POLITICAL ELITES IN FEDERALIZED COUNTRIES. THE CASE OF SPAIN (1980-2005)

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Abstract: The field of political elites has been consolidated as a fruitful area for research. An aspect that has been clearly under researched is the level of conflict (or consensus) in parliament and the explaining factors. Previous research indicates that there is a negative relationship with the proportion of newcomers in each legislature: the higher the circulation level, the lower the consensus among parliamentary groups. This paper tries to check this finding using the case of the 17 autonomous communities in recently federalized Spain and showing the preliminary result of an ongoing research project. The paper is built in three steps. First, researchers present an analysis of the most relevant social features (gender, age, profession, studies) of more than 4000 elected politicians during the democratic period in Spain. Then, they present the results of the analysis of the legislation passed by the 17 autonomous parliaments since they began their activities. This analysis will allow the establishment of the level of consensus in each chamber. The third step is based on an analysis of the factors that might explain differences in consensus emphasizing the role played by the level of circulation of politicians in each regional chamber. This is a work in progress paper.

Introduction

Spain is the country that most successfully completed the transition to democracy from an authoritarian regime. This transition involved the enactment of a constitution that consecrated the dismantlement of a centralized state whose modern origins go back to the beginning of the 19th century. Democratization and decentralization were parallel political processes. To be true, there had been other decentralizing experiences during the first third of the 20th century, but they failed. The last one took place during the Second Republic (1931-36) with the Estado Integral consecrated in the 1931 constitution. It was soon perceived as the break down of Spain and experts list this perception as one of the causes of the bloody civil war (1936-39) that put an end to the democratic and decentralizing experiment in Spain. The current decentralization process might be considered the heir of the 1931 attempt.

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The 1978 constitution created what is known as the State of Autonomies.[2] That is, a quasi federal State that transfers powers and resources to the newly created regions and regional governments. The resulting system has been called ÒimperfectfederalismÓ (Moreno 1994) or Òsemi-federalismÓ (Lijphart 1999:189).[3] It should be recalled that we are dealing with a process of decentralization, not devolution. Certainly, there were two autonomous communities that had enjoyed some level of autonomy during the Second Republic (namely, Catalonia from 1932 and the Basque Country from 1936, in the midst of the Civil War), but the 1978 decentralization process meant the creation from anew of a territorial structure unknown until then for the large majority of Spaniards. There was no devolution of powers, but a major transferring of power and resources.[4] Even in the cases in which devolution could be a proper name, like Catalonia or the Basque Country, the fact is that there was more Òtransferring Óthan Òdevolving Ófrom the state to the regions.

Figure 1. Map of Spain, Autonomous Communities, and Provinces.

The decentralization process meant the creation of 17 autonomous communities and two autonomous cities (Ceuta and Melilla), as it is shown in Figure 1. Some of them had their territorial borders clearly delimited since the 13th century, as it was the case of Valencia, Aragon, Catalonia, Asturias, Galicia, Navarre, and the Balearic Islands. Some others were newly created for political or geographical reasons, as it was the case of Santander, Madrid, Murcia, or La Rioja. Still, the borders of some others were transformed althoughtheir existence goes back to the middle ages, like the cases of Castile-La Mancha or Castile-Leon, previously known as the Kingdom of Castile, which included also Santander. The process delineated in the constitution meant also the creation of a de facto unequal federal system. There were some communities (wrongly called ÒhistoricÓ Ð Catalonia, Basque Country, Galicia- and Andalusia) that got more powers and faster than

[2] Certainly, before the constitution was written, Su‡rezÕs government enacted some decrees that meant the creation of some regional governments that paved the way to the institutionalization of regions during the constitution writing process (see Su‡rez 1978:59). For the transition to democracy and the decentralization process, see Linz (1989), Linz and Stepan (1996), Powell (2001) and Maravall and Santamar'a (1986).

[3] Lijphart (1999:189, 193) places Spain in the middle category of federal systems below Germany, the US, Switzerland, Canada, Austria, Belgium, Australia, India, and at the same level as Israel, The Netherlands, and Belgium before 1993.

[4] For a different point, see Guibernau (1999, 2004).

other regions which followed a slow path.[5] This discrimination has been partly overcome over the years thanks to the slow but continuous transfer of power to the new regional governments. Currently, there are still significant differences among the two groups of communities but the most relevant are the symbolic onesÑ the presidents of the government of the Òhistoric Óregions can dismiss the regional parliaments and call for new elections at their own will. As a result, four autonomous communities have different electoral cycles than the others, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Electoral cycles in Spain.

	I		II		III		IV		V		VI		VII	
	Date	Seats	Date	Seats	Date	Seats	Date	Seats	Date	Seats	Date	Seats	Date	Seats
Andaluc'a	1982	109	1986	109	1990	109	1994	109	1996	109	2000	109	2004	109
Arag–n	1983	66	1987	67	1991	67	1995	67	1999	67	2003	67		
Asturias	1983	45	1987	45	1991	45	1995	45	1999	45	2003	45		
Canarias	1983	60	1987	60	1991	60	1995	60	1999	60	2003	60		
Cantabria	1983	35	1987	39	1991	39	1995	39	1999	39	2003	39		
Castilla y Le–n	1983	84	1987	84	1991	84	1995	84	1999	83	2003	82		
C-La Mancha	1983	44	1987	47	1991	47	1995	47	1999	47	2003	47		
Catalu–a	1980	135	1984	135	1988	135	1992	135	1995	135	1999	135	2003	135
C. Valenciana	1983	89	1987	89	1991	89	1995	89	1999	89	2003	89		
Extremadura	1983	65	1987	65	1991	65	1995	65	1999	65	2003	65		
Galicia	1981	71	1985	71	1989	75	1993	75	1997	75	2001	75	2005	75
Islas Baleares	1983	54	1987	59	1991	59	1995	59	1999	59	2003	59		
La Rioja	1983	35	1987	33	1991	33	1995	33	1999	33	2003	33		
Madrid	1983	94	1987	96	1991	101	1995	103	1999	102	2003	111		
Murcia	1983	43	1987	45	1991	45	1995	45	1999	45	2003	45		
Navarra	1983	50	1987	50	1991	50	1995	50	1999	50	2003	50		
Pa's Vasco	1980	60	1984	75	1986	75	1990	75	1994	75	1998	75	2001	75
Congress	1979	350	1982	350	1986	350	1989	350	1993	350	1996	350	2000	350

Note: For the rest of the analysis it should be taken into account that different regions have different electoral cycles. For instance, legislature III in the Basque Country begins two years earlier than in Catalonia, four years earlier than in Andalusia, and five years earlier than in the rest of regions. We need to be aware of this temporal gap in the analysis of the evolution of, letÕs say, presence of women or immigrants in parliaments.

For research purposes it is necessary to highlight that since its creation, each autonomous community has a unicameral parliament and a government.[6] Both legislative and executive powers involve the creation of a quite large bureaucracy that manages the

[5] Unlike other federal states, SpainÕs federal system is asymmetric. There are some areas which are the exclusive responsibility of the central government (defense, international relations, fiscal policy, and the like), some others are controlled by the regional governments, and still others are shared. This arrangement is not stable. Regional governments have been negotiating (some with more intensity than others) with the central government for the transferring of more powers. Thus, not all autonomous communities have the same level of power. There is an asymmetry (inequalities) among three types of autonomous communities. One block is known as the historic communitiesÑ Galicia, Basque Country, Catalonia, and Andalusia. The first three are the truly historic communities, meaning that they are those that during the Second Republic (1931-36) were granted autonomy or passed a Statute of Autonomy. AndalusiaÕs inclusion in this group is the result of a referendum in which citizens decided to follow the path of maximum autonomy as provided in the Constitution. This group of autonomous regions enjoys a high level of decentralization. The second block is composed of those regions (Valencia and the Canary Islands) that were assimilated to the historic ones in terms of regional powers although with some symbolic limitations. For instance, their presidents cannot dismiss the regional parliament and call for elections. The third group is composed of the rest of the regions, which generally have a lower level of power. This asymmetry is in large part the result of the need to satisfy peripheral nationalist movementsÕ demands during the transition to democracy. These demands are the crystallization of historical processes that have made Spain a multicultural society.

[6] For the process of transferring powers to the regions and the building of the Estado de las Autonom'as, see Subirats and Gallego (2002). See as well Agranoff and Ramos (1998).

regional budget. Twenty years after the creation of the Estado de las Autonomías, the regions employed around one million of civil servants. The growth of the bureaucracy serving regional governments is the result of the communities receiving more powers and resources from the central government. Another indication of this decentralization process is the following data. In 1981, when the decentralization process had just started, the central government spent 87% of the total expenditure of the State while the regional governmentsÕ participation in the total expenditure was 3%. However, twenty years later, in 2001, the proportions were 58.8% and 27.6%.[7] Regional governmentsÕ relevance has grown as a result of the decentralization process whose major implications are a greater regional expenditure, a growing regional bureaucracy, a steady transfer of powers and resources to the regions that gain control over sensitive areas such as the education and health system and obtain the possibility of creating their own regional mass media.

All those outputs are expected in any decentralization process. For the purposes of my research it is important to highlight that the creation of the State of autonomies meant the opening of 1139 seats in all 17 regional parliaments for each election. Taking into account that since 1980 there have been six legislatures in each non historic region, seven in Catalonia and Galicia, and eight in the Basque Country, as can be seen in Table 1, the total number of regional seats opened to election is 7424 for the period 1980-2005.[8] This number might seem small, but compare the 7424 seats opened for election to the 3906 seats for which politicians have competed at national elections since 1979 when the first legislature after the constitution was opened.[9] In just numerical terms, the regional political-institutional elite almost double the national one, although in terms of relevance and importance there are still differences in favor of MPs in Congress but not necessarily the Senate. The results of a recent research indicate that parliamentarians place Congress and regional parliaments above Senate in the ranking of relevant political institutions (Coller 2003a, 2003b:106).

The decentralization of the State has created new regional institutions subjected to competition and thus consolidating a regional political elite to which we should pay more attention. We know little about regional politicians and certainly, they are more and more important for their fellow citizens in federalizing countries. They are, in Best and CottaÕs (2000:7) words, at the core of democratic systems. Regional politicians tend to gather more power and responsibilities since they regulate more areas that affect citizenÕs lives. This Ò*shaping of society*Ó is complemented by their responsiveness function. Regional politicians are in closer contact with citizens than national leaders and are thus more capable of bringing citizenÕs concerns to the regional parliament (it needs to be seen whether they are more or less responsible.) Regional politicians are crucial in the functioning of democracy since their actions, perhaps amplified for their closeness to citizens, affect the quality and legitimacy of democracy. In large part, they set the political agenda pointing at the issues to which media and citizens will pay attention. Foremost, regional elites constitute the cradle from which national political leaders emerge. A good number of ministers and national leaders in the government or the opposition began their careers in the regional parliaments in Spain. Thus, it is worth paying attention to these

[7] See Merry del Val (2005) and Toboso (2005) for the evolution of the economic resources transferred to the regional governments. For the evolution of the growth of the regional bureaucracy, see Rami—and Salvador (2002).

[8] I do not take into account the fact that in 2003, regional elections in Madrid had to be repeated because of a corruption scandal few months after the legislature was elected.

[9] This amount includes the 350 seats of Congress and 208 seats at the Senate. The first democratic election took place in 1977. The constitution was passed in 1978, and new elections were called in 1979. Experts call the first democratic legislature the Ò*constitutional*Óone, and the legislature beginning in 1979, the first one. I have followed this tradition.

politicians. Despite their relevance, political elites, and particularly regional elites, are largely unknown. As Linz (1997:123-4) put it once, "interest on public policy and responsiveness has made us forget one of the key elements in democratic politics: The politicians. Except some interesting but not too suggestive about the social features of political elites, we know little of democratic politicians".[10]

The research in which this paper is based is focused on political elites holding a seat in regional parliaments during the period 1980-2005. Being aware of the problems of the positional analysis applied here, I believe that choosing regional MPs as the object of study helps to set clear limits on who should be considered part of the elite—those who have been at some point members of an institution of representation. However, it is true that there might be other people who could be considered part of the political elite and who are not included here because they have never held a seat in a regional parliament. Two notorious cases will illustrate the point. Felipe González and José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, no doubt, are part of the Spanish political elite. They have been Prime Ministers, leaders of their parties, and their decisions have had a huge impact on the Spanish polity. However, since they have not been present in regional parliaments (neither in Andalusia, nor in Castile-León) they are not considered part of the regional political elite. Notwithstanding, some of the ministers of their governments have been included in this elite since they held a seat in regional parliaments, like it is the case of Joan Lerma, Manuel Chaves, Jerónimo Saavedra or Magdalena Álvarez. José María Aznar, his successor in the leadership of the Popular Party, Mariano Rajoy, and some members of Aznar's government are also included because either before or after participating in national politics were active in regional parliaments. Also, national leaders of the opposition party Izquierda Unida (United Left), like Julio Anguita, Francisco Frutos, or Gaspar Llamazares, are part of the regional elite for the same reason. It could be argued that positional analysis might leave out some people that have been influential in politics as leaders of parties at the local, regional, or national level. However, given the prominent role that parties play in nurturing institutions of representation in Spain, and since party leaders are usually placed in these institutions, except few exceptions like the ones mentioned, most likely the group of 4354 politicians that have held a seat in regional parliaments since 1980 make a good portion of the political power elite in democratic Spain. They make a part of what Suzanne Keller (1963) identified as a "strategic elite." The group, though, also includes MPs that have not been relevant or influential and have had no power at all, although I have tried to introduce some corrections that will help to identify the inner circle of the regional political elite—those people who had enough power to make decisions that shaped society in the period considered.

Social background of politicians

The Spanish regional elite (those people who have held a seat in any legislature of any regional parliament) for the period 1980-2005 is composed of 4354 people. Since there have been 7424 seats open for electoral competition, each member has almost been in at least two legislatures in average. Later on I will discuss the continuity of this elite and its consequences. If I had to summarize the social features of the Spanish regional elite I would have to say that the group is mainly composed of young men, natives, highly educated, mostly lawyers and educators, and with relevant social differences due to party

[10] The point was also stated by Patzelt (2002:96) when after reviewing an impressive number of empirical studies about recruitment in European parliaments pointed out that Italy, Portugal and Spain were way back behind other countries like Germany, Britain, or even France.

and territory. In this respect, the Spanish regional political elite is healthily similar to other political elites that have been studied over the years.[11]

This sort of homogeneous elite clearly contrasts with the heterogeneity of the Spanish society. Certainly, this is not an elite that reflects the social features and cleavages of the society. No political elite does it. It does not mirror the population because in the elite we find people with social features that are scarce in society. Trying to capture the differences between elites and society, Robert Putnam (1976:33 and ff.) formulated the law of increasing disproportion: "the higher the level of political authority, the greater the representation for high-status social groups". The question that still remains open is why some people enter the political elite while others do not and why those who enter the group tend to share some similar social features.[12] Actually, political elites tend to follow what Putnam (1976:22), following Lasswell (1965:9), named agglutination model as opposed to the independence model. In the latter, citizens have similar chances of entering the elite, while in the former, the elite is composed of people sharing some features that go together and are uncommon in society: high educational level, prestigious professions, and the like. Thus, as Blondel (1973:77) indicated, "the only question that arises is how vast is the distortion between the composition of the country and the composition of the legislature." In order to find out the level of distortion between the society and the elite, I will compare the elite and the Spanish population on five accounts: gender, age, place of origin, studies, and profession. For a better understanding and a systematic comparison, I introduce a measure of the disproportion, the "bias index" or "disproportion index" which is an adaptation of what Pippa Norris (1995:96) calls the "index of electoral bias."[13]

[11] See, for instance, Norris (1999) for the European Parliament, Best and Cotta (2000) for a historical look at MPs in Europe between 1848 and 2000, Norris and Lovenduski (1995) for the case of the British Parliament, Putnam (1976) and Aberback et al. (1981) for interesting but outdated reviews, Valiente et al. (2003) for the case of the Spanish Congress of Deputies in the 7th legislature, Mart'nez (2000) for the case of the Spanish representatives in the European Parliament, Genieys (1998) for the case of Catalan and Andalusian elites, and an excellent review in Spanish in Uriarte (1997). All these works review a number of studies where the conclusion is very similar in what concerns the social origins of political elites.

[12] Explanations tend to focus on both the demand and the supply side. Putnam (1976:46) indicates that the process is self selecting so that only those interested in public matters and with some vocation of public service will devote time to politics if the structure of opportunity is there. See also Uriarte (2000) for an analysis of the motivation of Spanish politicians. Certainly, one of the answers in democratic politics mediated by parties lies in the role played by different selectorates.

[13] This index is the ratio between the proportion of a particular group in the elite (say, women, immigrants, university trained people) and the same group in the electorate. Rather than choosing the electorate, I have relied on the data for the population as counted in the Spanish census. If there is a similar proportion in the elite and the population, the index will be close to 1. If the index is over 1, the group in question is overrepresented while if the index is below 1, the group is underrepresented. The further the index departs from 1, the more under or overrepresented the group analyzed.

Table 1. Evolution of social background of MPs and population.

	First legislature			Last legislature			MPs 1980-05
	MPs	Population[14]	Bias index	MPs	Population[15]	Bias index	
% Women	6	50.9	0.11	34	51	0.66	21
% Immigrants	17	11	1.54	13	22[16]	0.59	16
Average age					39.5		
Average education	3.61			3.63			3.57
% university trained	83	4.8	17.29	88	15	5.86	85
% Lawyers	19	0.3	63.3	22	0.83	26.5	19
% Workers	12	76	0.15	11	68.2	0.16	11
% Owners&managers	16	5.6	2.85	10	5.7	1.7	13
% Educators	19	3.5	5.42	23	4.7	4.89	21

Note: For computation purposes, the last legislature refers to the sixth legislature in all regions.

Gender. The usual politician of the period is a man (79%), although women have been incorporated to regional parliaments increasingly over the years paralleling what has happened also in the Congress of Deputies of Spain and other European parliaments.[17] For instance, at the beginning of the 80ÕS, the proportion of women in regional parliaments barely reached 10% (except in Madrid, 13%, and la Rioja, 11%) while by the beginning of the 21st century in most parliaments the proportion was over 30% and in some cases (like Castile-La Mancha) almost reached 50%.[18] There were cases (like Murcia in 1987) where no woman was elected as regional MP. Over these 25 years of federal democratic politics, parliaments more open to women have been those of Castile-La Mancha, Andalusia, and Madrid, while those more closed to womenÕs participation have been Aragon, Murcia and Catalonia. Data presented in Table 1 show the evolution of the proportion of women from the first legislature (around 1980-3) to the last one (at the turn of the century). Women have multiplied their presence in the regional political elite by a factor of almost 6, being proportionally more than in the Congress of Deputies, where the presence of women does not reach the third of the total members. Although the index of bias has gone from 0.11 to 0.66, there is still a long way to reach equal representation, which seems to be the trademark of what Best and Cotta (2000) call Òminority representationÓ.

There are reasons to explain the incorporation of women to politics (Uriarte and Ruiz 1999:212, Valiente et al. 2003:197-203), usually associated to the growing presence of women in the public arena, the politics of leftist parties opening the electoral lists to more women,[19] sometimes using quotas, the role played by highly educated centralized selectorates, the proportionality of the electoral system (not the size of the electoral district). There are not so obvious reasons to explain why some regions are more open to women in parliaments than others. Perhaps we should pay attention to the party ruling the region and its majority in parliament, the proportion of women in the active population, the presence of women among affiliates of different parties, and the average ideological outlook of citizens. In any case, the growing presence of women during the period 1980-

[14] See INE (1985) for data from the 1981 census. For the professions, the base is the active population having a job (over 10.7 million people).

[15] Data from the 2001 census available at www.ine.es. For the professions, the base is the active population having a job (over 16 million people).

[16] Includes 17.2% of nationals born in another region and 5.3 of foreigners residing in Spain.

[17] See Uriarte and Ruiz (1999) and Valiente et al. (2003).

[18] According to data presented by Valiente and her associates (2003:185), in 1977 there were 6% of women elected at the Congress of Deputies, 5% in 1982, and 28% in the eighth legislature (2000-04). Similar data for the Spanish representatives in the European Parliament presented by Mart'nez (2000:271) indicate that in 1986 there were 8% of women, in 1989 there were 15%, 28% in 1994, and in 1999 there were already 34% of women.

[19] Leftist parties (PSOE and IU) began applying quotas for women in 1988.

2005) has reduced the gap between the elite and the population very much in line with what has happened in other parliaments at the national and European level.

Immigrants. The Spanish regional politician has been born in the region s/he serves in 84% of the cases, which, overall, has left a short room for immigrants to participate in the political elite of their host regions.[20] This is not surprising in some regions that traditionally have exported labor force to other areas. For instance, Andalusia, Extremadura, Galicia, Murcia have traditionally been regions whose inhabitants have been nurturing the industries and services of Catalonia, Madrid, Basque Country and Valencia. Consequently, Madrid appears as one the regions whose parliament has been more open to immigrants (43%) also reflecting the proportion of non natives living in the region. Castile-La Mancha and La Rioja are the other two regions whose parliaments are more open, although they have exported population rather than being a traditional pole of attraction for people. Also, Andalusia, Galicia, and the Canary Islands appear as the regions whose parliaments are less open for immigrants. However, Catalonia being in the group of parliaments with low levels of immigrants is highly counterintuitive. Catalonia has been a pole of attraction for many Spaniards who during the 50s and 60s moved there to work. Overall, almost a third of the Catalan population has been born elsewhere in Spain. However, their share in the political elite for the period considered is roughly 10%. Further research should find explanations for this peculiar situation.[21]

Comparing the population with the elite, as can be done with data presented in Table 1, one realizes that while the proportion of migrants has doubled in Spain, its presence in the political elite has been reduced from 17% to 13% in 25 years. This means that the number of Spaniards living in a region that were born in another has grown because of a higher mobility and the incorporation of foreigners. However, the political elite of the regions has closed the door to immigrants. The bias index is clear. By the eighties of the 20th century, immigrants were over represented (1.54) while by the turn of the century the index was 0.59. Certainly, this bias index is lower than the one of women, which leads to think that, if a ÒminorityrepresentationÓ approach is to be adopted, the number of non natives should be increased in regional parliaments.

Age. Although Blondel (1973:77), in what is considered a classic of research in Parliaments, indicated that Òit is natural that legislators should be older than the ÒaverageÓ citizen of a countryÓ, the fact is that the average politician is almost as young as the average citizen. The average politician is almost 44 years old at the time of entrance in the regional parliament, which is quite close to the average age of Spaniards in 2001 (39.5) a reference year in which society had already undergone an intense aging process. Younger politicians can be found in the first legislatures and, also, when the majority in parliament changes. That means that the party obtaining the largest plurality of seats has placed in the electoral list a number of politicians younger in average than their predecessors. The youngest politicians can be found in La Rioja, Andalusia and Asturias (around 42 years old) while the oldest politicians, on average, can be found in Galicia, Castile-Leon, and Catalonia (over 45 years old). Compared to other parliaments, even the Congress of Deputies, this is largely a young elite at the point of entry. Young politicians are quite common in the also young Spanish democracy. Think of Adolfo Su±rez, Felipe Gonz±lez, Jos Mar'a Aznar, and Jos Luis Rodr'guez Zapatero, presidents of government that were closer to the fourties than to the fifties when they took office. Also, regional parliamentarians tend to be young and some get old in the chamber.

[20] Immigrants refer here to those MPs that have been born in Spain but not in the region where they hold a seat in parliament.

[21] See Miley (2004)

Young politicians in a parliament might mean might mean a good number of inexperienced politicians as well. Also, following Inglehart (1990), young MPs can incorporate to the legislative process and the political debate a good deal of new values and priorities that veteran politicians from older generations may seem alien to. Further research with these data should show gender and age differences among MPs.[22]

Education. Spanish regional politicians are quite educated since 85% hold a university degree. Only a tenth (11%) finished their studies at high school and 3.4% finished primary school or have no education. Data refer only to the 71% of politicians for which we could obtain data. Among those who attended university, few hold a PhD degree (8%), while the vast majority (60%) has a BA or ÒlicenciaturaÓ The remaining 17% obtained a degree after three years of education.[23] Certainly, it seems that Keller (1963:121) was right indicating that Òeducation is the single most important entrance requirement into the higher circlesÓ[24] In comparative terms, there are regions whose elite is more educated than others. Assigning numeric codes to the educational level attained by politicians, we can obtain an indication of the education of the regional elite.[25] The average is 3.58, which places the elite at the university level, a bit over the diplomatura or three-year degree. Regions with the more educated elites are Canary Islands, Madrid, and Catalonia, while the less educated elite in comparative terms are those of Extremadura, Aragon, and Navarre.

This is the reverse of the situation in the population at any autonomous community and in Spain in general, making the bias index quite high. Data in Table 1 indicate that the proportion of university trained politicians in the regional elite has grown a bit over the years, and the gap between the elite and the population has been shortened (bias index goes from 0.05 to 0.17), although the disproportion is much higher than in the case of women and immigrants. The proportion of university graduates in the Spanish political elite at the regional level is larger than in the European Parliament, where according to Norris (1999:97) the proportion was 75%. Furthermore, they make a similar proportion than that of the Spanish representatives in the European parliament, where university graduates are in every legislature over 85% (Martínez 2000). The political elite in the regions show similar levels of university graduates as the Congress of Deputies in the eighth legislature (84%, according to data presented by Valiente et al. 2003:191), and a bit higher than MPs in the Congress of Deputies in the 7th legislature (75%, according to data presented by Uriarte and Ruiz 1999:215). Furthermore, this group is more educated than local councilors in Spain, since only 10% of these have finished higher education (Capo 1992:140). Consequently, the idea that education is negatively correlated with the level of representation seems to fail hereÑ regional politicians are highly educated and certainly, university training is as common for them as it is for national representatives and even proportionally more common than for European parliamentarians.

Profession. The profession of politicians for the period considered is quite in line with what is expected. Liberal professions are the largest group and among them, law related professions are the most common (19%).[26] Doctors (6.3%), architects (1.2%),

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[22] Age groups (-44, 44-54, 55+) as in Norris (1999:98).

[23] Spanish university system is divided among diplomaturas or technical schools and licenciaturas or BA. The former require three years of education and the later require five years. Later reforms have changed the years of schooling needed to obtain a university degree.

[24] Quoted in Putnam (1976:27).

[25] Codes were assigned as follows. 1= up to primary school, 2 = secondary school, 3= mid university degree or diplomatura, 4 = BA or licenciatura, 5 = PhD.

[26] Lawyers seem to be the cradle for many representative and executive jobs. Cuenca and Miranda (1987:139) found that 33.6% of Franco ministers were law related professionals, the largest group followed by army officers (32%) and professors (13%). Also, Del Campo and his associates (1982:143) show that in

engineers (3.9%) or economists (3.7%) are not as frequent among politicians as those professions related to the legal system. The largest professional group is that of educators, though, and workers, and managers and owners get also a good share of power, as can be seen in Table 1. This elite is distinctively different than the one composed of local politicians, in which, according to data presented by Botella (1992:155), the largest professional groups are farmers (34%) and industrial workers (18%).

The professional composition of the Spanish regional elite is in line with what Norris and Lovenduski (1995) found for the British parliamentÑ a growing number of professors, although, contrary to the Spanish case I study, a declining proportion of lawyers. In the case of the Spanish political regional elite, the proportion of law related professionals has grown in the period considered (from 19% to 22%), as can be seen in Table 1. It is also in line with what Norris (1999:93) found for the European Parliament concerning the profession of politicians. There, educators (14%) outnumbered lawyers (10%), journalists (9%) and businesspersons (7.3%). It also reflects the professional composition of Spanish representatives in the European Parliament, where there is a growing presence of lawyers and an important although changing proportion of educators (Mart'nez 2000:274).[27] Still, my data contradicts Uriarte«s (2000:118) findings in the Congress of Deputies, where the proportion of lawyers is 15%. Uriarte, following Jerez (1997), indicates that the relative presence of lawyers diminishes over the years.[28] Contrary, in the regional political elite, the proportion of lawyers grows, although its overrepresentation diminishes in 20 years. The bias index goes from 63.3 at the beginning of the eighties to 26.5 at the beginning of the 21st century. This change is accounted for by the growth of lawyers in the Spanish society, which multiplies by a factor of three in the period considered. Still, lawyers are the group that is proportionally more overrepresented in the regional political elite.

No matter how important is the group of law related professionals in the political elite, it is outnumbered by that of educators: 21% of the Spanish regional elite are university professors or teachers at either a high school or primary school. This is a phenomenon that has been already emphasized in other studies concerning other countries and the European parliament, as it has been already noted. Furthermore, the relative weight of this group has increased like that of lawyers, since it went from 19% at the beginning of the eighties to 23% at the turn of the century. Educators are overrepresented in the elite, although in a lower intensity than lawyers. The bias index goes from 5.42 to 4.89, indicating that the overrepresentation of educators is stable over the years, contrary to what happened to the lawyers.

Why are there so many educators in the political elite? Already Weber (1946:95) had pointed out that there is an elective affinity between lawyers and politicians and Bell (1994) has found out that politicians that participated in the legal works of the French Revolution were dominantly lawyers. There should not be much of a surprise. Usually lawyers are familiar with the legislative process (making laws, debating, arguing,

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the first constitutional legislature of the Spanish Congress of Deputies, lawyers were the dominant professional group (23%) only outnumbered by public servants (30%) and followed by entrepreneurs (12%).

[27] According to Mart'nez (2000:274), the proportion of law related professions among the Spanish representatives in the European parliament is 17% in 1986-87, 18 in 1987-89, 17% in 1989-94, 22% in 1994-99, and 20% in 199-04. The proportion of educators for the same periods is 17%, 32%, 37%, 28%, and 15%.

[28] This is an aspect of the political elite that has been emphasized by the impressive study of Best and Cotta (2000) about Parliamentarians in Europe. Over the period of more than 150 years, they find out that the political elite is increasingly composed of middle class citizens with some political experience (in local or party offices). However, they detect a reduction in the proportion of lawyers, a steady proportion of businessmen and managers over the years, a growing presence of civil servants (mainly teachers), and an increment in the proportion of people holding social sciences and humanities degrees.

negotiating) so they bring some sort of know-how to parliaments. Contrary to what happen to doctors or engineers, or other liberal professions, for many lawyers, going back to their professions is not costly and may find some professional benefits after serving in parliament in terms of contacts and knowledge.

However, the case of educators might be different. Uriarte (1997:269), following Norris and Lovenduski (1995), suggest that educators, like lawyers and journalists, are part of the "talking professions" who master the use of words both in speeches and in writing. These skills are relevant for the parliamentary duties: debate, argue, convince, negotiate, and write laws. However, there is a relevant absence of journalists in the regional elite. Although the "mastering of words" is an important explanation of the presence of educators, it can be complemented with another factor.[29] In my opinion, the important proportion of educators in the political elite can be accounted for what Weber named "dispensability". For Weber (1946:85), "the professional politician must also be economically "dispensable", that is, his income must not depend upon the fact that he constantly and personally places his ability and thinking entirely, or at least by far predominantly, in the service of economic acquisition [É] Neither the worker nor—and this has to be noted well—the entrepreneur, specially the modern, large-scale entrepreneur, is economically dispensable in this sense."[30] A large majority of educators in Spain are civil servants and as such, they have some privileges in terms of tenureship. Unlike other professionals, their jobs are secure. So, they can easily begin a career in politics and come back to the university or the school if the political career fails or is interrupted. The costs they may face when they come back to the school or the university are low in comparison with that of, say, workers or architects.

It is also interesting to note that 11% of regional MPs are workers, 7.4% are owners or entrepreneurs and 5.7% are managers. According to Weber, workers are less dispensable than owners and entrepreneurs, although in the Spanish regional elite it seems that workers get a better share of power than other professional groups. Contrary to what happens to owners and managers, workers presence in the elite remains more or less the same over the years, as can be seen in Table 1. The index of disproportionality indicates that workers are underrepresented (0.15 at the beginning of the eighties and 0.16 at the turn of the century) in the elite and this situation has remained stable over the years despite the proportional reduction of workers in society. The contrary seems to happen to owners and managers. Their presence in the elite diminishes (16% to 10%) during the period considered, although their relative weight in the structure of occupations in the Spanish society remains stable. Notwithstanding, this group is overrepresented in the political elite. The bias index goes from 2.85 at the beginning of the period to 1.75.

Blondel (1973:81) indicated that there were three models of parliaments according to the predominance of the professions. The "lawyers' paradise" was characteristic of the industrialized world. Parliaments in the communist countries were dominated by workers, peasants, and the intelligentsia, while parliaments in developing countries saw the emergence of civil servants, teachers, and managers as the dominant professional groups. Spanish regional parliaments are a combination of the first and second model with clear

[29] The relative absence of journalists should not surprise. Already Weber found out that journalists did not find easy to enter politics except in the socialist party. "The reason", explained Weber (1946:97), "lies in the strongly increased "indispensability" of the journalist, above all, and the property less and hence professionally bound journalist, an indispensability which is determined by the tremendously increased intensity and tempo of journalistic operations. The necessity of gaining one's livelihood by the writing of daily or at least weekly articles is like lead on the feet of the politicians".

[30] For Weber, lawyers are more dispensable than other groups like doctors, workers or entrepreneurs. Journalists, whom Weber (1946:96) considered a "pariah caste, which is always estimated by "society" in terms of its ethically lowest representative", are indispensable.

tendencies aligned with the normal development of modern parliaments: a stabilization or reduction of lawyers and the opening of seats to other professional groups. Presumably, lawyers will keep playing an important role although it is also foreseeable that other groups (like educators) will consolidate and others, like civil servants, will grow.

It seems that being a native man, educated and working as educator or in the legal system is one of the most frequent avenues to become part of the regional political elite in Spain. To be true, over the years, women have seen rising their chances of entering the regional political elite, while it is getting harder for non natives in the region to become part of the elite. While workers seem to have the same barriers over the years to play politics in regional parliaments, for managers and owners it is relatively easier to enter institutional politics. Does it make any difference the party to which the politician belongs to? According to Putnam (1976:37), Ò[t]he degree to which an elite diverges from the independence model of statistically perfect representation is closely related to its ideological orientation. The more conservative a party or regime, the greater the overrepresentation of upper-status social groups within its leadershipÓ. In the case of the regional political elite, there are relevant differences among parties that may account for a differentiated social profile of politicians. I turn now to this topic.

Table 2. Party differences in the regional political elite in Spain (in %).

	PSOE	PP	Total elite (1980-2005)
Women	25	21	21
Age	43.1	45.6	44
Immigrants	17	16	16
Workers	18	5	11
Owners	4	12	13
Managers	2	6	
Lawyers	13	25	19
Educators	28	16	21
Average education	3.52	3.66	3.57
University graduates	52	67	85

The social outlook of politicians varies slightly according to territory and party. I will not provide here an analysis of the political elite of different regions, although I would like to focus on differences due to parties. There have been around 30 parties present in the 17 regional parliaments. The majority of them are regional parties which are active in just one region. This number complicates the analysis and might make it useless given the smallness and little relevance of some parties. Thus, I will focus my analysis on the two national parties with representatives in all regional parliaments during the period 1980-2005: the socialist party (PSOE, center-left) and the popular party (PP, center-right or right). Both are the major contenders in national and in most regional elections. The exception is the Basque country, Catalonia, and Navarre, where the major parties are the Basque Nationalist Party, Convergencia i Uni—,and Uni—ndel Pueblo Navarro, which might be considered the electoral brand of the PP in alliance with a local party in Navarre. The socialist and popular parties are either in the opposition or part of the minority government in these regions. All in all, both national parties gather 70% of the 4354 regional MPs that served between 1980 and 2006.

Considering the period under study and the two major parties, we can find some differences and similarities, as can be seen in Table 2. The socialist party has been

traditionally more open to women than the conservative party.[31] The PP incorporated women to the electoral lists much later than the PSOE, whose leaders followed a policy of positive discrimination for women reserving quotas in the electoral list and, later, some regional leaders introduced the Òzip electoral listÓ consisting on alternating men and women in the electoral list. These measures promoted a larger presence of socialist women in regional parliaments. Soon, the conservative party followed and began placing women in the electoral list, but without a formal policy of affirmative action.

The average conservative MP is slightly older than the socialist one and this is so in all legislatures. The difference is stronger in the earliest legislatures when a generation of young politicians in the PSOE controlled a large part of regional parliaments. For instance, in the early eighties, the average socialist MP was 38.4 years old while the average conservative politician was 45.4 years old. However, twenty years later, by the beginning of the 21st century, the difference is not significant since both socialist and conservative MPs are 45 years old in average. In the case of the PP, a group of young politicians took power in the party by the 90s initiating a generational renovation, accounting for the reduction in the age gap. Conversely, early socialists PMs tend to stay longer in parliaments, contributing thus to the aging process of MPs.

Both parties are equally open to immigrants, although the major differences are related to education and professions. On average, conservative regional MPs are slightly more educated than the socialist ones, according to data presented in Table 2. Certainly, there are more conservative than socialist MPs holding a university degree (diplomatura or BA). This might have a consequence in the quality of the legislative work of the regional parliaments.

Some might argue that political elites in modern countries are socially homogeneous, contrary to what happens in the population. Recruitment of politicians seems to privilege some social features and discriminate against others. Thus, females, immigrants, non educated, very young and very old people seem to be more absent from the elite than other social groups. The thesis of the social similarities between MPs irrespective of their political group assumes that in order to attract a larger number of votes, parties need to offer electoral lists that appeal to a wider portion of electors and thus will reflect the social composition of the society. Consequently, leftist and conservative parties will nurture their electoral list from similar social groups. In terms of professions, this is true only for liberal professionals among Spanish regional MPs. This is the only professional group (architects, engineers, doctors, economists, etc.) that is present in all parties. The exception seems to be the law related professions. The conservative party doubles the proportion of lawyers achieved by the socialist party.

The main difference concerning professional groups is related to the traditional sources of recruitment of politicians for leftist and conservative parties. Data in Table 2 shows that the socialist party tends to recruit regional politicians from workers more often that the conservative party. Conversely, the conservative party tends to recruit from owners and managers a good deal of their politicians and certainly more often than the socialists. It is over ten times more likely that a worker becomes an MP in a leftist party than in a conservative one. There is also an important difference in terms of professions. Leftist regional MPs tend to be educators more often than conservative ones. The difference is significant and might be explained by the fact that educators are usually civil servants and consequently it is not costly in terms of professional careers. Another explanation is that there might be an elective affinity between education and politics. For some MPs, the function of the politician could be perceived to be that of educating the masses.

[31] See Valiente et al. (2003).

Condusions

Is there a relationship between the social background of politicians and political outputs? Few years ago, Blondel (1973:76) indicated that Òwe know that, in some way, the backgrounds, career aspirations, and ideologies, as well as the personality characteristics of legislators will affect the nature of the process by which legislatures come to influence decision making.Ó[32] However, Putnam (1976:42), after reviewing a number of studies qualified the statement indicating that Òthe link between background and behavior is neither simple nor directÓ[33] According to Matthews (1985:25), the evidence presented in a number of studies is ambiguous and inconclusive.[34] Therefore, we can not make the claim that the social background of politicians will have an effect on legislation or the effectiveness of a political institution. However, Norris and Lovenduski (1995) found some evidence supporting the relationship between gender and legislative behavior suggesting that women may promote a number of distinctive issues being discussed in parliament.[35] Furthermore, I believe that Best and Cotta (2000:18) are quite close to reality when they indicate that the social background of politicians may make a difference in political outputs Òif members of different parliamentary parties are recruited from mutually exclusive social settings and devoted to divergent political norms if it comes to parliamentary compromising and the formation of coalitionsÓ I will try to qualify this statement using some social variables (mainly age and gender) to explain tentatively some political outputs like the rate of consensus (or conflict) in parliaments.

Variations in lawmaking in regional parliaments

So far I have discussed the social outlook of the regional political elite in Spain since the beginning of the federalizing process. It is time now to analyze what MPs have done in their chambers. The main function of any parliament is to legislate.[36] That is, to create laws that will rule society. Certainly, parliaments can develop a wide range of activities, although the most socially relevant is the lawmaking process. There are many types of laws, but I will not get into this debate here. The content of any law is the result of a long process of negotiation and reflects the point of view of individuals or groups present in the lawmaking process as representatives, as lobbyists or as experts.

In modern politics, the legislative function is largely contingent upon the government bringing bills to parliament for their discussion among political groups and further approval. The way it works in most chambers is as follows. A bill is proposed to the chamber. Usually, the initiative is taken by the regional government, although in some rare cases, a parliamentary group or a number of deputies can also bring a bill to parliament.[37] Depending on the content of the law, it will be brought for discussion to any of the committees of the parliament. For instance, the bill of the budget for the government is usually brought to the economic and budget committee. A bill related to the creation of a

[32] Emphasis in the original.
[33] See as well Patzelt (2002:85ff).
[34] See, for instance, Edinger and Searing (1967) as a case of ambiguous results. The authors conclude that some social background variables perform better than others, and under certain circumstances, to predict elite attitudes and behavior.
[35] See Norris (1999) for a list of references.
[36] About the functions of legislatures see Blondel (1973), chapter 2.
[37] The bill proposed by the government is called proyecto de ley (bill project). In other cases is called proposici–n de ley (bill proposal).

Table 4. Laws passed by consensus in regional parliaments.

	Legislatures							
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Avge**
Andaluc'a		47.8	50	57.1	42.2	56.8		54.1
Arag–n	84.09	78.3	64.81	56.6	84.78	52.38		70.2
Asturias	38.75	36.53	11.11	40	59.52			37.2
Cantabria								
Canarias								
Castilla-Le–n								
Castilla-La Mancha	61.9	43.58	25.9	73.6	64.6	88.2		59.6
Catalu–a		62.8	75	77.2	70.4	76.14	58.3	70
C. Valenciana		58.9	53.1	20.5	21.7			38.5
Extremadura								
Galicia			33.3	24.4	25.8			27.8
Islas Baleares								
La Rioja	85.7	66.6	79.1	21.2	26.3	53.3		55.4
Madrid		72.9	78.9	63.1	37			63
Murcia		59.3	68.5	39.5	32.5			49.9
Navarra	42.06	67.7	61.5	67	56.4			58.9
Pa's Vasco		58.3	74.3	59.4	50.8	33.8	35.4	52

Note: Because of discrepancies in the codification process, the proportion of the following cells might need to be reviewed: Andalusia 5, Catalonia 5, Madrid 4.

A law without negative votes means that all groups present in the chamber accept the law with more or less conviction. A consensus can be built over affirmative votes or over non negative votes or abstention. When a group or a MP abstains, it means that they are not against the passing of the law although they do not give it full support. This might be considered ÒweakÓ consensus as opposed to Òstrong consensusÓ (unanimity) when all groups or MPs cast their affirmative votes for any given bill. This is usually the case when the majority group makes an effort to incorporate the points of view of the opposition groups into the bill being discussed either at the committee level or at the plenary session.

I will not get into the debate about whether consensus is better than conflict. This is a moral issue I am not interested in as social scientist. A high level of consensus in the lawmaking process could be considered more efficient since it means that legislators take into account the needs, demands, and points of view of different social groups. A high level of parliamentary conflict might be less effective and generate conflicts in society since some groups might perceive that they are left apart, their interests not taken into account or negatively affected, and react accordingly.

Certainly, the rate of consensus is a good, solid, and clear indicator of political conflict in legislatures. A high consensus rate means that different political groups (no matter how ideologically distant they are) are able to agree and build consensus. A low rate of consensus is an indicator of political conflict and controversy, which is quite normal, especially in polarized parliaments. A low consensus rate somehow indicates certain inability to reach pacts and build agreements, which is the bottom line of parliamentarism.

One can expect that the proportion of laws passed by consensus would be similar in all regions. There seems to be no reason for a parliament to have a proportion of laws passed with negative votes much higher or lower than other. However, we can see in Table 4 that the behavior of regional parliaments also differs. On average, it seems that there are parliaments which are more Òconsensualist Óthan others. This is the case of Catalonia and Aragon, with an average of 70% of laws passed by consensus. Also, Madrid, Castile-La

Mancha, and Navarre show and average proportion of consensualist lawmaking around 60%. However, other parliaments show an average consensus rate quite low like Asturias (37%) or Valencia (38%), with barely over a third of the bills passed by agreement of all MPs.

Differences are not only found among regions. There is also internal variation over the years for each region. There are legislatures that show a high proportion of laws passed by consensus followed by others in which the consensus rate decreases dramatically. Take the case of La Rioja in the 3rd and 4th legislatures, the Basque Country in the 5th and 6th, Asturias in the 2nd and 3rd, and the like. In all of these cases, a legislature with a high proportion of bills passed by consensus is followed by a diminishing consensus rate in the next legislature. If the consensus rate varies, it is worth asking why and why should we care about it.

Consensus and conflict in parliaments

If the consensus rate is an indicator of political conflict in Parliaments and might be associated to efficiency in ruling a society, it is worth paying attention to the factors that might contribute to explain why the consensus rate varies across time and regions. Consensus rate, thus, is the dependent variable of my research. As we have seen in Table 4, the proportion of bills passed by consensus varies throughout the timeline and across regions. There are legislatures in which it is higher than in others. Also, it is different in autonomous communities and the differences are quite significant. The question, then, is what makes the consensus rate so variable? Which are the independent variables? There are several candidates I detail briefly with some statistical tests to check their role. Data refer to the following regions: Andalusia, Aragon, Asturias, Castile-La Mancha, Catalonia, Rioja, Madrid, Murcia, Navarre, Basque Country, and Valencia. This preliminary analysis covers 12 out of 17 regions and all finished legislatures except the first one. So, the total number of cases on which this research project is based is 48 (out of 89 possible, 54%). Further analysis will include also more legislatures and regions up to a total of 106.

Number of groups. Any bill that is passed with no negative votes needs to be approved by all parliamentary groups in the chamber. At first sight, it seems easier to build consensus among few groups than among many. Contrary, few political groups in parliament may help to build bridges, especially if the parliament is not polarized. In the period 1980-2006, the number of groups in regional parliaments go from 2 (socialist and populares, like in the single case of the fifth legislature in Castile-La Mancha) to 8 (like in the single case of the second legislature in Navarre) or 7 (like in most legislatures of the Basque Country). The average number of groups for the period is 4.[41] However, the statistical test indicates that there is a weak, although not significant, relationship between the number of parliamentary groups and the consensus rate. The Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.200 and the probability associated is 0.173. The coefficient suggests that the more groups, the higher the rate of consensus, which is counterintuitive. This is why the original proposition needs to be qualified for further research.[42]

Parliaments might be highly ideologically polarized to the extent that in some cases there are blocks of groups. In previous research I have shown that people (and that includes also political elites) perceive some groups ideologically closer to others (Coller 2003a, b).

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[41] Actually, the average is 4.48, but there can not be half of a group.

[42] It would be worth to pay attention to the index of effective number of parties developed by Laakso and Taagepera and praised by Lijphard (1999:68) as "widely used by comparativists in political science". $N = 1/\sum s_i^2$, where N = number of effective parties, s = proportion of seats in the chamber and i = party.

Sometimes, this closeness ends up in the integration of a political party (or a fraction of it) into another.[43] It can be said that the higher the polarization, the lower the rate of consensus could be. Contrary, the ideologically closer the parties are, the higher the likelihood of building consensus in the chamber. This proposition relies upon the existence of Òmediating Ógroups between two major ideological blocks. For instance, the presence of centrist parties in parliaments with a left-right divide might help to bring together distant political groups and thus help to build consensus. This is what Capo ( ) found out in his study about the Congress of Deputies in Spain. It might well be the case that my counterintuitive findings (the more groups the more consensus) is the result of the presence of mediating groups (like CDS or regionalist groups like PA in Andalusia or PAR in Aragon) that are less defined in ideological terms and can help thus building consensus.

National political climate. When we are dealing with federations like the case of Spain, we have to take into account the political climate at the national level. By political climate I refer to the perception that parties are willing to cooperate for the common good rather than showing their differences in basic areas like defense, terrorism, external relations, or education. If the political climate is turbulent, especially among the two major contenders, then, consensus at the regional (or even local) level might be more difficult than when the political climate is more stable. Therefore, the consensus rate might be affected as well in the regional parliament.

Among the many ways of capturing the political conflict in a society in a particular period of time, I decided to use the one involving the perceptions of qualified independent observers. In that way, we can obtain a proxy for the real political conflict. Twenty experts were asked to score the level of political conflict in Spain they observed in different legislatures of the Congress of Deputies.[44] I offered them a scale 0-10 in which 0 is no conflict and 10 deep and intense conflict. The average for the period was 5.88 and the values ranked from the lowest 4.75 of the second legislature (absolute majority of the socialist party) to the highest 7.21 of the 8th legislature (simple majority of the socialist party) or the 7.21 of the 5th legislature (simple majority of the socialist party). The hypothesis is that, in federations in which the main contenders at the regional and national levels largely coincide, the higher the political conflict at the national level, the lower the consensus rate will be because political parties, especially the major contenders (socialists and conservative), will be unable to reach agreements in the midst of a general political conflict. Certainly, making agreements with their rivals at the regional level in a moment of political turmoil at the national level could be detrimental for the parties, unless they agree on very institutional matters.

However, this does not seem to be the case. The correlation coefficient is -0.097, which means that both variables are not related at all. The coefficient is not significant (p=0.493). Therefore, political conflict at the national level seems to have no effect on the level of consensus reached by political parties in regional chambers. It could be that the variable is ill-defined or ill-built. However, The little dispersion of the measure of the variable (standard deviation is 0.8499) indicates that people tended to rank their perceptions around the mean more often than not. External independent observers largely coincide in their appreciation of political conflict, which suggests that the variable is well built.

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[43] This was the case of the party Euskadiko Ezkerra, that became integrated into the Basque branch of PSOE known as Partido Socialista de Euskadi. It is also de case of Nueva Izquierda, a party founded by former members of Izquierda Unida that became integrated into the PSOE. Also, Uni–n del Pueblo Navarro and PP merged in Navarre.

[44] The experts were journalists, professors, lawyers, but not politicians.

Abolute and simple majority. Another candidate to explain why consensus rate varies so often is the type of majority a party has in the regional parliament. In parliamentary systems with a proportional representation model, the chamber reflects with more or less accuracy the preferences of the voters. The more votes an electoral list gets, the more seats in parliament it gets. A party can have the absolute majority of seats (half of the seats plus one) or may have a simple majority or largest plurality of seats. Since parliament elects the president of the government and supports it, and since usually parliaments legislate after the initiative of governments, then we should pay attention to different scenarios affecting the level of consensus.

When a party has the absolute majority of seats in a parliament and supports a single party government, there is no need to build any agreement with other parliamentary groups to have the bills passed. The votes of their own MPs are enough to have legislation approved. At the national level, most of Gonz‡lez governments and the second legislature of Aznar enjoyed this situation. Similarly, there are regions where the same party has obtained a number of absolute majorities in the chamber (ie., Extremadura, Castile-La Mancha, Andalusia). Contrary, when a party gets the largest plurality of seats, but not the absolute majority of them, a multiple scenario appears. The successful party will need to build agreements with other parliamentary groups to have some legislation passed. These agreements may be built on a case by case basis or may reach the whole legislature period. In this case, it might be expected an effort to build agreements and, consequently, the rate of consensus could increase. However, this is not always the case. Depending on the number of groups, their ideological distance, and the number of seats they got after elections, it might be the case that agreements are impossible and the government has only a minority support. In this case, the rest of the groups can easily vote against any initiative taken by the executive making the task of governing certainly difficult. In this case, the rate of consensus is expected to be low, and the government short lived.

Therefore, absolute majorities may prevent consensus while simple majority of seats may foster it. According to data gathered on all of the 48 legislatures, there is independence between both variables. Running a regression with the dummy variable type of majority (1=absolute, 0=simple), the results is that the regression coefficient of the explanatory variable is -0.207, which is so close to zero that it makes irrelevant to mention that the coefficient is non significant (p=0.158). That means that for the data gathered, consensus rate is independent on the type of majority in parliament. Again, this is a counterintuitive result that requires further research to qualify the relationship between consensus and majority.

There is also an attitudinal variable that can explain the variability of the consensus rate in regional parliaments, namely the willingness of politicians to reach agreements with their rivals. This is, though, a psychological variable that is difficult to measure and will be discarded for our analysis here. However, we can use a sort of a proxy to find out about this attitudinal variable.

Taking into account that governments supported by the absolute majority of seats controlled by a single party do not need to make agreements with their rivals in order to pass bills by consensus, we might have a look at whether the party controlling the government and the majority of seats makes a difference in the rate of consensus.[45] For the simplicity of the analysis I will focus only on the two major contenders at the national level (PSOE and PP), eliminating from the analysis the cases of Catalonia and the Basque

[45] I need to check the cases of Rioja (2, 3 legislatures), and Aragon (3). Also, the third legislature of Navarra, which began with a coalition of PSOE, CDN and EA in the regional government, after a year split over and the government went to the hands of UPN (PP in Navarre) for the rest of the legislature. I have considered, then the fourth legislature of Navarre as governed by UPN but with the largest plurality of votes.

Country, which have always been governed by regional parties.[46] PSOE, the socialist party, held the absolute majority of seats in Andalusia (2, 3, 5 legislatures), Asturias (5), Castile-La Mancha (2, 3, 4, 5), Valencia (3), and Murcia (2, 3). PP, the conservative party (or its regional branch in Navarre, UPN) enjoyed absolute majorities in Rioja (4, 5), Madrid (4, 5), Valencia (4, 5), and Murcia (4, 5). With this subset of cases we can see whether the party holding the absolute majority of seats in parliament makes a difference in the level of consensus in parliament.[47]

A look at the consensus rate of the aforementioned legislatures in Table 4 suggests that with the exception of the fourth legislature of Madrid and the third of Castile-La Mancha, the level of consensus achieved when the PSOE holds the absolute majority of seats in regional parliaments is considerably higher on average than when the PP has the absolute majority. Actually, if we perform a simple regression analysis the result is a model like this:[48]

Consensus rate = 34.471 * 0.606 absolute majority

Consensus rate has been defined previously as the dependent variable of this study. The variable Òabsolute majorityÓ has two values. When the PSOE is the party that has the absolute majority of seats in a regional chamber in a given legislature, then the value assigned has been 1. When the PP held the absolute majority, the assigned value was 0. Note that we are dealing here with absolute majorities of a single party, not coalitions of parties to produce an absolute majority of seats to support a government. I will touch upon this issue later.

This model indicates that when the PSOE has the absolute majority of seats in a regional chamber, the level of consensus is 60% higher than when the PP controls the parliament. Additionally, the model suggests that socialist MPs make a larger effort to incorporate the points of view of other political groups in the lawmaking process (including the PP) than the conservative MPs, even when they do not need the help of other groups to have the bills passed.

The type of bills discussed in parliament might have also an impact in the rate of consensus. Bills related to the creation of universities or professional associations, those issued to help the victims of natural disasters or terrorism, are clear candidates to generate consensus. Other bills are less likely to become the ground in which parties build agreements. Further analysis will require to elaborate a classification of bills according to standard criteria.

Discontinuities. Finally, there is a last factor that can be used to explain the consensus rate in regional chambers. Every legislature, a number of candidates becomes new MPs. The proportion of newcomers in a legislature is considered here the circulation rate as opposed to the permanence rate.[49] This rate might be higher or lower depending on a number of factors like the strategy of the party in the making of the electoral list, the position of the party in the opposition or the government, the existence of quotas, and the like. These new MPs usually come to the chamber without contacts and friendship relationships with the rivals. If they are young and inexperienced, most likely they will also

[46] The exception is the 5th legislature in which the PSE-PSOE entered the regional government.
[47] See the consensus rates for these legislatures in Table 4.
[48] The Model is significant since p=0.010. The probability associated to the regression coefficient is p=0.010. R square is 0.368, which means that the variable Òabsolute majorityÓ explains more than a third of the variability of the dependent variable Òconsensus rateÓ
[49] The permanence rate refers to the proportion of MPs that holds a seat in any given legislature and the previous one.

be ideologically rather than pragmatically oriented. All these factors might have an effect in their performance in the regional chamber. In essence, this is the explanations that advanced Linz (????) to explain the failure of the Spanish Second Republic. A bunch of new MPs, highly ideologized and largely lacking friendship ties to their rivals, were unable to build the necessary consensus to keep the polity stable.

Table 5. Discontinuity of political elites in regional parliaments

	Legislatures						
	2	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Avge.**
Andalusia	61	49	49	38	49	46	48.66
Aragon	60	61	58	51	54		56.8
Asturias	67	44	44	60	36		50.2
Baleares	56	52	52	56	54		54
Canarias	58	57	52	63	58		57.6
Cantabria	74	46	56	51	56		56.6
Castilla-La Mancha	66	74	74	66	64		68.8
Castilla-Leon	66	55	51	47	62		56.2
Cataluna	61	42	43	44	53	56	49.83
Extremadura	52	51	57	54	43		51.4
Galicia	55	68	36	64	43	64	55
La Rioja	67	64	51	58	58		59.6
Madrid	57	49	54	56	57		54.6
Murcia	73	64	73	58	54		64.4
Navarra	62	60	70	72	62		65.2
Basque Country	61	48	56	57	52	37	51.83
Valencia	50	49	54	54	58		53
TOTAL	61.52	54.88	54.70	55.82	53.70	50.75	56.10

Note: I have not included the first legislature because the circulation rate is 100% since all members are new to parliament.

As data in Table 5 show, the average circulation rate for the period 1980-2005 in regional parliaments is 56.1.[50] That means that on average, more than half of MPs (56%) in each legislature are new in the job. MPs tend to circulate more in Castilla-La Mancha, Navarre and Murcia, while tend to repeat in the chamber more often in Andalusia, Catalonia, and Asturias. Given that there are different electoral cycles, I will not discuss variations within regions. There are several factors that have been tested to explain the circulation rate in parliamentary systems (Coller 2002): changes in political leadership, growth of the parliamentary group, expectations of winning the elections, and absolute majorities. These elements have an effect on the rate of circulation in parliaments.

Although interesting in itself, the circulation of MPs in regional parliaments is just an independent variable among others in this study. As we have seen, the consensus rate

[50] To keep into account: % of newcomers in the party supporting the government can be an explanatory variable. The older the institution, the lower the circulation rate (Putnam, Loewenberg 106, Blondel 73:86). There is no optimal circulation rate (Coller 1999, Uriarte 97:273). Cuanta menos circulaci–n, mayor es la profesionalizaci–n. El nœmero de legislaturas en las que se est‡ presente permite ver a los pol'ticos profesionales. Factors explaining turnover (Matthews 1985:40-1): profesionalization, less party competition, attractiveness of parliamentary career, decisi–n of stepping out, pacts to substitute one MP for another.

varies and we try to find out a plausible explanation for it. It is worth then to find out whether there is any relationship between the consensus rate (dependent variable) and the circulation rate. Previous research indicated that for the pair of cases of Catalonia and Andalusia, and Valencia and Madrid, the relationship was negative so that an increment in the rate of circulation meant a decrease in the rate of consensus (Coller 2002). There I warned that more cases needed to be added. Now, when I incorporate the 48 cases for which I could gather information, the correlation test indicates that the relationship between circulation and consensus is non existent. Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.007, which is to say that both variables are independent (p=0.963).

In my previous research, as well, I indicated that given that modern parliamentarism is mainly based on the decisions of a hyperelite who tends to control and coordinate parliamentary groups as well as becoming their Òpublic imageÓ appearing constantly in the mass media, it should be interesting to see whether circulation of this hyperelite has an effect on the consensus reached in parliaments. The idea is that, assuming this group makes decisions on what will finally be agreed upon with the rivals and the final vote of parliamentary groups; insofar there is a high discontinuity in this group, chances are that, following LinzÕs hypothesis, they will have difficulties reaching agreements with their rivals.

I run a regression using the variable Òcirculation in the hyperliteÓ The variable counted all members holding positions of power in each regional parliament in each legislature. By positions of power I considered those who preside, are vicepresidents or secretaries of legislative committees, speakers of the group, and members of the Presidency of the parliament (usually a president, two vicepresidents and two secretaries). If there are people who make decisions in parliament concerning the points to be negotiated in a proposed bill, these MPs are, no doubt, those who decide, to use a Wright MillsÕdictum. The lowest circulation rate (only 20% of hyperelite members are new into the group) can be found in Murcia in the Fifth legislature. The highest proportion of newcomers into the group with power in regional chambers (89%) can be found in the fourth legislature of Castile-La Mancha, which is the region together with Navarre and Andalusia with the highest proportions of circulation. The average circulation rate is 71%, with a standard deviation of 14 points. The regression model is as follows:

Consensus rate = 30.956 * 0.262 Circulation of hyperlite group

The regression model suggests counterintuitive results. On the one hand, it indicates that the relationship between both variables is positive. That means that the higher the circulation, the higher the consensus. However, the impact of the latter in the former is low. For each 1% that the circulation of the hyperelite grows, the consensus rate will grow as well 2.6%. The probability associated to the regression coefficient is p=0.072, R square is 0.069, which is not much. R square suggests that the contribution of the independent variable into the explanation of the variability of the dependent variable is quite low (7%). Notwithstanding these counterintuitive results, further research is needed in order to double check them and try to find alternative explanations.

It seems that although circulation might have a very mild and counterintuitive effect in the consensus rate of regional parliaments in Spain, there are other variables that do not participate at all in the explanation of the variability of the variable. However, it seems that there is a variable that is quite important. First, the fact that a party has the absolute majority of seats in parliament, but additionally, it is very relevant whether the party is the conservative or the socialist one. It seems for these preliminary results that the socialists

are more open to reach pacts with their rivals (including the PP) than their conservative rivals are.

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