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Master's Thesis of Political Science

**Dynamics of Frustrated Secessions:
Catalonia and Scotland**

좌절된 분리독립의 다이내믹:
카탈루냐와 스코틀랜드를 중심으로

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Abstract

Pro-independence parties in Catalonia and Scotland have for years claimed their determination to hold a referendum on the political future of the regions. Their commitment to channel their secession demands through a referendum had been realized, yet their secession attempts were frustrated. Despite multiple commonalities between these two cases, including the fact that in neither case is there a constitutional right to decide, there is a striking difference: a state response.

The Spanish government refused the Catalan government's proposal to delegate powers for the holdings of the independence referendum and has forcefully reacted to the unconstitutional referendums held in 2014 and 2017, perpetuating its rigid and fierce position on referendums and independence. On the contrary, the UK government responded to a similar proposal cooperatively. The UK and Scottish governments agreed on the delegation of powers to hold a legally binding referendum on independence, thereby establishing the legal basis for the Scottish independence referendum held in 2014. Though regional governments run by pro-independence parties had proceeded with a similar procedure for the holdings of the referendum, what were the determinants to variations in state responses?

I, therefore, seek to explain variations in state responses to the demands of an independence referendum by nationalist regional parties. With a focus on parties' electoral logic of behavior before and after the independence referendum, I argue that the party strategies factor is the most crucial element explaining variations in state responses in Catalonia and

Scotland. From case-centered empirical studies, I found that ruling party elites do behave strategically on the issue of the independence referendum for their own rational goals. In other words, ruling parties and party elites utilize the independence issue to retain further and expand their share of the vote in upcoming elections.

Keywords: Independence referendum, secession, party strategy, Catalonia, Scotland, territorial politics

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Abbreviations

CiU- *Convergència i Unió*

ERC- *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*

ICV-EUiA- *Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds-Esquerra Unida I Alternativa*

CUP- *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular*

PP- *Partido Popular*

C's- *Ciudadanos*

PSOE- *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*

SNP- *Scottish National Party*

JxPí- *Junts Pel Sí*

I. Introduction

1. Question

On September 18, 2014, the Scots turned to the ballots to decide their future relationship with the United Kingdom after through the Edinburgh Agreement of 2012 had devolved a right to decide, or a right to self-determination, to the Scottish government.¹ During the lead-up, both campaigns in favor of and against Scottish independence mobilized millions of people, with town hall meetings and discussions participated by most of the electorate happening alongside. The independence referendum, with the highest turnout rates (84.6%) in its election history, posed the question of the independence as 55.3% of those who voted chose to stay in the union. Simultaneously in Catalonia, political elites have for years been seeking for ‘right to decide.’ They have mobilized fiercely through scathing political rhetoric and massive street demonstrations, in the battle against the firm Spanish government in Madrid, as well as the rigid Supreme Court, a “highly politicized institution” (Morata 2013: 281). On 1 October 2017, the non-binding referendum or “consultation.”² The referendum on Independence for Catalonia had an overwhelming majority (92%) that voted for ‘yes,’ but its low turnout rates (43%) have questioned its legitimacy. In neither case, did an independence referendum lead to secession, confirming

¹ The right to decide was devolved to the Scottish government for a fixed period, before the end of 2014 to allow a single question referendum on its independence to be held (HM Government and Scottish Government 2012).

² The Spanish government had declared that any independence referendum would be illegal. The Catalan government, therefore, avoided using the term “referendum” and favor “consultation” or “process of citizens’ participation” instead. By contrast, the UK and Scottish government signed an agreement on the parameters of the 2014 referendum, explicitly acknowledging the legality of the referendum.

Stéphane Dion's statement that “secessionists never managed to split a well-established democracy through a referendum or an electoral victory (Dion 1996: 270).”

Catalonia and Scotland portray very similar pictures. The main characteristics they have in common are that they all have a strong sense of regional identity and a long history as distinct nations; they have similar devolved systems; they are all part of the EU; they all have influential nationalist parties representing their interests; and in neither case, is there a constitutional right to decide. Despite these multiple commonalities between these two cases, there is a striking difference: a state response. The Spanish government refused the Catalan government's proposal to delegate powers for the holdings of the independence referendum and has forcefully reacted to the unconstitutional referendums held in 2014 and 2017, indicating its rigid and fierce position on referendums and independence. Meanwhile, the UK and Scottish governments agreed on the delegation of powers to hold a legally binding referendum on independence, thereby establishing the legal basis for the Scottish independence referendum held in 2014. Therefore, a question emerges: Though regional governments run by pro-independence parties had proceeded with a similar procedure for the holdings of the referendum, what were the determinants to variations in state responses?

This paper addresses territorial party politics about frustrated secessions in plurinational democracies. As other secessionist movements in other democracies have or have tried, both secessionist movements used a means of popular consultation, by which the decision on secession is dependent upon the will of the people of the region³ In this respect, I argue that establishing a legal basis and formalities for independence referendums

³ For instance, Quebec.

is an essential step in the secessionist movement. More importantly, the fact that the Scottish government had ‘obtained’ the legal basis for the referendum, while the Catalan had not, requires special attention for thorough academic research.

To get a deeper understanding of how a secessionist project unfolds in established democracies, I, therefore, seek to explain variations in state responses to the demands for an independence referendum in Catalonia and Scotland. I hypothesize that ruling party elites do behave strategically on the issue of the independence referendum for their own strategic and rational goals. In other words, ruling parties and party elites will utilize the independence issue to retain further and expand their share of the vote in upcoming elections.

2. Goal

Independence referendums are rare events in established democracies. Such a referendum is a historic moment for a political community, which must choose between status quo and independence. Also, it is a momentous event for a nationalist mobilization process, in which communities are actively engaged in public discourse, collective actions such as rallies and demonstrations, and decision-making (Lecours 2018). Nationalist mobilization succeeded in both cases, and that makes these cases intriguing and unique. Moreover, for researchers studying Catalan and Scottish secessionist movements characterized by their contrasting trajectories will be able to provide theoretical implications in the general understanding of secessionism in established democracies. These cases may

also have repercussions on nascent secessionist movements all over the continent,⁴ be a trigger for or a dissuasion from arranging another independence referendum.

Most importantly, this contribution aims to examine the saliency of electoral strategies, put it differently that of electoral competition, behind the central government's reaction to the referendum on independence. This analysis abandons the most oft-noted topic in secession literature, which is mass mobilization for social movements. Instead, it attempts to focus on the behaviors of ruling parties in the context of territorial politics. Moreover, while identifying in neither case is there a constitutional right to self-determination, I deny such institutional explanations, instead, suggest an actor-oriented account in that I emphasize the electoral strategies of the ruling parties in the central governments had an impact on the presence or absence of the resisted independence referendum. By doing so, I hope to provide an analytical explanation for secessionism in established democracies and the logics of partisan action on secession.

3. Scope and method

I adopt a most similar system (MSS) design to explain variations in state responses to the demands for independence in Catalonia and Scotland. The MSS approach enables us to identify differences through the selection of cases with similarities; “common systemic characteristics are conceived

⁴ There have been rising nationalism in the UK (Wales, Scotland, and Northern Island), Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia), Germany (Bavaria), France (Brittany and Corsica), Spain (the Basque Country and Catalonia), Italy (South Tyrol, Sicily, Lombardy, and Veneto), Czech Republic (Moravia) and the list goes on (Guardian 2017).

of as ‘controlled for,’ whereas intersystemic differences are viewed as explanatory variables. The number of common characteristics sought is maximal, and the number of not shared characteristics sought, minimal (Przeworski and Teune 1970: 33).” Following MSS design, Spain and the UK are a common comparison in the literature on nationalism and territorial politics (e.g., Keating 2001; Guibernau 2006; Swenden 2006; Guibernau et al. 2014; Cetra and Harvey 2018). Catalonia and Scotland have many similarities. As aforementioned, they all have a strong sense of regional identity; they have similar devolved systems; they are all part of the EU; they all have influential nationalist parties representing their interests; and in neither case, is there a constitutional right to self-determination.

Further, it is worth noting that ultimately, these two referendums' results were contrasting, which can be interpreted in that the Catalan referendum should have brought independence to the people of Catalonia. I argue the result of the referendums does not overtly impact my hypothesis to the point of making it illegitimate, but rather to the point of making it valid. The voting turnout was low as 43% in Catalonia, whereas the ‘yes’ vote counted for over 90%. This low figure can be explained by the fierce position of the central government in Madrid, arousing fear and indifference amongst the people of Catalan towards the independence referendum and independence *per se*. In this light, I argue variations in state responses in the two cases is an important research topic.

Since this study focuses on the variations in state responses to the territorial demands, I selected specific timeframes for the case comparison analysis. In the Catalan case, I focus on the Spanish government’s refusal to delegate powers to hold a referendum in Catalonia in 2014, which led to the holdings of non-binding independence referendum twice and the unilateral

declaration of independence of Catalonia. To investigate the party dynamics and the behavior of ruling parties, I pay special attention to the period of 2010-2015, before and after the Spanish government's refusal to the delegation of powers. In the Scottish case, I focus on the agreement between the UK and Scottish government, what became known as the *Edinburgh Agreement of 2012*, which set formalities of the independence referendum held in 2014. I, therefore, center on the period of 2011-2015, before and after the Edinburgh Agreement.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the relevant literature for this analysis. It considers the case studies and scholarly viewpoint that are relevant to the topic of the analysis. Chapter Three shall establish the theoretical framework, in which two case comparisons are to be considered. Chapter Four shall discuss the backgrounds of the Catalan and Scottish secessionist movements. First, it will briefly introduce the devolved systems of Catalonia and Scotland, by which the electoral structure has become complexed, and subsequently, political parties have adapted to this dispensation, by changing their internal organizational structures. Second, it will encapsulate the road to independence referendums in these two cases so that one can distinguish the difference between the two.

Chapter Five and Six use an explaining-outcome process-tracing method (Beach and Pederson 2013) to study the critical determinants to variations in state responses to the territorial demands in Catalonia and Scotland while paying special attention to the behavior of political parties. According to Beach and Pederson, the explaining-outcome process-tracing method is used in a case-centric analysis to craft (minimally) sufficient explanation of the outcome for a particular case. Further, it may use both deductive and inductive methods using empirical evidence, combining these

two into a complex conglomerate mechanism to account for a historical outcome. I therefore test an existing explanation (institutional), then move on to the inductive part, building a plausible alternative explanation (actor-oriented) based on the evidence gathered from a multitude of different sources.

The sources used to feed process-tracing include archival sources, such as constitutions or conventions, election manifestos, the White Papers, an official report of the parliament, and election results, as well as existing scholarship. Also, census survey data collected by the Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió (CEO) and Scottish Social Attitudes (SSA), as well as news article records of the secessionist movement, are used to examine the regional populations of preferences to independence.

II. Literature Review

1. Demands for independence: rise of secessionism

The importance of Catalan and Scottish secessionism was recognized in the literature. Many researchers have approached in various ways to explain reasons why demands for independence recently arose in the regions, while some have focused on the expected political or economic consequences of secession (e.g., Armstrong and Ebell 2014; Castells 2014; Lecours 2018). In this section, I will focus on the former as it provides an insightful analysis in the understanding of a change in voter preference on the territorial question. Existing explanations on the emergence of secessionism in Catalan and Scottish communities primarily point to national identity, dire economic circumstances, and desire for political recognition.

The national identity account intersects with nationalism studies, in that it points to an increasing attachment to the regional identity as the underpinning of civic nationalism or the “nations without state nationalism” (Keating 1996; Guibernau 1999). Plurinational democracies can be characterized by the phrase ‘one polity and several *demos*’ (Requejo 2013: 159), and identity becomes more involved in plurinational contexts than in mononational. There are two types of nationalism, appealing to the same population of a given territory; while state nationalism seeks to promote a shared national identity for all the citizens for the state, the nations without state nationalism seeks recognition as a *demos*, claiming a right to self-government and self-determination (Kymlicka and Norman 1995: 306). As a

result, dual identities are in play and compete against each other, and citizens can feel attached to both the regional and the state identity with different intensities (Serrano 2013: 527).⁵ Thus, it can be assumed that secession is on the cards when the ethnoterritorial identity is shared by the majority of the population.

Many researchers in this tradition contend that the stronger attachment to regional identity than to state identity explains popular support for independence in the regions, but starting from the different understandings of the concept of identity. Researchers put a stronger emphasis on the social construction of national identity that privileges the territorial inclusion of *demos* over the ethnocultural one. For instance, the Scottish identity is based on “a sense of place,” rather than a “sense of tribe” (Smout 1994). Similarly, Catalan identity is held to “include a collective will for self-government based on an inclusive conception of Catalanness” (Serrano 2013: 531). This territorially inclusive definition of identity was empirically proven as secessionist elites in both cases during their bid for independence (2012-2017) embraced multiple identities through the territorial inclusion of immigrants (Arrighi 2019).

However, it cannot be assumed that national self-identification is the due product of culture or social construction; individuals can cognitively choose the sense of separate identity. According to Morata (2013: 285), researchers have found “the bonding of traditional identity feelings with more pragmatic attitudes, represented by younger generations, mostly descendants of Spanish immigrants of the 1950s and 1960s.” In his analysis

⁵ This double allegiance has also been defined as compound, dual, split or nested identities (see Linz et al., 1981; Miller, 2000; Moreno, 2001).

of data from CEO surveys, Burg (2015) argue that satisfaction with Catalan government performance is a reliable and statistically significant predictor of identity: “high confidence in Catalan political leadership increases and low confidence decreases, the probability of declaring either more or exclusively Catalan rather than equally Catalan-Spanish identity (296).”

The material account has appeared in the literature as often as the identity account. Many researchers emphasize dire economic circumstances due to government deficits and EU-led austerities since the 2008 financial crisis (e.g., Keating 2009; Guibernau 2013; Griffiths et al. 2015). With an increasing unemployment rate, even skyrocketed among under 24, and slow economic growth, Catalonia saw its wealth and status downgraded as it has lost resources and saving for infrastructure while accumulating an annual deficit of 8% of GDP due to the financial arrangement imposed by the Spanish Government in Madrid. Moreover, EU-led austerities fueled pro-independence sentiment in Catalonia amid unease about the channeling of taxpayers’ money to more impoverished regions.⁶

The last account to rising demands for independence in Catalonia and Scotland is the desire of political recognition. In this account, researchers point to emotions that trigger confrontation and struggles for greater recognition. They contend that government deficits or austerities alone do not attribute to minority nationalism, but a complex of ethnocultural and political-economic factors, such as a strong sense of regional identities, insufficient financial autonomy, linguistic and cultural

⁶ Catalonia’s average contribution to the Spanish Central Administration and Social Security corresponds to 19.40% of the total, but Catalonia only received 14.03%. After contributing to Spain’s various funds based on the solidarity principle, Catalonia is worse off than those autonomous communities subsidized by the funds and finds itself below the average in per capita spending (Guibernau 2014: 17).

distinctiveness, and the deepening of integration led by the European Union. Due to these reasons, minority nations would demand political (or symbolic) recognition and therefore, independence (Serrano 2013; Guibernau 2014; 고주현 2018). Guibernau (2014) refers to the term emancipatory nationalism, a democratic type of nationalism emerging in nations who do not identify with the state nor feel politically and culturally recognized as nations by the state (7-8). Catalonia and Scotland are cases in point. Her simple point is that nations or parts of nations included within a larger state feel that they did not earn a certain degree of political recognition from the state they deserve of, and this understanding becomes a motive for an opposition movement in search for greater recognition for the nation it claims to represent.

These three accounts provide a seminal insight into the understanding of increasing popular support for secessionism from the political, economic, and psychological perspectives. However, they neglected the crucial roles of political parties. Indeed, a complex interaction of actors is necessary for a secessionist movement to unfold and gain momentum. I seek to emphasize that political parties are present in almost in every aspect of the secessionist movement, such as mobilization, facilitation of discourses on independence, and legislation for the holdings of a referendum. In particular, political parties have played a crucial role in negotiating the legality and formalities of the referendum, which is an essential step in the Catalan and Scottish secessionist movements as these cases have employed a means of popular consultation.

2. Political parties in territorial reforms

Studies on territorial politics have emphasized political parties as vehicles of territorial reforms, including secession (e.g., Hepburn 2009; Muro 2009; Toubreau 2011; Toubreau and Massetti 2012; Rico and Liñeira 2014). Following recent structural transformations resulting from European integration and decentralization, the territory has been brought back in (Keating 2008). Parties representing stateless nations and national minorities have taken advantage of the reshaping of political space by the European project, adapting to this new dispensation (Lynch 1996; De Winter and Gómez-Reino 2002; Keating 2004). To them, it has often implied a rethinking of the whole concept of independence and a shift to a post-sovereign stance (Keating 2001).

As in the selected cases, the territorial dimension is at the basis of the representative functions of political parties. As “systems of channelment” (Sartori 1976), parties articulate distinct territorial interests or mediate between different territorial interests represented in their organization (Toubreau and Massetti 2012: 301). Once identified as ‘peripheral parties’ in the early 1980s (Rokkan and Urwin 1983) and ‘ethnic parties’ in the 1990s (Lane et al. 1991), nationalist and regionalist parties (NRPs) have now become a permanent feature of the European political landscape (Hepburn 2009: 477).⁷ These parties exhibit a commitment to territorial empowerment, which distinguishes them from other party families. They seek to represent and advance the particular interests of the region and

⁷ For the purpose of discussions, I use the term ‘nationalist and regionalist parties,’ rather than ‘stateless nationalist and regionalist parties’ introduced by Hepburn (2009).

where regional (or territorial) interests may be economic, political, social, cultural, or symbolic (ibid.: 483). In other words, their core business is essentially the demand for self-government based on territorial identities and interests (De Winter and Türsan 1998). For instance, many NRPs in government have outlined proposals for radical constitutional change, such as the Scottish National Party's (SNP) and *Junts pel Si*'s commitment in secession for years.⁸

Some scholars have pointed to the process of political decentralization explained by looking at it as the rational act of political parties seeking to achieve electoral goals (O'Neill 2003; Leon 2006). Others have emphasized parties' goals for the retention of electoral majorities (Meguid 2009; Sorens 2009). In a similar vein, Sonia Alonso (2012) emphasizes the competition between state parties and NRPs, which pushes some state parties to accommodate devolution at some point in time. In comparative studies of Belgium, Italy, Spain, and the UK, she further argues that when an NRP takes votes away from the state party in state elections in an electorally relevant region, in which the threatened state party has a high concentration of its total state-wide vote (53). For example, the devolution in the UK was possible, she explains, because the Labour was significantly threatened by the Scottish National Party (SNP) in Scotland and Plaid Cymru (PC) in Wales, while it was proportionally stronger in the Northern regions of England, Scotland and Wales (103). In the Spanish case, the Socialist Party were most influential in Andalusia and Catalonia, while it had to compete against the CiU in Catalonia and PNV in the Basque Country. Because CiU and PNV represented 19 percent of the total

⁸ Junt Pel Si is a coalition party in Catalonia formed since the 2015 election between ERC and CDC, who are pro-independence parties.

parliamentary seats in Spain and were strong enough to be a threat to state parties with government aspirations, the Socialist Party, therefore, accommodated devolution as its last-ditch effort. Further, she concludes that state parties use adversarial or accommodative strategies to the demands for devolution because there are always electoral benefits to reap from manipulating the center-periphery conflict in one or another state party's benefit (247).⁹

Overall, Alonso's analysis suggests that territorial reforms are at the heart of the amplified political scene where political parties manipulate and behave strategically for their own good. Alonso's analysis has built a fertile ground for more comparative researches in establishing the theoretical perspective of party politics in territorial reforms and firmly stressing party elites' manipulation of territorial issues. I argue this point to be relevant to my analysis as it paves the way for an essential theoretical perspective and, in so doing, nurtures the scholarly literature in the field of party behavior and territorial reforms.

Beyond Alonso, Cetrà and Harvey (2018) deal with another form of territorial reform, particularly secession. In an attempt to examine why the UK and Spanish governments reacted differently to the demands for independence, they suggest that the central governments responded within the framework of a constitutional right to self-determination and the conception of the state. More importantly, the PP-led Spanish government and the Conservatives-Liberal Democrat UK government did so strategically. Their novelty consists of the initiative in depicting the actor's interest and preferences behind their decisions, which institutions and ideas alone do not

⁹ Alonso (2012) uses terms anti-periphery and pro-periphery strategies, instead of adversarial and accommodative. For the purpose of discussion, I use the latter.

explain.

Their analysis on the differences between the Catalan and Scottish independence referendum, in pertinence with party politics, sheds light on the understanding of the roles of political parties, particularly the supply side, in secession. However, their analysis lacks thick explanations on the parties' strategic calculation in the changing party political context as they have primarily focused on the relationship between institutional and ideational factors, and the strategic factor.¹⁰ Also, the role of party politics in politicizing and contesting the issue of secession has not been sufficiently explained.

By reviewing the literature mentioned above, it becomes evident that the party political perspective is necessary for the understanding of territorial reforms. In this light, applying this theoretical perspective to the selected cases requires going beyond Alonso and Cetrà and Harvey. Since devolution, the electoral structures have been complexed, and parties had subsequently adapted their internal organizational structures to this new dispensation. In a multilevel environment, state-wide parties (SWP) play a function in securing the territorial integrity of the state by linking the various levels and territorial units (Fabre and Swenden 2013: 342), but at the same time, their regional branches do not. Instead, they position themselves and strategize on the territorial dimension as regional parties do. Moreover, especially when the climate of polarization characterizes public opinion on the 'territorial question,' in addition to stiff electoral competitions with other SWPs and NRPs, strategic calculations of SWPs

¹⁰ Cetrà and Harvey (2018) contend that a constitutional right to self-determination and conceptions of state and nations have been used in the rhetoric of the ruling parties and as the reasons why they opted for resistance or accommodation to the demands for lawful independence referendums of pro-independence regional parties.

become even more complicated. Thus, this paper aims to contribute to this emerging literature by capturing the behavior of state parties in such a party dynamic context, politicizing and contesting the issue of secession and reap electoral benefits from so doing.

III. Theoretical Framework

1. Hypothesis

Upon sifting through the pieces of literature provided, an interesting question emerges. Why do the research regarding the Catalan and Scottish secessionism not fully engage in navigating the supply side of independence, *the states*? It, in turn, creates an empirical gap which must be answered, and it will seek to address the gap with insights drawn from the territorial politics literature previously discussed.

I asked the question this thesis seeks to answer: “why were there variations in state responses to the demands for an independence referendum in Catalonia and Scotland?” I established a primary hypothesis that ruling party elites do behave strategically on the issue of an independence referendum for their own strategic and rational goals. I further elaborated in that I also argue that ruling parties and party elites utilize the independence issue to retain further and expand their share of the vote in upcoming elections.

In this light, this paper focuses on the behavior of ruling parties and party elites. For doing so, I focus on parties’ electoral logic of action (Toubeau and Massetti 2013: 302), along which political elites devise strategies following a set of interests and objectives. This logic captures the behavior of parties, which seeks in nature to maximize their share of the electoral market, which is anchored in Downs’ spatial theory (1957). Moreover, drawing from insights developed by territorial politics scholars (Meguid 2008; Hepburn 2009; Alonso 2012; Toubeau and Massetti 2012;

Cetrà and Harvey 2018), I have distinguished three relevant dimensions of partisan strategic incentives: first, the strategic calculation of ruling elites vis-à-vis incentives created by the party system; second, incentives created by the party competition; and third, incentives created by public opinion.

2. Framework drawn from territorial politics

First, I start from the point where parties make strategic calculations vis-a-vis incentives from the bi-dimensional political systems in both cases. Political parties as vote-maximizers will adopt positions in both ideological and territorial dimensions whenever the situation requires it (Alonso 2012: 34). Researchers have empirically proved that many parties had changed their position opportunistically and instrumentally, repeatedly moving back and forth on the “territorial question” (Meguid 2008; Hepburn 2010; Toubreau 2011). Examples for this repositioning of parties on the decentralization issue can be the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE), which moved from a Jacobin-centralist party to supporting the creation of Spanish autonomous communities (Moreno 2001) and similarly the British Labour Party, which was opposed to decentralization in the 1960s and became the primary instigator of devolution following the second referendum in 1997 (Bradbury 2006). An example from NRPs is also available. The electorally successful regional party, *Convergència i Unió*, also moved from supporting decentralization to supporting independence since the 1990s. It is impossible to locate parties on a fixed and permanent point on the territorial dimension, De Winter and Türsan (1998) argued. It, therefore, underlines both SWPs and NRPs as strategic actors that target simultaneously more

than one combination of social groups to maximize their electoral potential.

Second, I emphasize that incentives created by electoral competitions between NRPs, NRPs and SWPs, and SWPs have effects on the party strategies regarding territorial reforms, which have also continuously been studied in the territorial politics literature (e.g., Meguid 2008; Alonso 2012; Martí Tomàs 2015). For the purpose of discussion, I will focus on the party competitions between NRPs and SWPs, and in between SWPs, which would have significant effects on the strategies of the ruling parties in the central governments, which is also one of the SWPs. According to Alonso (2012), SWPs have two main movements along the territorial dimension; they can either converge towards the issue position of the nationalist competitors or move away from it and closer to the centralist side of the dimension (37). The former is more likely when SWPs attempt to take voters away from the NRP by challenging the exclusivity of the party's programmatic stance and only when the NRP directly threatens them. The latter is used by SWPs to attract voters whose preferences go against the proposals of NRPs and who give more relevance to territorial issues than to left-right position issues when deciding their vote.

Third, I consider the views of the public on the territorial question, which create incentives for both NRPs and SWPs. From the point of view of ruling parties, the opinion polling provides them with a barometer that enables them to measure how large or small their support basis would be. It is important to note that if ruling parties can ascertain the public would reject independence their reaction, which strategy the parties would use would not make a difference, be it accommodative or adversarial. In this respect, I will consider public opinion as to the last important dimension of party incentives, as Cetrà and Harvey (2018) emphasize the same point.

IV. Backgrounds of Catalan and Scottish Independence

Movement

1. Devolution

This section introduces the change in electoral party systems brought by devolution. Devolution in Spain and the UK has sparked the multi-level nature of party competition and party organization.¹¹ For general elections, state-wide parties (SWPs) devise a single electoral program that appeals to as large a group of voters as possible. For regional elections, they center on specific interests of each region because the issues discussed at the regional level may diverge from those discussed at the national level. This is because SWPs now face a competition with regional parties, or non-state-wide parties (e.g., Fabre 2008; Fabre and Swenden 2013), which build their electoral appeal on regional identity, authority or territorial mobilization at the center and are likely to question the regional credentials of the SWPs (Meguid 2008; Toubreau 2011).

Moreover, SWPs are now under pressure between party unity, cohesion, and centralization on the one hand, and diversification and internal decentralization on the other hand (Fabre 2008: 309). As SWPs should compete in elections at different levels, electoral and party systems certainly influence their organizational structures. Caramani (2005: 315)

¹¹ More precisely, for the Spanish case, it is decentralization, which was achieved by the creation of seventeen Autonomous Communities (ACs). The decentralization proceeded through bilateral bargaining, which created the statute for autonomy for each AC, and, in so doing, created asymmetry in the decentralized powers from one community to another. Most serious was fiscal autonomy distributed to ACs, of which the 'foral' regimes were given the most, compared to other ACs. Due to the continuous grievances expressed by other ACs, especially the Basque Country and Catalonia, the fiscal system was revised three times, which yet turned out to be not much satisfactory.

observed that “linguistic, territorial and ethnic cleavages that specifically refer[ed] to the distinctiveness of the cultural and ethnic regions” had remained steady. Thus, at regional elections, SWPs need to aim primarily at defending the interests of the region, rather than the national community as the country (Keating and McGarry 2001).

In addition, the presence of nationalist parties puts more pressure on the internal cohesion of state-wide parties, as they emphasize different issues and politicize the relationships between the central and regional levels (Deschouwer, 2003; Hopkin and Bradbury 2006: 136). NRPs’ regionalized issue profile may prompt its party elites to demand more autonomy. They may argue that they are more legitimate than the SWPs and better understand the local and regional situations because they know better of the region than anybody else. As a matter of fact, this rhetoric was used by both CiU and the SNP when appealing for valence issue votes.

The interconnection between state-wide and regional elections also has effects on the internal organization of SWPs. The level of interconnection depends upon the electoral cycle, state-wide considerations on regional elections and the impact of regional elections on central government (Deschouwer 2003: 223). When the outcome of a regional election depends on the national context, or when regional elections influence national politics, SWPs are more likely to keep a certain level of control over their regional branches. On the contrary, when state-wide and regional elections are disconnected, the regional branches of SWPs are more likely to enjoy autonomy in decision-making but lack representation at the central level. Overall, the electoral framework is very closely connected to the internal organizational structures of SWPs, and it can be assumed that SWPs would decentralize power to their regional branches following

devolution.

In the Spanish case, Fabre (2008: 316) claims that the nationalization of electoral results suggests a certain level of centralization of party organizations. This argument is backed by the empirical evidence in that PP and PSOE “have an interest in limiting the autonomy of the regional branches to maintain their internal cohesion and make sure that the poor results or policies of one regional branch do not affect the rest of the party.”

The UK case shows a different picture. Detterbeck and Hepburn (2010: 123) found that center-left parties tend to grant more autonomy to their regional branches than center-right parties. The Labour party has a devolved or federal organizational structure (Swenden and Maddens 2009: 262-3), whereas the Conservatives is more centralized. More interestingly, there exists the asymmetry between the Scottish Conservatives and the Welsh Conservatives, as a direct result of different patterns of party formation. So is the asymmetry between the Catalan socialists of the PSC and other ordinary branches of the PSOE (Fabre 2008).

Consequently, the internal organizational structures of SWPs in devolved plurinational states, such as Spain and the UK, have an impact on party strategies. As aforementioned, parties may adopt different organizational structures, be it centralized or decentralized, as a result of the level of interconnectedness between regional and general elections, as well as the presence of nationalist parties. In this respect, this paper also takes this into account, analyzing party strategies in a comparison between regional and general elections.

2. The road to the independence referendum

2.1. Catalonia: the resisted independence referendum

The first Catalan election of 1980 resulted in the victory of CiU, then a moderate Catalan center-right nationalist party that has maintained the large share of votes since then. *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) enjoyed its supremacy as a governing party until 2003 when another nationalist party *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC) of a left ideology joined a tripartite coalition to oust CiU from power. The other two parties in the coalition were the Catalan Socialists (PSC) and Iniciativa per Catalunya–Verds (ICV), who are formally regional branches of state-wide parties (SWPs) but with a substantial autonomy from their national branches (Martí Tomàs 2016: 70). These parties have been long-time proponents of the federalization of Spain and supported more autonomy for the Catalan institutions. A party system with two Catalan nationalist parties and two SWPs supporting more autonomy led to the demand for a new Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, which was hotly debated but eventually agreed between these four parties (ibid). The new Catalan charter was voted in the Catalan Parliament in September 2005, receiving the support of around 90% of the representatives, whereas the *Partido Popular* (PP), the Catalan branch of the Spanish right-wing party, was the only party against which voted.

After the Catalan Parliament ratified the new Statute of Autonomy, it was later revised and modified by the Spanish Parliament to comply with the Constitution fully and finally sanctioned in a referendum by the Catalans on 18 June 2006. Immediately after being sanctioned, however, the Spanish-wide PP challenged the new statute on the grounds that the new self-

government granted to Catalonia went beyond the limits of the Constitution. Four years later, the Spanish High Court of Justice has eventually cut back 14 articles and modified about 30 more articles of the 2006 Status of Autonomy. This event is thought to be the trigger to the Catalan secessionist movement (e.g., Guibernau 2014; Martí Tomàs 2016), provoking a massive demonstration led by the Catalan government and supported by the main nationalist political parties on 10 July 2010 in every thoroughfare of Barcelona.

After the failed talks between the then Catalan President Mas and Spanish Prime Minister Rajoy on the request to give greater fiscal autonomy to Catalonia (Reuters 2012), Mas called an early election on 25 November 2012 intending to win an absolute majority of seats. Mas and his party CiU failed to secure enough seats to form a majority government, so he decided to form a political alliance with ERC, the second-largest party.

Meanwhile, the Spanish central government's mantra is the indivisibility of the Spanish nation and the territorial integrity of Spain, a central component of the Constitution. Because national sovereignty belongs to the Spanish people, the Spanish government has insisted regional governments have no right to decide its political future. Also, a Catalan referendum would be an illegal act and a violation of national sovereignty, according to Spanish PM Mariano Rajoy. In April 2014, a request by the Catalan Parliament to the Spanish Parliament to transfer the powers to hold a legal referendum, which echoed the mechanism used in the Scottish secessionist movement, was rejected.¹² An overwhelming majority of 299 Spanish MPs voted against it, including the main opposition PSOE, while

¹² The Spanish government explicitly rejected the Scottish precedent because Spain, unlike the UK, has a codified constitution that enshrines the unity of the state (Cetra and Harvey 2018: 5).

only 46 voted in favor. The Catalan government proceeded to hold a referendum anyhow. In September 2014, the Catalan Parliament passed a law on ‘popular consultations’ to hold a non-binding referendum on independence on 9 November 2014. The Spanish government challenged the law in the Constitutional Court, which ruled the vote illegal five days before it was held. The vote on self-determination, which came to be known as the participation process, was more an act of protest by secessionists than a definitive test on independence as it was boycotted by most unionists (Liñeira and Cetrà 2015: 263).

For the Catalan government and its supporters, it was unacceptable in a liberal democracy to put limits on self-determination if the agreement was met through unequivocally democratic means. On the national day of Catalonia, days before the early regional election, an alliance of pro-independence political parties vigorously campaigned for Catalonia’s secession under the motto ‘*Junts pel Sí*’ (Together for Yes), while Madrid also sent more than 1,000 additional anti-riot police for the Diada celebrations in Catalonia. This election scored the highest participation rates (77.44%) in the Catalan history and was claimed as a “de facto referendum” (Martí and Cetrà 2016) or a ‘plebiscite on independence,’ which was meant to bypass the PP-led government's opposition to hold a binding referendum. The nationalist coalition *Junts pel Sí* won 62 seats, while leftist pro-independence *Candidatura d’ Unitat Popular* (CUP) gained ten seats, meaning that an alliance of these two parties could give teeth to secessionists. The Catalan President Artur Mas had then planned to declare Catalan independence—at best via referendum, at worst, unilaterally—within 18 months, and to draft a new constitution within six months (*Politico* 2015).

On 1 October 2017, the Catalan government held a second independence referendum, which asked voters the question: “Do you want Catalonia to be an independent state in the form of a Republic?” The final turnout was 43% (2.3 million), while the yes vote counted for 90.2% and the no vote 7.8%. However, the vote was opposed by Madrid on the same ground as the 2014 vote, and the Court suspended the referendum law. The Spanish government remained its firm stance on this issue inexorably. Madrid imposed direct rule on Catalonia and called an early election in Catalonia on 21 December 2017 after the Catalan Parliament had unilaterally declared independence on 27 October 2017. Some of the secessionist leaders are arrested or fled the country; those arrested are waiting for a trial which may charge them prison terms of up to 25 years on charges of rebellion and misused funds (Reuters 2019).

2.2. Scotland: the negotiated independence referendum

Since 1977, the SNP had been making a blueprint for independence, though the referendum date had been repeatedly delayed. In 1999, after the establishment of a Scottish Parliament, the SNP proposed an independence referendum within the first four-year term of an SNP government. Independence was the tenth item in a list of Scotland’s fourteen priorities in the election. In the 2003 elections, the SNP emphasized an ability to govern competently as a strategy for building support for independence (Mitchell 2016: 76). It also proposed to hold a referendum within three years of coming to power, which was anticipated to take place four years later.

The independence discussion accelerated when the SNP won 47 out

of 129 seats in the 2007 election, allowing it to form a minority government. In the first years of its term as the minority government, the SNP launched a *National Conversation* on Scotland's constitutional future (Scottish Government 2007), followed by the Calman Commission established in 2009 by the opposition parties to consider further devolution with support of the UK government as well as the Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democratic parties. Since the global financial crisis of 2008, however, domestic discourses mostly revolved around the economic issues, and so these two competing versions of Scotland's future had been ignored.

Until the SNP's surprise victory in the 2011 Scottish Parliamentary, a referendum on independence was a remote hypothetical (Kidd and Petrie 2016: 29).¹³ More interesting is that the Additional Member voting system built in the devolved Parliament had been deliberately devised to preclude a single-party government; the SNP was to be confined by this electoral arrangement, which should force cooperation with one or more of the Unionist parties (ibid). Since the SNP returned majority, the independence referendum was inevitable.

In January 2012, Prime Minister David Cameron indicated his willingness to endorse the legitimacy of a referendum on Scottish independence. Opinion polling that time clearly showed a resounding no to independence. On 15 October 2012, in St. Andrew's House in Edinburgh, Prime Minister Cameron, Secretary of State for Scotland Michael Moore, and First and Deputy First Ministers Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon put their names to the *Agreement between the United Kingdom Government and the Scottish government on a Referendum on Independence for Scotland*. The product of private negotiations between the two governments, what

¹³ In the 2010 UK general election, the SNP had won only six of Scotland's fifty-nine seats.

become known as the Edinburgh Agreement, ended months of uncertainty and legal debate over whether Holyrood had the competence to legislate for a referendum on Scottish independence (Tickell 2016: 325).

Besides, the Agreement specified the franchise for the referendum, the number of options and questions, the wording of the question (as they agreed on a single-question referendum), and a deadline by which the vote had to be held (HM Government and Scottish Government 2012). The governments agreed to grant powers to hold a referendum on independence to Scotland under Section 30 of the Scotland Act 1998. Published in 2013, Scottish Government's White Paper (*Scotland's Future*) described itself as a guide to an independent Scotland, while the UK government's Scotland Analysis program heavy with data and economic and financial analysis mainly discussed the economic consequences of the secession. The SNP was the biggest party in the official Yes campaign (also including the Scottish Green Party and the Scottish Socialist Party), while the Labour, Conservatives, and Liberal Democrats supported the No side (Better Together campaign). These unionist parties campaigned against independence by stressing the advantages of remaining in the UK and suggested further devolution for Scotland and made this proposal public ahead of the poll to convince voters to reject independence in favor of greater power for a permanent Scottish Parliament within the UK. In the run-up to the referendum, most remarkable was the involvement of grassroots campaigners in both official campaigns that galvanized a more direct engagement with voters than is usual in political campaigning (Dekavalla 2016: 796).

The Scottish referendum on independence took place on 18 September 2014. It is worth noting that the 2014 independence referendum

took place in a different political context than previous ones: the SNP had been in power for the last eight years, taking over from Labour as the most popular party in Scotland, while Conservative party has returned to power in Westminster in a coalition which promoted economic austerity; disengagement with Westminster politics intensified in Scotland due to the economic and welfare policies adopted in Westminster and by the management of global financial crisis, Iraqi war, and the expenses scandal under previous Labour government—there was, therefore, a growing disillusionment in Scotland with the major Westminster parties (Dardanelli 2005).

Scottish people decided to remain part of the UK; the No side won with 55.4% votes against independence, while the yes side lost with 44.7% votes in favor, which recorded the highest turnout (84.6%) for an election or referendum in the UK since the introduction of universal suffrage. Following the referendum, a process is underway to transfer further powers to the Scottish Parliament in areas such as taxation, welfare, and elections (HM Government 2016), as it was signed in a pledge by three major parties in the UK before the referendum.¹⁴ More interestingly, the immediate consequence of the independence referendum was the landslide victory of the SNP in the 2015 election (for Westminster). The SNP won all but three seats in the Scottish Parliament and became the first party in sixty years to win 50% of the Scottish vote, gaining 56 seats. The Labour party suffered from its severe electoral defeat, losing 40 seats, while the Liberal Democrats lost ten seats. “The tectonic plates of Scottish politics shifted” as

¹⁴ David Cameron, Ed Miliband, and Nick Clegg signed the letter that promised the transfer of extensive new powers to the Scottish Parliament, delivered by the process and to the timetable agreed by these three parties. Also, it promised the permanence of the Scottish Parliament (The Guardian 2014).

Sturgeon said after the election (BBC 2015).

The recapitulation of these two cases shows essential roles of political parties in accelerating and intensifying the nationalist debate revolving around the territorial question of the regions, and it resembles what territorial political scholars have insisted. Moreover, the substantial shift in, or acceleration of, the territorial debate coincided with increasing public support for independence, while the two central governments reacted to the demands of the nationalist parties differently. The Spanish government firmly insisted that the Constitution strictly prohibits the holding of a referendum on independence in Catalonia, and inexorably reacted to the holding of non-binding referendums. In contrast with the Spanish government's fierce reaction on the Catalan issue, the UK government agreed to grant the powers for the holding of the referendum on independence to the Scottish government, which produced the 'legal, fair, and decisive' referendum on Scottish independence. Seemingly, this is an interesting point of departure that I hope to delve into with academic curiosity.

As I have mentioned earlier in Section 2, I seek to answer the question: "why were there variations in state responses to the demands for an independence referendum in Catalonia and Scotland?" In the next chapter, I, therefore, test an institutional explanation on the difference in these two cases. An institutional explanation emphasizes the legal basis of independence referendums *per se* and the constitutional frame of right to self-determination. After testing this institutionalist account, I will suggest an alternative account from the actor-oriented perspective in that I emphasize that in neither case is there a constitutional right to self-determination and that Scottish party elites managed to gain the legal basis

of the Scottish independence referendum from the counterpart elites in the central government. Also, I further argue that party dynamics and subsequent strategic calculations were behind the different decisions made by the two central governments.

V. Constitutional right to decide?

1. Catalonia: the legal challenges

As emphasized earlier, in neither case is there a constitutional right to self-determination. Both regional governments had tried to earn support, at least a permission, to hold a referendum on independence from the central governments. The difference between these two cases was that the Spanish government resisted the Catalan independence referendum and it quickly provoked a confrontation between the two entities, whereas the UK government agreed to the holding of the independence referendum and to establish its legal basis upon the Edinburgh Agreement. In this section, I argue that an institutional explanation, which focuses on the presence of the legal basis, on such variations in state responses is not sufficient.

Fundamentally, the Spanish Parliament can delegate or transfer powers to regional governments employing organic law under article 150.2. This article allows the government to pass a law delegating the power to hold a referendum in the Autonomous Communities. The Court (Judgement 103/2008, 31/2010, 31/2015) has ruled that regional governments have no powers to legislate on the referendum because Spanish central institutions not only have the power to authorize them but also to legislate them, based on the conjunction of articles 23, 81, 92.3 and 149.1.31 of the Constitution (*ibid.*). It implicitly implied that the Spanish Parliament could delegate powers to regional governments for the holding of a referendum. Therefore, the organic statute under article 150.2 should provide for a delegation or transfer of the inherent powers to legislate and the explicit powers to

authorize.

This option was the key to Scotland's lawful referendum on independence, whose legality was ratified in the Edinburgh Agreement of 2012. It was tried in Catalonia as well, as briefly mentioned above. The Catalan pro-independence parties, CiU, ERC, CUP, and the leftist green ICV presented a resolution in Congress seeking Senate's approval for the referendum under article 150.2 as a legal argument (El Pais 2013). The resolution states a referendum in an AC is not "a case in which the nature of the subject makes article 150.2 of the Constitution inapplicable" and the formula of delegation *ad casum* is selected "to establish a necessary framework of coordination and collaboration between the Spanish State and the Generalitat of Catalonia for a commitment to take action on the result of the referendum (Parlament de Catalunya 2014)."

The proposal was rejected by an overwhelming majority in the Spanish Parliament. In response, the Catalan government and the Parliament decided to use a non-referendum popular consultation under the Catalan Statute 10/2014. This statute establishes any consultation which was used to elude the authorization or intervention by the Spanish government under article 149.1.32 (Bossacoma and López Bofill 2016: 117). This approach had a problem; because the Spanish Constitution implicitly establishes the referendum is a kind of popular consultation (ibid), the Catalan government's attempt to elude legal challenges by branding this poll a 'non-referendum popular consultation and citizen participation' has failed.

The Spanish government forcefully reacted to it. Madrid has indicated that the Spanish Constitution does not permit such a popular consultation that would possibly allow the separation of Catalonia from the rest of the state. It added that if the Catalan government takes actions to call

for the independence referendum, they would be paralyzed through administrative and judicial means (Vintro 2012). In response, the Catalan government blamed the Spanish government for violating the fundamental right to political participation (Bossacoma and López Bofill 2016: 122-4), but, to recall, at the same time it was calling the 2014 polling as non-referendum popular consultation. In result, in the eye of the Constitutional Court, this form of a popular consultation was “a masked referendum (ibid: 134),” which is prohibited by the Constitution.

For the Spanish government, the legal basis for its position is founded upon the Constitution of 1978 in line with the provisions of Article 1 and 2 of the Constitution. Although the preamble recognizes the existence of various “peoples in Spain,” the duty to protect their “culture and traditions, languages, and institutions” is entrusted to the Spanish people (Turp 2017). Further, The Constitution affirms “the Spanish people” as the subject of “sovereignty” from whom “all powers of state organs” allegedly emanate (art. 1.2) and “the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation, the common and indivisible homeland of all Spaniards (art. 2).” The government in Madrid also finds support for their position in the Judgement of the Constitutional Court (JC) 103/2008, the leading case on referendums and secession in the Basque Country. The Court ruled that holding a referendum related to sovereignty would require an amendment to the Constitution at the beginning of the process. The Court’s position on the territorial integrity, secession and referendum were many times reaffirmed in the Judgements 48/2003, 31/2010 and 42/2014.

The Spanish Constitution is “a written, rigid and judicially controlled Constitution (Bossacoma and López Bofill 2016: 111).” As presumed, the Constitution can be reformed following the amending powers,

procedures, and circumstantial limits established in articles 166, 167, 168, and 169 (ibid.: 112). Particularly for the issue of independence, the Court saw constitutional reform must be made following the procedures outlined in the article 168 (Constitutional Court Judgement 19/2017), which is known to be the hardest amending process. One possible explanation for such a ruling could be a political calculation, in which such a rigid and time-consuming amending process would prevent secessionist from trying to arrange a referendum by constitutional reform or even make them worn out amid the proceedings.

Overall, Catalonia has the legitimate way of holding an independence referendum through the organic statute under 150.2, which is a similar process that of Section 30 Order that provided in the Edinburgh Agreement.¹⁵ After reviewing this, it became clear that it was the political will of the party elites in the Spanish Parliament that determined the fortune of the Catalan independence referendum. What about Scotland? What made it possible for Scotland to ‘obtain’ its legal basis for independence referendum? After reviewing the legal debate revolved around the referendum, it became evident that the political will of the ruling parties and party elites was the determinant.

2. Scotland: the *Edinburgh Agreement* of 2012

The UK constitution relies on precedent and convention, and referendums tend to be utilized in an ad hoc manner when it is perceived to

¹⁵ Nonetheless, there is interpretative controversy about the scope of constraints to the powers and matters that can be delegated or transferred based on the wording of this article (see Bossacoma and Bofill 2016: 114-5).

be in the interests of the government (House of Lords 2010). Moreover, there is no formal constitutional requirement to hold a referendum in the UK, powerfully indicating that the political will of the ‘government’ is a decisive factor. In result, the increased use of referendums has been marked by a ‘lack of consistency’ in UK politics (Mitchell 2016: 76)

When the SNP returned a majority in the Scottish Parliament in 2011, the Scottish independence had become something more than merely hypothetical. In response to the consultation on independence, the UK government published *Scotland’s constitutional future* in 2012, several months before the Edinburgh Agreement.¹⁶ It indicated that "the Scotland Parliament does not have the legal authority to hold an independence referendum and our firm intention to put that issue beyond doubt" (HM Government 2012). Since the Constitution is a reserved matter, meaning that the UK Parliament has retained all constitutional sovereignty, the UK government temporarily transferred the powers to hold a referendum to the Scottish Parliament (HM Government 1998).

The UK and Scottish governments made an order under Section 30 of the Scotland Act 1998, which enabled the Scottish government to legislate for the referendum legislation nine months before the poll. Under the Edinburgh Agreement, the UK and Scottish governments were committed to working together in the light of the outcome in the best interests of the people of Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom (HM Government 2012). Most important is that the minority SNP Government in office from 2007 to 11 had tried and failed to achieve the same concession

¹⁶ The consultation was launched in January 2012 to gather individual’s and organization’s opinion on how a legal, fair, and decisive referendum on Scotland’s constitutional future can be achieved. It was about the “mechanics of ensuring a fair referendum rather the implications of the result (HM Government 2012).” Nearly 3,000 individuals and organizations responded to this consultation.

from the UK Government before the Edinburgh Agreement.

To sum up, I argue that the resisted independence referendum in Catalonia was not due to the absence of a legal basis founded upon the Constitution. Instead, it was the lack of political will of the political actors who determine it, rather than merely the legal impossibility. Also, I argue that the negotiated referendum on Scottish independence was a political outcome, which interests of the UK government had determined.

In this light, I proceed to analyze the behavior of ruling parties and party strategies that led parties to behave in specific ways from actor-oriented perspectives. To recall, I hypothesized that ruling party elites do behave strategically on the issue of an independence referendum for their own strategic and rational goals. In other words, ruling parties and party elites will utilize the independence issue to retain further and expand their share of the vote in upcoming elections.

VI. Catalonia: Party dynamics and the behavior of ruling party, *Partido Popular*

1. Incentives created by the party system

Party system of Catalonia includes the traditional left-right ideology axis and a territorial axis, where parties position themselves on the relationship between Catalonia and the rest of Spain. During the 1990-2010 period, the party system of Catalonia remained remarkably stable. It consisted of five main political parties—two nationalist parties, two state-wide parties, and one green party. Two nationalist parties, as repeatedly mentioned, were a center-right wing party CiU and a left-wing party ERC. CiU was a federation of the center-right *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* (CDC) and the Christian-Democrat *Unió Democràtica de Catalunya* (UDC), which favored a gradual system of increasing self-government. CiU has the most potent force in the Catalan elections, which had governed Catalonia for 23 years until the tripartite coalition government removed it in 2003. ERC is a leftist party, which had moderate claims on decentralization and full independence in the long run. Two state-wide parties are *Partido Popular Català* (PPC) and *Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya* (PSC). PSC is a center-left and federalist party, federated with the state-wide party *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE), with which it shares a group of a parliamentary group in the Spanish Parliament. This party has traditionally been the second dominant party in the Catalan elections. In 2003, it formed a coalition party with ERC and ICV, removing CiU from the Catalan government after 23 years. PPC is the regional branch

of the Spanish *Partido Popular* (PP), a right-wing and centralist party. This party has never been in power in Catalonia although it provided support to the CiU government during the 1999-2003 legislature.¹⁷ Finally, *Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds-Esquerra Unida I Alternativa* (ICV-EUiA) is a leftist, green and federalist coalition party. ICV is a federation of communist and socialist parties, who have been traditional proponents of federalism in Spain and supported greater decentralization for the Catalan institutions, while EUiA is a coalition of leftist and communist parties split from the Spanish *Izquierda Unida* (IU) in 1997.

Seemingly, until 2010, the political spectrum in Catalonia had leaned towards the left, as well as the more decentralization dimension. It is worth noting that there are two dimensions in the party system in Catalonia, and it implies a crucial aspect. Elections revolve around two dimensions, meaning that parties need to determine which dimension would be its primary dimension of electoral competition (Alonso 2012: 13-40). Traditionally, the territorial dimension often structures the party system in Catalonia, whereas the ideological dimensions have more salience in the Spanish party system (Guinjoan and Rodon 2016: 22).

Since 2010, Catalan society's political preferences have changed. Polls showed broader support for independence and for pro-independence parties (to be discussed in Section 3, Chapter 6). More interestingly, since 2012 voter preference on the territorial dimension moved from the middle position to the extremes, having spread along both sides of the dimension—

¹⁷ CiU provided parliamentary support for the PP's state-level minority government between 1996-2000, which put more salience on socioeconomic policies. After the 1999 Catalan elections when CiU failed to gain enough seats to form a majority government, the then leader Jordi Pujol decided to secure legislative support from the PP rather than a coalition with ERC, on the grounds of intolerable ideological differences. This parliamentary alliance between the PP and CiU in the Spanish and Catalan Parliaments during this period was very unpopular (Elias 2015; Elias and Mees 2017: 147).

either union or a separate state (Aragonès and Ponsatí 2016: 76). At the same time, when the electorate was modifying their preferences on the territorial dimension, two new parties entered the electoral arena. The first party is *Ciudadanos* (C's) which is a Catalan and ideologically ambiguous but a strongly centralist party, favoring the status quo on the territorial dimension. The second is *Candidatures d'Unitat Popular* (CUP), which is also a Catalan party born at the municipal level with strong preferences in favor of both full independence and leftist ideology.

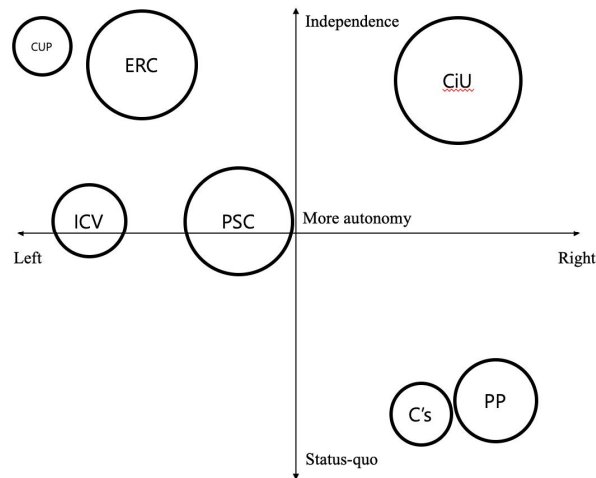
Simultaneously, parties have adopted new and different strategies mainly on the territorial dimension amid changing voter preferences and political landscape in Catalonia's party system. I argue that parties have changed their position on the territorial dimension opportunistically, which will bring them more votes, which resembles what territorial politics scholars have noted. On the one hand, ERC and PP moved in a very predictable way. ERC has shifted its position from moderate claims of decentralization with a long-term wish of full independence to specific demands for full independence. PP has moved its position slightly from moderate to more extreme claims of centralization, for the union of a whole Spain, to defend its constituency from the competition with C's.

On the other hand, other parties seemed to experience a hard time adapting to a new environment. The PSC has suffered severe internal turmoil. The party split into several factions, small factions breaking away to create new small parties with pro-independence positions and a larger faction remaining centralist. The long-time coalition of two different parties, CiU, split into halves due to its internal tensions. CDC continues to claim statehood for Catalonia and demand independence, while UDC maintains the moderate decentralization position.

In result, there has been a stiff competition on the territorial dimension, with more saliency than does have the ideological dimension. On the territorial dimension, C's and PP are competing for the centralist votes, and the CiU, ERC, CUP and PSC's pro-independence factions are competing for independentist votes, while PSC and ICV-EUiA position themselves at the center of the dimension. On the ideological dimension, ERC, PSC, ICV-EUiA, and CUP are competing for leftist votes, whereas CiU, PP and C's are competing for rights votes. More tellingly, the salience of the territorial dimension has become more solidified since 2010. Traditionally, Parties have not formed a coalition nor supported parties that shared the same political views on the territorial dimension, but based on the parties' ideological identities—either right (CiU and PP) or left (PSC, ERC, and ICV-EUiA). Two most significant forces in the Catalan Parliament, CiU and ERC, have formed a political alliance to push independence through an independence referendum, despite their ideological differences.

By reviewing the party system in Catalonia, it becomes evident that the salience of the territorial dimension has been more amplified in the electoral arena. Recently, the party system in Catalonia has highly polarized along the territorial dimension. More interesting is that a correlation between the position of the parties on the two dimensions is found, which contradicts the theoretical assumption of Downs' spatial theory. A left-wing party is more likely to be close to its nationalist competitor along the territorial dimension than a right-wing party, or vice versa. It implies that competition between SWPs and NRPs have intensified. This connection is only found in the Catalan case; therefore, I shall make no assumptions regarding the connection of the party's issues positioning on the two dimensions.

Figure 1. Political parties and the two dimensions in the Catalan party system since 2010



Note: Circles are an approximation of parties' position since the 2010 Catalan election. The size of the circles indicates the party's electoral support during the 2010-2012 period.

NRPs now form a coalition or strategic alliance to push forward independence at the expense of the ideological differences, which had never happened until 2010 in the Catalan electoral history, and it indicates that SWPs' strategic positioning on the territorial issue is inevitable. Moreover, in addition to the substantial growth of CiU and ERC, the entry of new parties into the electoral arena is corresponded by the strategic decisions of SWPs, including the PSC and PP, how to react to the highly-polarized party system. In the next section, I seek to explain how electoral competitions between NRPs and SWPs, and SWPs have effects on the SWP's strategies. For the purposes of discussion, I pay special attention to the competition between SWPs—PSC, C's, and PPC.

2. Incentives created by the party competition

Scholars suggest that in Spain the nationalization of the party system is robust and SWPs are expected to remain quite integrated, meaning that regional divergence over party policy to win electoral popularity at the regional level is not much tolerated (Caramani 2005: 315). Indeed, the Catalan branches of SWP's are mirror images of their central branches and, for that reason, party competitions in both regional and general elections must be taken into account to understand these parties' strategies vis-à-vis territorial demands of nationalist parties. Further, I argue that PP's strategy against the independence issue since 2012 has revolved around the 'ownership battle' with C's at both the regional and national level. After I explain the reasoning behind this argument, I introduce another evidence, before the independence debate, which empirically confirms my argument on the effects of party competition on the SWP's strategy vis-à-vis territorial demands.

As discussed earlier, when two major nationalist parties moved from a moderate to an extreme stance on the territorial question, PPC used an adversarial strategy. Again, the strategic positioning of PPC mirrors that of the state-wide party in adopting a strong position in favor of the unity of the state and in making of it a salient issue of the party discourse. After the then Catalan President Mas called a snap election in 2012, the political landscape in Catalonia showed a different picture compared to ten years ago. Pro-independence nationalist parties (CiU, ERC, ICV-EUiA, and CUP) have overtaken the electoral arena, securing 87 seats combined, whereas PSC lost a large share of seats and dropped to a historic low of twenty. PSC

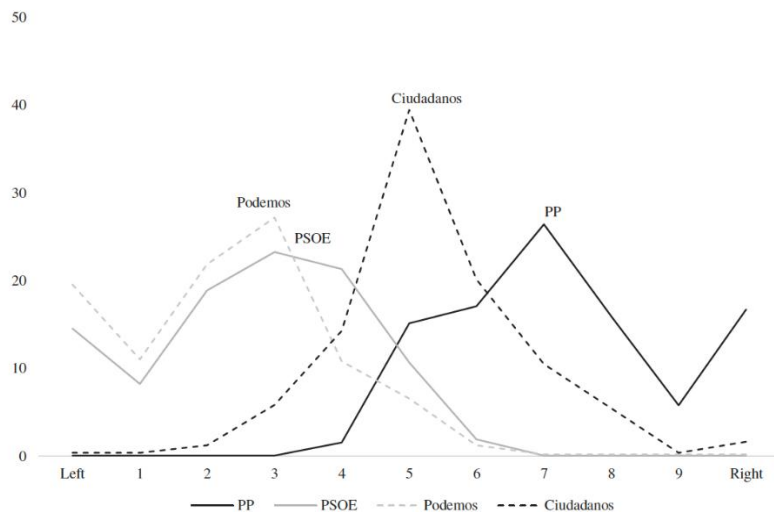
converged toward the demand of nationalist parties along the territorial dimension this time for the independence referendum, not independence. In the run-up to the 2012 election, PSC did not clarify its position on independence, letting voters question whether it supports independence or something else. It made it clear that for the referendum to be held, it must be agreed with the Spanish government. Amid the highly polarized political space, this ambiguous positioning on the territorial issue turned out to have adversely affected the electoral fortune of PSC.

In the meantime, PP was close to being the runner-up. It successfully secured the seat share of nineteen, suggesting that it has consolidated its position in the Catalan Parliament despite being in the government at the national level, where it also applied harsh austerities. There was also a bad story for the electoral fortune of PP; C's has grown a successful competitor to PP, securing nine seats in the Catalan election. There are two crucial aspects to the PP's competition with C's. First, the public perception of the C's position on the ideological dimension located towards the center from the right pole, meaning that C's has taken an advantageous position on the ideological dimension, compared to PP, which is anchored in the Downsian paradigm. Second, PP had almost exclusively 'owned' the centralist position on the territorial dimension until 2012, but this quickly growing competitor, C's, started encroaching upon the same issue position, as mentioned earlier.

Amid the heated debate on Catalonia's independence, PP and C's both sharply opposed to the nationalist parties' proposal on the holding of the independence referendum in 2014. The reason why PP has still held on to the adversarial strategy against the nationalist parties is quite simple. As the PPC competes with C's for the centralist position, rather than with

Catalan nationalist parties, the PP does not risk incurring in severe electoral losses by adopting a rigid stance on demand for a Catalan independence referendum. Furthermore, the incumbent PPC at the central government would not risk making a conversion of issue positioning at election time. It would instead try to replicate the same strategy that put the party in office in the previous election since this strategy of issue positioning had been proven a winning combination (Meguid 2008: 44). Therefore, it can be explained that PPC and PP have maintained its territorial position and saliency it had in the 2011 election to focus on the campaign on its incumbency and on the issue, it has owned.

Figure 2. Ideological distribution of parties in the public perception in Spain, 2015



Source: Orriols and Cordero (2016)

I introduce another case that confirms my argument in pertinence with the relationship between party competition and SWP's strategy vis-à-vis territorial demands. When the 2003 left-wing coalition government

drafted the new charter for Catalonia's autonomy before the independence debate has surfaced, in that I contend that PPC-PP's strategy against NRP's territorial demands revolved around the competition between PSC-PSOE at the national level.

From 1980-1999, CiU's territorial aims were to accrue political capacities and resources through permanent bargaining (Aragonès and Ponsatí 2016: 63) to complete its constitutional development with the final transfers of powers to Catalonia. In other words, it was the period of numerous bargaining between the two governments, quite a different picture from the 2010s. The 2003 regional election heightened the territorial disputes and shook the political landscape of Catalonia. Following the election, the left-wing party coalition of PSC, ERC, and ICV worked on a new statute of autonomy to tackle Catalan resentment over its net contribution to the state budget. In response, on April 15, 2004, the then Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero from PSOE promised: "a more sympathetic approach to Catalan demands for greater devolution including a new Statute of Autonomy and a better financial arrangement (Guibernau 2004: 218)."

I argue this left-wing party coalition has an electoral strategic rationale behind. PSC's centralizing tendencies in power, the slow progress on promised economic and social reforms, and the dependency on the party elites in Madrid questioned the ability of PSC and PSOE to stand up for Catalan interests (Equipo de Sociologia Electoral 1980). However, from 2004 onwards PSOE's approach to the Catalan political space has evolved by increasing the Catalanist profile of PSC. Seemingly, PSC had been the second-largest party in the Catalan Parliament after CiU during this period, and CiU's nationalist issue profile directly threatened it, so PSC had to react

to it strategically. In this light, PSC would have determined to move toward CiU to take moderately nationalist votes or to prevent nationalist voters defecting to this nationalist competitor.

In the meantime, at the national level, PSOE would have also strategically chosen to accommodate Catalonia's bid for constitutional reform. It is partly because other ACs had been completing their constitutional development for further decentralization, meaning that rejecting multiple proposals of greater decentralization would backfire and highly likely to hurt PSOE in the next 2008 election; it is also partly because this accommodative strategy would distinguish them from the PP, who then displayed a sharp Spanish nationalist rhetoric against peripheral nationalists' demands, which heightened territorial disputes (Balfour and Quiroga 2007).

Table 1. Number of seats in the Catalan Parliament by parties

	1980	1984	1988	1992	1995	1999	2003	2006	2010	2012	2015	2017
JxSí											62	66
CiU	43	72	69	70	60	56	56	48	62	50		
PSC	33	41	42	40	34	50	42	37	28	20	16	17
ERC	14	5	6	11	13	12	23	21	10	21		
PPC		11	6	7	17	12	15	23	21	10	21	4
ICV-EUIA	25	6	9	7	11	5	9	12	10	13	11	
C'S								3	3	9	25	36
CUP										3	10	4
Others	20		3						4			8

Source: ICPS.cat

Simultaneously, PP not only rejected the new statute in the Parliament and asked for a rejection to it in the referendum, but also challenged the new statute, which was already ratified through the

referendum, to the Constitutional Court because it was unconstitutional. It can be explained that because, for PP, it was clear that a rejection of the Catalan statute would have been much damaging to the PSOE government. Because the PSOE was receiving the parliamentary support of the Catalan ERC in Madrid and at the same time the Catalan Socialists were in control of the Catalan Parliament thanks to a regional coalition of PSC, ERC, and ICV. Had the Catalan statute not prospered, the Socialist-led government in either Madrid or Catalonia could have collapsed (Muro 2009: 464).

As a result of this territorial dispute, the effectiveness of different strategies adopted by PSC-PSOE and PPC-PP showed different pictures. PSC-PSOE's accommodative strategy in reaction to its nationalist competitor, CiU, turned out prolific only at the national level. In the 2008 general election, they secured 169 seats which were a narrow victory, but large enough to form a majority government. However, in the 2006 regional election PSC lost its five seats, yet still secured its position as the second-largest force in the Catalan Parliament. More interesting is that CiU also lost its eight seats, while PP gained seven seats, the best result it would ever have for the next thirteen years (at the time of writing).

In addition to incentives created by the polarized party system and intensified competition between nationalist parties and PPC, and PSC, C's and PPC, incentives created by the public opinion account for the ruling party's strategic calculation regarding the demands of nationalist parties for holding an independence referendum. In the next section, I will discuss how the opinion polling played a part in the party's devising its strategy.

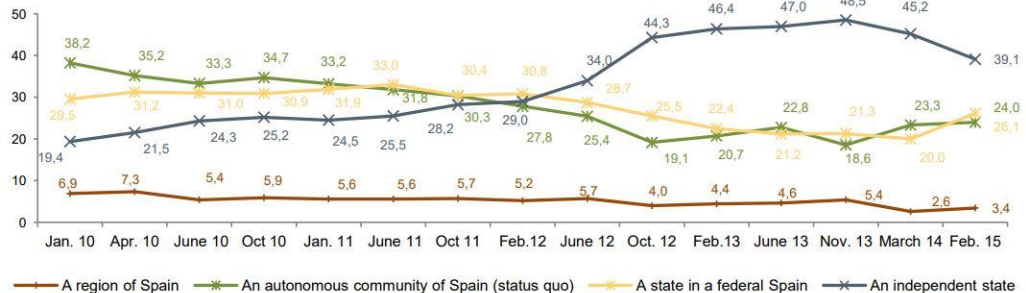
3. Incentives created by public opinion

Political parties maximize their votes to gain office and implement their preferred policy choices (Strøm 1990). Consequently, parties that aim at taking and staying in the office would be more responsive to the electorate interests and demands to increase their share of the vote. At the same time, “parties, unlike issues or candidates, give continuity and structure to the political debate, and act as ‘perpetual screens’ through which individuals follow the political process (Liñeira and Cetrà 2015: 259).” It means that party position on the territorial issue reflect but may also affect followers’ constitutional preferences. Thus, this last section explores public support for constitutional change, and from so doing, I hope to explain party strategies more comprehensively.

As aforementioned, demands for an independent Catalan state have gained momentum after the Constitutional Court’s ruling in 2010 to curtail the new Statute of Autonomy that had been approved and ratified four years earlier (e.g., Guibernau 2014; Rico and Liñeira 2014). However, as seen in Figure 3, popular support for independence has risen in fast pace from 2012 when mass demonstration seeking for a Catalan state took place, while support either for status quo or federalization has gradually decreased. However, this trend started to change from 2014, with popular support for independence decreasing by 6.1 percent point and for federalization increasing by 4 percent point. It can be understood partly as a response to the Madrid government’s firm stance on the Catalan issue. Nevertheless, on 9 November 2014, the Catalan government pushed forward with non-referendum popular consultation on Catalonia’s constitutional future in

defiance of the Constitutional Court.

Figure 3. Preferences in territorial arrangement in Catalonia, 2010-2015



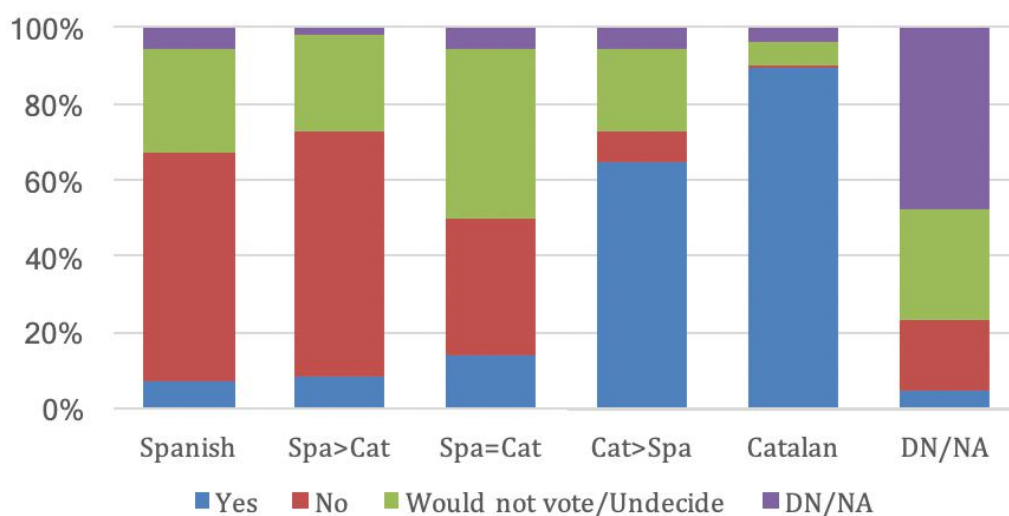
Source: Political Opinion Barometer Press report (CEO; 2015)

Long term evidence suggests that Catalans feeling more Catalan than Spanish and exclusively Catalan have grown from 24% by 1979 to more than 40% by 2010. In contrast, population feeling attached to the Spanish identity and more to the Spanish identity than the Catalan identity has fallen than 15% point according to the CEO survey. Furthermore, those who identify themselves more Catalan than Spanish and exclusively Catalan are more likely to support independence, compared with those feeling more Spanish than Catalan and exclusively Spanish, as shown in Figure 4. From this, it could be argued that national identities remain as the central to secessionism, yet it does not presuppose a predetermined transformation into secessionist attitudes (Hale 2008: 39).

For instance, 40-45% of the population express predominant regional identities in Catalonia, while in Scotland (around 60%) or the Basque Country (above 50%) the figure is significantly higher (Serrano 2013: 528-9). However, support for independence in these three cases is similar or even higher in Catalonia (ibid.). In this respect, it should not be assumed that regional identity is a simple function to rising secessionism.

Instead, rising support for independence must be understood in the political context, in which political parties have maneuvered and intensified the nationalism debate. It coincided with the economic downturn, rising unemployment, spending cuts and structural reforms as remedies for increasing government deficits led to public dissatisfaction with the central government as well as a sharp surge of social unrest that filled the streets in the early 2010s. In result, the election to the Catalan parliament held in November 2012 produced a parliament heavily polarized on the territorial issue, with traditionally minor parties gaining ground for over mainstream formations (Rico and Liñeira 2014: 257).

Figure 4. Support for independence by Moreno national identity, 2011



Notes: Respondents were asked: “If tomorrow a referendum was held to decide the independence of Catalonia, what would you do?”

Source: Barometer CEO-652, Serrano (2013)

This trend has continued until recently. In the 2015 and 2017

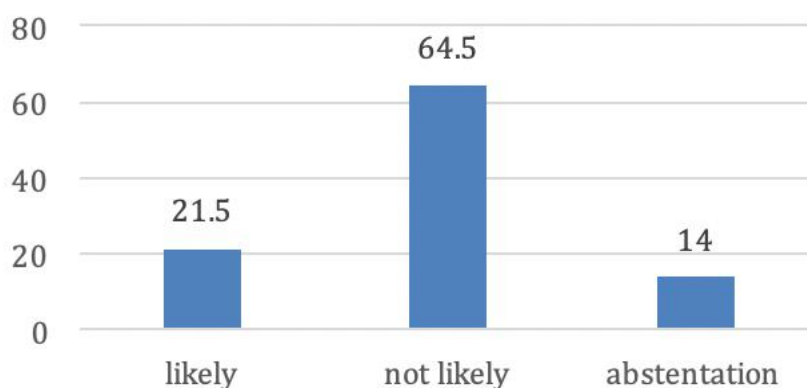
elections, secessionists maintained their majority in the parliament.¹⁸ A recent change in the Catalan political landscape is that the main anti-independence party, C's, has emerged as the largest in the parliament (35 seats), while pro-independence parties won a slim majority, gaining 70 out of 125 seats. From closely looking at the relationship between voting behavior and support for independence, it was found that most of those who have vote intention to the pro-independence political parties, such as CiU (78.8%), ERC (91.9%), and CUP (89.7%), unsurprisingly support independence. Similarly, an overwhelming majority of those have vote intention to the centralist parties or parties that are ambiguous on the territorial dimension, such as PP (88.1%), PSC (86.2%), C's, (94.8%) and Podemos (79.2%), do not support independence. Support for independence and vote intention to the pro-independence parties coincide as presumed, meaning that Catalonia's party politics weighs heavily on the territorial dimension. Also, more tellingly, secessionists' strategy to reap electoral benefits from the nationalist symbolism of on-going struggle with Madrid turned out prolific. So, did the anti-independence parties in a similar way.

The popular perception of the Spanish government can explain why two independence referendums, or popular consultations, in Catalonia recorded such low turnout rates, compared with Scotland. According to the CEO press report published in 2015 (see Figure 5), more than half Catalans identified that the Spanish government is not likely to finally offer an agreement, which would possibly end the conflict between Catalonia and Madrid (64.5% of respondents). In the meantime, only the minority viewed

¹⁸ After the unilateral declaration of independence by secessionist parties in the Catalan Parliament following the independence referendum held on October 1, 2017, the Spanish Senate voted to invoke Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution. It allowed Prime Minister Rajoy to dismiss the Catalan government and to dissolve the Catalan Parliament, calling for an early election.

that the Spanish government is likely to offer an agreement (21.5%). In this respect, the two referendums' turnouts relate to the impact of inefficacy; because people believe that their votes are not meaningful, they instead decided not to participate in regards to opportunity costs. It can be understood that the Spanish legal framework mainly, more precisely the Spanish government's use of it, is key to framing citizen's support for the option for independence, as seen in public opinion on the constitutional future of Spain, which has been strikingly polarized for over many years.

Figure 5. The popular perception of the Spanish government's willingness for accommodation



Note: Respondents were asked: *“To what extent do you think it is likely that the Spanish government will finally offer an agreement that would be acceptable for a majority of the Catalan Parliament?”*

Source: Barometer CEO-804

In sum, the climate of polarization on the constitutional question that permeated public opinion in Catalonia has been successfully articulated by the pro-independence parties to change voter preferences. The reasoning behind this argument is, as shown in this section, that support for independence skyrocketed from 2012, whereas the Catalan party system has remarkably polarized since 2010. To recapitulate. The parties had moderate

territorial claims until 2010, even the nationalist parties like CiU and ERC. In response to the rising public discontent with the central government and public anger around by the legal challenging of the new Statute of 2006, nationalist parties moved from moderate claims to explicitly demanding independence. In the leadership under the grassroots organizations with support by the pro-independence parties, mass demonstration for a Catalan state inundated the streets of Barcelona twice in 2010 and 2012, followed by a rise in support for independence since 2012.

In the meantime, the centralist parties' delicate articulation of the public opinion also worked. When support for independence skyrocketed in 2012, the centralist parties secured the 'no' votes at least a base level of 40% and more than 45%, with the abstention added (see Figure 3). Given that support base, particularly the PP-led Spanish government forcefully and firmly resisted the demands for the independence referendum in Catalonia. Also, it was proven that PP successfully manipulated the public opinion as the independence referendums turnouts counted for around 40% both times. Overall, this confirms the statement that "the voting behavior of individuals is an effect of the activities of political parties (Przeworski and Sprague 1986: 9)."

This is the point where the Catalan case diverges from the Scottish case; whereas public opinion was articulated by both pro-independence and anti-independence parties in Catalonia, it was predominantly articulated by the unionist parties in Scotland, albeit there was no clear sign of pre-existing public dissatisfaction with the constitutional status of Scotland. It is further to be discussed in the next chapter.

VII. Scotland: Party dynamics and the behavior of ruling party, the Conservatives

1. Incentives created by the party system

Just like the Catalan, the Scottish party system is bi-dimensional, but it is not as complicated as the former. Since the devolution, the voting behavior of the Scottish regional election was very much similar to that of the UK general election until 2007. The three main British SWPs are present in Scotland, and their regional branches enjoy a significant level of autonomy, compared to that of Spanish SWPs in Catalonia (Detterbeck and Hepburn 2010).

The Scottish Liberal-Democrats have traditionally been a federalist party (Fabre and Martínez-Herrera 2009), but position themselves on the unionist pole along the territorial dimension and at the same time the center-left pole along the ideological dimension. The Labour party as an SWP is traditionally a left-wing party, but the 1990s the New Labor's shift to the center reduced the gap between the party and the Conservatives and more importantly eliminated any left-right ideological difference with the party's main rival, the Scottish National Party (SNP) (Paterson 2006; Paterson et al. 2001). Moreover, the Scots located the Labour near the nationalist pole on the territorial dimension because it is thought to be the pioneer in the Scottish devolution, although the party did not traditionally support devolution, but strategically first supported devolution in the 1970s when it felt it was losing ground to the SNP.

The Conservatives party, officially the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, is the only right-wing party and unionist party. Traditionally, it was long regarded as a true defender of Scottish interests within the Union until the 1950s (Kidd 2008). However, in Thatcher years it suffered an electoral decline amid anti-Tory sentiment prevailed in the 1990s, losing much of its electoral base in Scotland. More devastating was the party lost their last remaining MP north of the border ahead of the devolution referendum in 1997, to which it opposed.

The SNP is the main and the only relevant NRP in Scotland. Founded in 1934 as an advocate for Scottish home rule, it clamored for Scottish independence since the late 1980s. The SNP is a center-left social democratic and pro-independence party. Over three Scottish Parliament elections from 2003, the SNP had increasingly gained support among who supported independence while also expanding its support beyond that base.

Table 2. Scottish Parliamentary election results in number of seats, 1999-2011

	1999	2003	2007	2011	2016
Labour	56	50	46	37	24
SNP	35	27	47	69	63
Conservatives	18	18	17	15	31
Liberal-Democrats	17	17	16	5	5
Others	3	17	3	3	6

Source: Scottish Parliament.

The 2007 Scottish Parliamentary elections marked the decline of Labour, which had led the Scottish government since the devolution. Labour's support in Scotland had been slipping away over many years.

Many Scottish voters once identified with their working-class and trade union roots, yet Labour had lost its traditional bastions when Scotland's largest trade union opposed the motion, and some SNP candidates were given donations from trade unions (Mitchell 2014: 267). The Scots saw Jack McConnell, the leader of Labour and the First Minister of Scotland from 2001 to 2007, as to be under the control of his party's leadership in London (ibid: 266). More critical was that he refused to criticize the Blair government on the Iraq War, by which Scots were angered because the Blair government did not consult with the Scottish Parliament, without "the strongest possible democratic scrutiny (The Telegraph 2002)." At the same time, to the eyes of Scots, the Labour party seemed to be no longer different from the national branch in London, while it was identified with "their mistaken policies and the system of government as the causes of New Labour's failure (Mitchell 2014: 267)." ¹⁹ Simultaneously, the Scots' perception of Labour had shifted since 2007. When voters were asked in 2011 where they placed Scottish political parties on a scale for the constitutional status,²⁰ The SNP and Conservatives were perceived to lie at opposite ends of the spectrum, and Labour shifted more towards the opposition side (id. 2016: 83).

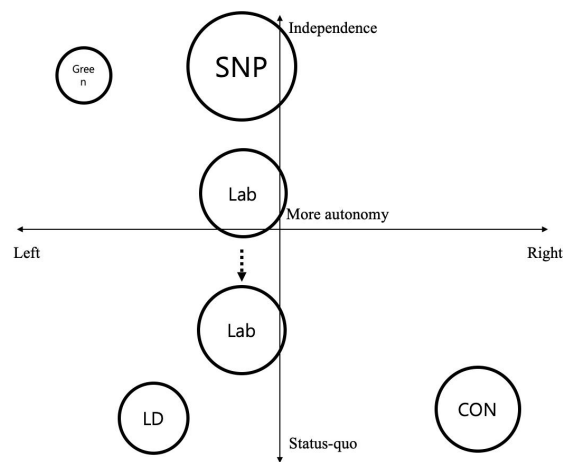
Resulting in forty-seven SNP MSPs, forty-six Labour MSPs, seventeen Conservatives, sixteen Lib-Dems, two Greens and one independent, the 2007 Holyrood election marked the new party system in Scotland that is characterized by realignment and ideological convergence

¹⁹ Before devolution, even when Labour was in government in Britain, its distinctiveness in Scotland was much appreciated. While Labour government had accepted nuclear weapons, failed to stand up to the United States on the Vietnamese War, cut back public spending in economic and fiscal crises, the party in Scotland kept its distance from the policies decided in London (Mitchell 2014: 267).

²⁰ The scale indicated opposition to or support for more powers for Holyrood.

in the party system. As mentioned above, the public perception of Labour had shifted to incline more towards the opposition side (status-quo) on the territorial dimension, and voters' defection to SNP and dealignment with Labour corresponded it.

Figure 6. Political parties and the two dimensions in the Scottish party system since 2007



Notes: Abbreviation for parties are SNP (Scottish National Party), Green (Scottish Green), Lab (Scottish Labour), LD (Liberal Democrats), CON (Scottish Conservatives)

In sum, the Scottish party system is not as complicated as the Catalan one, with a smaller number of parties and one relevant nationalist party. The Scottish political landscape has distinct features. On the one hand, all SWPs are unionist, while NRPs (including the Scottish Green and other smaller parties) position themselves on the independence side along the territorial dimension. It means that the SNP exclusively owns the independence issue while the Conservatives, Labour, and Liberal-Democrats are competing for the ownership of the union and integrity of the UK issue. On the other hand, the Conservatives party is the only right-wing party,

while other parties are located on the left side of the ideological dimension. It implies that there is stiff competition between SWPs on the territorial dimension amid the heated independence debate since 2007.

2. Incentives created by the party competition

Some may argue that the 2012 Edinburgh Agreement between the UK and Scottish governments on the terms of the 2014 Scottish referendum was the product of Cameron's personal preference for direct democracy or the coalition government's particular preference for 'flexible unionism' (McGarvey 2015: 93). The rationale behind the decision of the UK government to sign the agreement for the holdings of the referendum should be understood in terms of party dynamics and electoral strategies of the ruling parties. I argue that the Conservatives' accommodative strategy revolved around the competition with the Labour. Because, as mentioned earlier, regional and state-wide elections are disconnected in the UK, I will focus on the competition between the Conservatives and the Labour at the Holyrood elections.

The decline of the Conservatives party in Scotland through 1980s and 1990s left them with no Scottish MPs in 1997. The proportional electoral system in the Scottish Parliament allowed for some recovery, but the Conservatives remained a toxic brand in Scotland, and the Liberal Democrats suffered by their association with it (Cetrà and Harvey 2018: 16; McGarvey 2015: 101). In the post-devolution era, most striking was that the Conservatives party in Scotland barely won support from the Scots, in contrast with the situation in Wales. While Plaid Cymru was in the doldrums,

the Welsh Conservatives gained votes and seats in 2011. In contrast, the SNP became a sole governing party, and the Conservatives won only 15 seats.

The SNP's primary strategy over many years has contained valence considerations. It believed that voters' constitutional preferences were influenced by the assessments of their expectations of the SNP's capacity to deliver in public policy terms. If the SNP could prove itself competent, it might not only become the 'natural party of government in Edinburgh,' but that this would spill over into support for independence (Mitchell 2016: 78). With its manifesto promising independence, the SNP incrementally expanded its electoral base even beyond voters who support independence over three elections. In the 2011 elections, the SNP gained support from 15% of those who support a status-quo and 50% of those who support for more powers, winning sixty-nine seats in the Parliament. In the meantime, the Conservatives had almost no support among those in favor of independence, and most of their supporters were those in favor of status quo. It suggested that opinion in favor of independence had polarized by party, though less so among those who preferred more powers or the status-quo to independence. That the SNP not only almost exclusively owned the independence issue but also had expanded its electoral base meant that the Conservatives had to make a move to take votes away from other SWPs. When the Conservatives was directly threatened by the SNP, the competition with the Labour posed it a more severe threat.

There are two crucial aspects of the Conservatives' competition with the Labour. First, the public perception of the Labour's position on the territorial dimension shifted towards the Conservatives, in favor of status-quo, meaning that now the two parties compete for the same issue position.

Second, these two parties both have been losing credit with the people of Scotland. It meant they were losing ground on valence politics as well to the SNP. The Conservatives was even more vulnerable to it, than was the Labour. Because the Conservatives had been only a minor opposition party, it had less reputation in valence politics in Scotland. Valences issues were brought when the SNP and the Labour are ideologically close and have few major policy differences between them (Johns et al. 2009).

In this context, the Conservatives got a chance. In reaction to the territorial demands of the SNP and small pro-independence parties, it accommodated the proposal of the independence referendum in 2012 and the rationale behind the Conservatives' accommodative strategy was just as simple. By converging towards the issue position of the SNP, the Conservatives could take voters in favor of further devolution and the constitutional status-quo from the Labour, and possibly a small number of the Labour's defectors to the SNP.

Further, the Conservatives, Labour, and Liberal-Democrats of the unionist camp, in the run-up to the referendum, proposed further devolution for Scotland and made this proposal public ahead of the poll to convince voters to reject independence in favor of greater power for a permanent Scottish Parliament within the UK. Seemingly, this was also a strategic move to manage to win supporters of the SNP in favor of further devolution over to their side, and the Conservatives' intention behind this proposal was even more evident after it signed to the Edinburgh Agreement in 2012.

The effects of party competition on the ruling party's reaction to the territorial demands are also relevant in the previous Scottish Labour era. During the 1999-2007 period, the Labour-Liberal Democrats coalition did not have many incentives to adopt an accommodative strategy vis-à-vis

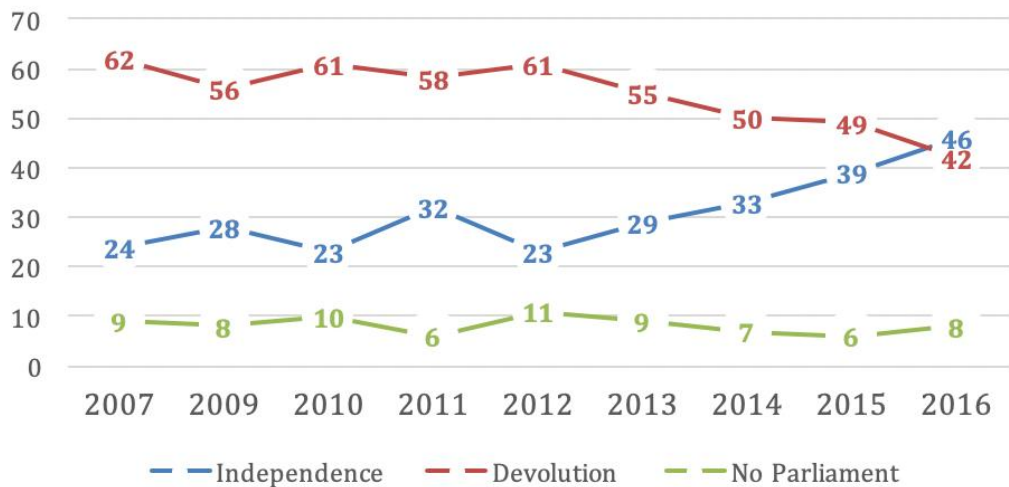
territorial demands of SNP for two reasons. First, because the SNP that time was not significant enough to threaten the Labour and other SWPs. Moreover, second, because the Labour party was also in government in London, and there was no need to bring the territorial question on the agenda on a nationwide scale (Martí Tomàs 2015: 220).

It is also important to note that the independence debate accelerated without any clear evidence of dissatisfaction with the constitutional status quo (McHarg 2016: 101). I point that independence was at the heart of the amplified political scene to a greater extent that the Scottish political parties manipulated and strategically behaved for their own good, more tellingly than the Catalan case.

3. Incentives created by public opinion

In this section, I argue that the pre-referendum opinion polling has played its part in Cameron's strategic calculation. The Calman Commission found insofar as there was widespread support for constitutional reforms, there was support for more devolution, rather than independence (McHarg 2016: 102). Surveys measuring constitutional preferences among the option of independence, devolution, or no Scottish Parliament, found that independence support ranged from 24% to 35% between 1999 and 2014 and further devolution from 50% to 62% (What Scotland Thinks 2014). For these reasons, Cameron's view that the Union would win a crushing victory and that demand for independence would be defeated have also partly attributed to his decision in the agreement.

Figure 7. Attitudes towards how Scotland should be governed 2007-2016



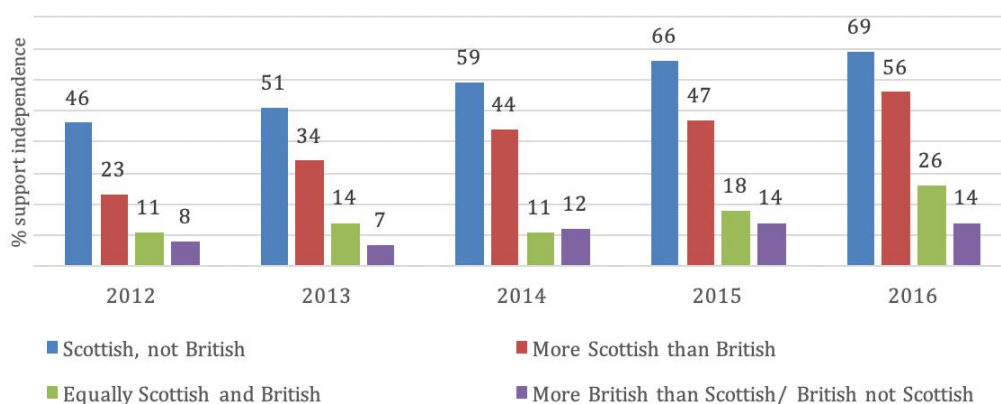
Note: Data for 2008 is not available. Up to and including 2015 interviewed adults aged 18 and over. In 2016 those aged 16 or 17 were also interviewed for the first time. If the 16 and 17-year-olds are excluded, the proportion choosing independence falls to 45% while the remaining figures are unchanged. The first ‘independence’ option refers to independence, the second to some variant of ‘devo max’ or ‘home rule’, and the last ‘No Parliament’ to limiting the responsibilities of the Scottish Parliament to those set out in the original Act that established the Scottish Parliament, which represents opposition to any kind of devolution.

Source: Data from Table 1 in Curtice, J. (2016)

The Scottish Social Attitudes (SSA) survey revealed incrementally increasing Scottish support for independence since the advent of devolution in 1999. The lowest levels of support for independence were recorded in 2010, three years after the SNP first came to power as a minority government, and again in 2012, a year after the SNP became a majority government. Even in 2014, when a survey was conducted immediately before the referendum, support for independence remained low at no more than 33%. Strikingly, when the survey was conducted after the general election in which the SNP took more than half seats in the House of Commons in 2015, support for independence rose to an all-time high of 39%. It recorded even higher at 46% in the most recent survey.

Most people identified themselves in one of the three categories in Figure 8. For instance, in 2016 29% said they were equally Scottish and British, 28% that they were more Scottish than British, and 24% that they were Scottish and not British (Curtice 2016: 8). Those with a strong sense of Scottish identity have been more likely to support independence. During the referendum campaign in 2012, less than half of those who said they were ‘Scottish, not British’ indicated their support for independence. Now, this figure has gone up to at least two-thirds. Similarly, those who put themselves in ‘more Scottish than British’ showed their increasing support for independence. In sum, a majority of those who identify themselves exclusively or predominantly Scottish are highly likely to support independence.

Figure 8. Support for independence by Moreno national identity, 2012-16



Note: The level of support for independence registered in response to SSA survey questions are broken down by a measure of national identity known as the Moreno question (Moreno 1988). The respondents were asked to indicate what combination of feeling Scottish and feeling British best describes themselves.

Source: Data from Table 3 in Curtice, J. (2016)

The picture looks very different for those ‘equally Scottish and British.’ In 2014, weeks and months before the independence referendum, around one-tenth of those who identified themselves equally Scottish and British indicated support for independence. The figure is now one-fourth in the most recent survey, meaning that pro-independence movement has been galvanizing their support beyond those exclusively and predominantly Scottish.

It is important to note that while in each election (Westminster and Holyrood elections) those in favor of independence have been more likely to vote for the SNP than have those against, support for independence and voting for the SNP have been far from synonymous with each other (Curtice 2016:11). According to the SSA survey (2016), until the 2012 Westminster election, only around half of those who supported independence voted for the SNP. In 2015, as many as 85% of those who supported independence voted for the SNP. Meanwhile, the party has been successful in winning support from those in favor of independence since 2007—around 80% of this group. Unsurprisingly, it has won support from a minority of the unionists, from the lowest of 8% in 2005 (as Westminster election) to the highest of 38% in 2011 (at Holyrood election). It is partly because the SNP was thought to be providing Scotland with effective government—as it was valence issue—rather than because of enthusiasm for its policy of independence (Johns et al. 2013). To this extent, interestingly this constitutional question, which was held to be a class position issue, now seems to have a strong connection with valence politics.

Overall, the independence referendum has virtually increased the salience of the constitutional future of Scotland in its electoral politics. Just like pro-independence parties in Catalonia, SNP has been successful in

reaping electoral benefits from the nationalist question of the critical debates most people engaged in for many years. From looking at the opinion polling, it becomes evident that the electoral success of SNP has not been equal to increasing public support for independence. Instead, SNP successfully managed its party image and the public perception of its commitment to Scottish interests. Had Cameron and party elites known that they would win by 55.4%, possibly they would not risk the future relationship between the UK and Scotland on the ballot.

It becomes more evident that the public opinion was one of the crucial factors for explaining the Conservatives' accommodative strategy regarding the territorial question. There was no clear sign of pre-existing dissatisfaction with the constitutional status of Scotland, albeit with a tinge of demands for further devolution. So the unionist parties significantly articulated the public opinion, pushing through the agreement for the delegation of powers. It becomes more evident that the public opinion is of importance to the ruling party's strategic incentives when compared to the latest case evidence.

As mentioned earlier, this year Theresa May has refused the proposal of the Scottish government to delegate powers to hold the referendum on independence for the second time. Her refusal can be explained in the context of party competition and public opinion. First, while the weakening of the Labour party in Scotland has been in place since 2007 and the Conservatives has doubled its seats in the Scottish Parliament in 2016, the SNP has consolidated its position as 'the defender of Scottish interests,' securing all, but three seats in Westminster election in Scotland. It meant that the voting behavior of the Scottish people has substantially moved from position issues to valence issues. Second, it is risky to allow the

independence referendum when the independence option has at least a base level of 46% (see Figure 7), compared to 32% several months before the Edinburgh Agreement was settled. Simultaneously, the Brexit referendum marked a stark distinction between Scotland and the rest of the UK (except London and Northern Ireland) on the EU membership issue, which was like an open flame in the woods. Third, the Scots have already gained a promise on further devolution and relevant legislation (the Scotland Bill 2015 and the Scotland Act 2016) are put in place. Promises on further devolution will not again attract them.

In result, the Conservatives has focused more exclusively on the unionist side as the party's "primary dimension of competition" (Alonso 2012), whereas the SNP promised the second referendum in the 2016 election manifestos. The Conservatives has outflanked the Labour, positioning themselves as the leading unionist campaign with the 'no second independence referendum' argument. Electorally, it was a successful shift as in the 2016 election they showed its revival for the first time since 1983.

VIII. Conclusion

This paper addressed territorial party politics about frustrated secessions in plurinational democracies. This analysis sought to explain variations in state responses in Catalonia and Scotland to the demands of the independence referendums by the nationalist regional parties. With a focus on the electoral logic of actions of the ruling parties as a point of departure, it explored the party dynamics and the behaviors of parties through a case comparison. From doing so, it found that parties made strategic calculations vis-à-vis the incentives created by the party system, party competition, and public opinion. Also, further, this analysis empirically proved that ruling party elites do behave strategically on the issue of an independence referendum for their own strategic and rational goals. Put it differently, ruling parties and party elites utilize the independence issue to retain further and expand their share of the vote in upcoming elections.

Interestingly, it found that the party competition between state-wide parties is a highly relevant factor in explaining state variations. Amid the changing party system, in which parties have adopted new and different strategies, ruling parties chose either an accommodative or adversarial strategy in response to the territorial demands of nationalist regional parties, intending to have an impact on the electoral fortune of other state-wide rivals. In this point, this analysis found that party competition between state-wide parties and nationalist regional parties is not as relevant as assumed in the literature, at least for these specific cases.

It does not dismiss the public opinion factor. Incentives created by public opinion were evident in both cases to the extent that political parties,

both in the pro-independence and anti-independence camps, have significantly articulated the public opinion in pushing through accommodative and adversarial strategies. Further, it can assume that trends in public opinion will be an essential indicator of the prospects for the secessionist movements that continue today.

This research design has focused on three dimensions of party incentives—party system, party competition, and public opinion to explore the ruling party strategies as the independent variable. However, this parsimonious research design might have missed another critical variable that is potentially relevant—ideational variable. As Cetrà and Harvey (2018) discussed the conception of the state and nations significantly differ in Spain and the UK. The Spanish constitution declares that the ‘Spanish people’ are the subject of ‘sovereignty’ from whom ‘all powers of state organs’ allegedly emanate and ambiguously states about the recognition of minority nations, which is the same reasoning used in the Spanish government’s argument against the right to self-determination. In the meantime, unionism as a political doctrine and ideology pervaded the UK’s political and social landscape. Indeed, this is an important variable, but lacking this variable does not hurt my theoretical framework and arguments that follow through.

By focusing on the party dynamics and the strategic behavior of the parties, this analysis, therefore, confirms the statement that a secession is a rare event in democracies. Because the party system, party competition, and public opinion interlocked together must create a ‘working condition’ for a ruling party at the right time to decide to accommodate the territorial demands, it is less likely to happen in terms of the possibility.

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국문초록

카탈루냐와 스코틀랜드의 분리주의 정당은 수 년간 자기 지역의 분리독립을 위해 노력해왔다. 그 결과 두 지역 모두 분리독립에 관한 국민투표를 실시하는 데까지는 성공하지만, 결과적으로 독립에 실패하고 만다. 그런데 두 지역의 분리독립 시도가 좌절되기까지의 과정에는 매우 흥미로운 차이가 존재했다. 그 차이는 분리독립 시도에 대한 중앙정부들의 대응이었다. 기본적으로 카탈루냐 지역정부와 스코틀랜드 지역정부 모두 국민투표를 시행할 권한을 갖고 있지 않았다. 우선 카탈루냐 지역정부는 국민투표 시행 권한을 이전해줄 것을 스페인 중앙정부에 요구했으나 거부 당했다. 이에 카탈루냐 지역정부는 2014년, 2017년에 국민투표를 강행 했는데, 스페인 중앙정부는 이를 위헌이라고 비난하며 매우 강경한 태도로 대응했다. 이에 비해 스코틀랜드의 분리독립 시도에 대한 영국 중앙정부의 태도는 매우 온건한 것이었다. 영국 중앙정부는 스코틀랜드 정부가 합법적으로 국민투표를 시행할 수 있도록 법적인 근거를 마련해줌으로써 평화적으로 국민투표가 실시되도록 했다. 즉, 두 지역 모두 분리독립을 위한 국민투표를 시도했다가 실패했다는 점에서는 동일했지만, 그 과정에서 나타난 중앙정부의 대응은 매우 상이한 것이었다.

무엇이 이런 차이를 초래했을까? 무엇이 두 중앙정부로 하여금 분리독립에 대해 상이한 태도를 취하게 만들었을까? 본 연구는 ‘정당전략’이 그 원인이라고 주장한다. 두 지역에서 국민투표 추진부터 시행 이후까지의 정당행태에 초점을 맞추어 살펴보면, 집권당과 정당 엘리트들이 득표 극대화라는 자신들의 합리적 목표 달성을 위해 전략적으로 행동하는 것을 발견할 수 있다. 즉, 집권당과 정당 엘리트들은 이후 선거에서 유권자 득표를 극대화하고 유지하기 위해 분리독립이라는 독립 투표

이슈를 이용한다는 것이다. 본 논문은 두 사례의 분리독립 시도와 과정을 비교 관점에서 두텁게 기술한다. 이를 통해 ‘정당전략’이 두 사례에서 중앙정부 대응의 차이를 불러온 주요한 원인이었다는 점을 증명한다.

주요어: 독립 투표, 분리독립, 정당전략, 카탈루냐, 스코틀랜드, 영토정치학

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