

Ethnic Media and the Mobilization of Identity

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Abstract

Can media fuel support for ethnic parties? By their nature, ethnic media can manipulate the salience of cultural boundaries, strengthening group identity. In a conflicting environment, they can help coalesce grievances against the state along identity lines, which favors ethnic mobilization. I study the case of the Basque Country in the late phase of the Franco regime, where an independent radio station operated by the local clergy promoted the revival of regional language. Using contemporary, archival, and survey data, I show that exposure to ethnic radio increased support for new radical independentist parties, and that the effect is driven by linguistically hispanified municipalities with low historical support for Basque nationalism. I also show that radio increased bilingualism in subsequent generations, and contributed to the progressive bundling of ethnic identity and political radicalism during the democratic transition.

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1 Introduction

Ethnic identity is an important driver of political behavior, but how it becomes decisive is in many respects unclear.¹ It is well understood that ethnic cleavages are not an inevitable feature of societies, but are contingent on the geographic and historical context: they can emerge where institutions and the distribution of cultural traits make an identity pivotal for electoral mobilization (Chandra 2004; Posner 2005; Huber 2017), or when a shared cultural membership can be used to coordinate losers from economic shocks or state policy (Mor 2022; Vall-Prat 2022). Yet, identities are harder attributes to switch than hats, and their political organization requires an appropriate technology.

In order to generate ethnic voting, it is necessary that ethnic categories be salient to the population, and overlap with political categories. In modern democracies the two processes, that of increasing the salience of ethnicity and of politicizing it, are usually co-determined by the activity of political actors (Eifert et al. 2010). However, in principle they need not coincide: salient ethnicities can be crafted by non-politically motivated actors, or cultural entrepreneurs (Posner 2003). The media are potential catalysts of identity salience and politicization. Since the changes brought by the printing press on ethnic and national landscapes (Anderson 2006 [1983]; Pengl et al. 2021), modern mass media have often played an important role in either promoting or defusing particular cultural identities. Public media in Rwanda reduced inter-ethnic prejudice (Blouin and Mukand 2019), radio stations in Zambia helped create current linguistic groups (Posner 2003), and popular media in the United States accelerated immigrant assimilation (Russo 2020). The

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

consequences of media on political behavior are more mixed. Media outlets for minorities, or ethnic media, may or may not affect their political participation, often depending on their content: media which provide political information can favor participation, while pure entertainment can demobilize (Oberholzer-Gee and Waldfogel 2009; Velez and Newman 2019; Zonszein 2020).

In this paper, I study the effects of ethnic media on minority identity and mobilization within a nation-state. My key argument is that ethnic media, even if they do not provide political content, can affect political behavior by increasing the salience of group identity, and thus indirectly favor the coalescence of political claims along identity lines. Ethnic media diffuse exclusive cultural traits such as language and therefore reify ethnic boundaries, the set of markers and practices that delimit membership to the in-group (Barth 1969). In this environment, factors such as state policy which generate grievances along demographic lines, can more easily result in ethnic mobilization.

I test this argument with a case study of the Spanish Basque Country,² a notable example of peripheral nationalism.³ After the Spanish civil war (1936-1939), the authoritarian regime led by Francisco Franco (1939-1975) repressed regional minorities, outlawing non-Spanish identity (Balcells and Villamil 2020). In the 1960s, during a partial liberalization of the radio market, the regime allowed the creation of local radio stations controlled by the Catholic Church. Under the institutional protection of the Church, journalists and local clergy running *Radio Popular de Loyola* (RPL, Popular Radio of Loyola) began producing daily broadcasts in the Basque historical language, Euskera, with the goal of promoting its

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

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

revival (Agirreazkuenaga [2012](#); Agirreazkuenaga [2017](#)). I study the consequences of exposure to RPL, an ethnic media outlet, on the support for Basque ethno-nationalist parties after the democratic transition. In its early activities, RPL did not have political motivations and was run by priests. However, the social context of the time in the Basque Country was characterized by indiscriminate state repression, which increased the perceived contraposition between the Spanish state and the Basque population. I hypothesize that non-political ethnic media increased the salience of ethnicity and, operating in a context of repression that politicized identity, influenced the propensity of listeners to support ethnic parties.

To test this hypothesis, I use different datasets: comprehensive municipal-level data on radio reception, voting behavior, language use, party infrastructures, and war violence over more than 90 years of Basque history; detailed daily information on RPL programs hand-collected from archival sources; and several waves of regionally representative public opinion surveys.

With archival material, I first characterize the typical content RPL listeners were exposed to. I document that RPL targeted both bilingual and Spanish-speaking Basques, and that its goals were to encourage the daily practice of Euskera among those who spoke it *and* to enlarge its boundaries by teaching it to hispanified listeners. Moreover, even in programs realized in Spanish, RPL transmitted folklore songs in Euskera and explanations of the distinct ethnic origin of surnames. By contrast, the radio did not cover national politics, which was a monopoly of state-owned channels, and thus could not provide direct political or anti-government information. I then study the political effects of RPL broadcasting. I use information on the location and technical characteristics of the transmitter,

and an engineering software, to compute the predicted reception of RPL signal across municipalities, exploiting the highly irregular Basque topography to isolate exogenous variation in signal strength due to terrain shape and unrelated to local political inclination. I find that villages with better reception of RPL transmissions in the late Franco era gave consistently higher support to Basque independentist parties after the Spanish democratic transition, and lower support to conservative centralist parties. When studying effect heterogeneity, I find that the results are driven by the behavior of municipalities with low historical strength of Basque nationalism and a lower initial share of Euskera speakers. Moreover, support for the traditional, more moderate, nationalist party did not increase and, if anything, may have decreased: the new ethnic constituencies supported instead radical Basque parties born during the transition and tied to the terrorist group *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA). I find consistent results using vote shares and turnout in referendums where radical parties called for rejection or abstention.

Additional analyses at the municipal and individual level give support to the initial hypothesis. First, with language use data, I show that radio increased the share of Euskera speakers over time, consistent with a higher salience of ethnicity being the key mechanism. Second, with data from six survey rounds, I characterize descriptively the mechanism through which non-political and non-radical media programs increased the vote for radical parties: for generations born during and after the dictatorship, Basque nationalism has a progressively stronger correlation with left-wing identification. This supports the view of a generational realignment whereby the stronger ethnic identity of young people was increasingly mobilized in terms of radical opposition to the Francoist state and its ideology. The new ethnic constituencies were thus more likely to support parties with

independentist and socialist agendas, a process to which ethnic media contributed. Given that in the post-Franco period ethnic appeals became pervasive in the media environment, the effect of RPL is attributable to the late dictatorship years, when it was the most important ethnic outlet (Durante et al. [2019](#)).

This paper provides direct quantitative evidence on the role of media in ethnic politics. Besides that, it rationalizes the different effects of ethnic media on behavior, by showing that non-political outlets which promote cultural distinctiveness can interact with social grievances to promote the politicization of identities.

2 Theoretical framework

The existence of cultural diversity does not imply, *per se*, its political organization: ethnic politics is the outcome of distinct collective processes. First, it requires the definition of boundaries which differentiate members from non-members, “creating” ethnic groups (Barth [1969](#); Wimmer [2013](#)): the standard approach in political science maintains that boundaries are defined around some shared descent-based marker (Chandra [2006](#)). Then, the salience of boundaries increases, that is individuals identify with their ethnic category more than other categories in which they could claim membership. Finally, ethnic categories are politicized, that is, they come to coincide with political categories and members coordinate their behavior. These processes are theoretically disjoint: in Africa missionaries and colonial officers shaped linguistic boundaries, and the ethnic categories they define, with non-political motivations (Ranger [1989](#); Posner [2003](#); Pengl et al. [2021](#)); while the emergence of conflicts related to colonial administration increased the salience

of these categories and made them political (Vail and White 1989). In practice however, boundary-making and politicization reinforce each other (Pengl et al. 2021), which makes them hardly separable: politicians who want to make ethnicity or nationality politically relevant need to make it salient for the public, for instance through propaganda or education policy (Balcells 2013; Eifert et al. 2010), and political behavior such as group-level mobilization also reinforces identity (Lawrence 2013).

Ethnic media can affect ethnic voting through each of these mechanisms: in order to understand the nature of their effects, it is necessary to characterize their content. Ethnic media could have a direct effect on politicization and mobilization of identity by transmitting propaganda. I focus instead on a different channel: even when they do not spread political information, media have the capacity to influence the salience of cultural boundaries (Blouin and Mukand 2019; Russo 2020; Buccione and Mello 2020). Therefore, they influence vote choice indirectly, by making the appeals of political entrepreneurs resonate more easily among the population. Absent circumstances for ethnic politicization, the diffusion of ethnic media can be correlated with group identity but not with political action. When these circumstances are present, ethnic media have implications for behavior.

Similar indirect mechanisms are debated in the literature on media and collective action: exposure to some outlets has large effects on violent mobilization (Yanagizawa-Drott 2014), but the mechanism could pass through a higher effectiveness of face-to-face mobilization (Straus 2007).

2.1 Linking theory to the case

In order to tie the theoretical discussion on ethnic media to the case study, it is important to characterize the connection between language and ethnic identity in contemporary Basque Country. This discussion helps clarify why the targets of language revival were also Spanish-speaking Basques and how programs in Euskera have increased the salience of ethnicity among listeners. Although Euskera has been at the core of Basque nationalist propaganda since the late 19th century (Atienza 1979), it is not seen as an exclusionary criterion for identity. In survey data from the 1990s, the majority of respondents do not think that speaking Euskera is necessary for considering oneself Basque, while "willingness to be Basque" has the highest agreement, and being born in the region ranks second (Figure G.2). In spite of this, the Basque Country is seen by almost everyone as the land of Euskera. A large majority of respondents indicates the language as the first most important difference between the Basque Country and the rest of Spain (Figure G.1). Therefore, the historical language is the most salient trait associated with ethnic identity. Bilingualism is also positively correlated with individual ethnicity salience, measured by the relative strength of Basque over Spanish identity (Figure G.3, $\rho=0.46$).

3 The politics of Basque identity

At the end of the Spanish Second Republic in 1936, the political system of the Basque Country was tripartite. The Left and Right blocs represented conflicting interests over land redistribution and religion, and the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) advocated for regional autonomy and cultural rights of the ethnic Basques, while being conservative on

social and religious issues (De La Granja Sainz 2009). The increasing polarization, and the intransigence of the Right about centralism, led the Basque nationalists to take the side of the Republicans after the coup led by general Francisco Franco, and the civil war then ensued (Watson 2007). With Franco's victory in 1939 and the onset of his authoritarian regime, the Basque provinces entered a period of repression. The regime repressed linguistic minorities in order to impose a unique Spanish identity: the measures included language bans, book fires, mandated translation of names, and purges of priests and school teachers (Clark 1979; Balcells and Villamil 2020).

Overall, the regime's effort to dilute ethnic identities was a failure. Cultural transmission disappeared from the public domain but survived in private. According to ethnographic accounts, family and church remained safe spaces for "being Basque" (Pérez-Agote 2006); similarly, in survey data cohorts born before and after the dictatorship are not meaningfully different in terms of the language their parents spoke at home (Figure G.4).

In the long run, it became clear that Franco's goal of erasing *political* identities had failed as well. Even where generations with living experiences of the war and of post-war repression refrained from politics (Pérez-Agote 2006), their sons and grandsons did not. Young people born under the dictatorship grew increasingly dissatisfied with state policies, and opposed to Franco's regime both ideologically (becoming more left-wing) and in their identity, a process that sociologists refer to as the radicalization of Basque nationalism (Pérez-Agote 2006). The emergence of the terrorist organization ETA, initially founded by students, is a symbolic summary of such tendency: many segments of the civil society supported the organization's use of violence and its agenda of territorial secession

and economic socialism. Far from being a prerogative of sons of nationalists, Basques with non-ethnic political backgrounds, outside of the traditional PNV constituency, became close to radical nationalism (De La Calle [2015](#)).

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

4 Independent media and the activities of RPL

The radio environment during the authoritarian period was under government control. Only state-owned radio stations were allowed to use transmitters of power above 2 kW (CdIS [1970](#); Arregui [2011](#)), therefore the audience of most private stations in Spain at that time was limited to a single province. Only the state network, *Radio Nacional de España*, could report national news (Coca and Martínez [1992](#)). After the *Ley de Prensa* of 1966, the regime shifted from preventive censorship of media content to a more paternalist approach based on ex-post sanctions (Clark [1979](#); Cisquella et al. [2002](#)), which led to a partial liberalization of the media market.

In this context of gradual concessions, the regime granted the catholic Church frequencies for approximately one private radio station per province. This led to the creation of

the *Radio Popular* (RP) network, affiliated to the Church's network COPE. Individual radio stations were typically owned and managed independently by provincial bishoprics. The first RP stations in the Basque Country were in Bilbao (RPB), San Sebastián (RPS) and in Loyola Jesuit sanctuary (RPL).

RPL was founded in 1961 by the Jesuit friars José Bergara and Francisco Ibicuru. They wanted to exploit the potential of broadcasting to spread religious messages, since the consumption of radio was expanding (Arregui 2011), and the Basque provinces consumed more than other Spanish provinces (Coca and Martínez 1992). Further evidence about the lack of political motivations can be found in the letter where the bishop he approved the radio foundation, where he specified that RPL had an "apostolic purpose" (Arregui 2011, p.18). The daily broadcast initially included only religious content, but was gradually expanded to include various original general-interest programs. Since the early years, part of the programs were in Euskera, while others were in Spanish. Religious content like the Mass and the rosary was entirely in Euskera (Arregui 2011; Agirreazkuenaga 2012).

The strong use of Euskera was exceptional even among other Basque COPE stations: RPB transmitted only in Spanish until the last few years of the regime; RPS was acquired by the Jesuits in 1971, after which programs in Euskera increased, but before that the use of Basque language was extremely marginal and just "symbolic" (Agirreazkuenaga 2017).

The main reason why RPL could operate notwithstanding the linguistic content was the affiliation with the Church, which granted some degree of institutional protection. The fragile equilibrium is recounted by Arregui (2011), a former RPL editor, in a telling anecdote. From 1961 to 1964 RPL transmitted in AM. In 1964, the government mandated the transition of radio stations from AM to FM waves, and took advantage of the new

reallocation of frequency bands to deny a FM frequency to RPL. Thanks to the intervention of the local bishop, the radio re-opened in 1965 with an FM transmitter.

RPL was almost the only radio station where it was possible to regularly listen to programs in Euskera during the late Franco period. Smaller radio stations run by individual activists who had tried to follow the same path had been shut down in the early 1960s (Agirreazkuenaga 2017). Other radio stations, which transmitted from abroad, had an unstable reception and frequency, also due to signal disruption by the government (Arrieta 2015). Thanks to RPL's efforts in promoting ethnic culture, by the first democratic elections many Basques had been exposed on a daily basis to the traditional language of their region (Agirreazkuenaga 2012; Pérez-Agote 2006; De Pablo et al. 2011).

4.1 Factors for transmitter location

Although the location of the transmitter, and ultimately reception, was decided by the RPL management, the exact position was chosen under uncertainty and technical constraints. The studios of RPL were inside the Loyola sanctuary, in the province of Gipuzkoa. Initially it used an AM transmitter located close to the sanctuary, in terrains owned by the Jesuits in the Loyola valley. In 1965, after the attempted shutdown, RPL used a new transmitter in FM, which was maintained until the end of the dictatorship. Since FM was a new technology, and many household receptors only allowed for AM frequency, it was difficult to predict the possible audience that a station in FM would have (Arregui 2011). The transmitter was located on top of the mount Itxumendi, in the interior of the Gipuzkoa province. The reason was that the mountain was relatively high (730m), and not too close to other mountains of the area. The management hoped to maximize the geographic re-

ception across the whole Basque Country (Arregui 2011, p.43). Another technical consideration which constrained the choice of position was that the signal was sent from the radio studio in the sanctuary to the transmitter. To give an idea of the context of uncertainty in the choice, there were initially technical difficulties in sending the signal to the transmitter correctly, because some hills between Loyola and Itxumendi created unforeseen transmission issues, and the management had to circumvent the problem ex-post (Arregui 2011, p.44). Therefore, even if the location of the transmitter was non-random, it was largely determined by supply-side, rather than demand-side, considerations.

4.2 Post-Franco growth in Basque language media

Even though RPL was a precursor of media in Euskera (Agirreazkuenaga 2012), it quickly lost its status of sole provider after the democratic transition. In the 1980s, the new autonomous provincial government opened several mono and bilingual radio and television channels. These channels had, among others, the explicit goal of promoting Basque culture and language, and used extensively Euskera and nationalist symbology (Coca and Martínez 1992). Therefore, RPL exposure can be considered a meaningful treatment only in the period of the late Franco period.

4.3 Language use

I focus on RPL transmissions in FM, which started in 1966. To characterize qualitatively and quantitatively its content, I present results from the manual coding and analysis of a random sample of original radio transcripts that I accessed at the library of the Provincial

Government of Gipuzkoa, and complemented with information from secondary sources (Arregui 2011; Agirreazkuenaga 2012; Agirreazkuenaga 2017). The details of the data collection and coding criteria, and additional results, are reported in Appendix E.

Every morning and afternoon, RPL offered general interest programs with discussions of religion, sport, or information for women. These programs were mostly in Spanish, and a few of them were bilingual. Other programs had an entertainment and cultural content, and were entirely in Euskera. These could be discussions of agricultural work and farmers' life, reading of verses and songs by Basque poets, or radio dramas where the main characters had recognizable Basque traits. There are few doubts that these programs were made for an audience already fluent in Euskera. Some programs had an explicit educational content: they were intended to help children and students practice the language, for instance they encouraged them to write and read essays in Euskera. It is most likely that the intended audience of these shows were children and teenagers in Basque-speaking families who were forced to use Spanish at school and were at risk of abandoning the native tongue. Some shows tried instead to teach basic elements of Euskera, like the meaning and correct pronunciation of some words, as shown in Figure 1: the intended audience were probably Basque children and adults whose main language was Spanish. Finally, there were shows in which the radio speaker provided information on the origins of ethnic Basque surnames, replying to letters from the listeners. Even in these shows, which were often in Spanish, the replies emphasized the tradition of the Basque Country and its distinct historical origin relative to Spain.

Monolingual Euskera programs tended to be allocated to evening time slots (right panel of Figure 2): this supports the conjecture that they were conceived as consumption

goods for the family, including children and teenagers that were home from school. Much of RPL's musical broadcast consisted in Basque folklore songs. their share was generally similar or higher than that of Spanish songs (Figure E.2). RPL also introduced advertisements in Euskera, another novelty at the time (Agirreazkuenaga 2017).

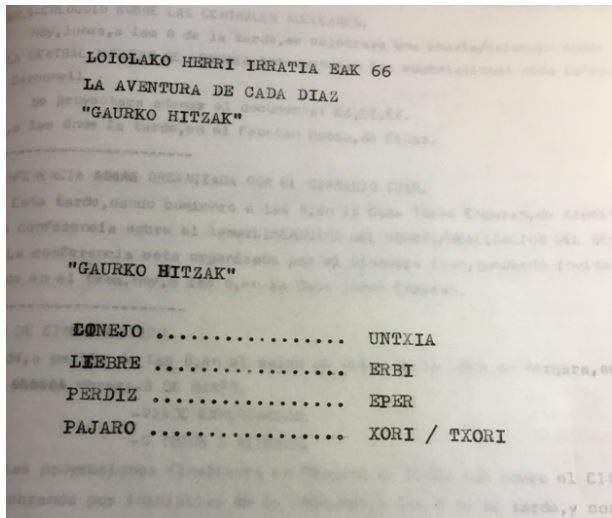
Since national news could only be given by state-owned channels, the informational programs covered local life. Local news were mostly announcements of forthcoming social events in Basque villages, that the radio received from listeners and collaborators: activities in local schools, sports, cultural or religious meetings. It also gave weekly bulletins of local food markets and prices (Figure E.5). News announcements could be in Spanish, Euskera, or bilingual (in which case the same piece of news was reported in both languages, Figure E.6): the proportion of local news read in Euskera varied substantially across days in the same month (Figure E.1), but on average it was increasing over the years (left panel of Figure 2).

4.4 Who listens

It is clear that the goal of RPL was to promote the diffusion of ethnic culture, for listeners with a strong ethnic identity, and others with plausibly more ambivalent attitudes, at least in linguistic terms. What were the incentives for this latter sub-population to turn on the radio and listen to RPL? Certainly the presence of entertainment programs covering, among others, sport and local affairs in both languages was probably appealing in a period where radio had an important social role. Another possibility is that the radio attracted many listeners who were primarily interested in the religious content. In Basque society, the correlation between religiosity and nationalist ideology had been historically tenuous

at most: survey data show that generations born before the dictatorship, which plausibly raised their family during the early RPL activity, had generally very strong Catholic feelings irrespective of their nationalist ideology, a pattern that changes visibly only for people born in the transition (Figure G.5). Religion could thus have attracted audiences of all backgrounds.

Figure 1: Basque educational content in RPL

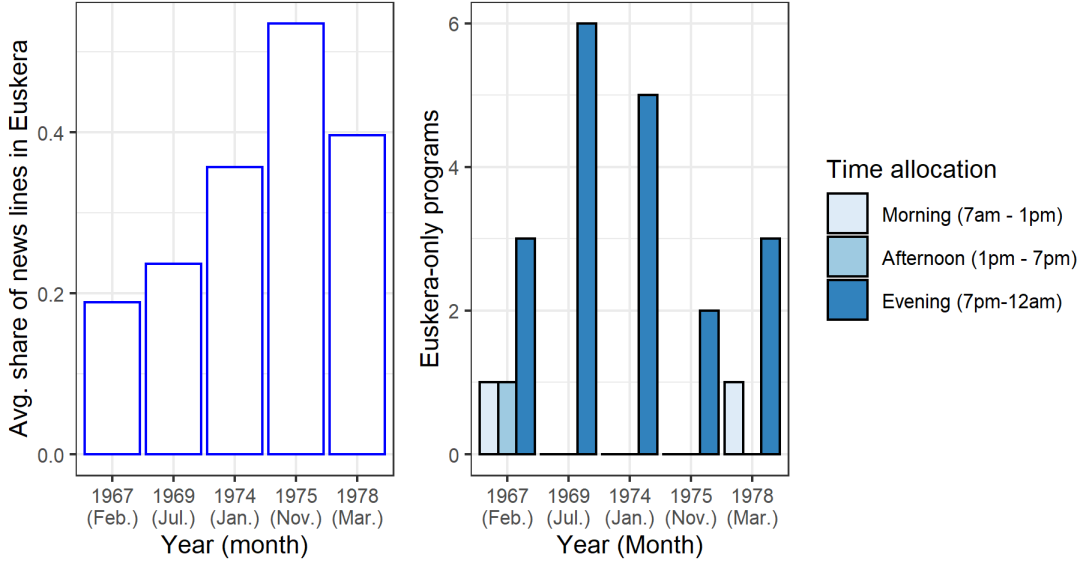


Note: Example of elements of Basque teaching. Feature called "Words of the day", within the predominantly Spanish-language show "Everyday's adventure". Names of animals with the corresponding Euskera translation. *Source:* Photo by the author, courtesy of Koldo Mitxelena Library.

5 Data and Design

To study the effects of RPL on political outcomes I compiled municipal-level data from public and archival sources. Variables are aggregated at the town boundaries of the first election in 1977 and aggregation details are in Appendix A.

Figure 2: Language use in RPL



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

5.1 Operationalizing and interpreting radio exposure

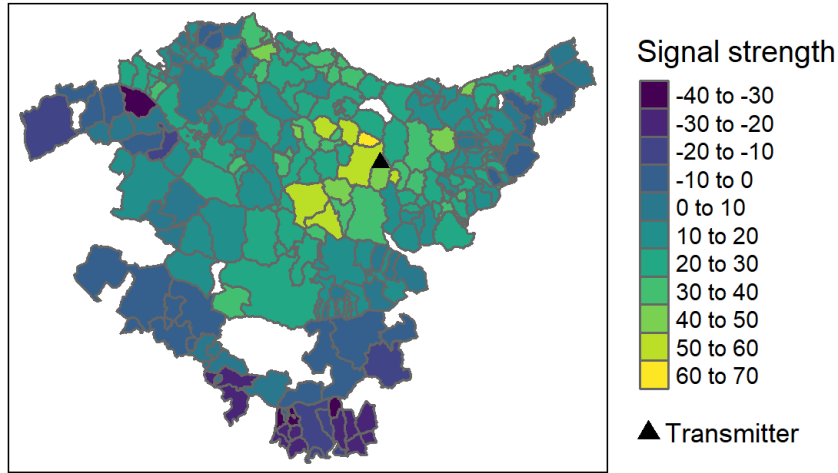
The theoretical object of interest is the effect of listening to RPL during the Franco era on individual behavior in the short and long-run. I cannot observe individual media consumption, thus I rely on municipal-level information. Following a literature on the effects of media initiated by Olken (2009), I estimate media consumption with its supply. Specifically, I compute the received signal strength of RPL at the centroid of each municipality in the Basque Country and the neighboring province of Navarre (discussed in Section 7). Differently from studies that can identify compliers (Peisakhin and Rozenas 2018), I am unable to model actual reception as a (possibly non-linear) function of signal strength, so I follow the literature and rely on a linear approximation. This also means that an exogenous signal strength is an encouragement to treatment: a causal effect scaled by the share

of compliers.

I compute predicted signal strength using the Irregular Terrain Model (Longley and Rice 1968). The inputs of the formula for signal strength are the technical parameters of the originating transmitter, such as power and frequency, the distance between the transmitter and the receiving antenna, and any topographic obstacles that the waves encounter, derived from a terrain map. I collected information on the FM transmitter used by RPL from 1966 from Arregui (2011), who reports indications of how to reach by car the transmitter on mount Itxumendi. I geo-referenced the transmitter location using Google Earth and Google Maps, and validated it with a website that geo-locates mountains (Peakvisor.com) and an online directory of radio antennas (fm1ist.org). Following the literature, I use the ITM algorithm to also compute the predicted signal strength in free space, that is the strength of the signal that would be received at a given point in absence of any terrain obstacle. The signal in free space captures the deterministic component of reception, which is due to non-random factors such as the technical parameters and the relative location of the transmitter: conditioning on it, and on other geographic characteristics, isolates a stochastic component that is due to differences in terrain shape, plausibly unrelated to political inclinations (Durante et al. 2019; Crabtree and Kern 2018). The predicted signal strength in $\text{dB}\mu\text{V}$ is standardized to the support $[0, 1]$ by the formula $S_i = \frac{s_i - \min_i(s_i)}{\max_i(s_i) - \min_i(s_i)}$ for interpretability. To validate the measure in absence of listenership data, I use archival data on voluntary contributors and local collaborators of RPL in 1978; both measures are positively correlated with signal strength (Figure B.1). Figure 3 shows predicted signal strength in the Basque Country.

To qualify theoretically this estimand, recall that RPL was virtually the sole ethnic me-

Figure 3: Predicted RPL signal strength



dia outlet only until the democratic transition: after that, Basque public radio and television became bilingual, and appeals to ethnicity became pervasive in the media environment. The long-run effects of RPL on political outcomes should thus be interpreted as the effect of a continued historical treatment of 10-15 years during the dictatorship on democratic political behavior. This interpretation is analogous to that of Durante et al. (2019), who estimate an effect of Berlusconi's television in Italy on the early receivers only.

5.2 Outcomes

To measure support for ethnic-nationalist and other parties, I use vote shares in the elections for the Spanish parliament in the years 1979 to 2019.⁴ Specifically, I use vote shares for the two Basque nationalist blocs, the PNV and the radical nationalists, as well as the Spanish conservatives (PP) and socialists (PSOE), which embody, respectively, op-

⁴In Spanish autonomous communities, regional elections are arguably more salient for everyday policy. However, in survey data used in Appendix G, the same party is voted in regional and national elections by ~ 91% of the respondents who reported the two votes.

position to regional separatism, and the more traditional left-right cleavage. Vote shares are computed over eligible voters, since turnout was also an electoral strategy. Not all parties are present in each election, most notably the radical nationalists were banned between 2002 and 2008 due to their ties with ETA. The coding and years used for each party are reported in Appendix [H](#).

As additional measures, I collect data on referendum outcomes, and data on the origin of ETA-affiliated prisoners in 1974, published by an ETA activist (Forest [1974](#)).⁵

5.3 Other variables

Population and geography. Population data come from digitized Spanish Censuses, available from the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística* (INE), while municipal-level geographic variables (area and elevation) are published by the *Centro Nacional de Información Geográfica*.

Ethnic identity. I use two historical measures of the salience of Basque ethnic identity. First, I collected online and archival electoral data for the Second Republic period (1931-1936). From those data, I use the PNV vote share in the 1933 national election.⁶ The second measure is the share of Basque speakers in 1972. Although this variable is not strictly pre-treatment, it is measured after roughly half of the radio exposure period, which at least attenuates the concern of post-treatment bias. I use a newly digitized linguistic survey from Yrizar ([1973](#)), who collected the number of Euskera speakers at the municipal level from parish priests (See Appendix [A](#) for a discussion of these data). The distribution

⁵In Appendix [A](#) I discuss the use of data from politically non-neutral sources.

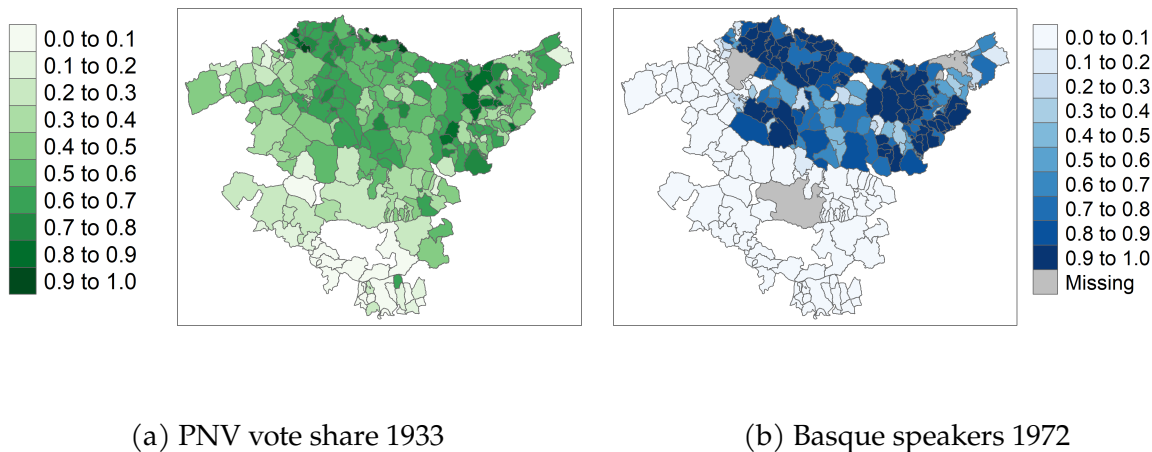
⁶As explained in Appendix [H](#), the other elections held in the 1930s are less suitable.

of these two variables is plotted in figure 4. For the post-Franco period, I obtain official municipal-level data on language composition for the period 1981-2016 from the Basque statistical institute.

Additional pre-treatment variables. I collect additional data on pre-Franco ethnic politics. From Solano (1993) I code whether in the 1930s a town had PNV party branches, Basque centers (*batzokis*), youth and alpinist clubs, and branches of the Patriotic Women association. I also collect individual-level data on victims of Francoism during the civil war compiled by the non-profit organization *Euskal Memoria*, matched to municipal boundaries using the town of birth.

Summary statistics for all the variables are in Appendix A.

Figure 4: Historical measures of Basque identity



5.4 Design

The validity of the research design relies on the independence of the radio signal relative to the outcomes, conditionally on controls. To check possible threats to identification

under this empirical strategy, I perform balance tests on pre-treatment correlates of political behavior. I estimate the following model:

$$x_{ip} = \alpha_p^b + \beta^b Radio_{ip} + M'_{ip} \theta^b + \varepsilon_{ip}^b \quad (1)$$

where x_{ip} is a potentially confounding pre-treatment variable in municipality i and province p , $Radio_{ip}$ is the predicted signal strength, M'_{ip} is a vector of controls which includes signal strength in free space, municipal area and elevation (logged), and population in 1970 (logged), and α_p^b is a province fixed effect. The standard error ε_{ip} is assumed to be spatially correlated within a bandwidth of 30 km (Conley 1999). As Table 1 shows, RPL reception is not significantly correlated with civil war victims, vote shares for the Left and Right blocs before the war, distance from provincial capitals (a measure of remoteness), and the share of Basque speakers. However, there is a statistically significant correlation with the pre-war vote share of the PNV: this raises a concern that, despite the constraints to transmitter placement explained before, RPL reception was stronger in areas with nationalist leaning. To adjust for this unbalance I include the PNV's vote share in 1933 among the covariates. After this adjustment, the only variable that remains unbalanced is the presence of a Patriotic Women Club, although the correlation with radio reception is negative.

In the analysis, I estimate models of the form

$$y_{ip} = \alpha_p + \beta Radio_{ip} + X'_{ip} \theta + \varepsilon_{ip} \quad (2)$$

where X_{ip} is a vector containing signal strength in free space, the demographic and

Table 1: Balance tests

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

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

geographic controls and PNV vote share in 1933.

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

$$y_{ip} = \alpha_p^m + \beta^m Radio_{ip} + \gamma^m Z_{ip} + \delta^m (Radio_{ip} * Z_{ip}) + X_{ip}' \theta^m + \varepsilon_{ip}^m \quad (3)$$

6 Results

6.1 Electoral outcomes

I first estimate the average effects of exposure to ethnic media on voting behavior, with model 2. Results are reported in Table 2. Column 1 implies that increasing the quality of

the signal from 0 (no reception) to 1 (perfect reception) increases the average post-Franco vote share for radical nationalist parties by about 11 percentage points. This is a very large effect, but as noted by Peisakhin and Rozenas (2018), it refers to an extreme counterfactual. In terms of standard deviations, an increase in signal strength of one raw standard deviation (0.147) is associated with an increase in support for radical nationalist parties of about 1.6 percentage points. In terms of the residualized signal strength, which is the actual variation used for identification under this design, an increase of one standard deviation (0.094) is associated with a vote share higher by about 1 percentage point. The estimated effect on support for the nationalist but moderate PNV is negative but not statistically significant at conventional levels (column 2). Instead, exposure to RPL reduces the average vote share of PP by about 7 percentage points. (0.6 for one residualized standard deviation, column 3). The effect on votes for the Spanish left (PSOE) is both close to 0 and non-significant (column 4). Overall, RPL exposure is associated with an increase in support for radical ethnic parties and a decrease in support for centralist parties, while there appears to be no effect on the "non-ethnic" left.

To put the results in the context of existing research, these average effects are similar in magnitude to those that the literature attributes to strongly biased media (Peisakhin and Rozenas 2018; Grossman et al. [forthcoming](#); Li and Martin 2022). However, differently from existing studies, this treatment represents an exposure during a time in which elections were not held and in absence of a party system. Thus, it captures how much an ethnic media outlet made individuals more responsive to the appeals of certain parties during democracy.

Appendix C reports a series of robustness checks on the main results: they are not

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

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

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

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

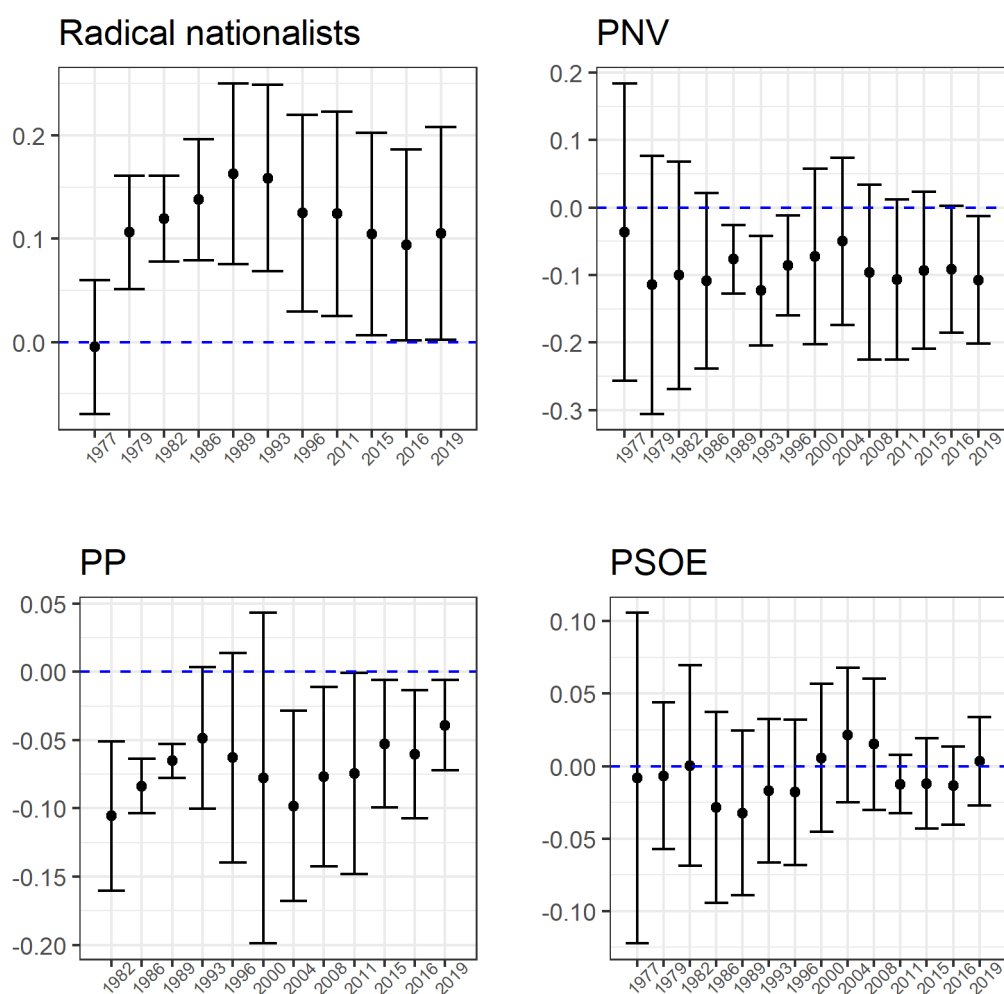
sensitive to excluding individual municipalities (Figure C.2) or extreme values in the signal distribution (Figure C.1). Moreover, they are robust to further including the share of Basque speakers in 1972 as control (Table C.1) and to replacing signal in free space with logarithms of municipality coordinates (Table C.2). Finally, results remain statistically significant using wild cluster bootstrapped standard errors at the district (*comarca*) level (Table C.3).

Figure 5 reports the results for each election individually.⁷ The sign and significance of the estimates is consistent across years and not driven by few outlier elections. There is also a visible pattern whereby effects gradually diminish in time. The only election where ethnic voting seems uncorrelated with radio reception is the first general election of 1977. It is possible that the null estimated effect for this year is related to the high initial fragmentation of the radical nationalist bloc, which had not run united. The lack of a unitary actor able to mobilize effectively at the dawn of the new party system may explain

⁷Results are not available for all parties in every election, see Appendix H.

this difference. In partial support of this hypothesis, in 1977 all the radical lists combined gained on average 8% of the votes at the municipal level, while in the following election in 1979, the unitary list Herri Batasuna gained an average vote share of 11.7%.

Figure 5: RPL exposure and voting behavior in every national election



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

6.2 Additional mobilization measures

In this section I study the effect of exposure to RPL on other measures of ethnic mobilization beyond party support. To send signals to the central state, Basque nationalists used both vote and turnout as electoral strategies. In the referendums held in the transition period these strategies were widely used.

In the constitutional referendum of 1978 the PNV called for abstention (El País 1978a), while the radical nationalist parties called for a rejection vote (El País 1978b); I estimate the effect of RPL exposure on referendum outcomes, using as outcomes the turnout rate and the vote share for "No" (as for party vote shares, it is computed over eligible voters). Instead, in the referendum over regional autonomy of 1979, the PNV called for approval, while the radical nationalists promoted abstention (El País 1979); here I use turnout and the vote share for "Yes". I also run models with a measure of much more extreme behavior: joining the terrorist separatist group ETA. This variable is the log number of ETA prisoners captured by the Spanish authorities in 1974 and born in a given municipality. Results in Table 3 show that RPL exposure is associated with lower turnout in the constitutional referendum and not significantly with the No share (columns 1 and 2). This is partially at odds with the party vote results, as it implies that exposure to RPL benefited mobilization by the PNV. However, the same variable is negatively and significantly correlated with both turnout and the Yes share in the autonomy referendum (columns 3 and 4), consistent with the boost in support for radical nationalists starting from 1979. In this referendum, a signal strength increase by one residualized standard deviation decreased turnout by about 2 percentage points. I don't find significant effects of radio exposure on

ETA prisoners. This may be due to self-selected nature of the sample, but also to the fact that joining a terrorist group is a far more extreme outcome than voting, and other social and individual-level characteristics were probably more decisive.

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

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

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

6.3 Heterogeneity

While on average prolonged exposure to RPL appears to have increased the propensity to mobilize for radical ethnic parties, the effects may not be homogeneous across the sample. If ethnic media affect political behavior through the salience of identity, it is plausible that they operate along the margin where ethnic boundaries are more porous to begin with, whereas in communities where ethnic identification is generally strong, support for ethnic parties can be expected to be high even without media. The history of Basque politics suggests two observable measures of the relative importance of ethnic identity versus a Spanish one. One is the past support for Basque nationalism, a variable that tends to be persistent over time (De La Calle 2015); the other is the use of Euskera, which is a corre-

late of ethnic nationalism (Strijbis et al. 2021). Table 4 report the results from estimating equation 3 with the PNV vote share in 1933 as moderator. The effects of exposure to RPL on voting are statistically significant and consistent with the coefficients in Table 2 when the moderator value is 0 (non-interacted coefficient of *Signal strength*), while increasing the value of the moderators lowers them towards 0 (interacted coefficients). This specification relies on the assumption of linear marginal effect in the moderator values: to relax it, I also use the binning estimator proposed by Hainmueller et al. (2019). Partitioning the sample in terciles reduces the precision of estimates, but the results are qualitatively similar under this more flexible specification (Figure C.3).

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

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

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

In Table 5 I estimate model 3 using the share of Basque speakers in 1972 as moderator, and keeping the PNV vote share as control. The results confirm those in Table 4.

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

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

Note: Covariates include signal in free space, log of municipal area and height, log of 1970 population, and PNV 1933 vote share. Provincial capitals are excluded from this sample as the language variable is coded as missing. Conley standard errors in parentheses (30km). *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

These findings jointly suggest that ethnic media influenced electoral behavior the most among the strata of population that were more linguistically assimilated and less likely to support ethnic parties in the past; by contrast, in communities with a strong tradition of Basque nationalism and Euskera use radio had close to no effects. This finding is consistent with existing accounts of the rise of a new "cultural constituency" of nationalist youth born under the dictatorship (De La Calle 2015; Pérez-Agote 2006). Moreover, the analysis suggests that the heterogeneous effects on party support within the nationalist bloc are driven by the behavior of these new ethnic constituencies, which supported the new radical parties and, if anything, penalized the more moderate PNV.

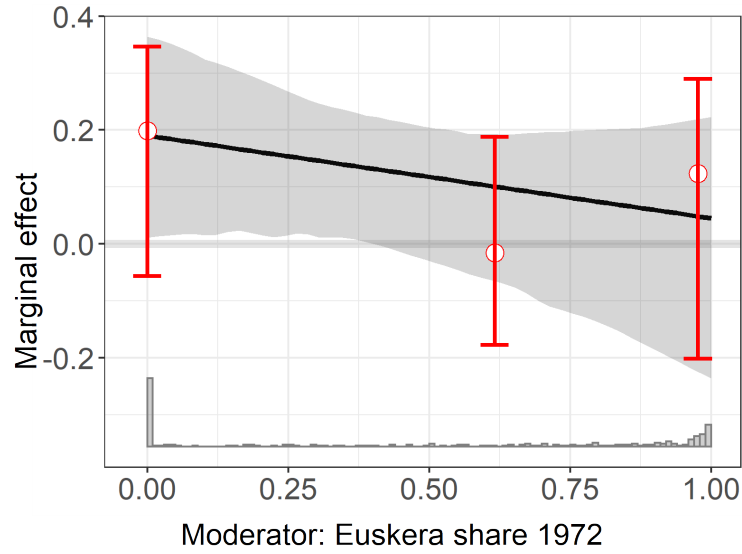
6.4 Language adoption

If radio exposure made Basque identity particularly salient, and this in turn increased ethnic voting, one would expect to observe behavioral patterns correlated with voting, but purely expressive of group identity. In the context of this study, a natural behavioral outcome is the adoption of Euskera.

Exposure to ethnic media may have increased the use of Euskera in time not only through the directly exposed cohorts, but also through education decisions for future cohorts. After post-Franco school reforms, school curricula are available in Spanish, Euskera, or both, but the choice of teaching language is made by the family (Aspachs-Bracons et al. 2008): therefore the proportion of individuals fluent in Basque today is also a measure of community preferences over identity. Using contemporary data on language composition of municipalities, I compute the absolute difference between the share of Basque speakers in 2016, the most recent year for which official data are available, and the share in 1972 used previously. I then use this measure as an outcome, and the share of Euskera speakers in 1972 as moderating variable. In this way I estimate the marginal effect of RPL exposure at different levels of the baseline share. This is important because the baseline share in 1972 constrains mechanically the growth over time: in municipalities where no-one (everyone) is a speaker, the share can only increase (decrease) in time (Appendix F).

Figure 6 shows that the marginal effect of RPL exposure on Basque language adoption is positive, although not strongly significant, for the sub-group of municipalities with lower number of initial speakers. This provides at least suggestive evidence in favor of a mechanism of a stronger and durable Basque identity.

Figure 6: Marginal effect of RPL exposure on change in Euskera use, 1972-2016.



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

7 Discussion

7.1 Neighboring Basque communities

The analysis so far has focused exclusively on the Basque Country, a region where the repressive attitude of the state strongly politicized identity. The presence of ethnic Basques outside the borders of the Basque Country allows, in principle, to test for media effects in different provinces. As a suggestive exercise, I repeat the analysis on the neighboring province of Navarre. This province is considered part of the historical Basque homeland, and nationalist parties regularly run in elections. Despite this resemblance, several reasons prevent its inclusion in the main analysis: Navarre has an independent institutional history and a different party system than the Basque Country. Moreover, on empirical grounds, most municipalities were not meaningfully reached by RPL signal. Therefore, it is more

appropriate to study this province separately and the analysis should be taken as only suggestive. Under these caveats, I estimate the effects of RPL exposure on votes for radical nationalist parties in Navarre (Figure D.1). The results show a positive and marginally significant effect on votes starting from the 1979 election, although it decays quickly in time and, by the 1990s, becomes indistinguishable from 0.

7.2 Identities and ideologies

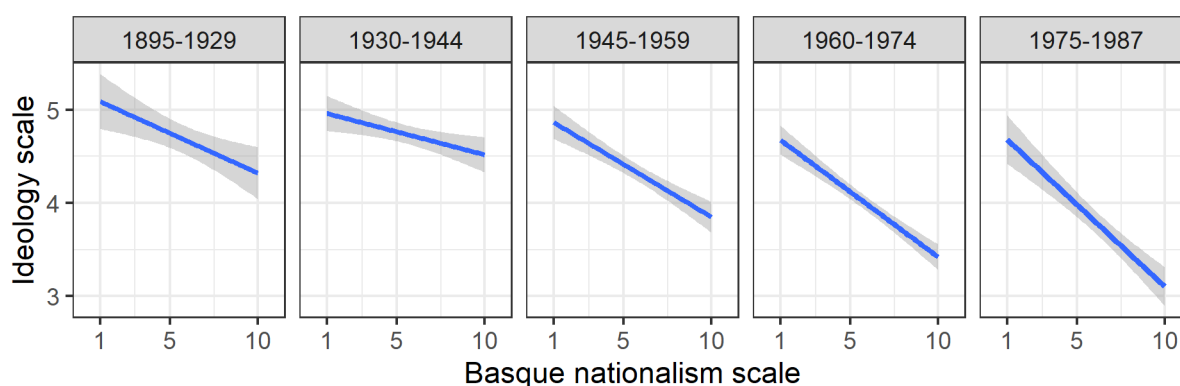
The finding that RPL increased voting for radical ethnic parties and not for others might appear counter-intuitive, especially in light of the religious lining of RPL. How does ethnic identity promoted by a peaceful media outlet fuel radical politics? To answer this question it is important to consider the circumstances of political conflict that politicize identity in the first place. By the end of the Spanish regime, the conflict between the center and the periphery had strongly radicalized. Indiscriminate repression and police brutality had aggrieved young people and undermined their belief in state legitimacy. Therefore, RPL was operating in an environment where ethnic identity and its cultural traits were becoming increasingly and more radically politicized against the regime. The realignment of political attitudes across generations, and the bundling of identity with anti-regime political radicalism are well characterized in qualitative sociological work (Pérez-Agote 2006). In this section, I provide a further quantitative description.

I use six rounds of surveys on culture and politics from the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (1993-2005), and use the birth year to categorize respondents into cohorts of roughly 15 years size (See Appendix G).⁸ In all waves respondents are asked to place them-

⁸The CIS surveys do not provide information on respondents' residence, therefore they cannot be used

selves on a 10-points scale of Basque nationalism and on a 10-points left-to-right scale. Figure 7 shows the raw correlation between these two self-reported dimensions of political identity for each cohort. While the relationship between identity and ideology is weak among older cohorts, for individuals born during and after the dictatorship, Basque nationalism is progressively more strongly associated with being on the ideological far left. Figure G.6 further shows the generational shifts in distribution of political identities: cohorts born under Franco and after have both stronger nationalist feelings and left-wing ideology.

Figure 7: Nationalist identification and left-right identification, raw correlation by cohort



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

This shows that the radicalization of identity, even if not the intended outcome of a religious media outlet, was the by-product of a generational realignment of political identity catalyzed by the experience of the dictatorship, and to which ethnic media contributed.

to study the effects of RPL exposure.

7.3 Direct mechanisms

The relationship between ethnic media and voting tested in this paper revolve around the salience of identity, an essentially indirect effect. Media can however influence vote directly, through political communication, coverage of campaigns, or propaganda. It is difficult to tell how RPL covered politics after media liberalization, but some at least partial information can be retrieved from the transcripts of local news realized in 1978, after the end of Franco's rule. The analysis, described in Appendix E, shows a relatively high frequency of mentions of radical nationalist parties and unions, but also of PNV politicians and of Spanish left parties (Figure E.3). Among the topics, labor and social movements, along with economic themes, receive most of the coverage (Figure E.4). However, attention to these topics was given by all regional media, and not just RPL. Given the expansion of independent media outlets during the transition, a stronger slant of RPL in favor of radical nationalist parties relative to the other media, including radio and TV stations in Euskera and publications produced by radical nationalist parties with an electoral agenda, is highly unlikely.

8 Conclusion

Due to their broad reach and the capacity to expose large audiences to the same messages, modern media can influence political and group identities. In this paper, I have proposed that ethnic media with non-political content can encourage the political mobilization of ethnicity. By increasing the salience of ethnic boundaries, they favor the coalescence of political conflicts with the state along identity lines. This effect is heterogeneous:

it is stronger where ethnic identity is initially less salient. Moreover, the effect manifest when state policies, such as indiscriminate repression, create opportunities to coordinate grievances along group lines: this may cause ethnicity to be bundled with other ideological inclinations shaped by the conflict with the state. If repression makes identity politics radical, ostensibly peaceful ethnic media can lead to more radical politics.

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Ethnic Media, Repression, and the Mobilization of Ethnic Identity

Appendices

A Municipal-level data

A.1 Municipal boundaries

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

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

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

* Standardization made in the sample which includes also Navarre.

adopt is to preserve all the information available in the electoral data: therefore I treat the smaller towns as separate towns in the election year before they are dissolved.

A.2 Basque speakers in the Franco period

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

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

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

A.3 Discussion of the sources

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

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

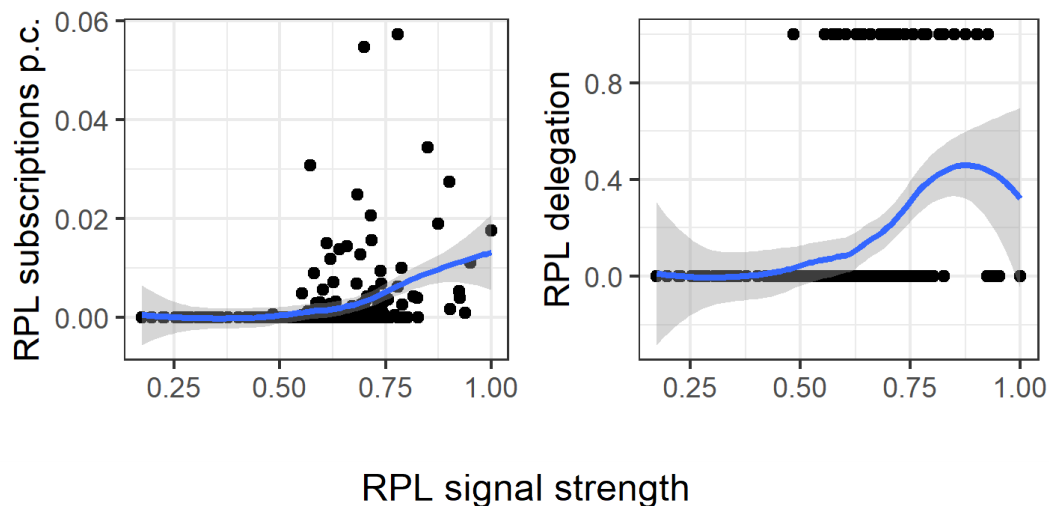
The data on ETA members arrested come from a book by an ETA activist, originally published under pseudonym. Beyond the self-selected nature of these data, it is unlikely that the list contained false positives. If anything, given that it is a snapshot at a certain moment in time, it is certainly an underestimate of the total number of people (affiliated

to ETA or not) arrested by the Spanish authorities.

B Additional maps and pictures

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

Figure B.1: Correlates of RPL reception



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

Figure B.2 shows historical printed ads of RPL programs, from the early 1980s.

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



Source: Koldo Mitxelena Library

C Robustness

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

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

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

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

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

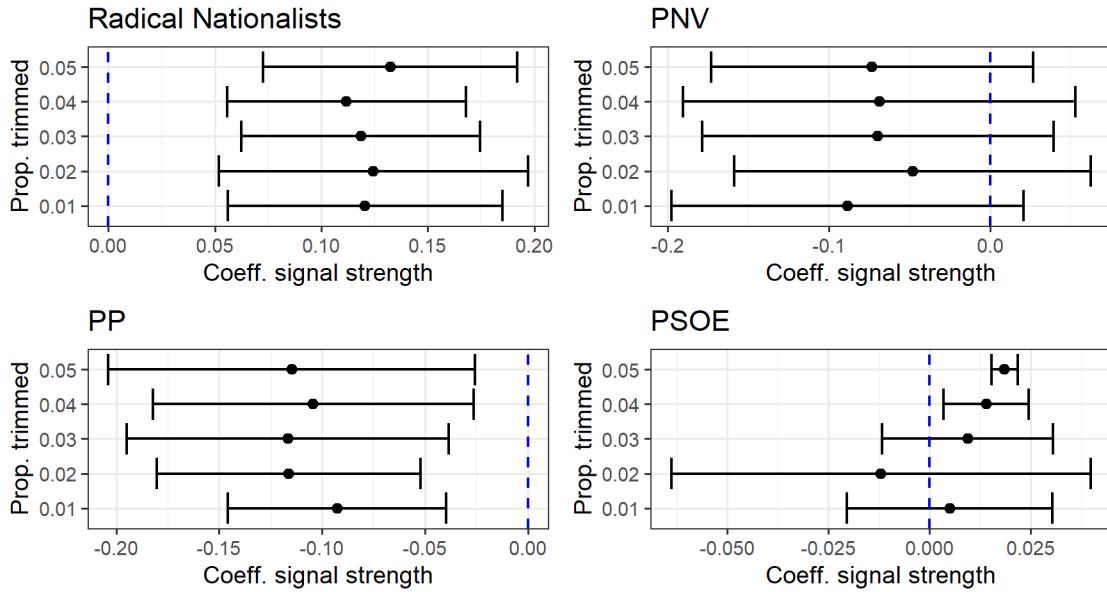
Note: Covariates include log of town latitude and longitude, log of municipal area and height, log of 1970 population, and PNV 1933 vote share. Conley standard errors in parentheses (30km). *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

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

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

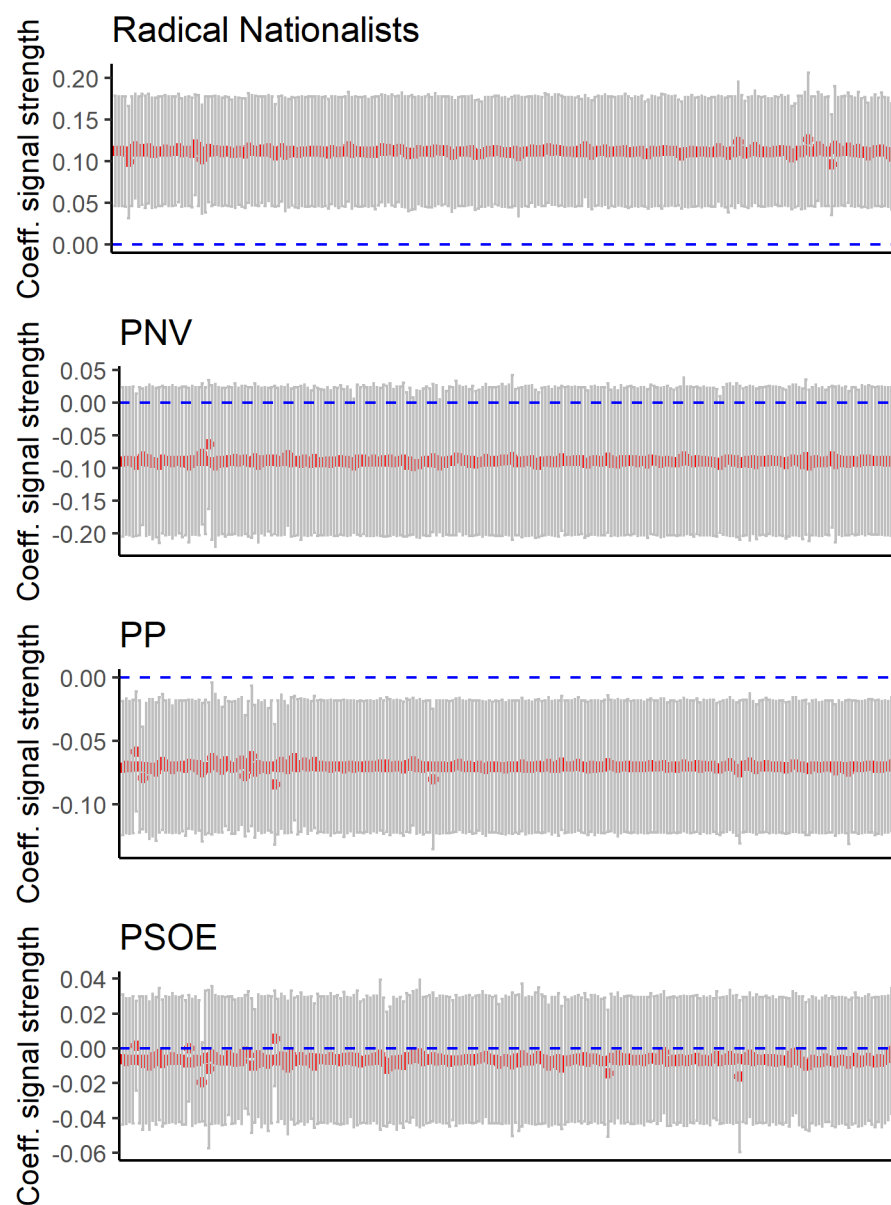
Note: Estimates from the same models reported in table 2, with p-values from wild cluster bootstrap at the district level.

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



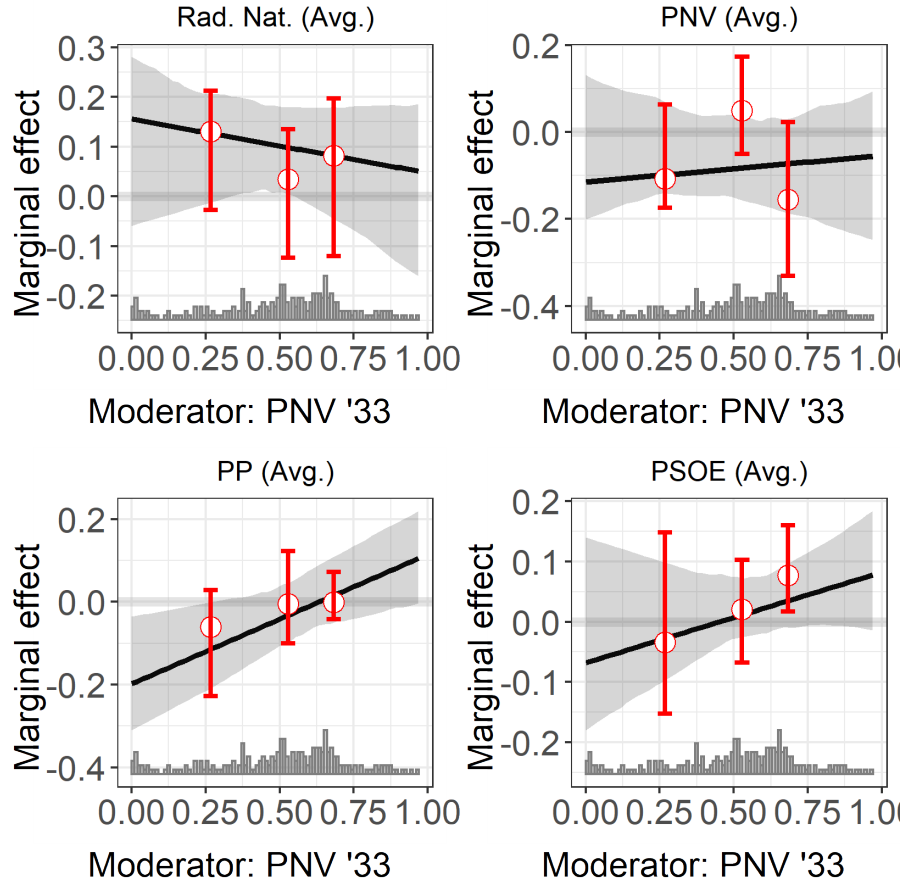
Note: Coefficients from the models reported in table 2, removing the top and bottom extreme observations in the distribution of RPL signal strength. 95% Confidence intervals with Conley standard errors (30km) displayed.

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



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

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

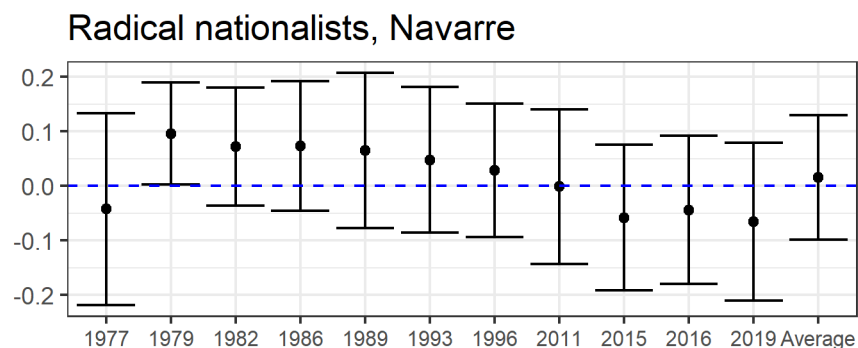


Note: Marginal effect of predicted signal strength of RPL on average vote shares, by terciles of PNV 1933 vote share, using the binning estimator in Hainmueller, Mummolo, and Xu (2019). All models include signal in free space, log of municipal area and height, log of 1970 population, PNV 1933 vote share,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

D Results on other Basque regions

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

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



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

E Content of RPL

E.1 Sampling and data collection

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

E.2 Language coding

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

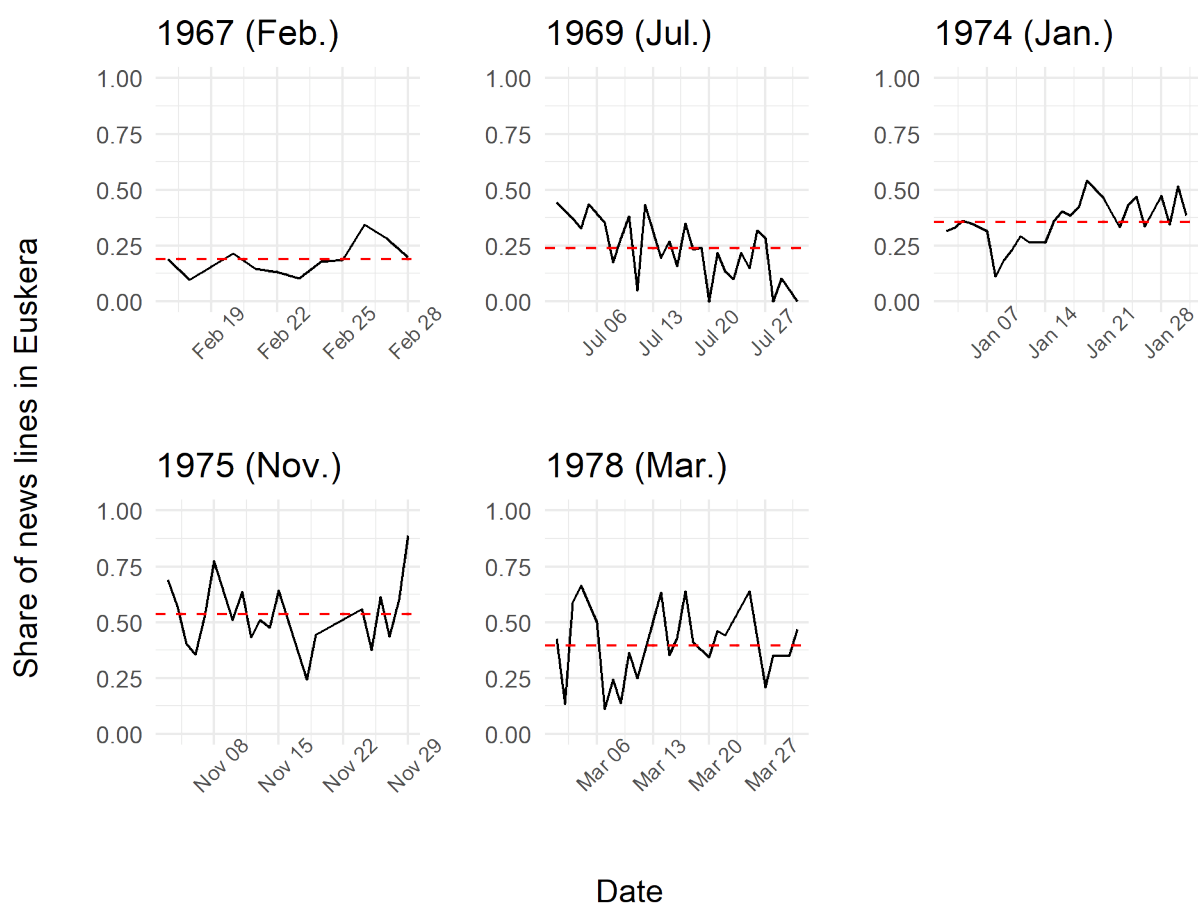
It is important to note that the documents available are those used by radio speakers,

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

E.3 Songs

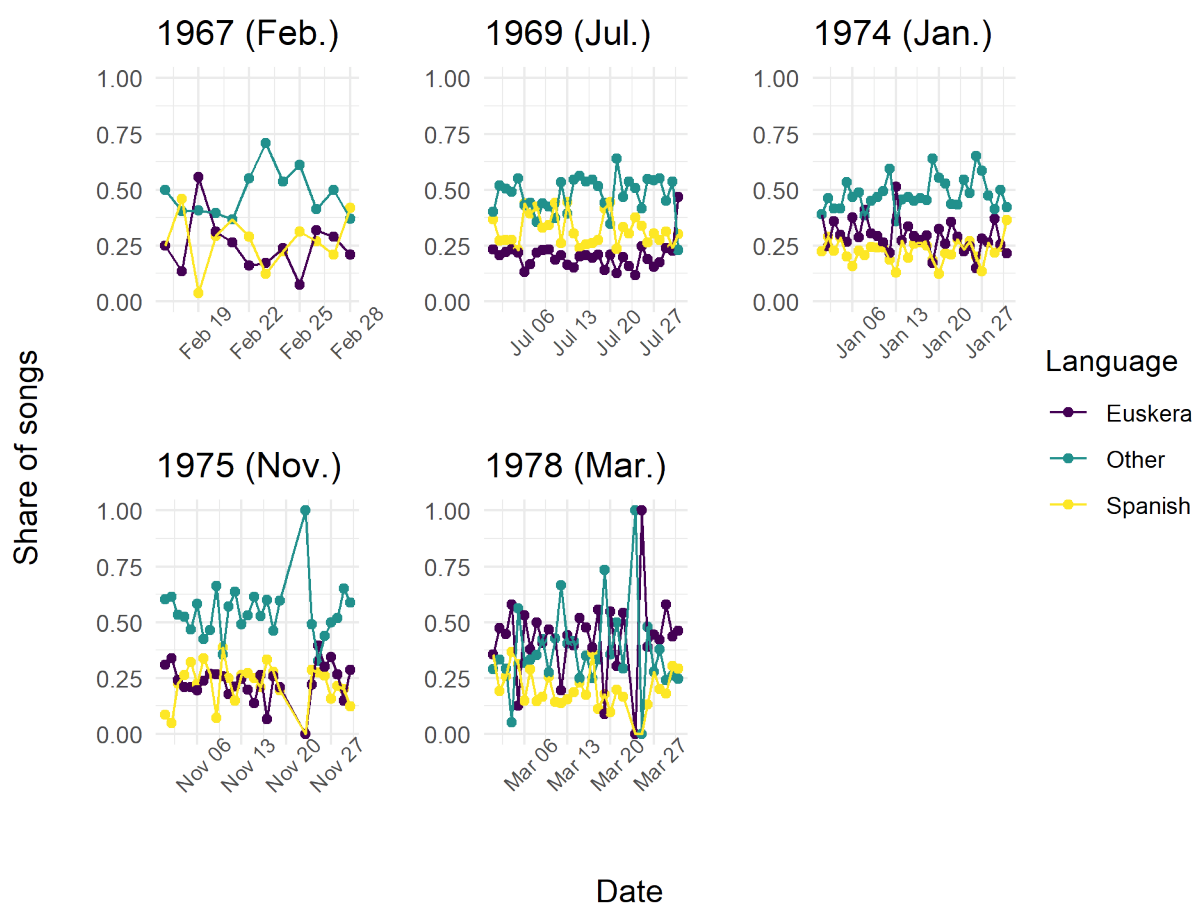
For each program, there was a list of the songs or music pieces aired, together with the language of each song (except for classical music). This is very convenient, because it avoids relying on the language of the song title as measure, since several titles of foreign songs were translated in Spanish to make them understandable. I recorded for each program the total number of songs and music pieces aired in each language: Spanish, Euskera, and Other, a residual category that contains both songs in foreign languages and pieces without lyrics. In a minority of cases there was no indication of the language of the song. I then evaluated each case considering the context: songs inside monolingual Basque programs, or introduced in the transcript as being from the region were coded as Euskera; similarly, songs introduced as from Spain were coded as Spanish. When contextual information was not present in the transcript, songs were coded based on the title language or the regional origin of the author. Figure [E.2](#) plots the language composition of songs every day.

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



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

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



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

E.4 Political coverage after Franco

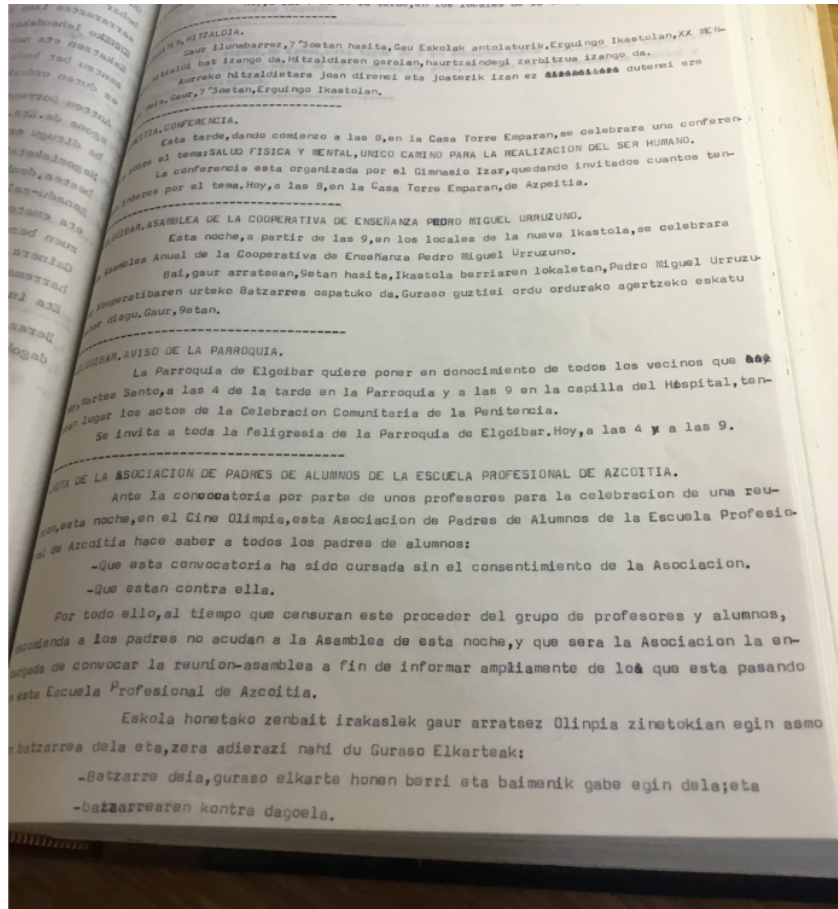
While I do not have data on coverage of national politics in RPL after the end of Franco's rule, I collected data about one month of programs (March 1978) aired during the transition. I can thus study the coverage of social and political events at the local level. I read closely all the local news transcripts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

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

MERCADO SEMANAL DE <u>Azpeitia</u> AÑO 1.975	
DÍA <u>4</u>	MES <u>Noviembre</u>
PLANTAS	
HUEVOS <u>62-60-46-42</u>	LECHUGA <u>14</u>
POLLOS <u>145</u>	BERZA <u>10</u>
GALLINAS <u>60</u>	CEBOLLAS <u>16</u>
GOSEJO <u>100</u>	TOMATE <u>12</u>
CORDERO <u>180</u>	PIÑIENTOS <u>30</u>
PICHONES <u>X</u>	ACELGAS <u>13</u>
QUESO DE OVEJA <u>100</u>	PUERROS <u>35</u>
QUESO DE VACA <u>170</u>	
PATATA <u>9</u>	
YAMAS <u>40</u>	
ALUBIA ROJA <u>375</u> <i>Pelamin</i>	
ALUBIA BLANCA <u>98</u>	
HABAS <u>40</u>	
BERZA <u>10</u>	
LECHUGA <u>13</u>	
TOMATE <u>12</u> <i>= 85 del país</i>	
PIÑIENTOS <u>30</u> <i>k</i>	
GUINDILLAS	
CEBOLLAS <u>16</u>	
ZANAHORIAS <u>16</u>	
PUERROS <u>35</u>	
ACELGAS <u>13</u>	
AJOS <u>250</u> <i>cada</i>	
ESPINACAS <u>30</u>	
COLIFLOP <u>15-30</u>	
CEBOLLAS <u>5</u>	
CAHIOTAS	
ASANTES <u>X</u>	
	FRUTAS
	MANZANAS <u>20</u>
	PERAS <u>20</u>
	UVA <u>34</u> <i>Blanca</i> <u>20</u>
	CEREZAS <u>X</u>
	PLATANOS <u>42</u>
	MARANJAS <u>28-20-18</u>
	MANDARINAS <u>28-20</u>
	MELOCOTON <u>X</u>
	MELON <u>26</u> <i>Kilo</i>
	LIMON <u>60</u>
	MUECES <u>95</u>
	AVELLANAS <u>X</u>
	ALBARICOQUE <u>X</u>
	FRESAS <u>X</u>
	ALMENDRUCO <u>X</u>
	ACEITUNAS <u>96-69-74-50-248</u>

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

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

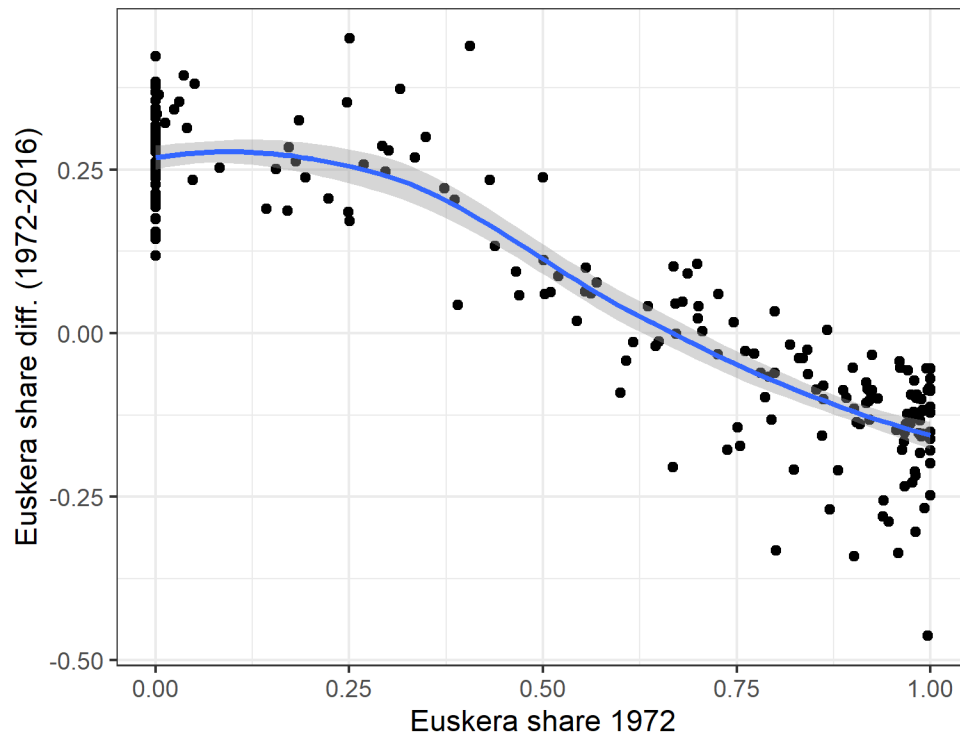


Source: Photo by the author, courtesy of Koldo Mitxelena Library

F Language change

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

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



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

G Individual-level results

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

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

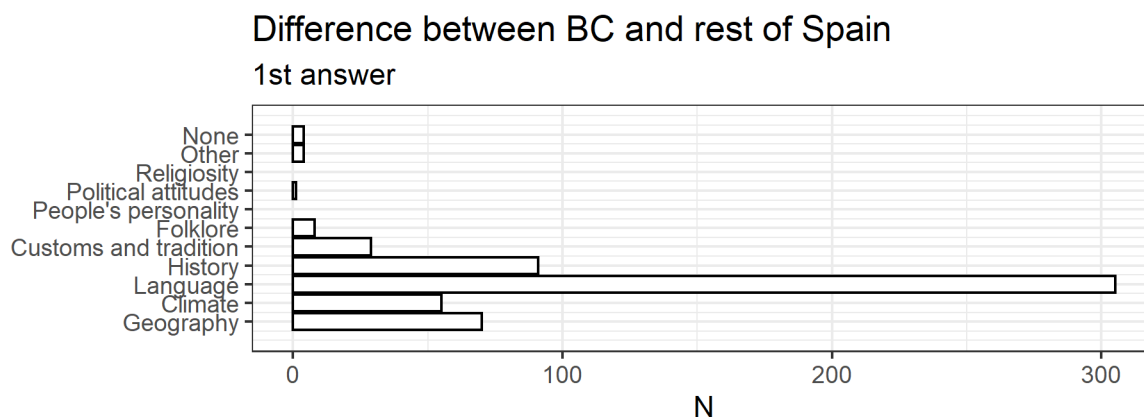
G.1 Language and identity

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

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

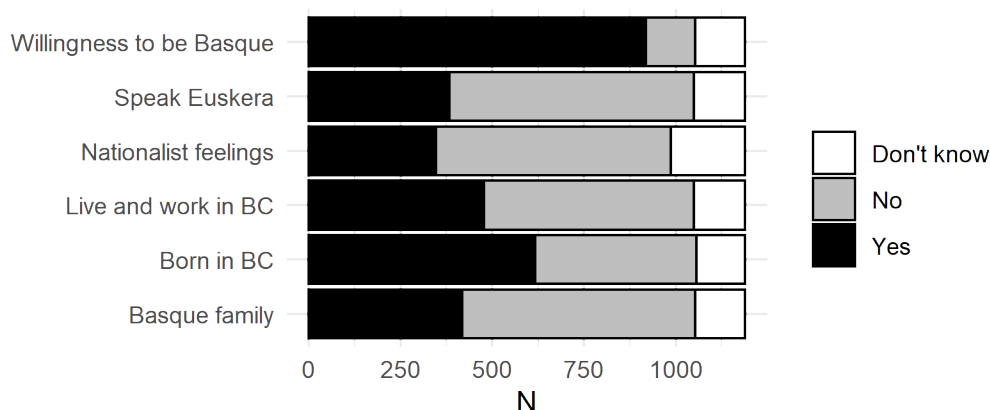
most agreed upon condition, higher than having a Basque family or living and working there.

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



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

Figure G.2: Agreement over conditions for Basque identity

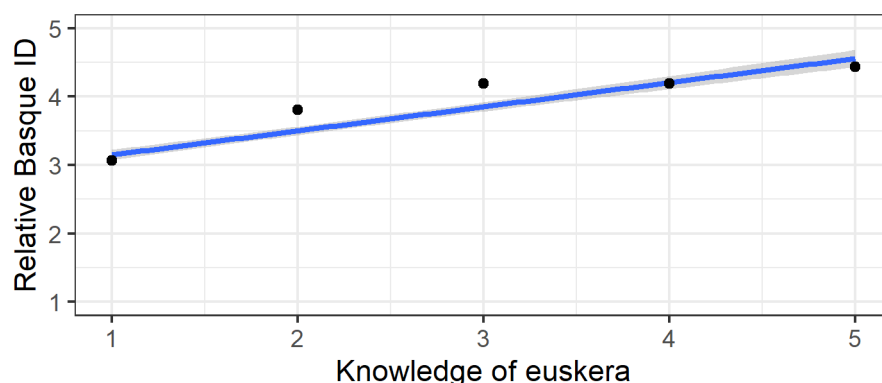


Note: Original question: "Tell me now if you think that each one of these conditions are necessary for a person to consider herself Basque"

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

Basque (either as mother tongue or from later adoption) have on average a stronger ethnic identity than those who do not.

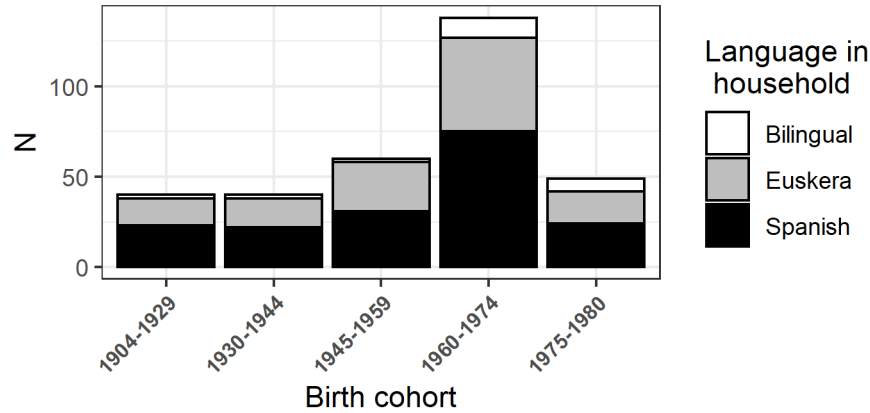
Figure G.3: Language proficiency and ethnic/national identification



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

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

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

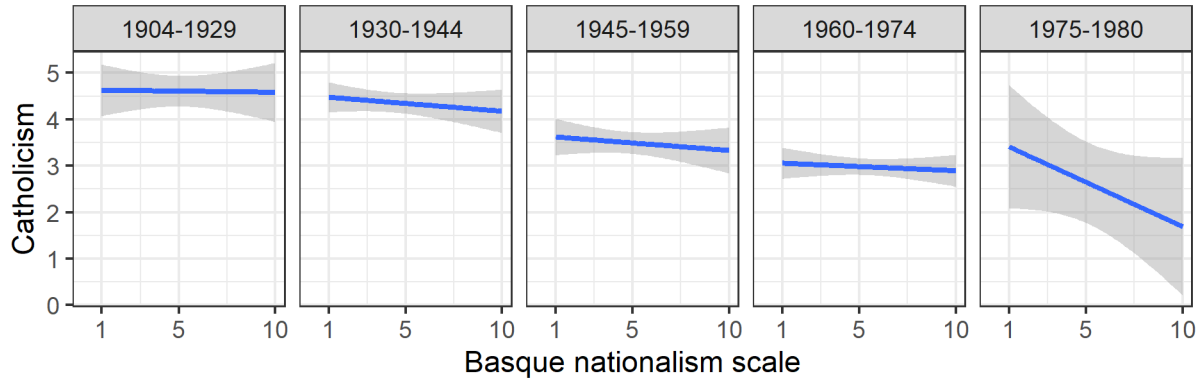


Note: Original question: "What language was spoken in your house when you were a little boy/girl?"

G.2 Religion and identity

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

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



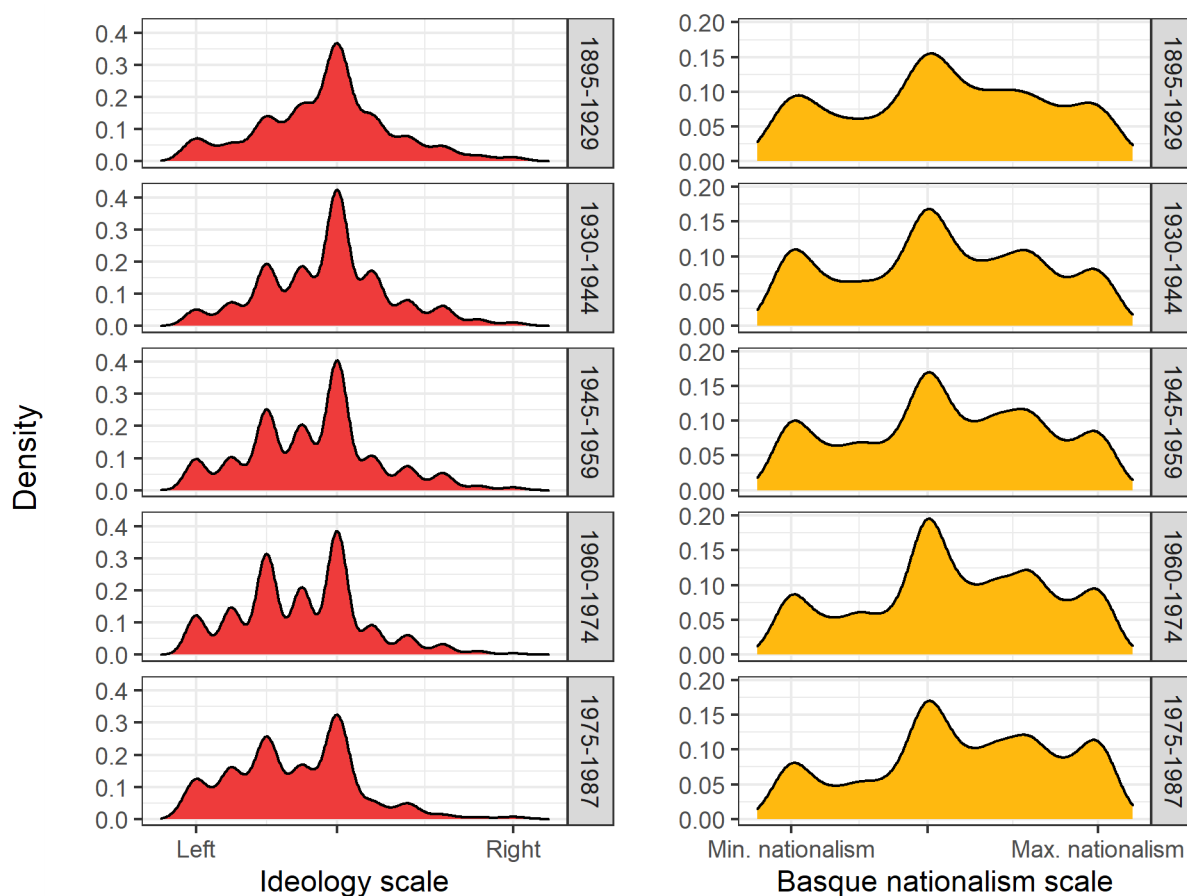
Note: On the x-axis, self-reported individual position on the Basque nationalism dimension [0-10]. On the y-axis, self-reported individual catholicism. Original question: "Personally, how do you consider yourself on religious matters?" [Atheist/Indifferent/Not practicing Catholic/Little practicing Catholic/Practicing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

G.3 Ideological cohort shifts

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

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

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



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

H Political parties

H.1 Parties in post-Franco elections

Table [H.1](#) reports the party classification used. For some parties, some election years are excluded. Radical nationalist parties did not run between 2002 and 2008 due to a party ban for their ties with ETA. PP votes are not available in all Basque provinces in the early election. Table [H.2](#) reports the parties and lists coded as electoral nationalists in 1977. The coding follows Clark ([1979](#)).

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

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

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

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

H.2 Parties in the Second Republic, 1933

Elections in the Second Republic (1931-1936) in the Basque Country were dominated by three factions: the Left (Republicans, Socialists and Communists), the Right (Carlists, Monarchists) and the Basque nationalists. The electoral system was multi-member district with plurality rule and open lists. Voters could cast a number of votes equal to 80%

of the seats to be allocated. Parties thus formed coalition lists with a number of members generally equal to the 80% of seats to be allocated (De La Granja Sainz [2009](#)). There was generally low variation in the number of preferences within list, as voters tended to give a preference to all candidates on a list. The vote share for a coalition (PNV, Left, Right) is computed as the total of preferences for all candidates in the list over the total of preferences cast for all candidates.

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

Note a slight abuse of party names: the vote share of the PNV includes that of ANV, an electorally marginal nationalist party that in 1933 ran only in the Gipuzkoa, gaining a small number of votes. Table [H.3](#) reports the parties competing in 1933 in the Basque Country and in Navarre, coded following De La Granja Sainz ([2009](#)).

Table H.3: Parties in the 1933 parliamentary election

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