

# **SUBNATIONAL AUTHORITIES**

*Comparative Politics*

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IE University

# What we'll cover today

- Veto player theory

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- Multilevel governance

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- Bicameralism

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- Checks and balances, accountability institutions, and constraints on the executive **may make it harder to innovate, to adapt, and to respond quickly**

# Within-state divisions and accountability



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## Veto player theory

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- Countries' political systems can therefore be described by the number of veto players there are

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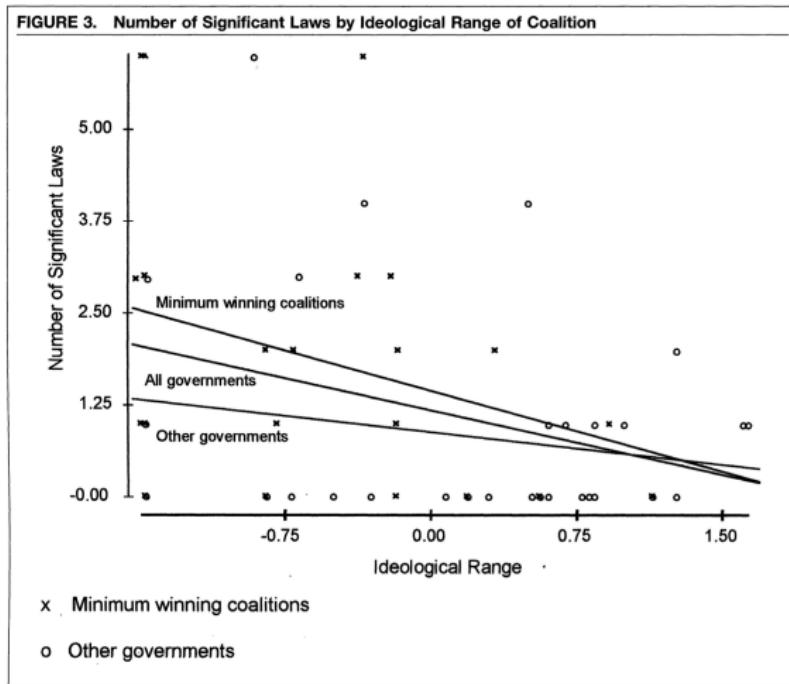
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- With more veto players, more regime instability (at least in presidentialism)
- With more veto players, judicial and bureaucratic activism will flourish

## Some evidence consistent with veto player theory

## *Data on work conditions policy reforms in European countries in the 80s, as a function of the ideological distance among coalition members*

**FIGURE 3.** Number of Significant Laws by Ideological Range of Coalition



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- The theory ignores how parties and interest groups can help coordinate actors
- By diluting responsibility and facilitating blame shifting, the existence of “veto players” can actually facilitate unpopular reform in some cases

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- A more political take: **veto players emerge from conflicts and bargains among political elites**
  - This idea invites us to take more seriously the political origins and dynamics of veto players, and how they shape states and state capacity

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- In many ways, **politics never ends**: the constitution is a (necessarily) incomplete contract, constantly subject to issues of interpretation and enforcement

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- Political leaders, political parties, citizens, and ideas play a role in shaping these effects
- The selection, socialization, and networks of key actors (governors, mayors, senators, justices) matters

# Multilevel governance

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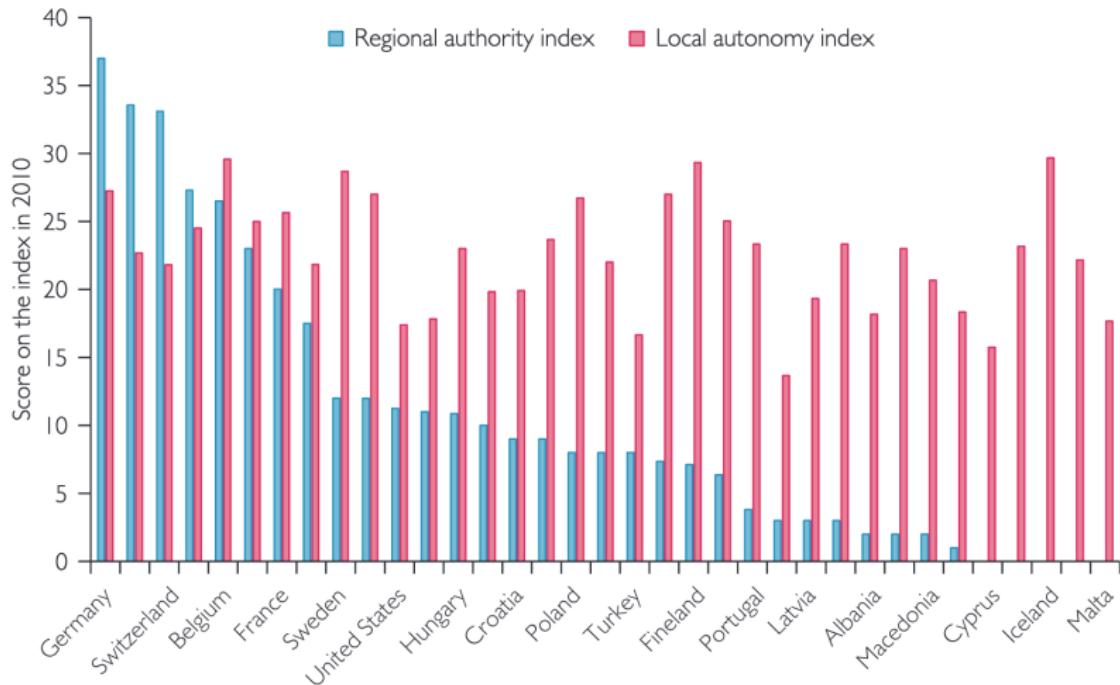
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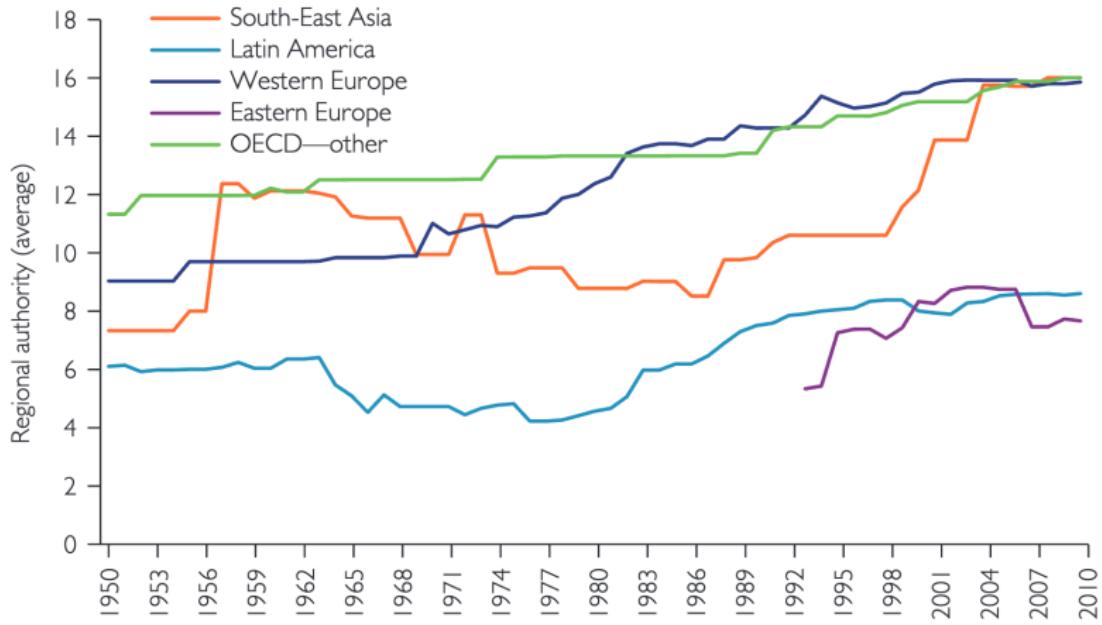
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  - A continuous measurement of **regional authority**: law making, executive control, fiscal control, and borrowing control

# The regional authority index across countries



# The regional authority index across time



# Trends in multilevel governance

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- Merging or scaling up of subnational units

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- Third generation theories, or the identity approach

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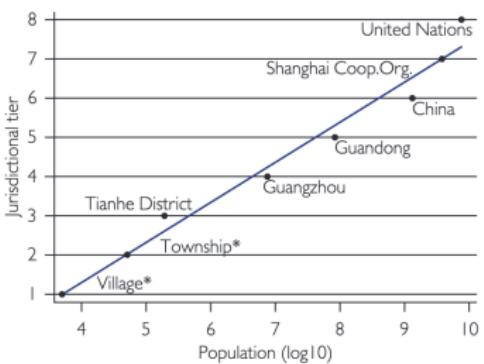
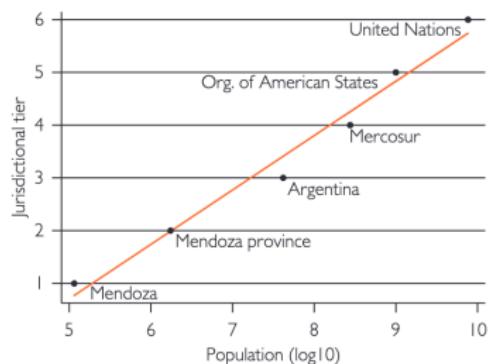
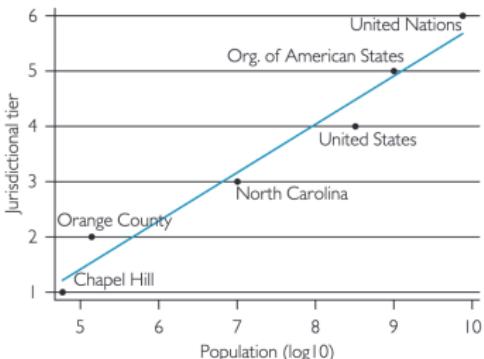
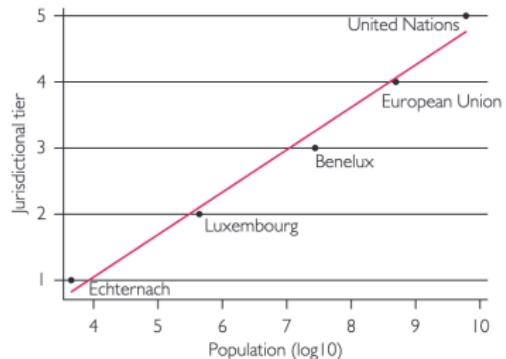
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- **Key limitation:** This approach leaves little space for political conflicts. It assumes decisions are taken by a welfare maximizing social planner. Decentralization is seen as a technical matter.

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Note: Luxembourg (top left), United States (top right), China (bottom right), and Argentina (bottom left). Population estimates for 2010; population numbers for village and township in China are averages for the Tianhe District.

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- **Key limitation:** ignores the role of differentiated identities

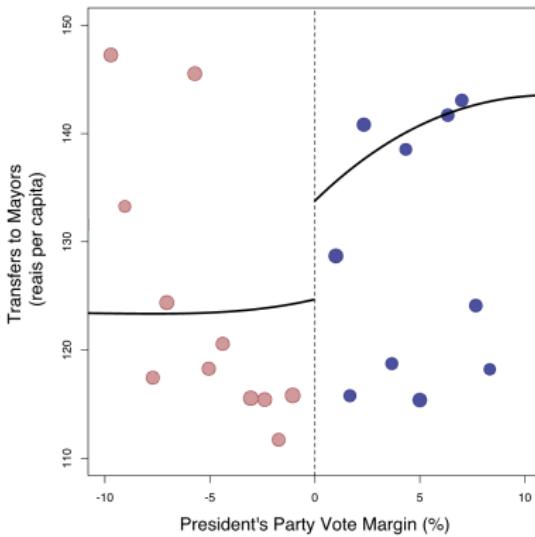
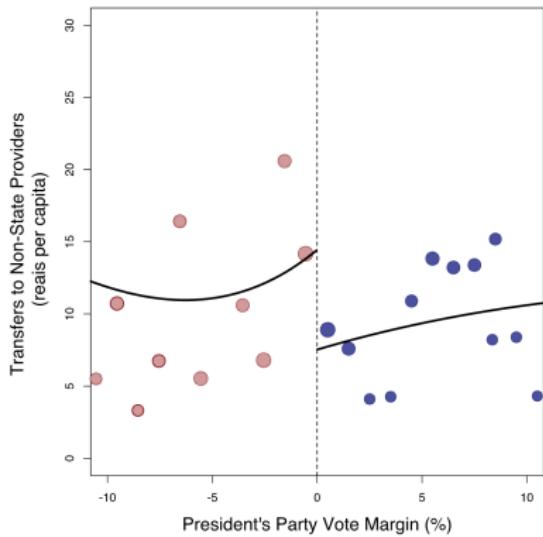
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## *OECD's 10 principles for more effective decentralization*

1. Clarify the responsibilities assigned to different government levels
2. Ensure that all responsibilities are sufficiently funded
3. Strengthen subnational fiscal autonomy to enhance accountability
4. Support subnational capacity building
5. Build adequate coordination mechanisms across levels of government
6. Support cross-jurisdictional cooperation
7. Strengthen innovative and experimental governance, and promote citizens' engagement
8. Allow and make the most of asymmetric decentralisation arrangements
9. Consistently improve transparency, enhance data collection and strengthen performance monitoring
10. Strengthen fiscal equalisation systems and national regional development policies to reduce territorial disparities

# The economic approach to multilevel governance

From a **study** on the effect of mayoral political alignment on federal transfers in Brazil



# Ambiguous effects of political alignment

From a **study** on the effect of political alignment on health transfers and outcomes in Pakistan (Punjab)

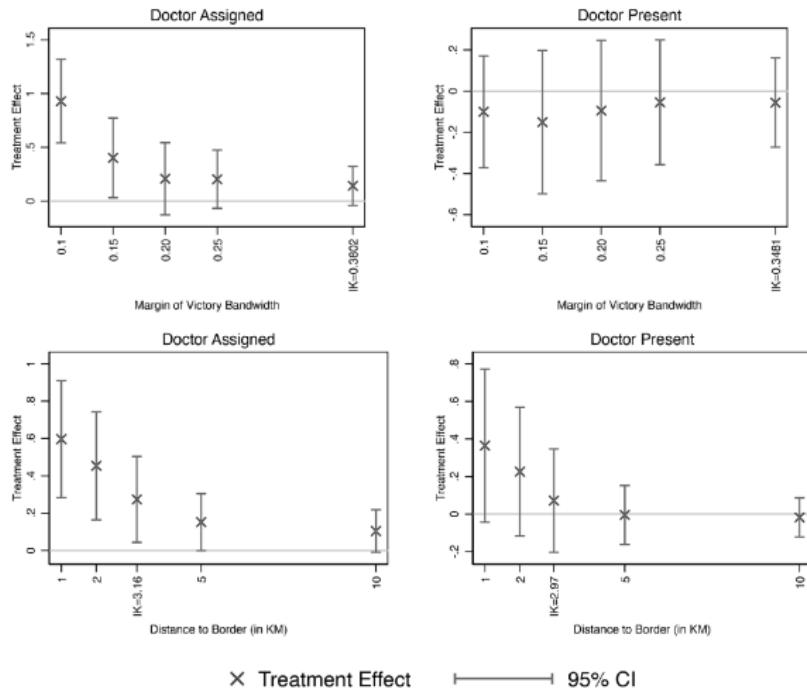


Figure 2. Main results from close elections regression discontinuity (RD) (top) and geographic RD (bottom). Color version available as an online enhancement.

# Ambiguous effects of political alignment

From a **study** on the effect of political alignment on health outputs and outcomes in Argentina (Buenos Aires)

|                                 | Infant Mortality Rate |                     |                     |                     |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                                 | (1)                   | (2)                 | (3)                 | (4)                 |
| <i>Political Alignment</i>      | 2.56***<br>(0.72)     | 1.66***<br>(0.59)   | 2.00*<br>(1.13)     | 1.25*<br>(0.73)     |
| <i>Municipal Consultations</i>  | -0.53***<br>(0.11)    | -0.32***<br>(0.08)  | -0.32***<br>(0.08)  | -0.40***<br>(0.09)  |
| <i>Provincial Consultations</i> | 0.28<br>(0.67)        | 0.21<br>(0.56)      | 0.21<br>(0.56)      | -0.06<br>(0.48)     |
| <i>Municipal Wealth</i>         | -0.0001<br>(0.0002)   | -0.0000<br>(0.0002) | -0.0000<br>(0.0002) | -0.001<br>(0.0001)  |
| <i>Reelected Mayor</i>          | 0.14<br>(0.69)        | 0.30<br>(0.59)      | 0.31<br>(0.59)      | 0.33<br>(0.55)      |
| <i>Electoral Competition</i>    | -0.004<br>(0.003)     | 0.02<br>(0.02)      | 0.02<br>(0.02)      | -0.004<br>(0.03)    |
| <i>Peronist Mayor</i>           | 0.46<br>(1.09)        |                     |                     |                     |
| <i>State Presence</i>           |                       | -16.40***<br>(4.30) | -15.68***<br>(5.12) | -14.93***<br>(4.57) |
| <i>Informal Settlements</i>     |                       | -0.24***<br>(0.05)  | -0.24***<br>(0.05)  | -0.24***<br>(0.06)  |
| <i>Protest</i>                  |                       |                     |                     | -0.04**<br>(0.02)   |
| <i>State Presence*Alignment</i> |                       |                     | -1.14<br>(2.16)     |                     |
| <i>Observations</i>             | 223                   | 223                 | 223                 | 191                 |

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , Fixed Effects and Cluster Robust SEs

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- Party competition and **party system differentiation** are central – regional parties' success fuels decentralization. Issues of identity and recognition are key in that **feedback** loop between party competition and decentralization.

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From a **study** on the effects of the 2010 Spanish Constitutional Court's ruling about the Catalan constitution on citizen attitudes

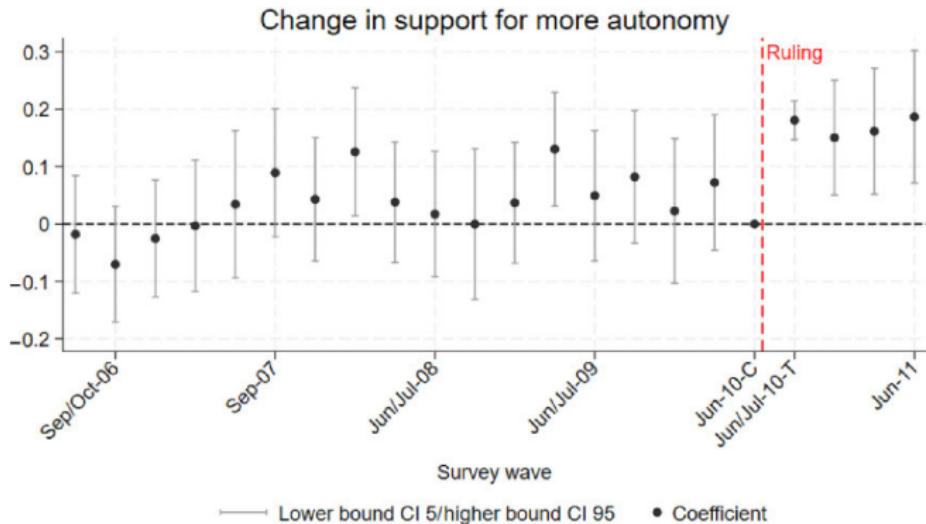


Fig. 1. Event Study: Change in the Preferred Relationship between Spain and Catalonia across Survey Waves.

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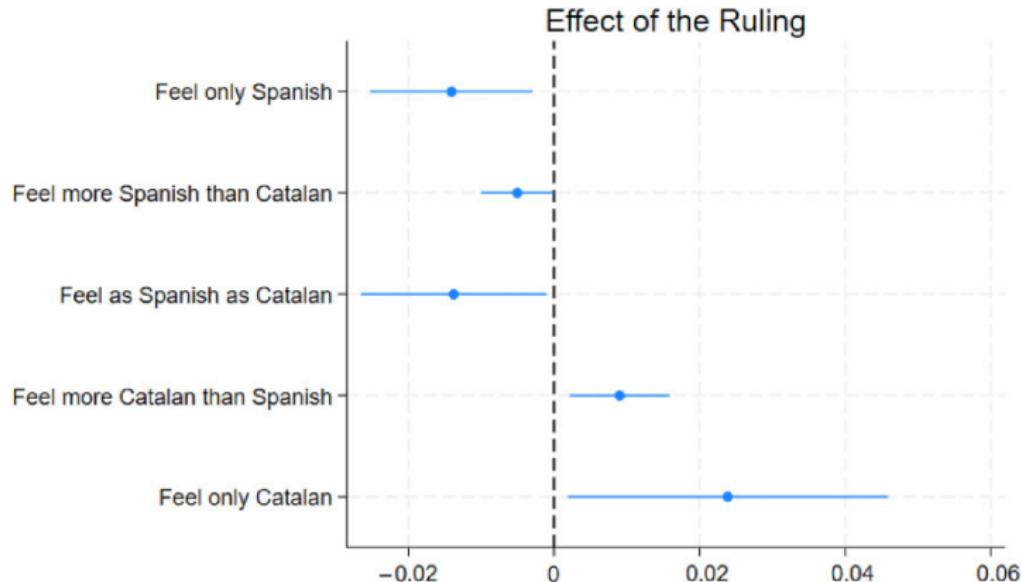


Fig. 4. *Marginal Effects of the Ruling on Each National Self-Identification.*

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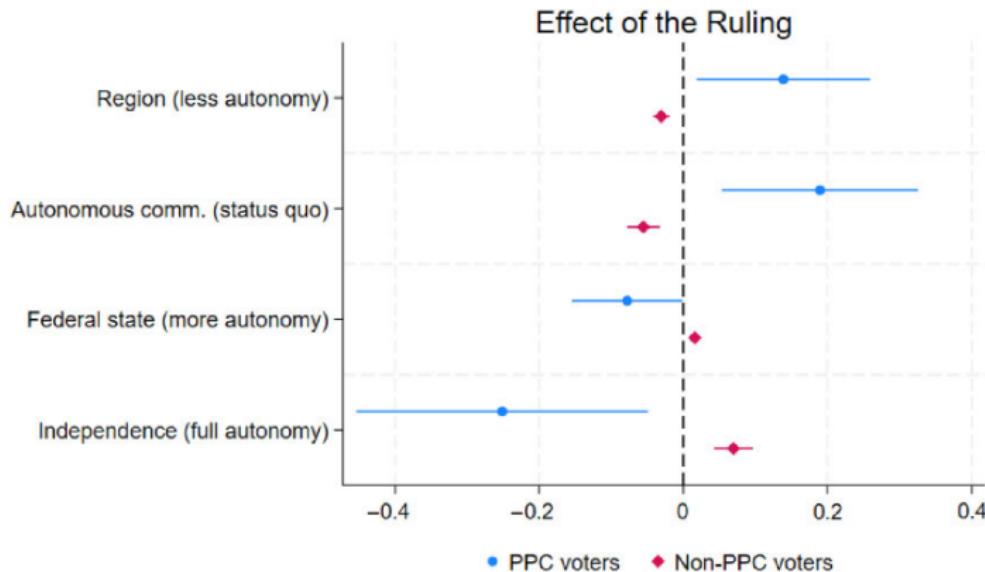
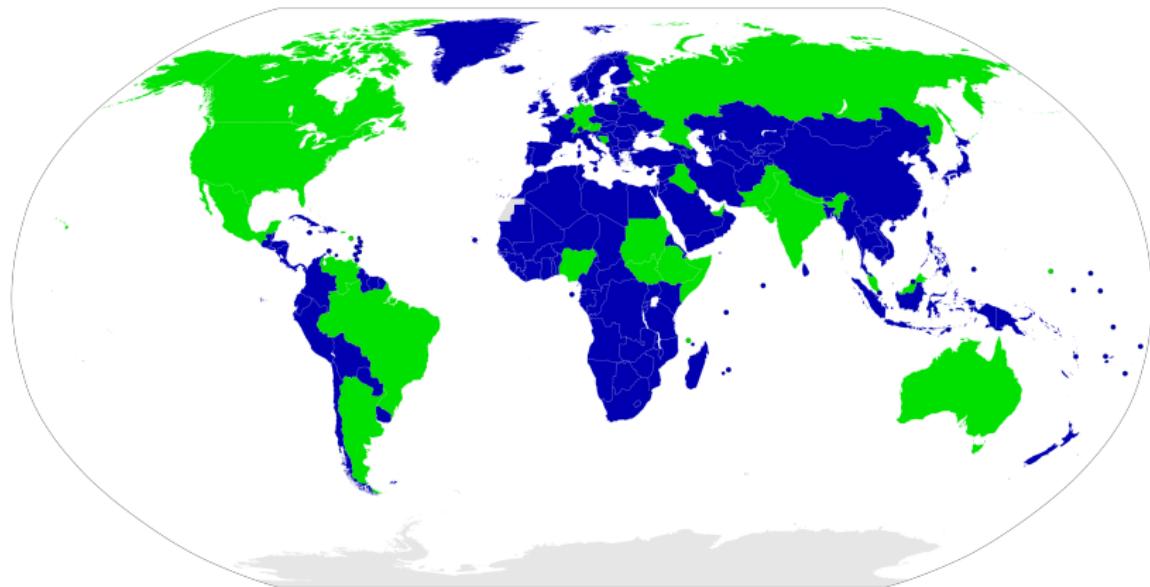


Fig. 5. Heterogeneities of the Effect of the Ruling on Each Preferred Relationship between Spain and Catalonia According to Past Vote.

# Federalism

# Unitary vs federal countries around the world



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- Federalism is in essence **an institutionalized division of state authority between national and subnational units**
- In **unitary systems**, the central government remains the sole sovereign, subnational governments are subsidiary, and their powers (to make or implement policy) can be curtailed by the central government

# What is federalism?

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- In **unitary systems**, the central government remains the sole sovereign, subnational governments are subsidiary, and their powers (to make or implement policy) can be curtailed by the central government
- In **federal systems**, central and subnational governments have independent powers and responsibilities; the central government cannot abolish or curtail subnational authority

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- The key is whether the central government can abolish / suspend / reshape the power of subnational governments
- **In federal systems, subnational governments are constitutionally protected, their power is inherent rather than delegated**, and can therefore not be curtailed by the central government

# Going beyond the constitutional criterion

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- **More vs less decentralized**
  - Legal authority to pass policies

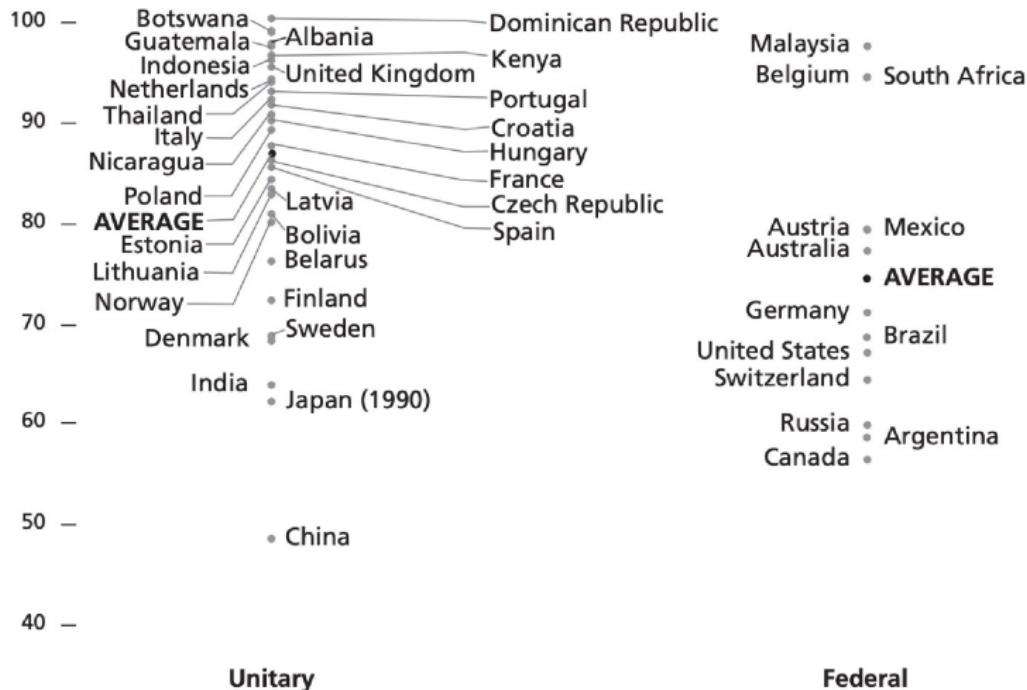
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  - State capacity (including fiscal capacity) to implement policies

# Federalism versus centralization

FIGURE 15.1

## Revenue Centralization: Central Government's Share of Tax Revenue



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  - Examples: Belgium, and the federalizing but not federal cases of the UK, Spain

# Is federalism good? Potential gains

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- Decentralized innovation
- Keeping diverse societies together

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- Race to the bottom through competition
- Stronger collective action problems in policy formulation and implementation
- Reducing within-units political competition (in the extremes, *subnational authoritarian enclaves*)

# Subnational hybrid regimes in federal democracies

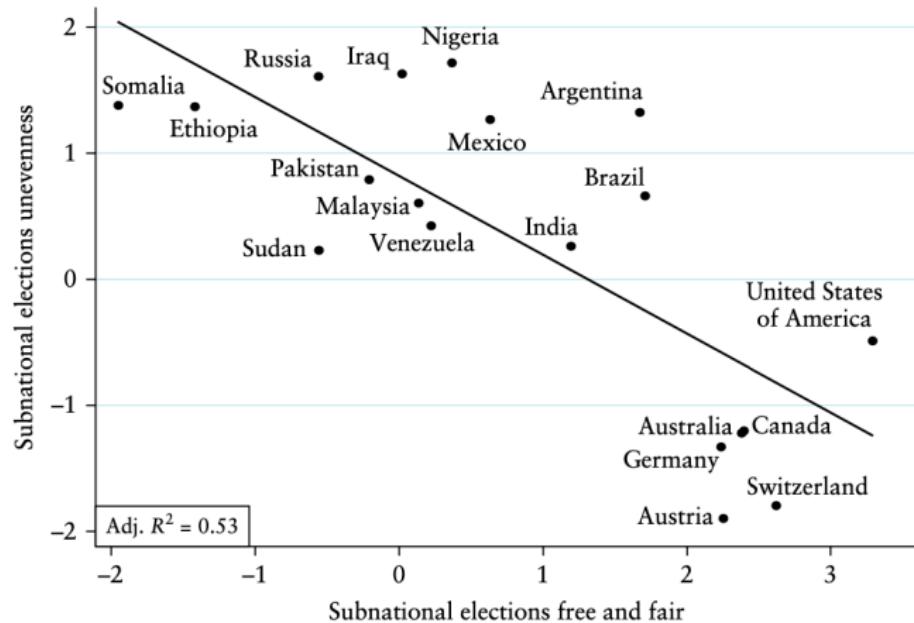


FIGURE I.2. *Subnational elections in nineteen large federations (2014)*

Source: Author's elaboration on varieties of democracy data (Coppedge et al. 2018a)

# Subnational hybrid regimes in federal democracies



FIGURE 1.3. Argentina's provinces and their level of democracy (1983–2015)

# Does federalism sustain subnational authoritarianism?

TABLE 6.2. *The determinants of subnational democracy (I), 1983–2007 (random-effects models)*

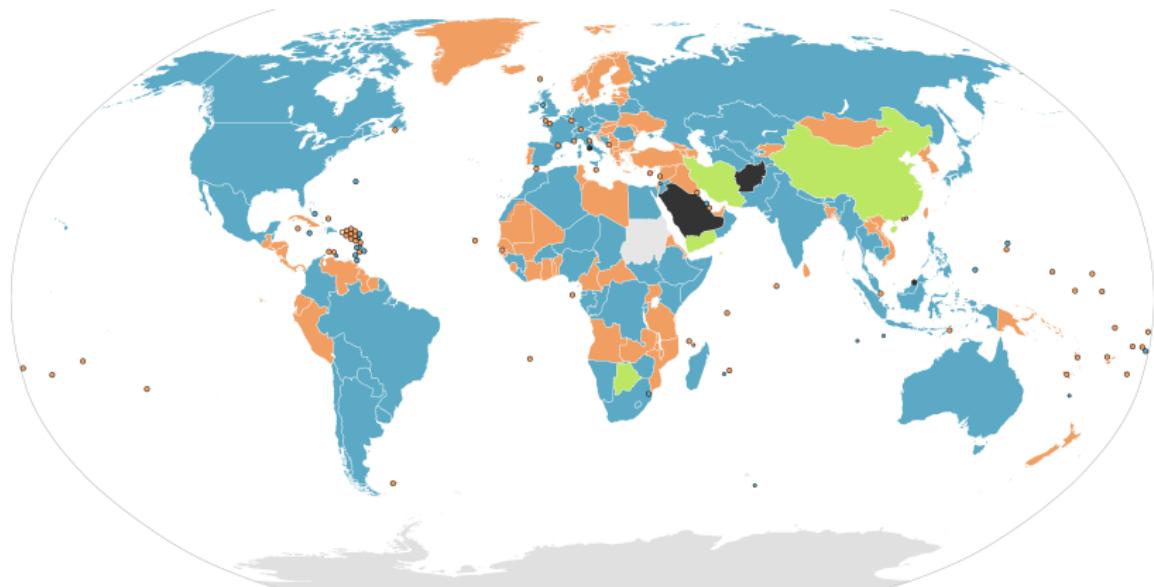
|   | (1)                 | (2)                 | (3)                 | (4)                 |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Federal Transfers pc                              | -0.347**<br>(0.120) | -0.363**<br>(0.119) | -0.340**<br>(0.120) | -0.376**<br>(0.105) |
| Resource Rents pc                                 | -0.094<br>(0.197)   |                     |                     |                     |
| Logged GGP pc                                     | 0.348<br>(0.321)    | 0.305<br>(0.314)    |                     |                     |
| Modernization                                     |                     |                     | 0.014<br>(0.060)    |                     |
| Human Development                                 |                     |                     |                     | 4.645+<br>(2.482)   |
| Culture   | 0.013<br>(0.009)    | 0.013<br>(0.010)    | 0.019**<br>(0.007)  | 0.015**<br>(0.006)  |
| Presidential Popularity                           | 0.003<br>(0.005)    | 0.002<br>(0.005)    | 0.003<br>(0.005)    | 0.001<br>(0.006)    |
| Presidential Copartisan                           | -0.066<br>(0.381)   | -0.063<br>(0.377)   | -0.110<br>(0.381)   | -0.180<br>(0.383)   |
| Presidential Popularity x Presidential Copartisan | -0.008<br>(0.007)   | -0.008<br>(0.007)   | -0.008<br>(0.007)   | -0.007<br>(0.007)   |
| National Leader                                   | -0.641*<br>(0.278)  | -0.619*<br>(0.277)  | -0.590*<br>(0.276)  | -0.714**<br>(0.276) |
| Constant  | -0.145<br>(0.541)   | -0.060<br>(0.514)   | 0.315<br>(0.420)    | -3.072+<br>(1.828)  |
| Observations                                      | 131                 | 131                 | 131                 | 131                 |
| Number of units                                   | 24                  | 24                  | 24                  | 24                  |
| Overall R-squared                                 | 0.341               | 0.333               | 0.329               | 0.362               |

Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses.

\*Significant at 10%; \*significant at 5%; \*\*significant at 1%.

# Bicameralism

# Unicameral vs bicameral legislatures



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- In **unicameral systems**, the legislature has just one chamber or body.
- In **bicameral systems**, there are two distinct assemblies in charge of legislative activity.
- Names of the second (or upper) house vary significantly across systems

# Types of bicameralism

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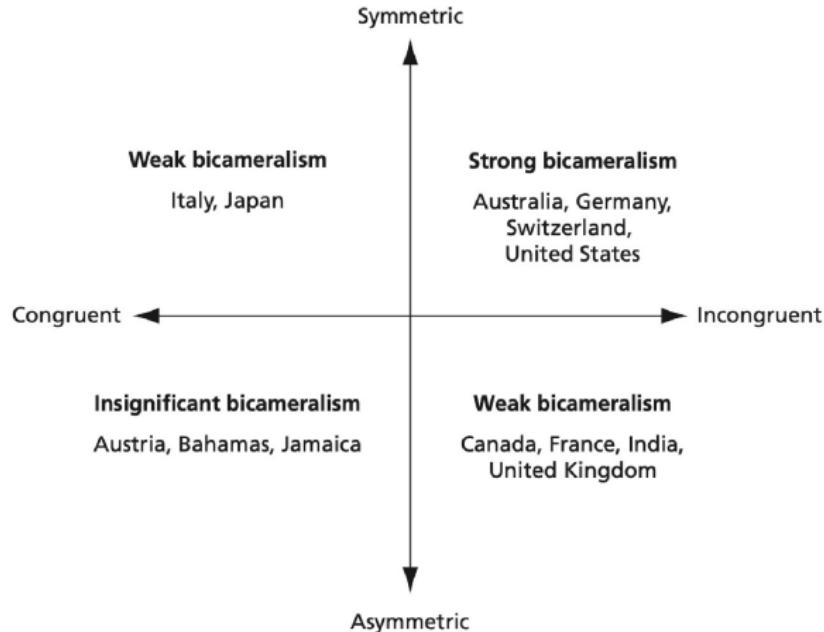
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- Symmetric bicameralism is rare. Some examples: Italy, Colombia, United States
- Asymmetric bicameralism is more common. In the extreme, the lower house has ultimate decision-making power.

# Varieties of bicameralism

FIGURE 15.3 Two Dimensions of Bicameralism



## Bicameralism in historical perspective

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- Many unitary systems retained (democratized) upper houses still on the idea of **tempering (and improving) the deliberations** of the lower house.
- Others eventually got rid of the upper house, or reformed the system to make it **strongly asymmetric**.

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- **Make progress on your research design**