster bootstrap at the district level.

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



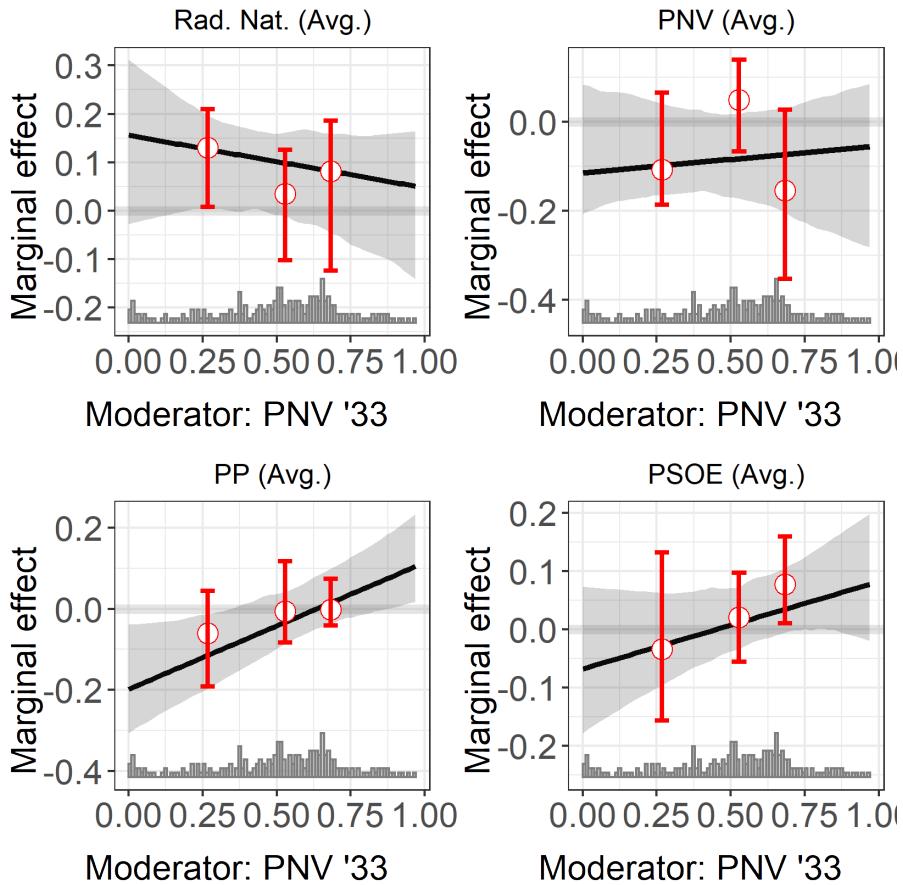
*Note:* Coefficients from the models reported in table 1, removing the top and bottom extreme observations in the distribution of RPL signal strength. 95% Confidence intervals with Conley standard errors (30km) displayed.

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



*Note:* Coefficients from the models reported in table 1, 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 interactive models



*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, Mummolo, 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 Content of RPL

### D.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 a block randomization procedure 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.

### D.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.

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.

### D.3 Music

For each program, there is a list of the songs or music pieces aired, together with the language of each song (except for classical music and other instrumental pieces). 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 instrumental pieces. 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.

### D.4 Additional descriptive statistics

This section reports additional descriptives on RPL content during and after the Franco era. Figure D.1 shows, for each month of programs surveyed, the daily share of news lines in euskera. The dashed lines represent monthly average shares, used to plot figure 3 in the main text. Figure D.2 shows the language composition in the music aired by RPL. With the exception of 1969, songs in euskera account for an equal or higher share of the total than

songs in Spanish.

## D.5 Additional historical evidence

In this section I provide a narrative account on the content of RP. All the section draws on the work by Agirreazkuenaga (2012) and Arregui (2011), on RPL and, RP-S.

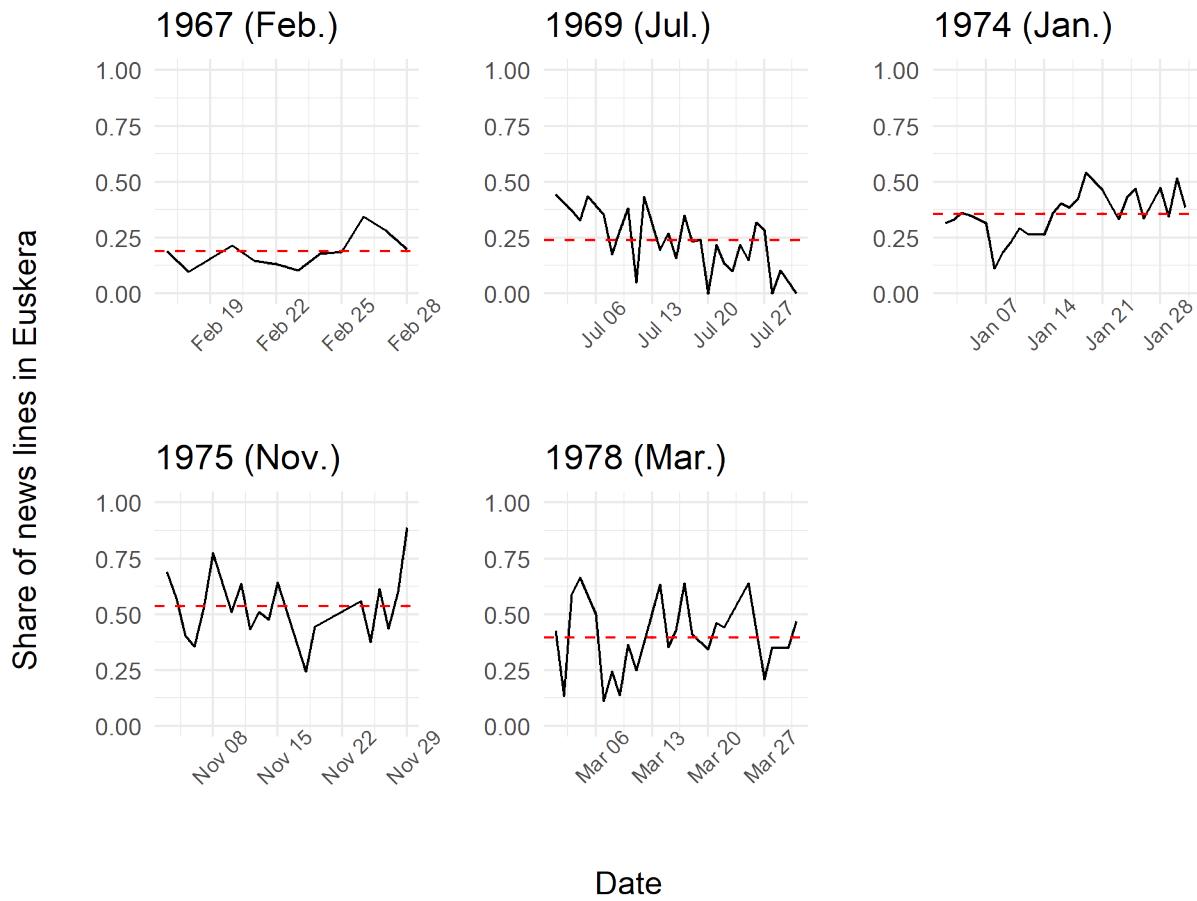
RPL started using euskera from its early years in 1962. The radio transmitted the catholic rosary (prayers) every day and later started to broadcast the mass. Both were in Basque. Later on, the station developed entertainment and popular programs where both languages were used. This tendency was strengthened after the radio closure and the new opening in FM in 1966.

Basque music had a strong presence. The Spanish authorities had compiled lists of prohibited music, including political songs but also Catalan and Basque folk singers. RPL and RP-S were fined several times for transmitting this music. RP also participated to the organization of the first and only Basque music festival in 1971.

RPL also had a few general entertainment programs fully in euskera. The most famous was *Beti Jai* (Always Partying), lasting one hour per day, which combined music, interviews, comments on facts of the day and Basque poems. Until 1977 all Spanish radios had to connect to the state-owned network RNE for the news. Therefore, the information service on RP was limited to reading and summarizing Spanish newspapers with relatively little room for additional contributions. RP-S introduced a journalistic program called *El kiosko de la Rosi* (The Roses' Kiosk) where the press articles were commented. In addition, RP stations discussed news of local interest. Other programs like *La radio marcha* (The radio walks) broadcast interviews realized to common people on the streets. This direct contact with the listeners created problems to RP in 1972, when an interviewed woman called to a strike to protest against the trial of two ETA members.

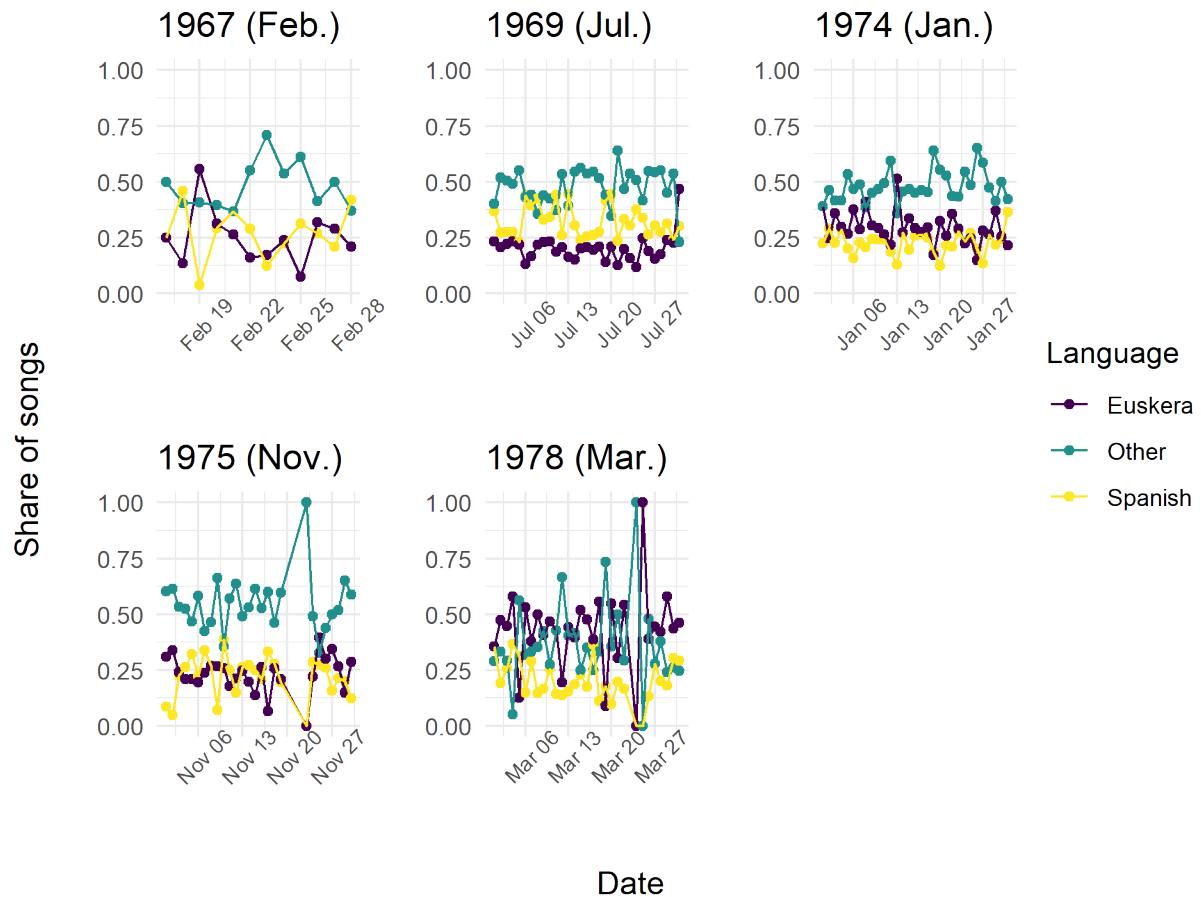
Some radio dramas with typically Basque characters were realized in euskera as well.

Figure D.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 3.

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



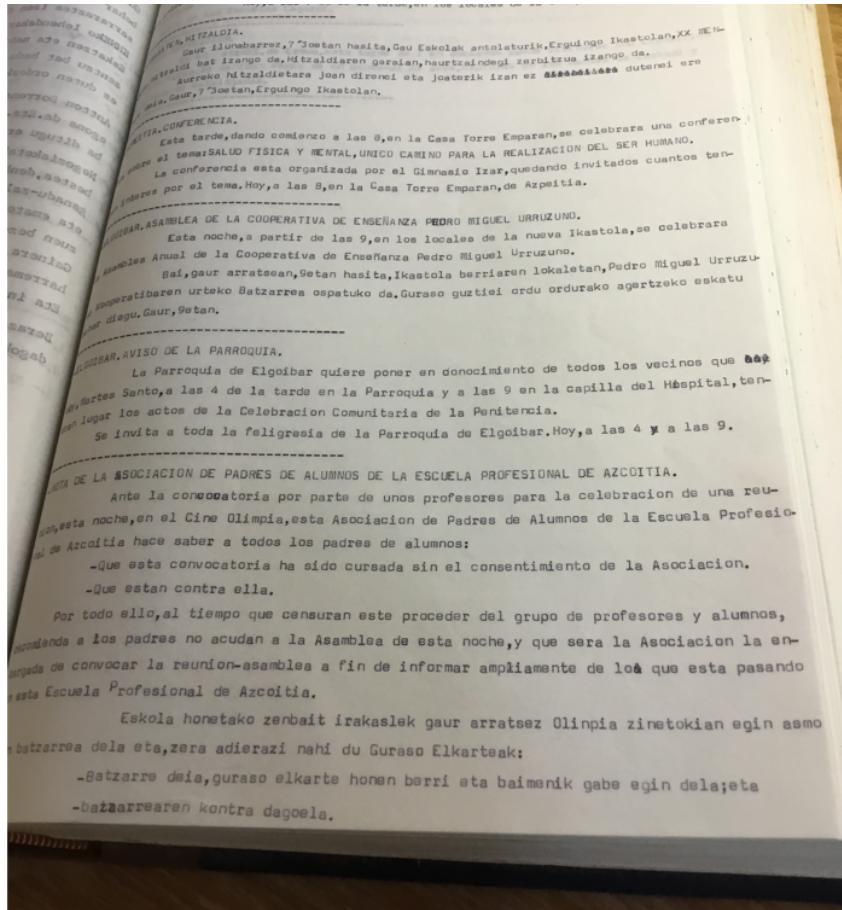
*Note:* Share of songs and music pieces by language over time in each of the months of broadcast coded.  
 "Other" includes songs in foreign languages (e.g. English) or instrumental pieces (e.g. classical music).

Figure D.3: Local news in RPL: food prices at the market in the town of Azpeitia

MERCADO SEMANAL DE		Locality Narienche		AÑO 1.975
DIA	MES	PLANTAS		
NUEVOS	62-80-96-42	LECHUGA	14	
POLLOS	145	BERZA	10	
GALLINAS	60	CEBOLLAS	16	
BOMEJO	110	TONATE	13	
CORDERO	180	PIIMENTOS	30	
PICHIOMES	5	ACELGAS	18	
QUESO DE OVEJA	400	PUERROS	36	peuva
QUESO DE VACA	170			
PATATA	9			
VAINAS	40			
ALUBIA ROJA	375	FRUTAS		
ALUBIA BLANCA	98	HANZANAS	20	
BARAS	10	PERAS	20	
BERZA	10	UVA	34 Blanca ~20	
LECHUGA	13	CEREZAS	X	
TONATE	12	PLATAMOS	42	
PIIMENTOS	30	MARANJAS	28-20-18	
GUINDILLAS	K	HANDARINAS	28-20	
CEJOLLAS	16	HELOCOTON	X	
ZAHORIAS	16	NELON	26 Kilo	
PUERROS	35	LIMON	60	
ACELGAS	18	MUECES	95	
ABIOS	2'50 cada	AVELLANAS	X	
ESPINACHAS	30	ALBARICOQUE	X	
BALIFLOR	15-30	FRESAS	X	
ECAROLAS	5	ALMENDRUCO	X	
CONCHOFAS		ACEITUNAS	96-69-74-50-248	
ISANTES	X			

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

Figure D.4: Local news in RPL: mono- and bilingual announcements

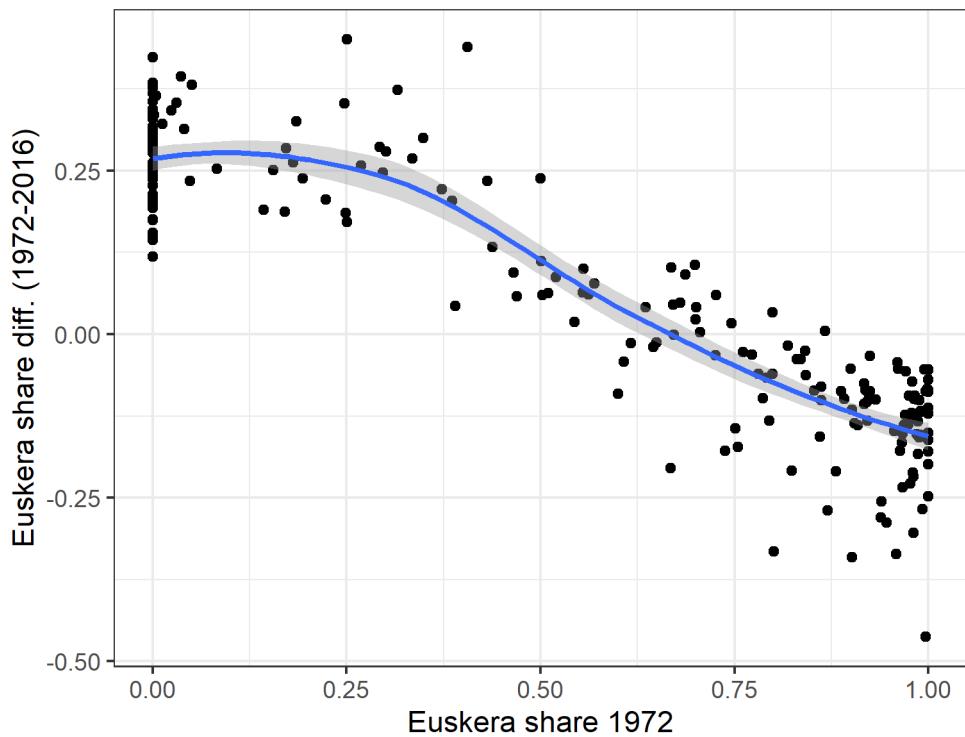


Source: Photo by the author, courtesy of Koldo Mitxelena Library

## E Language change

Figure E.1 shows the absolute growth in the use of euskera at the municipal level between 1972 and 2016, computed as the difference in shares of speakers, over the baseline share in 1972. The value for 2016 is from official data of the Basque statistical institute, the value of 1972 is from Yrizar (1973).

Figure E.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.

## F Political parties

### F.1 Parties in post-Franco elections

Table F.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 F.2: Radical nationalist parties 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

### F.2 Parties in the Second Republic, 1933

Elections in the Second Republic (1931-1936) in the Basque Country were characterized by three main factions: the Left (Republicans, Socialists and Communists), the Right (Carlists, Monarchists) and the Basque nationalists (PNV and in one district ANV). 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). The low variation of within-list preferences suggests that voters tended to give a preference to all candidates on a list. I use the election of 1933 because it is the first

one in which the PNV ran independently, as in 1931 it had run in coalition with the Right. 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 vote share of the PNV includes the ANV, a marginal nationalist party that in 1933 ran only in Gipuzkoa with modest vote shares. I report below a list of parties in 1933.

Table F.3: Parties in the 1933 parliamentary elections

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

Figure F.1 shows the distribution of votes for PNV at the 1933 elections in the three Basque provinces. Before the parliamentary elections, the Basques voted in a plebiscite over the Statute of autonomy approved by an assembly of mayors of the three provinces. Navarrese mayors had withdrawn from the preparation of the Statute draft, therefore the referendum was not held in Navarre. The referendum was held without oversight of the central authorities and the scholarly consensus is that there have been irregularities (De La Granja Sainz 2009). As shown in figure F.2, the median vote share for the "Yes" was above 90% in Biscay and Gipuzkoa and lower in Alava. In one municipality registered votes for the "Yes" exceed the

total of registered voters.

Figure F.1: Vote share for the PNV in 1933

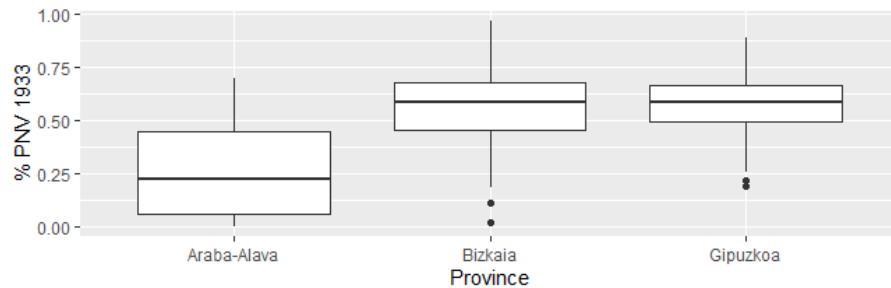


Figure F.2: Vote share for "Yes" in the autonomy referendum in 1933

