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**Secessionism on the Rise: Frames, Media Bias, and
Strategies of Political Parties in Catalonia (2010-2014) and
Scotland (2012-2016)**

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Abstract

Increasing calls for regional independence are being made in several European countries, and such calls are accompanied by growing public support for secessionism. Over the last decade, Catalonia and Scotland have enjoyed the highest level of political mobilization for secession in the European Union.

This research highlights the role of the media in changing attitudes toward independence and studies regionalist parties' strategic choices to understand their electoral success at the regional elections at a time of fast growth of independence sentiments among the population. This study employs different methods: process tracing to focus on the specificities of the independence process in a view to understand how the secessionist agenda transformed the cases; frame analysis of media links the theoretical arguments and their representation in the public discourse; content analysis of regional parties' electoral programs via Regional Manifesto Project approach helps to define the strategic choices of regionalist parties which brought success to their secessionist agenda at the regional elections; most-similar cases comparative analysis allows to identify commonality and differences between the cases of Catalonia and Scotland.

This dissertation uncovers how: the media communicate regionalist arguments to the audience; the media justify independence claims; regionalist parties strategize their secessionist programs. First, a strong pro-region bias is the main feature of media coverage. Secondly, saliency is influenced by the political process as a largely exogeneous factor, but the framing process may also influence reality by giving particular meaning to the major political events and by framing them as political opportunities or as having transformative power. Third, the political competition structure contributes to the strategic choices of political parties.

My research contributes to the framing literature by considering the role of diagnosis, prognostic, and motivational framing in the independence discourse. It highlights the extent of pro-region message flows vis-à-vis pro-center and neutral messages in media communication. My analysis contributes to previous research on regionalist parties by making an in-depth case study to differentiate between subsuming and blurring strategies adopted by secessionist actors.

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Introduction

Secessionism is a very broad phenomenon in international politics, with cases observable all around the globe. After World War I, redrawing the map of Central Europe and the Middle East included accommodating some aspirations of secessionist movements. Starting in the 1960s, the process of decolonization granted statehood to some communal groups but denied it to others. The collapse of multi-ethnic states, tendencies toward globalization, and increasing demands for sovereignty by stateless nations show secessionism to be an important trend in contemporary politics. Griffins (2016) legitimately noted that we are currently living in the age of secessionism.

To maintain territorial integrity and satisfy secessionist demands, some governments offer forms of self-government. The number of states granting some form of autonomy increased especially after the end of the Cold War. But self-government is not a universal key to settling self-determination conflicts. While autonomy reforms reduced tensions in some cases, others demonstrate the reverse. For example, Schulte (2020) argues that territorial reforms eased tensions in Moldova and Papua New Guinea. However, in India with Kashmir province or Mindanao in the Philippines, the same approach has not led to peaceful resolution of ethno-territorial conflicts.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the number of independent states on the European continent increased. The USSR break-up left some territorial conflicts frozen. The people of Eastern Ukraine, Transnistria, Nagorno Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia demanded autonomy. Some of these tensions led to intrastate and interstate conflicts.

The Balkan wars in the 1990s were a clear example of a civil war that entailed ethnic conflict and secessionism escalating to violence. However, the Balkans are not the only case in point of European secessionism. The map of secessionist movements and the official political parties in Europe that favor some form of independence are quite dispersed. Having their demands realized would divide the map of Europe into patches. According to the Center for Security Studies, the

European countries with the strongest regional movements are Spain, Great Britain, and Belgium (Bieri, 2014).

However, peaceful means prevail over the force of arms in challenging the territorial integrity of the state by the independence movements at the current stage (Griffiths & Wasser, 2019). One reason is the EU institutional framework which serves as a safeguard to prevent such conflicts from escalating into violence. The cases of the Basque Country terrorist organization *Euskadi ta Askatasuna* (ETA) and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) demonstrate the use of violence accompanying independentist demands. However, they never became civil wars or military intrastate conflicts, and were eventually channeled into peace process.

The ‘peaceful’ nature of secessionist conflicts in the EU does not prevent the serious challenge they pose to state territorial integrity. The last decade has demonstrated that support for independence in Europe has undergone drastic changes. For example, in 2014, the New Flemish Alliance (NVA) became the dominant party in Flanders and Belgium, with 32.1 percent of the Flemish vote. At the same time, supporters of independence in Catalonia, Scotland, and the Basque Country have stated their goal of becoming independent EU members, showing that secessionism is one of Europe’s important political issues. The EU views secessionism as a threat to unity and integration because any separation of a territory from an existing state would inevitably result in weakening that state. In a situation of complex interconnectedness, such as the EU, the weakening of one state may lead to the deterioration of a whole regional bloc (Bordachev et al., 2015: 37).

During the 2010s, the cases of Catalonia and Scotland recurrently dominated EU headlines. On 11 September 2012, millions took to Barcelona’s streets to celebrate Catalonia’s National Day, subsequently turning into massive demonstrations, displaying such slogans as ‘Catalonia is a new State of Europe’, ‘Independence now!’, and ‘Catalonia is not Spain.’ Connolly (2013:52) argues that ‘the demonstration in Barcelona was a striking example of the nationalism that has recently gained ascendancy in several of the EU’s most prominent stateless nations’.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) campaign slogan, ‘Independence in Europe,’ nicely captures the essence of demands by European stateless nationalists to separate from the parent state but remain part of the EU. After their victory in the 2011 Scottish elections, the SNP held a referendum on independence in 2014, which provoked heated debates about sovereignty not only in Great Britain but also in Catalonia, Flanders, and many other European regions.

This research focuses on the two most prominent cases of secessionism in the EU: Catalonia and Scotland. The respective Catalan and Scottish societies experienced similar growth of independence sentiments in a relatively short period. Many existing theories of secessionism are not well-equipped to explain sudden increases in independence sentiments and electoral support for secessionist parties. Most approaches point to structural explanations, such as economic or cultural factors, more suitable for explaining cross-regional differences, or slow/gradual longitudinal changes in the levels of support, rather than rapid changes in attitudes toward independence.

The power of media in promoting and establishing particular narratives is widely recognized theoretically and empirically (Chadwick et al., 2015; Dekavalla, 2016; Stround, 2011; Sciarini & Tresch, 2019). Media outlets can set the agenda for political debates by highlighting certain issues or topics that they deem important, and framing them in a particular way. Media outlets can use various persuasion techniques to influence public opinion on political issues. This can include the use of emotional appeals, expert opinions, and endorsements. Media outlets can provide information that is relevant to political debates, such as polling data, expert analysis, and news coverage of political events. This can influence the public's understanding of political issues and the positions of politicians. In sum, we know that media can influence democratic processes in a variety of ways. However, the role of media in secessionist debates still an uncharted territory in the academic literature. Due to the role of media in political debates, the secessionist debates in the context of rapid growth of independence sentiments represents a worthwhile research avenue to trace the role of media in such a context.

The role of media is recognized in the spread of nationalism. Anderson (1991) underlines the importance of ‘press capitalism’ in the creation of a national consciousness, especially the simultaneity of reading national newspapers. Gellner (2008) focuses on media technologies by clarifying the importance of understanding the language and style of the transmitted message. Hobsbawm (1992) justifies the importance of the content of the media message to break down the division between the national and the local. Billig (1995) further highlights the role of traditional media as one of the main agents of what he called ‘banal nationalism’.

In summary, the role of media is widely recognized in democratic processes and the dissemination of nationalist sentiment. Although there is limited research explicitly linking media and secessionism, an understanding of the roles of media in democracy and nationalism provides a foundation for exploring the role of media in secessionist processes.

The theoretical literature provides several justifications for self-determination demands. These cluster into normative and explanatory theories. Both can become arguments in the discourse upon which they are built.

In the normative literature, Connolly (2013) summarizes the international law approach that considers secessionism in the context of the self-determination principle. Miller (2015) outlines the necessity of protecting the national culture from assimilation by the dominant group. Norman (2003) justifies pro-independence demands, giving attention to the population’s democratic will.

Explanatory theories study secessionism from different economic and political perspectives. Economic arguments appear in such studies as McKendrik et al. (2014), Bosco and Verney (2012), and Boylan (2015). Their main idea forms around economic imbalances in the state and dissatisfaction with the economic accommodation of minorities. Demands for more economic benefits or protesting financial cuts could characterize the periphery. This approach regards independence as the possibility of building a better economic future.

Disagreement on the vertical distribution of political powers across levels of government can justify secessionist demands. Siroky and Cuffe (2015) explain the use of a ‘lost autonomy’

discourse in independentist claims. Petersen (2002) notes the challenge to the territorial integrity of the minority group's reduced political status in the state. Cetra and Linera (2018) outline the attraction of EU membership for pro-independence strategies. Sorens (2005) argues that democratic and nondemocratic societies demonstrate different levels and degrees of likelihood of gaining sovereignty by different means.

When people come up with the idea of independence, their line of reasoning can rest on several elements; and these elements can change as a result of exogenous shock and the unfolding of the political process. Accordingly, this research addresses sudden changes in support for secessionism, treating secessionism as an attitude and the subject of constructivist changes.

As the main source of information that most people receive about the political situation, the media are likely to reflect if not influence these changes. Much of the public information is mediated rather than direct. The ways of communicating the information substantively shape opinions about political affairs, as confirmed by authoritative studies (Chong and Druckman, 2007a; De Vreese, 2007; Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006; and Dursun-Ozkanka, 2011).

The more coverage an issue receives, the greater individuals' concern with this issue becomes (Dursun-Ozkanka, 2011). In other words, people learn how much attention they should devote to the issue by deriving it from the amount of media concern. Therefore, the media coverage implies the attribution of meaning to the object. Media may cover the political party's meeting (object) by saying that it was of 'game-changing' importance to the regional political landscape (attribution).

The attribution of meaning is strictly connected to the concept of framing. Chong and Druckman (2007a) argue that small changes in the presentation of an object can lead to a bigger shift in public opinion. Framing the issue helps to conceptualize the meaning of the object. The narration of the issue influences people's perception.

Independence is a radical political change which involves the creation of a new state, reset of international treaties, creation of a new constitutional framework, etc. Basta (2020) introduces the concept of 'collective exhaustion master frames' to illustrate the role of narratives in radical

political changes. These frames have two tasks – a cognitive task to legitimize radical actions with the aim to change the status quo and an emotional management task to stimulate collective impatience.

Another source of influence is the consistency of message flows. Not only the media attribute a certain salience to the arguments but they also present them with a particular bias. A consistent directional bias of news can impact how people perceive them (Zaller, 1996) and may lead to changes in citizens' attitudes and behavior.

In sum, these considerations lead to three important factors: the saliency of the issue (agenda-setting), directional bias (message flows), and framing (agenda-framing). Their interaction influences public opinion and shapes popular narratives on the issue at hand.

These factors inform the two tasks of the present research. First, this thesis seeks to analyze the communication of the regionalist arguments in the media. To what extent are the media messages one-sided or two-sided? Which arguments play a role in the regionalist discourse? Why does the saliency of arguments change?

Second, this thesis investigates the justification of claims to independence. What meanings are attributed to the independentist arguments? Does the framing of independence change? If so, what are the circumstances that change the independence-framing strategy?

This research connects the historical trajectory of the independence process and its representation in media discourse. The factual political process includes merely descriptive aspects of major political events, leadership talks and actions, meetings in Parliament, political actions, and legislative changes. The narrated political process includes the ways the media present these events, communicating them to the audience using framing and media bias. This research addresses the connection between a basic (and relatively uncontroversial) description of the political reality and its representation in the media. In other words, I search for the mutual influence of these categories on each other. The events are important in the process, as is their communication. Moreover, they affect and change each other.

The interplay between reality and media communication, the saliency of arguments and their framing, directional bias, and meaning attribution requires the application of different research methods. Studying the ‘reality’ component occurs via the process tracing of cases. Consideration of the Catalan and Scottish cases focuses on the respective periods of independence sentiment growth. These case studies unpack the sequence and connections of the major events in the process. The process tracing highlights key changes in the political landscape, including independence supporters’ practical steps.

This ‘reality’ connects with media communication. Based on the theoretical literature on the drivers of secessionism, this study examines three main arguments justifying independence: legitimacy, economy, and political/institutional justifications. Each group of main arguments comprises three sub-arguments. The legitimacy-argument group includes international law appeals, the national identity and culture component, and people’s will to become independent. The economic-argument group includes the ideas of economic prosperity amid independence, blaming the central state for inadequate economic policy and considering the idea of economic crisis. The political/institutional-argument group features demands for more institutional powers, the discourse of ‘lost autonomy,’ and the EU membership issue.

Analysis of each argument proceeds on the basis of the direction and frame of communication. First, it can have a directional bias: pro-center, pro-periphery, or neutral. Second, if the argument refers directly to independence, it can have a diagnostic, prognostic, or motivational frame. The latter is important because the framing of independence claims may shape public opinion about the attractiveness of the idea of independence. Prognostic and motivational framing connect with the future and can effectively combine into one analytical category. In contrast, the diagnostic framing refers to the present and recent past. Beckert (2013) argues that the construction of a persuasive narrative of the future shapes mental representations of the issue, so distinguishing these types of framing is analytically important.

In sum, my analytical framework studies the frequency of arguments in the discourse and simultaneously calculates the frequencies of each frame and message flow. The Atlas.ti program helps to facilitate these operations. The empirical evidence derives from the two main regional newspapers via manual content analysis.

The independence process highlights the role of regionalist parties. Catalan and Scottish regionalist parties extensively contributed to the independence process. Simultaneously, these parties enjoyed electoral success in regional elections. This means that regionalist parties normally take advantage of rising independence sentiments. Electoral success brings to the fore the importance of studying electoral strategies. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) outline several cleavages in party competition. For regionalist parties, the center-periphery cleavage plays the crucial role in strategies to attract votes (Barrio & Rodriguez-Teruel, 2017). Elias et al. (2015) argue that parties can position themselves in economic and territorial domains, give saliency to a particular domain, use framing, and selectively emphasize the issue. Combining all the tools, regionalist parties have four main strategies at their disposal: one-dimensional, two-dimensional, blurring, and subsuming. My research seeks to uncover which strategies led to electoral success for regionalist parties with an independentist agenda. Do strategies change from party to party and over time? What factors influence change in strategic choice? Massetti and Schakel (2015) outline the importance of in-depth analysis to distinguish between blurring and subsuming strategies. They also highlight the importance of going beyond the manifesto analysis to address the gray areas in the contours of strategies. My research seeks to contribute to this literature too.

The analysis of parties' strategies employs different methodological tools. First, the content analysis of manifestos allows for measuring issue positioning and saliency. This analysis uses the Regional Manifesto project data, coding all political parties' claims in the context of territorial and policy domains. Second, studying issue framing and selective emphasis utilizes the analysis of political parties' electoral campaigns.

Accounting for regionalist party strategies is important for several reasons. First, political competition is part of the whole independence process. Regionalist parties contribute and, in some cases (such as Scotland), lead the demands for independence. Second, media bias, frames, and party strategies connect directly with the regionalist phenomenon. They influence each other and contribute to our understanding of the internal logic of sudden changes in favor of independence.

The main contribution of the research is highlighting the role of media and political communication in the process of growing secessionism. The theoretical literature suggests many explanations for increases in independence sentiments. However, most of these approaches analyze the rise of nationalism and violent ethnic conflict; the issue of secessionism in institutionalized democratic contexts is not adequately studied. Precisely, my research seeks not only to analyze the content of the message flows and demonstrate which explanations feature in justifying secessionism in the public discourse but also the extent to which these messages are communicated one-sided or two-sided. The research will uncover empirically the link between the theoretical arguments of secessionism and their role in the public discourse. In other words, theories of secession identify some issues which could be used as a justification for secessionist demands. My research seeks to analyze how these theories are framed in the public discourse and to what extent they present in the media.

My research brings forward a new perspective on the fluctuations of independence sentiments. Some scholars argue that the Constitutional ruling first triggered growing secessionism in Catalonia (Rico, 2012; Elias, 2015; Rico & Liñeira, 2014). In light of the Basque Country Statute reform proposal and Brexit issues in Scotland, understanding the substantive causes in Catalonia and Scotland may contribute to understanding still unfolding processes.

Chapter 1 presents the theoretical framework of the study. First, it reviews the main literature on secessionism, presenting the working definitions of nation, nationalism, and secessionism, with a particular attention on drawing the differences between regionalism and secessionism. Second, it connects secessionism literature with the theoretical background of political communication and

collective action. It synthesizes the role of social movements and introduces the frame approach to dealing with social attitudes. Third, it reviews the crucial role of political parties in the regional political process. Finally, after having identified convergences amongst the different theoretical explanations, the research questions and the conceptual framework are presented.

Chapter 2 introduces the methodological framework of the study, starting with a discussion of the case-study approach and its comparative version. Explaining the theoretical and methodological reasons to choose the cases of Catalonia and Scotland, the chapter discusses the advantages of process tracing to study the selected cases. In addition, it reviews the Regional Manifesto project as an approach to studying the strategies of regionalist parties. Finally, the chapter presents the developed framework for analyzing the media content.

Chapter 3 traces the independence process in Catalonia in the period of fast growth in secessionist attitudes: from 2010 to 2014. This chapter comprises sections that add up to one calendar year in the study period. Comprising sections that add up to one calendar year, each section outlines the main political events, actors, and changes in the independence process. The chapter scrutinizes the sequences of actions within the study period, finally summarizing the main arguments and their framing in political discourse.

Chapter 4 applies a similar approach to studying the independence process in Scotland from 2012 to 2016. It highlights the main actors in the political discourse, changes in the political environment, and rhetorical modifications regarding the issue of Scottish independence. The final section of the chapter drafts the longitudinal analysis of media coverage.

Chapter 5 brings together all the theoretical, methodological, and empirical considerations. It uses case comparisons to identify common and different patterns. This chapter compares the saliency of arguments in the discourse, the framing of these arguments, the dominant message flows, and regionalist party strategies during the regional elections. Finally, it presents the synthetic answers to the research questions that chapter 1 outlined.

The study analyzes the period of drastic rise in independence sentiments, bringing to the fore the fluctuating attitudes toward independence. My research analyzes all the relevant political events and how the public discourse reflected them during the period under study. It connects the media analysis, process tracing, and strategies of political parties, to demonstrate the evolution of the independence process and underlying reasons for changes in presenting independence demands. In this period of secessionist growth I study why the saliency of arguments change, to what extent secessionist arguments correspond to the political process, and how they are reflected in the manifestos of political parties.

1. Literature Review and Analytical Framework

The issue of secessionism has been widely examined in the literature. In order to understand the interplay between various concepts and actors in the context of rising secessionism, several bodies of literature have been analysed.

The first section focuses on the literature on secessionism. The aim is to synthesise the main explanations of the existence of this phenomenon and to uncover the theoretical reasons for the support for independence among the population. This section conceptualises the issue of independentism and to clarify the differences between the closely related concepts of *nationalism*, *secessionism*, and *regionalism*. The task is also to identify different types of *regionalism*, including autonomism, independentism, and rattachism. Finally, the main arguments of independence support are derived and conceptualised.

The political communication literature aims to study how the independence claims are communicated to the people, and the section discusses political communication approaches and theories. The main argument is that secessionism is an attitude shared by the population rather than a primordial feature of society. As an attitude, secessionism is a subject to perceived changes in the minds of people. This section examines the strategies employed by media to frame the center-region discourse and investigates the discursive opportunity structures to facilitate the sudden increases of the support for independence. Next, the role of media in the process of changes is addressed. In particular, the role of media bias and its influence on public opinion is closely investigated to establish the theoretical ground for explaining how the pro-independence arguments are justified.

The second section synthesises the main theoretical approaches explaining the ways of conveying regionalism in the period of the sudden growth of secessionism by merging the pieces of literature on political communication and secessionism to build up the theoretical framework for the dissertation. This framework consists of research questions in line with the three kinds of literature addressed and the three main theoretical arguments (political, legitimacy, economy) to

be analysed empirically. All elements, including theoretical arguments of secessionism support, frames, and media bias, should uncover how the drastic increase in the support for independence in Catalonia and Scotland at the beginning of the 2010s were framed and communicated via media.

In political opinion change, the agency plays an important role; in other words, the actors define and shape the public discourse. The increase of independence sentiments in Catalonia and Scotland coincided with the electoral success of regionalist parties (allowing them to form a government without a coalition with state parties), and there are reasons to think that regionalist parties were the main actors in public discourse who set the secessionist agenda. The third section investigates the concept of regionalist parties, the differences between the regionalist and the ethnic parties, and analyses the typology of these parties. This section aims to examine the theoretical approaches towards the strategies of political parties. Based on the results of this section, it will be possible to hypothesise the strategic choices of regionalist parties to seek support for their secessionist programs.

1.1. Literature on Secessionism and Political Communication

Nationalism: from regionalism to secession

The phenomenon of secessionism is related to the nation as the main subject to admire it. The debates arise on the definition of nation. Smith (1991:14) stands for ethnosymbolistic position on nation and nationalism, defining the nation as 'a form of collective identity that is distinct from gender, class and other social identities'. On the other hand, Brubaker (1996: 21) represents the constructivist view and critically reframes the notion of nation, arguing that 'we should focus on the nation as a category of practice, nationhood as an institutionalised cultural and political form, and nationness as a contingent event or happening.' The Brubaker approach states that a nation can be framed differently by political parties or social movements to provoke frustration among the population and force them to mobilise. Anderson (1991) states that nations are *imagined communities* because it is impossible to know each other directly for every community member, but they have a shared sense of belonging. This sense is constructed and shared by people who consider themselves attached to the same *imagined community* or nation.

However, nationalism per se is very generic. It is both inclusive and exclusive at the same time (Kumar, 2010). It includes people who share subjective or objective characteristics in the community and excludes the rest. The term nationalism can be attributed to the states or far-right movements, standing for 'titular nation' dominance in the state. The phenomenon we deal with in the case of secessionism is *stateless nationalism*. According to Kymlicka (2004:117), 'stateless nations are nations which currently do not have a state in which they are a majority – a state literally to call their own – but which have had such a state in the past, or which have sought such a state. They find themselves sharing a state with other nations for a variety of reasons.' Both Catalonia and Scotland have experienced independent rule in history. Scotland was reunified with England only in 1707 (the same king ruled Scotland and England since 1603). The birthday of Catalonia does back to the Middle Ages when Barcelona independently freed itself from the Moors. In the 12th century, the Kingdom of Aragon was formed in which Catalonia retained broad political

rights as a result of a marriage between Petronila of Aragon and Count of Barcelona Raymond Berenguer IV. Some scholars think that the period before the union with Aragon was the era of de facto independence (Guibernau, 2004).

There are several distinctions between stateless nationalism and 'classic' nationalism. Ethnic nationalist doctrine defines a nation 'as a form of ascriptive identity' based on a myth of common descent (Keating, 2001: 4-5). Stateless nation theories query that a nation could be civic-based and acquired when people voluntarily identify themselves as a collectivity based on 'common values and institutions, and patterns of social interactions' irrespective of ethnic origins (Keating, 2001: 3). For example, Minahan (2016) has conducted a global survey and confirmed that there are 420 stateless nations globally, while only 193 states are represented in the UN. His survey includes both Catalonia and Scotland as stateless nations.

Stateless nationalism does not necessarily demand independence. Stateless nationalism can also adopt an irredentist or an autonomist goal. For example, the Catalan party *Convergencia and Unio* (CiU), considered a nationalist party and represents a stateless nation (Catalonia), supported the autonomism of Catalonia and the expansion of the political powers within the existing Spanish state. However, they changed their goal and proclaimed their desire to separate from Spain in 2012.

Stateless nationalism is connected to more general term 'regionalism'. Tomaney (2020:369) explains that in human geography, regionalism 'refers to efforts to organise (or reorganise) government into distinct administrative regions, an attachment to a particular region, or an emphasis on the regional characteristics of a setting'. The discussion of the term has been fostered by the development of the EU and the idea of 'Europe of regions'. It led to the notion of 'new regionalism', speaking of 'the contemporary value attached to the region as a terrain of socioeconomic, cultural and, perhaps above all, political action' (Tomaney, 2020: 369). This understanding inevitably leads us to the idea that regions are social constructions, and regionalism is the means by which they are constructed (Tomaney, 2020). Regionalism is associated with the protection of identity attached to a particular territory within the state and presupposes regional

identity. It stresses the concept of social construction, i.e. possibility to change, of the territory where regionalist parties actively compete for political power. As territory is considered to be the most important feature, regionalism may or may not be built along ethnic lines because regionalism can have economic or geographic nature.

Regionalism states the defense and promotion of territorially defined identities and interests as the core objective, and is centred on self-government claims (De Winter, 2003). A regionalist political movement may demand provincial rights, autonomy within the state, recognition of cultural distinction, etc. This discussion leads us to the conceptualization of regionalism as the most general term since it implies claims for reorganization of a state structure in favor of more autonomy or decentralization (Dandoy, 2010). These claims may include, in most general terms, *protectionism*, *decentralism*, and *secessionism*. The radical demands of regionalism are presented by *secessionism*, i.e. 'the political movement of a specified population group that drives a process at the end of which it hopes to have succeeded in detaching itself and its territory from its host-state' (Wolff, 2002: 5). The final aim of secessionism is secession – 'the breakup of a nation-state and the creation of successor states in its place' (Schaeffer, 2008:1887). However, Pereira, Portos and Voudras (2018) note that a secession aimed at joining a territory of another state is denoted by the term *irredentism* (separation from the parent state plus annexation of some territories considering belonging to them) and its suggestions the emergence of a new center of power – *independence*. This conceptualisation adds additional variety to the definition of secessionism.

To sum up, *regionalism* is the most generic term, including all the varieties of movements representing the centrifugal tendencies within the state. The most radical dimension of regionalism in terms of demands for self-government is *secessionism* which is a focus of this research.

Theories of secessionism

Several explanations have been advanced for the emergence of secessionism. I am now going to review the most important theoretical perspectives on the matter, starting from the cultural explanations and then moving to structural and constructivist.

Cultural theories explain the support for greater autonomy by historical, traditional, linguistic, and ethnic factors (Fearon and van Houten, 2002). Authors conclude that language differences between the region and the central state serve as markers or symbols for nationalist activities and support nationalist sentiments (Fearon and van Houten, 2002:18). The primordialist approach stands for the cultural distance between the region and the rest of the state as the predisposition for nationalism. Connor (1994: 159) states that “the ethnonational bond is stronger than any ties that transcend the national group.” It can be seen as the plausible explanation for Catalan or Basque secessionism where we can see the distinct culture and language. However, Scottish secessionism is also a case in point, but Gaelic is spoken by only 1 percent of the Scottish population (Pereira, Portos & Vourdas, 2018). Moreover, neighbouring Wales has 20 percent of Welsh speakers and a lower level of autonomism. Many can consider cultural differences as at least necessary condition for the demands of more autonomy (Hetcher, 1975).

Some theories try to connect the economic and cultural factors. Alesina and Spolaore (1997) defend the stance that democratisation and globalisation lead to secession. In particular, democratisation leads to the creation of more countries because the dictatorship (Leviathan) is no longer capable of ensuring the redistribution of wealth. Their evidence is supported by the observation that there are fewer countries in the nondemocratic world compared to the democratic one. Hale (2008) mentions the link between ethnic distinctiveness and secessionism because ethnicity underlines the difficulties of union governments at portraying themselves as non-exploiters of minority groups for the benefit of the dominant group.

Serrano (2013) identifies the link between national identity and the support for independence. Stateless nations can seek recognition of their demos and demand self-government or self-determination. At the same time, state nationalism aims to establish a shared identity for all citizens. In this complex framework, typical for multinational states such as Spain, Great Britain, and Belgium, the phenomenon of dual identity arises. The intensity of people's attachment to one of the competing identities (state or regional) defines their desires for more or less self-

government. However, as in the case of the support for an independent economy, the main problem is the reverse causality. Identity can drive the support for independence in the same manner as independence can foster a person to identify himself in terms of regional identity as his challenge against the central state.

Even though the cultural approach is challenged many times because such primordial characteristics are slow to change, the support for independence is fast. Articulating cultural distinctiveness can play a crucial role in people's perception of the rationale to separate from the parent state.

Gurr (1970) explicitly indicates the causal link between frustration and the potentiality for rising nationalism, particularly capacity for political violence. He explains that the potential for collective violence relates to the *relative deprivation* intensity and scope. The disparities between justifiable expectations and real-world value capabilities are the primary mechanism of frustration. Despite referring to violent conflicts, the importance of the mechanism of frustration is at play. Relative deprivation emerges when expectations of further facilitation and recognition of national peculiarities are high, but the state's actual actions are considered preventive. Gurr and Moore (1997) further explain that *grievances* increase due to political and economic discrimination. Political and economic discrimination refers to the systemic limitations of access to certain opportunities based on the ascriptive characteristics. Gurr (1993) argues that economic and political *differentials* (intergroup inequalities in access to scarce resources) among this discrimination and demographic stress composes *group collective disadvantage*, which can cause the grievances. In particular, Gurr (1993) notes the role of economic and political disadvantages of grievances about economic and political rights.

Even though there are always grievances and deprivation that can trigger political mobilization, Gurr's contribution is mainly on explaining the mechanisms of the underlying process of political mobilization. His researchers focus on ethnopolitical groups and different secessionist movements, explaining why the mobilization for secession was successful in some

cases while in others not. Moreover, Gurr (1993) explains that institutionalised democracies facilitate non-violent conflict. This work is a significant contribution because it justifies the adequacy to apply the grievances concept for the EU democratic states where unlikely to find out the violent response from disadvantaged groups like Catalans, Scottish, and Flemish. However, Western Europe experienced violent conflicts, including Northern Ireland, Basque Country, and South Tyrol.

A specific case of relative deprivation is the failure to accommodate the national minority and give them the powers they seek. Sikory and Cuffe (2015) explain that loss in the decentralisation policy (or recentralization) can trigger secessionism. Precisely, territories that lost autonomy in the past and do not enjoy the number of powers they expect in the present are more prone to secede because they have strong incentives and the capacity to pursue secession thanks to past experience. As a result, these reasons facilitate collective actions, and they are likely to demand secession. On the contrary, never autonomous groups have a lack of collective action capacity, and currently, autonomous groups have a lack of incentives, so they are less likely to secede. The mechanisms of 'lost autonomy' are four: ethnic dissatisfaction with the undermined status of the territory, which causes grievances; weakening of the central government abilities to make credible commitments to conciliate the group; collective action capacity which was gained during the autonomy is difficult to detach from the group immediately; free-rider problem in lost autonomy is bigger than joining forces with those who seek separation (Sikory and Cuffe, 2015: 5). Combining with the discussion of Gurr on relative deprivation, this literature contributes to the idea that secessionism can increase when the central government has cut off the expectations of further development of autonomy, and the group can feel disadvantaged due to the 'lost autonomy'. For example, the group expected additional separate powers to increase their autonomy, but the central authorities blocked this proposal. In this case, the group can feel the disadvantage due to the lost autonomy, especially if such autonomy was experienced in the past (i.e. *fueros* of the Basque country).

A more nuanced approach is presented by Lecours (2022) where he explains the increased demands for independence by the nature of autonomy. The author distinguishes between dynamic and static autonomies: static autonomy corresponds to permanent, unchangeable autonomy arrangements whereas a dynamic autonomy can be enhanced or adjusted in the future. He argues that static autonomy is more likely to stimulate secessionism rather than dynamic because the static autonomy reduces the political accommodation to just two options (status quo or independence) whereas dynamic autonomy offers ongoing adjustment to the interests of the region.

Hetcher (1975) stands for economic segregation as a reason for secessionism. He called it *internal colonialism*. A state can cause unbalanced economic development of the territories due to the choice to invest more in one region at the cost of other regions without attempting to close or narrow the development gap caused by the state economic policy choices. Milanovic and Sambanis (2011) show a correlation between the demand for higher sovereignty and regional income; wealthier regions can demand more sovereign rights to control linguistic, educational, and/or tax policies. However, these opportunities have consequences, including reduced economic integration with the rest of the state, costs for business, and slowing economic growth. In this regard, the size of the region matters since a larger economy results in lower costs per capita. Small but wealthy regions also tend to demand more sovereignty, especially budget-donor regions (Milanovich and Sambanis, 2011: 8-9). Horowitz (1981) is on the same page and argues that the center's economic policies, which force more affluent regions to subsidise the poorer, can be the justification for seeking more autonomy.

Collier and Hoeffler (1998) outline the *natural resources struggle* as a plausible explanation for nationalism. Initially, possessing natural resources increases the risk of conflict; however, at a high level, natural resources start to reduce the likelihood of conflict. Authors explain that at the initial stage, the natural resources are interpreted as the attractive taxable base to capture by secessionists, but at the higher level, it is a safeguard of the government because it can use it to protect itself. Collier and Hoeffler (1998) also underline the size of the territory as a condition.

According to them, the larger is the population, and the higher is the risk of conflict. There is an essential notice: Collier and Hoeffler (1998) refer to civil war as an outcome, whereas Milanovich and Sambanis (2011) concentrate on demands for more autonomy. Collier and Hoeffler (1998) contribution is in necessity to take into consideration the economic well-being of the state.

Meadwell (1983) provides the rational choice explanation of *cultural mobilization*. Analysing the forms of mobilization in Quebec and Brittany between 1870 and 1914, the author unpacks that people support independence when they feel they can benefit from the independent economy. Blais and Nadeau (1992) find that the people of Quebec would opt up for independence in case they are confident in the future economic benefits of sovereign rule. Howe (1998) sees the strong correlation between the preferences about sovereignty and the estimation of potential benefits from an independent economy. However, it is still unclear what comes first: the support for an independent economy leads people to choose separation or vice versa. In any regard, the critical relations between these variables established in the literature gave the incentive to use it to justify the idea of beneficial separation.

Social movements and collective action

Another corpus of literature emphasises the role of social movements in collective actions. *Breakdown theory*, in general, supports the idea that mobilization is achievable when the mechanisms of social control lose their restraining power (Useem, 1998). *Resource mobilization theory*, on the contrary, states that a high level of government repression should increase the cost of collective action and then reduce the likelihood of group mobilization (Snyder&Tilly, 1972). Resource mobilization theorists outline the pivotal role of social movements in collective action because pre-existing organisations provide resources, guidance, support, and leadership to sustain collective action (Useem, 1998). Key features of social movements include informal interactions, solidarity, shared beliefs, and contentious participation through collective non-institutional political action. Social movements contribute to political representation by articulating the

people's interests, demands, preferences; they have the capacity to lead the public discourse and give salience to particular problems (Hutter, Kriesi, and Lorenzini, 2018: 324-326).

The discussion of the outlined literature leads us to the question of the interplay between political parties and social movements because they are the primary agents in the political mobilization process. The focus on collective action can differentiate movements and parties. While parties engage in electoral contestation, movements attempt to advance their agenda by *contention* via 'street politics' and disruption outside of established institutional agendas (Tarrow, 1994). Kriesi (2015) argues that parties can become social movements as much as they are based on strong social movements and use the social movements' mobilization strategies, while social movements can choose to become political parties to defend and represent their interests directly in the electoral channel. 'The expansion of the conflict in the public sphere is seen as the general 'weapon of the weak' that allows social movements to create political opportunities for elites, not only in the negative sense of repression, as Tarrow (1994: 98) has observed, but also in the positive sense that politicians seize the opportunity created by the challengers and defend their cause within the political system' (Hutter, Kriesi&Lorenzini, 2018:325).

McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2004: 5) defines contentious politics as 'episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realised, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants'. The demands for independence can be considered as a claim in contentious politics. The authors present the dynamic model of contention, including the attribution of social opportunity or threat, social appropriation, innovative collective action, and escalation of perceived uncertainty as to the lineaments of a broad social change. They present the importance of framing in such a process. They do not limit framing to a strategic tool of movement leaders but expand the view of framing 'to involve the interactive construction of disputes among challengers, their opponents, elements of the state, third parties, and the media'(McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2004: 44). They stipulate the political context and the role of

media by saying that ‘the media and other sources of communication inadvertently frame a movement for its participants as well as for others’ (Ibid).

The role of framing is highlighted by Aspinall (2007), emphasizing the role of social construction in the development of grievances. He suggests that specific events do not automatically translate into grievances unless there is an active process of framing that presents the need for a radical political change. The social construction of grievances is a central focus of social movement scholars, with the concept of injustice frames developed by Gamson (1992) being a key component of this process. The perception of injustice is crucial for creating a ‘mobilization frame’ that can mobilize support for collective action. The injustice frame not only highlights the unfairness of a situation cognitively, but also stimulates an emotional response. Similar observations are made by McAdam (1999) who argues that outrage does not arise solely from objective conditions but also from the framing of those conditions as intolerable.

Beissinger (2002) highlights the importance of agency in driving radical political change. He argues that even though early attempts at political transformation may face structural constraints, initial successes in mobilization can break down these constraints and hasten change. However, his focus is less on the intricate politics of persuasion and more on the broader shifts in society. While activists may frame events to win over those who are undecided, the events themselves appear to be external to framing efforts. Indeed, the political mobilization process is unlikely to be possible without agents with social skills which ‘highlights the way in which individuals or collective actors possess a highly developed cognitive capacity for reading people and environments, framing lines of action, and mobilising people in the service of broader conceptions of the world and of themselves’ (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012: 17). One of the tasks of the skilled actors is to develop ‘a shared interpretative frame that allows those in the field to make sense of what other actors are doing in the field in a particular situation’ (Ibid: 216).

Basta (2018) stipulates the key role of so-called *transformative political events* in collective action. He underlined the crucial role of events in politics and derived a significant for this research

idea that political events are not objective phenomena but ‘socially constructed outcomes of political struggle’ (Basta, 2018: 1262). It is not substantially important the fact of the event, but the way it is framed, how the meaningfulness of this occasion is presented in public discourse. However, evidence from Scotland and Catalonia demonstrates that neither Brexit nor Scotland referendum, neither Catalanian self-proclaimed referendums 2014 and 2017 drastically changed the attitudes towards independence of the local population. But the idea of the social construction of reality is fundamental because it gives the possibility to evaluate the role of media as a source of reality reflection in collective action. Ancelovici, Dufour and Nez (2016) give credits for the idea of the interplay between the media role and social construction of political events. They note that *Indignados* and *Occupy* movements in 2011 enjoyed exceptional media coverage and was able to push their ideas in the center of public debates. Notably, the real profiles of participants were different from their media representation. For example, *Indignados* were presented as mainly youth directly hurt by the economic crisis and the austerity policy plus marginal and anti-system people. In fact, it was an intergenerational and highly educated movement that was in a stable financial situation but had uncertainty in the future (Ancelovici, Dufour, and Nez, 2016).

The role of media and framing

As Esser and Pfetsch (2020:337) point out: ‘(p)olitical communication refers to the flow of information and the exchange of messages among political actors, citizens, and the media. All three participants contribute to the creation of political public spheres.’ The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication defines political communication as ‘making sense of symbolic exchanges about the shared exercise of power and the presentation and interpretation of information...with potential consequences for the exercise of shared power’ (Jamieson and Kenski 2017: 4). The power aspect in this definition mainly refers to discursive power. This power is the proven ability of contributors to the political communication space to introduce, amplify, and maintain topics, frames, and speakers that dominate attention in ongoing political discourse (Jungherr et al. 2019). Blumler (2017) emphasizes that communication plays a crucial role in

aspects of politics beyond acquiring and retaining power. These include transmitting the interests and demands of citizens, symbolically legitimizing authority, and clarifying alternative options in policymaking.

Esser and Pfetsch (2020) argue that the interplay between media and politics is experiencing a fundamental change which can be referred as a fourth age of political communication. Hence, contemporary political communication operates through two modes: the traditional top-down approach of mass communication, and the interactive logic of internet communication. These two modes create 'hybrid media systems', which are more complex and multidimensional, and cannot be reduced to a single communication logic. Therefore, the relationship between media, politics, and citizens is better understood as a political communication ecosystem (Anderson, 2016). This ecosystem is characterized by its increased complexity, flexibility, and mutual adaptation, and involves various individuals, organizations, and technologies engaged in the production and consumption of news and information. The boundaries of these ecosystems can be drawn geographically or thematically, depending on the analytical focus of the information exchange relations within a particular territory or issue.

Modern theories stipulate the role of media coverage in collective actions. The technological infrastructures can be linked to social laws, regulations, standards, or values that, as institutions that enable as well as structure and control individual and collective behaviour, cannot easily be ignored or overridden (Dolata & Schrape, 2016). For example, it is generally taken for granted that the use of social media explains the forms that protests took on and the diffusion they underwent (Candón & Redondo, 2013). Nevertheless, we do not know precisely how central and critical social media are, nor do we know the exact way in which they work. For example, Effing et al. (2011) found that social media did not play a significant role in voting behaviour changes during the local government electoral campaign in the Netherlands in 2010 and 2011. On the contrary, social media use predicted campaign participation in the Swedish elections of 2010 (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011).

Political opinion changes can explain sudden changes in the attitudes of a population. Sloman and Rabb (2019) state that political opinion is driven by affect, reason, individual, and group representation and produce attitudes and beliefs. They argue that '(p)eople live with the illusion that they are rational agents who reason, feel, and make decisions as individuals.' (Sloman and Rabb, 2019: 2) In fact, our cognition is influenced by partisan cues, social groups, collective values, collective narratives, etc. People tend to be more concerned with being perceived as good member's of the community; they more easily change the attitude when the group is changing the perception rather than by the force of argument (Sloman and Rabb, 2019:3). The media influence collective reasoning; secessionism is a considerably discussed issue in media, especially in the regions where such a question has political importance and can influence affairs between territories within the state. My research argues that support for secessionism is a political attitude and a subject for the consideration of political opinion change literature (Mutz, 1998). Moreover, media is an agent of formatting such a collective view because 'politicians and journalists communicate to the public mainly through the mass media' (Zaller, 1996: 21).

The critical role in attitude formation plays the composition of messages and ideas to which they are exposed (Vreese & Boomgaarden 2006). Theorizing Zaller (1996), the content of news media to have an impact on political attitudes needs to provide a directional bias. Zaller (1992,1996) noted it as *a one-sided information flow*. In other words, the media message should have a noticeable negative or positive message on the issue covered. On the contrary, *two-sided information flow* is defined as covering both sides of the issue. These messages have less influence on opinion changes (Zaller, 1996). As Vössing (2015: 157-159) explained about the attitudes change towards European integration, political elites can use political explanations to transform public opinion but to have an effect; justifications should have 'a direct persuasive impact on levels of support for the policy in question'.

Media serves as a bridge between political arenas and the citizens. Most people know about politics comes from mass media or other people by 'second' or 'third' hand. Media plays a crucial

role in political communication because it is the central means of connection between people and a broader social and political world (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Notably, media are relatively free to choose ‘what news they deem worthy of covering and thus in creating realities by categorising and framing events and actors’ (Auel & Tiemann, 2020: 39).

Esser and Pfetsch (2020) demonstrate the role of media as a distinct actor in public discourse and communication. There are three channels of communication: channels that are under full control of political actors (e.g. newspaper ads, TV commercials, personal websites), news media organizations which are under control of journalists, and social media where the content comes from a wide range of contributors. In terms of impact, the quest for discursive power has become a difficult task for political figures. The reason being that major news outlets no longer view themselves as mere middlemen, but rather active participants in shaping public perception (Ibid). Additionally, social media platforms have gained significant influence as individuals across the political spectrum, including politicians, journalists, and ordinary citizens, have grown reliant on them as sources of information and channels for its dissemination (Ibid).

Another area of research that examines the relationship between politicians and journalists in comparative politics focuses on their perceived power dynamics. Many studies have shown that politicians in various countries believe that the media possess much more power than journalists themselves admit. Politicians across Europe believe that journalists hold significant power in setting the political agenda (Lengauer et al., 2014). The reason for this difference in perception is that politicians view certain media behaviors, such as proactive reporting, a broad interpretation of objectivity, and the imposition of news logic on politics, as expressions of power (Vliegenthart & Skovsgaard, 2017).

Discussing the literature on collective actions and the role of media, the importance of framing has been considered. Framing literature explains how particular narratives are constructed. The frame concept was introduced into the social sciences by Gregory Bateson in 1955 and elaborated nearly 20 years later by Erving Goffman in ‘Frame Analysis’ (1974). Bateson (1972:191) defines

a frame as 'a spatial and temporal bounding of a set of interactive messages.' A frame is an interpretative schema that simplifies and condenses the word out there by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action. Goffman (1974:21) defines *frame* as 'schemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large.'

Frame functions to organise experience and guide action by rendering events or occurrences meaningful. Snow et al. (1986:464) introduces the *frame alignment* defining it as 'the linkage of individual and SMO <*Social movements organisations*> interpretive orientations, such that some set of individual interests, values and beliefs and SMO activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complementary'. Since frame alignment is a necessary condition for social movements to participate in collective actions and that it can be more than one alignment process, authors denote it as a *frame alignment process*.

There are four main *frame alignment processes*. *Frame bridging* is the 'linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem' (Snow et al. 1986: 467). The mechanism of *bridging* can occur both at the organisational and individual levels. It refers to the group of individuals who share the same grievances or ideological orientations but lack incentives or organisation to start the collective actions. In other words, *frame bridging* is the primary task of any social organisation because it structures and systemises the collective action by bridging the problem and people who share the same interests. But *frame bridging* does not explain the whole variety of participatory activities and different organisational structures of social movements. Frame bridging articulates the problem in aggregate, which is not enough, in many cases, to guide collective action (Snow et al., 1986).

Frame amplification is 'the clarification and invigoration of an interpretive frame that bears on a particular issue, problem or set of events.' (Snow et al., 1986: 469) The importance of the event or problem for an individual may not always be evident. People can see no meaning of the event in their everyday life; the role of uncertainty is also at play. The support for collective action

or the particular attitude is a function of clarifying or reinvigoration of a frame. Values and beliefs are two things that can be amplified to reinforce the support for action. Values can be constructed as ‘modes of conduct or states of existence that are thought to be worthy of protection and promotion’ (Snow et al., 1986: 469). Values can be amplified through the identification, ideologisation, or elevation in the hierarchy of values. The relevant values should be emphasised in public discourse. For example, peace movements amplify cooperation, human life, or justice values by asserting their constitutional right to mobilise support. *Belief amplification* works to connect the object of action and the nature of that action. Belief is cognitive support for desired values. People should believe that the collective action or an attitude towards some value is efficient, and the change is possible only in case of collective action or support for a particular attitude. Optimism about the feasibility of the outcomes of collective actions should encourage people to support it. This process creates a sense of necessity. For example, the opposition of city airport expansion exhorted the people living near the airport to speak up because no one but them could stand for their homes (Snow et al., 1986: 469-471).

Frame extension refers to the defence of amplified frame by extending the boundaries of pre-existing frames. The programs or values of the agents of collective action may not adequately reflect the sentiments of the society or have a slight shape on the life situations or interests of potential supporters. In this case, social agents have to enlarge the pre-established framework to encompass the interests of the social groups they want to attract. They need to portray their objectives and activities as reflecting the needs of society (Snow et al., 1986: 472). For example, a political party may start as representatives of a particular social group or class. Still, if they want to ensure seats in Parliament and gain support for their electoral program, they may switch to the catch-all type of political party to fulfil this aim.

Frame transformation refers to the need to change the existing frame. It can be the case when the promoting values are no longer resonate with the audience. In extreme situations, the existing frame can be considered incompatible with the conventional lifestyle, and it should be changed.

New values can be attributed, or the old meanings can be drastically reframed. *Domain-specific* and *global-interpretive* frame transformations are identified. *Domain-specific transformation* involves substantial changes in the domain of life framed. For example, the previously taken for granted status quo of the domain of life is challenged and reframed as problematic and in need to change. The illustration of this type of alignment can be any movement fighting to the change of status of a group (feminist movements, secessionist movements). *Transformation of global interpretive frames* outlines ‘the scope of change is broadened considerably as a new primary framework gains ascendance over others and comes to function as a kind of master frame that interprets events and experiences in a new key’ (Snow et al. 1986: 473-475).

In order to gain support for values of beliefs, different framing tasks exist, and various framing processes are used. *Diagnosis frames* are used to identify some event or aspect of life as troublesome and in need of change and the attribution of blame for the problem (Snow et al., 2007: 387). Diagnosis framing focuses attention on the aspect of life as problematic and defines the relevant issue as in need of repairment. It puts the questions like ‘What is wrong?’ or ‘Who is to blame?’. For example, Islamic movements leaders use diagnosis framing to define ‘the cosmopolitan free-thinking Westernized liberals’ as the main enemies of traditional Muslim values and national identity (Snow and Byrd, 2007: 124).

Prognostic framing involves articulating a solution to the problem, including a plan of attack and frame-consistent tactics for carrying it out (Snow et al., 2007: 388). It includes special remedies or solutions for achieving the established objectives. Prognostic framing replies to the question ‘What is to be done?’. To illustrate, Usama bin Laden used the prognostic framing to call the Muslims to fight against ‘Satan America’ (Snow and Byrd, 2007: 127). It is essential to mention that the prognostic framing should not necessarily come from the previous diagnosis framing. In many cases, it is true that logically one should first articulate the aspect of life as troublesome and then present the answers on how to deal with it. Nevertheless, analysis of the

Iranian revolution suggests that the Iranian people were already prepared for an uprising; the question was on how to guide it. (Snow and Byrd, 2007)

Motivational framing deals with the ‘free-rider’ problem by presenting a rationale for engaging in the corrective activity (Snow et al., 2007: 387). It entails the ‘motivational vocabulary’ that provide incentives for action. Supporters should be changed from observers to participants because the diagnosis and prognostic framing do not resolve the problem of action mobilization (Snow & Byrd, 2007). Collective action is associated with fear, and successful mobilization should overcome the obstacle to enjoy people joining the movement. The dissatisfaction with the government policy or the political rights infringements is not sufficient to inspire people to take an active part in collective action. There is a need for strong motivation. For instance, bin Laden presented the terrorist activity against the US as an individual duty of every Muslim appealing to religious values (Snow and Byrd, 2007: 129).

All in all, the mentioned literature defines secessionism as a broad phenomenon that can be addressed by including different explanatory variables. Growing independence sentiments have a lack of literature explaining the sudden rise and the support of nationalist parties. The role of media is the key to communicating the secessionist agenda to the audience. Additionally, the role of social movements and political parties in the agenda-setting is important in framing the independence claims.

1.2. Research question: Linking Secessionist Arguments and Ways of Communication

Research question

Support for secession has increased in Catalonia from 21.5 percent in 2010 to 48.5 percent in 2013 (*Cento d'Estudio Opinion*, 2017). In Scotland, there has been similar growth from 20 percent in 2012 to 42 percent in 2016 (Scottish Social Attitudes, 2017). Teo (2020) argues that media discourse shapes the popular narrative. The role of media is essential in facilitating popular attitudes and reality reflection. Based on these considerations, the research question is **‘How does the media convey independence claims?’** In other words, this research seeks to understand how independence claims framing change, how media present the important political events, how discursive opportunity structures affect the ways of presenting the reality, how do they map onto the different political positions. The important link between the exogenous importance of the political events and their constructed meaning is highlighted. The focus is on issue framing by a significant yet understudied actor, which arguably shapes public debates and perceptions of secession.

The recent literature on secessionism tries to explain independentism as a gradual phenomenon, while little attention has been paid to justifying sudden changes. For example, Sambanis and Milanovic (2011) summarise at least 14 explanations of rising demands for sovereignty, including political discrimination, the ethnic concentration of minorities, economic inequalities, and territorial disparities. In Scotland and Catalonia, the level of support doubled within two to three years. As with other feelings, secessionism is subject to perceived changes. People can show their support for it today, but tomorrow they may change their minds entirely. My study aims to understand sudden changes in attitudes about independence within populations and highlight the role of media in framing this process.

These explanations of secessionism serve as the justification arguments to frame the independence claims. Challengers may give salience to a particular argument if they think it should resonate with the audience. In this regard, the important question is **‘How does the media**

communicate regionalist arguments to the audience? ’ It is important to note that this question addresses the **regionalist** arguments which include secessionist arguments because my research deals with the wider context of center-periphery discourse. The same arguments can represent the demands for more powers or authority but not directly imply secessionist demands. Media are the primary source of political communication for people. It is in the power of media to decide which ‘skilled actors’ (politicians, opinion leaders, influencers) give a floor. This agenda-setting power drives the research to concentrate on media as the primary agents of communicating this agenda to the audience.

Public discourse arguments

The outlined literature provides several arguments on why people may demand secession. ***Legitimacy argument*** justifies secessionism in terms of legitimate and legal reasons for demanding sovereignty. It generally includes the idea that secessionism is a consequence of the underrepresentation of minorities, the infringement of historical rights, and the failure to accommodate minorities into the multinational state, so the national groups have a right to demand sovereignty to resolve their disadvantaged position in the parent state. This group includes three main sub-arguments.

The democratic principle is a legitimacy argument representing secessionism as a democratic choice or international law principle to accommodate the stateless nationality in line with self-determination. Connolly (2013) considers secessionism as an exercise of the external self-determination principle of international law. Self-determination of people is a principle of international law rooted in the UN Charter and a right of stateless nationalities included in the Declaration of Granting Independence to Colonial Countries (1960).

National sovereignty is a legitimacy argument that includes primordialist and cultural reasons for demanding independence. This type of reasoning consists of appealing to the distinct national identity of stateless nationality, language and cultural uniqueness or necessity to defend these national features. Miller (1995: 85) defends secessionism as a legitimate source to protect national

cultures because dominant groups are prone to exercise their superiority to assimilate minorities cultures. He also underlines the legitimate claim of self-determination in case of clear distinction of minority national identity.

People's support legitimacy argument is derived from the plebiscitary theories of secessionism. This argument positions secessionism as a will of local people. Norman (2003) expresses the idea of legitimate secessionism when the majority of people support it. This argument does not assume the additional requirements to justify independentism, such as human rights abuse, cultural distinctiveness, or historical injustice against the stateless nation.

Economic argument justifies secessionism in terms of economic problems and potential benefits from independence. In many regards, this argument is seen as a rational choice because people evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the current economic position and the possibilities to improve it. Individuals tend to represent themselves as rational individuals, even if the objective economic reality could be evaluated wrongly. This argument includes *central state economic policy*, *economic crisis*, and *prospects of the future independent economy*.

Central state economic policy argument includes the current economic reforms, their economic impact on the territory, policy of constraints, and decisions taken by the central authorities regarding the economic management of a territory. McKendrik et al. (2014) show that harsh austerity measures cause an increase in support of independence. People suffering from the disadvantageous economic decisions of central authorities cease to trust the central institutions and start considering the breakup with the state. This reasoning includes the internal colonialism discourse when the regional elites blame the central ones for inadequate redistribution of wealth or the obligation to subsidise the more impoverished regions.

The economic crisis is an argument justifying demands for secessions because of current economic troubles. Bosco and Verney (2012) note that the economic crisis provides a strong argument of blaming the central authorities for bad economic performance. Regional parties can send a message that the current territorial accommodation is no longer possible. Rico (2012) argues

that the concerns about the economy and dissatisfaction with the central state management of the situation are one of the reasons to take a more radical stance regarding the territorial dimension.

Prospects of future independent economy argument establish the clear link between secession and future economic benefits in case of independent economy. The logic is that pro-secessionist individuals believe that the economy would perform better and positively influence their economic status in the case of the creation of their state. Boylan (2015) confirms that the support for independence is a function of grievances rooted in the desire to have independence in managing their taxes and finances. People will choose the independent state if they believe it can help them achieve economic goals (Cuadras-Morató and Rodon, 2019: 2192).

Political/institutional argument is directly related to the phenomenon of power. It justifies secessionism in terms of inadequate political structure, the share of powers, and institutional composition. The movement can demand *decentralisation*. Decentralisation is a political argument framing secessionism as a response to the underrepresentation of minorities in state political institutions, considering demands for more political powers and rights or changes in the territorial composition of the state. This argument employs the 'lost autonomy' discourse to explain the necessity to demand independence (Siroky and Cuffe, 2015). Cederman, Wimmer and Min (2010: 92) demonstrate that political mobilization with secessionist demands results from the conflict over access to state power between the ethnic and state elites. They note that the exclusion of ethnic groups from the access to state powers may inspire the collective action for the recentralization of a state, including the demands for sovereignty.

Failure to negotiate an autonomy deal is a political argument representing secessionism as a response to failed negotiations about the expansion of political rights of the territory. Petersen (2002) notes the ethnic resentment as a consequence of the reduced political status of stateless nationality, which can trigger the demands for independence. Sorens (2004: 733) argues that policy change can have a major impact on secessionism support. He explains that the autonomy's offer to the territory that did not have it may lead to voters' satisfaction in the region. On the contrary,

the policy change of reducing autonomy may have the reverse effect. By distinguishing between dynamic and static autonomies, Lecours (2022:4) argues that in case when nationalist parties believe that the existing autonomy arrangement is a take it-or-leave-it proposition, they stress out the incapability of the state to respond the demands of the region and that the constitutional status of the minority can come only with independence.

EU membership is a political argument outlining the benefits of the region to be a part of the EU as well as the attribution of threat from the part of the central state of losing such a beneficial membership in case of separation. Colomer (2007) formulates the general idea that economic integration facilitates the small countries sovereignty claims by having access to large markets. Cetra and Linera (2018: 717) consider this idea in saying that ‘substate nationalism may try to reconcile the maximisation of regional influence with a pro-independence strategy that allows the sub-state territory to join the list of EU Member States.’

Ways of communication

All the outlined arguments have one peculiarity in common: to some extent, they relate to relative deprivation. Even the concept of grievances is too vague; people rationalise secession when they feel it will change for good their current status quo economically, politically, or legally. Political, economic, or legitimacy explanations do not work alone because people may not feel it. For example, the economic crisis can exist in reality and affect the economic performance of the state or region. Still, the negative consequences of it may not affect each individual well-being. One thing is what exists in reality; another thing is the way how reality is presented. Cultural arguments may not play a crucial role in supporting independence for decades, but if it is consistently presented in public discourse as a shared value and necessary reason to secede, people may assume it as a rationale. In other words, the idea of independence is communicated to the audience by rationalising the particular arguments. That is why the ways of how these arguments are presented in the discourse are making sense.

Media are a source having a direct influence on public discourse. Social movements, political elites, interest groups extensively use media to set their agenda. Arguments derived from the literature justifying the demands for secession become the matter of public discourse through media coverage.

One source of media influence on public opinion is the consistency of message flows. Zaller (1996) introduces the framework of the impact of message flows depending on their directional bias. Zaller (1996) provides an operative framework to study media bias. With the purpose of operationalising the research correctly, it will reference both terms ‘direction’ and ‘message flow’ to reflect the idea that the reference category is not a negative or positive bias in terms of coverage but the attitude towards the center-periphery cleavage. Instead of ‘one-sided positive’, ‘one-sided negative’ categories, I propose to use ‘pro-center’ and ‘pro-region’ notions. De Vreese (2007: 273) argues that ‘the media may not only influence what citizens think about (agenda-setting), but also how they think about these issues (framing)’. The media bias plays a role in the first part of this notion – *agenda-setting*. The idea is that media gives salience to the arguments in the political discourse by ensuring their extensive coverage and attention. As soon as the message loses its importance due to the changes in the political circumstances, the media can change the strategy and facilitate another argument. Still, the direction of the message should remain the same.

The second part of the story is the way how people think about the issue. Framing effect occurs ‘than (often small) changes in the presentation of an issue or an event produce (sometimes large) changes of opinion’ (Chong & Druckman, 2007a: 104). Framing is the process of developing a particular conceptualisation of an issue. Politicians try to attract people by encouraging them to think about an issue along particular lines. They invoke a *frame in communication or media frame* which organises everyday reality by providing meaning to an unfolding strip of events and promoting particular definitions and interpretations of political issues (Ibid: 106).

The discussed literature outlines that different framing processes are more appropriate to deal with concrete framing tasks. McDonnel, Bail & Tavory (2017) studies the theory of resonance, explaining why some messages resonate with an audience meanwhile others do not. The main argument is that a frame cannot be relevant until employed to solve a problem. Thus, to the extent resonance is about congruence, ‘the act of making a cultural object congruent as a person works through a situation or problem they face rather than having an already congruent or familiar solution ready at hand’ (McDonnel, Bail & Tavory, 2017: 3). As authors point out, ‘taking such a view, it becomes clear that resonance does not always occur when the idea expressed by an object aligns with that of the audience. Instead, we argue that cultural objects are not relevant unless employed to solve a problem’ (Ibid).

However, the problem-solving nature is not the only factor that potentially affects the strength of a frame. Another factor is the repetition of the frame. The loudness of a frame defines the influence on an individual’s opinion (Chong & Druckman, 2007b). Citizens are blown about whatever current information manages to develop with the greatest intensity. Repetition of frames directly influences the accessibility of an attitude (Ibid). Another strong effect has competition. People are exposed to competing frames, which increases consistency among decisions taken on specific policies and underlying principles (Chong & Druckman, 2007a: 112). Media frames do not exist in a vacuum. They should be persuasive enough to outcompete the other side of the discourse.

The battle for constructing the persuasive narrative is the key in framing independence claims. Beckert (2013: 220) defines that ‘actors are motivated in their actions by the imagined future state and organise their activities based on these mental representations.’ He refers its analysis to the economic field but mentions that ‘fictional expectations are not limited to the economy but are relevant in all spheres of human action’. The author states that ‘by not being bound to rational calculation, fictions do not have to be true but must be convincing. They are therefore open to the influence of collective beliefs and manipulations by powerful actors’ (Ibid: 222). This openness to

manipulation predisposes the role of framing in the representation of independence claims. The motivational and prognostic framing are both related to the future, allowing them to consider in one analytical category. The difference is that prognostic framing is ‘cold’ and usually does not contain action incentives. In contrast, motivational framing is ‘hot’ because it includes motivational language and stipulates the incentives to gain independence. My research expects that future-oriented framing should dominate over diagnosis framing as a part of a competition to build a persuasive narrative about the attractiveness of independence.

To sum up, legitimacy, political, and economic arguments are important in providing the rationale of the support for independence. But these arguments are communicated to the audience in a particular way. The media bias is employed in order to give the salience to the argument,. The direction of the messages helps to create the image of the necessity for independence and set the independentist agenda. Framing defines how people think about independence, and media frames compete to build a persuasive narrative of independence.

1.3. Territorial Party Politics

There are compelling reasons to study the role of media in territorial debates and the strategies of regionalist parties in gaining support for secessionist programs. Firstly, the period of rapid growth in secessionist movements coincided with electoral victories for secessionist parties in Catalonia and Scotland, who benefited from popular mobilization for independence. This suggests that the agenda-setting power of the media could play a significant role in promoting secessionist programs of political parties (De Vreese, 2007).

Secondly, issue framing is a critical aspect that links media and political parties, especially regionalist parties. Issue framing is part of the strategic toolbox of regionalist parties (Elias et al., 2015). The media is the primary channel through which these parties ensure issue framing because it provides them with a platform and space to present a resonating issue in a particular way. It is reasonable to assume that media and party issue framing have a lot in common, and it is

methodologically reasonable to apply the concept of framing to study media framing and party strategies.

Thirdly, political parties and media are parts of the hybrid systems or political communication ecosystems (Chadwick et al., 2015; Anderson, 2016). In this ecosystem, political parties and media are two key actors who interact and adapt to each other in a complex and dynamic way. Political parties use media as a channel to ensure saliency of their agenda, while media provide them with a platform to present their message to the public. The relationship between political parties and media in this ecosystem is characterized by mutual dependence and influence. Political party leaders are the most cited agents in the secessionist debates, this fact means that political parties are the main drivers of secessionist debates which is channeled by the media. However, it is in powers of media to decide which actors may use their platform for their ideas.

Finally, regionalist parties and media use similar but not identical framing of territorial and independence claims. The main and salient arguments used by media are presentend in section 1.2., namely legitimacy, economy, and legal arguments. The party's framing can be found in FraTerr dataset, where authors distinguish between cultural, socio-economic, political and environmental (Elias et al., 2021).

Regionalist parties

The secessionist agenda is more likely to be adopted by regionalist parties. Regionalist parties are considered to be a manifestation of the political will of the periphery to represent their forces in the state system (Masseti and Schakel, 2015: 866). In this regard, the critical issue for such parties is the promotion of the territorial dimension and requirements for a greater degree of self-government. Colino (2020: 72) proposes to focus on the activities of regionalist parties and social movements as engines of centrifugal tendencies.

Several main criteria can define the regionalist party. First, regionalist parties are independent political organisations that participate in elections. Secondly, such parties are organizationally present only in a certain sub-territory of the state, which may include one or several territorial units

(Masseti and Schakel, 2015). The territorial restrictions on their electoral activity are connected with the fact that these parties' main task is to protect the interests of only their region. For example, the regionalist party Bildu, an advocate for the interests of the Basques, is represented in both the Basque Country and Navarre because it considers Navarre to be primordially Basque lands. A similar example is the Por Ávila (XAV) party created in 2019. This party defends the interests of one province of Avila, which is part of Castilla y León, and identifies as political priorities in its program the improvement of the welfare and socioeconomic development of its territory and, therefore, can also be ranked among the regionalist parties in the light of the proposed definition.

It should be noted that the third criterion does not mean that regionalist parties refuse to participate in national elections or that they cannot participate in the activities of national parliaments. For example, the regionalist parties of Catalonia and the Basque Country are represented in both the regional and national Parliament in Spain. However, if we analyse their electoral support, it becomes evident that such parties received seats in the national Parliament solely because of the considerable support in their regions. Finally, the main task of regionalist parties is to achieve, defend and/or strengthen territorial self-government. (Masseti and Schakel, 2015: 868) Regional elites are interested in intensifying and maintaining the latent course of the center-region conflict to achieve political goals (Martínez-Tapia, 2016).

Regionalist parties also can be of different types. Dandoy (2010:206) provided the division of regionalist parties into *protectionists*, *decentralists* and *secessionists*.

Protectionists regionalist parties defend the separate identity of the region, including linguistic, religious, or cultural distinctiveness. They fight for access and participation in national political life and agree with the current state structure. Protectionist parties are divided into *conservative* and *participationist* subgroups. *Conservative protectionist* regionalist parties seek to preserve a status quo of their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness from the dominant culture of the central state and work to prevent any attempts to discriminate against their own culture. Examples are the Carinthia Slovene party and Enotna Lista in Austria to preserve the Slovenian

minority. The second sub-category is *participationist* parties. These parties try to end political and cultural discrimination. They want to improve their political situation regarding political and citizenship rights (introduce quotas for representing their minority at the different institutional levels). Examples are French Basque regionalist parties (Dandoy, 2010: 205-208).

Decentralist regionalist parties demand decentralisation of the internal order of the state. They challenge the balance of power between center and region and seek more autonomous rights and powers within the state. Within this group of parties, there are also different subtypes. *Autonomist* parties want to achieve a considerable level of autonomy and responsibility, which is substantially higher than the rest of the regions in the state. As an aim, they seek autonomous political institutions and administrative services, for example, *Union Valdotaïne* in Italy, *Coalicion Galega* in Spain. *Federalist* parties demand the establishment of the federal territorial organisation of a state. If autonomist parties want the separate autonomous powers for their region only, the federalist parties support the reorganisation of the whole state, which implies a general autonomy of all regions within the state. This is the case for the Flemish VU (*Volksunie*), RW (*Rassemblement Wallon*) and FDF (*Fédéralistes Démocrates Francophones*). *Confederalist* parties want to hold sovereignty and decide on their own which competencies to pass at the central state level. The Flemish Social-Liberal party demands the transformation of Belgium from federal into the confederal state (Dandoy, 2010: 208-210).

Secessionist parties aim to establish an independent state of their own and define the region's political future according to their demands. Speaking about *secessionist* parties, this group is divided into *independentists*, *irredentists* and *rattachists* parties. *Independentist parties have a goal of establishing* a fully independent state within the borders of their region or territorial entity. A case in point is SNP in Scotland and ERC in Catalunya. *Irredentist* parties seek to regain the lost territory, i.e. the reunification of all populations belonging to one nation under the single nation-state. The idea is to break away from the host-state and annexe the territories of another nation-state under the flagship of belonging to the same *imagined community*. *Herri Batasuna* in

the Basque Country demands the creation of independent Basque country within the borders of the autonomous community and the annexation of Navarra and the French Basque region into a single independent state. *Rattachist* parties do not look for independence. They desire to detach themselves from the current state, join another one, and be considered an inherent part of its territory. To illustrate, the catholic parties in Northern Ireland, i.e. *Sinn Fein* and SDLP, seek to be integrated with the Republic of Ireland (Dandoy, 2010: 213-214). One can confuse the rattachism and irredentism. Irredentism ultimate aim is independence even if it wants to join some territories from another state. Rattachism can differently be labelled as *reunionism* or *reunificationism*, and its final goal is to join another state (kin-state), not to create the independent one of their own. What people in Crimea did in 2014 can be considered as rattachism.

The term of the regionalist party should not be confused with the ethnic party. Zuber (2012:929) explains that 'an ethnic party appeals to voters as the champion of the interests of one ethnic category or set of categories to the exclusion of others, and makes such an appeal central to its mobilising strategy. The key aspect of this definition is exclusion'. The ethnic party is a sub-type of the regionalist party; however, as Hepburn (2009) correctly mentions, European integration has led to the de-ethnization of regionalist parties and switched their emphasis on the territory as the criterion of inclusion, which means regionalism as it is. Nevertheless, the ethnicity component can still be relevant for the regionalist party and play an essential role in their political agenda. For example, the Basque nationalist party still stands for a distinct ethnical identity of Basques from Spaniards. Hepburn (2010:527) uses *stateless nationalist and regionalist party* (SNRP) term to describe the whole family of regionalist parties which represent the particular region and state the aim of some degree of self-government at the core of their program and compete at the level of small world, representing the interests of particular ethnic group, even if ethnicity can be constructed in terms of regional identity. In terms of my research, it is a regionalist party.

The role of political parties

The top-down model defends political parties as a critical factor in setting up agenda and agents of political mobilization because citizens tend to adopt messages and opinions proclaimed by the party they support. Riker (1986) claims that political parties are likely to manipulate voters' opinions using different heresthetic strategies. Partisan elites can influence people through public speeches, statements, media coverage manipulations regarding the promotion of regional demands for more sovereignty, etc. Cohen (2003) studies people attitudes towards state policies. The study concludes that people ground their attitudes on the social meaning, which the author defines as 'the perceived compatibility of an object of judgment with socially shared values' (Cohen, 2003: 808). The experiment showed that liberal people supported the welfare program labeled as from the Democratic party and conservative people endorsed the program defined as from the Republican party, although these programs' content was reversed (Cohen, 2003). Green, Palmquist, and Schickler, E. (2004) conclude that even people aware of the content of the policy, tend to follow the party cues and adopt the position of their party leaders mechanically. Bullock (2011) suggests that party cues affect people's attitudes towards particular policy choices. However, he also mentions the influential role of policy details and position-taking by party elites.

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) stipulate that political parties shape political cleavages to maximise support rather than only represent such division. They identify four main cleavages. The first two cleavages were caused by the national historical revolutions, including a) *center versus periphery* cleavage between central and regional elites due to the creation of nation-states and difficulties in accommodation of minorities, which led to the eruption of regional nationalism; b) the cleavage between *the nation-state and the church*. The next cleavages resulted from industrial revolutions, including c) owner versus worker cleavage outlined in the right and left parties division, d) land versus industry cleavage due to the conflict between the prime producers of goods in rural and entrepreneurs in urban areas. The *center versus periphery* cleavage is typical of the Spanish state landscape and continuously presented in political parties' competition.

The outbidding model predicts that party competition in ethnically segmented societies, in the long term, will tend to be polarised and involve outbidding strategies, which will eventually favor party polarisation and permanently jeopardise political stability (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972). The outbidding argument is that party ideology and competition changes result from prior voter changes since parties are prone to increasing votes. Parties may devote resources to mobilise those who are already predisposed to support them, or they may try to expand their base by converting other citizens to support their cause. Karp (2012), studying the party competition as the instrument of voter's mobilization, concludes that in the polarised systems, the mobilization of votes is greater than in fewer ones. In this regard, regional parties can be treated separated from the national-level parties as far as they are associated with the phenomenon of 'stateless' nationalism (Hepburn, 2009).

Barrio and Rodriguez-Teruel (2017) argue that regionalist parties' elites view on *center v. periphery* cleavage play a significant role in shaping new party strategies to attract votes. Analysing the Catalan *Convergencia I Unio* (CiU) case, authors conclude that '(u)nder specific circumstances (government instability, party leadership changes, and intense party competition), the regionalist party's structure of opinions played a role in the configuration of the party position towards a more radical approach to the territorial cleavage, which eventually helped – combined with other exogenous factors – to fuel polarisation in people's demands, bringing them closer to the party elites' original positions' (Barrio and Rodriguez-Teruel, 2017: 1778).

Sorens (2004) outlines the role of regionalist parties on secessionism growth. He claims that regions with well-established regionalist parties experienced an increase in the level of political autonomy. In contrast, regions without this type of party did not enjoy similar improvements in their political status. Regionalist parties claim to represent their region and seek to improve their region's power. Their influence is institutionalised through the party system of the state, so they have the possibility to lobby for more independent rights within the state political system. It

justifies their essential role in the process of secessionism growth because regionalist parties have both the ability and desire to challenge the current state order.

To sum up, the role of political parties in defining the public discourse regarding the *center v. periphery* cleavage is essential. Regionalist parties present themselves as champions of the desires of their region to have more political powers. The most radical desire of regionalist parties is to gain the complete independence of the region they represent. The next logical question that is important for the theoretical framework is how regionalist parties with secessionist agenda frame their programs. The role of regionalist parties in secessionism growth should be taken into account.

Regionalist parties strategies

Regionalist parties in Scotland and Catalonia have experienced electoral success at the regional level at the beginning of the 2010s and were able to form a majority coalition with the secessionist agenda at the core. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the strategic choices of such parties that have led to their victory. Spain and Great Britain represent a multilevel state where political competition varies at the regional and national levels (Hepburn, 2010). To describe the distinction, Hepburn (2010:528) uses the metaphor of *small world*, stipulating that ‘these small worlds have distinctive party systems reflecting the efforts of regional parties to reflect the electorate's values. However, there are also differences resulting from the structure of the states in which the ‘small worlds’ are embedded, the capacity of the region to legislate and the dominance of political ideologies’.

For the regionalist party, the main goal is to reorganise the state power structure to ensure some form of self-government. This goal is a central issue for them in contesting elections at the regional level. However, it is not always true that regionalist parties concentrate on exclusively territorial demands (Massetti, 2009). In order to place sufficient electoral pressure on competitors, especially on established state-wide parties, regionalist parties expand their electoral appeal and talk about other issue dimensions (Elias, 2019:4). The particularly strong pressure arises on the economic dimension. This dimension is the most important area of competition in contemporary

democracies (Wagner, 2012). Consequently, regionalist parties are forced to compete on two dimensions: territorial, which is the principal, and economic, which is very important for competition parties in elections (Elias, 2019:4).

Elias et al. (2015) theorise regionalist parties electoral strategy choices. In the context of competition on more than one dimension, regionalist parties have a strategic toolbox consisting of *issue positioning*, *selective issue emphasis*, and *issue framing*. *Issue positioning* expects parties to take controversial positions on a given issue. *Issue emphasis* means prioritising an issue that is more favourable to them and downplaying those that are less favourable. *Issue framing* expects parties “to frame a new issue in terms of ideological dimension that is most important to them or which they can lay the strongest claim to ‘own’” (Elias, 2019:5).

Combining all the tools, Elias et al. (2015) elaborate on four strategies. *One-dimensional strategy* means that party selectively emphasise and position their core dimension and ignore the economic one. *Blurring strategy* adopts contradictory positions on the secondary economic dimension. *Subsuming* strategy means that parties will frame economic issues in core territorial terms. *The two-dimensional strategy* is at play when a party simultaneously emphasises territorial and economic dimensions (Elias et al., 2015: 844-846). Based on this theoretical strategic toolbox, Alonso et al. (2015) suggest that regionalist parties engage in a two-dimensional strategy because parties have to address issues where they have a competitive advantage and the issue that their competitors emphasise. Accordingly, the core business for regionalist parties is the territorial dimension. It is the economic one for state-wide competitors, so both groups should address both issues in their electoral program (Masseti, Schakel, 2015). Finally, Alonso et al. (2015:859) conclude that the parties’ strategic choice depends mainly on the type of party according to the territorial orientation. They blur less along their primary dimension of competition, the territorial dimension, than along their secondary one, the economic dimension, and they do not use the one-dimensional strategy. The subsuming strategy is closely related to issue framing when regionalist parties present the economic and other dimensions in core territorial terms. As far as the regionalist

parties are actively involved in framing the secessionist discourse, it is expected to see the subsuming strategy in their electoral behaviour.

Secessionist agendas are adopted by regionalists rather than by national-level parties. Having a secessionist party in office at the regional level is an important condition to promote secessionist ideas. In the case of Spain, the regionalist parties support in their region makes them relevant parties also at the national level (*CiU*, Basque National Party (BNP)). Moreover, in the aftermath of regional elections 2010 in Catalonia, *CiU* was returned to power with a majority of 38.4 percent and beat the preceding left-wing coalition. Before the elections, *CiU* was in opposition to *tripartite* (Spanish Labour Party, Left Republican Party of Catalonia (*ERC*), Left Union and Alternative Party (*EUiA*)). The SNP gained power in the 2007 Scottish Parliament election, forming a minority government, before winning the 2011 Parliament election, after which it formed Holyrood's first majority government. The evidence of both the increase in independence sentiments among the population and the electoral power of regionalist parties have led to the sub-question **‘How do regionalist parties strategize their secessionist programs?’**

Conclusion

The phenomenon of secessionism attracts the attention of scholars from many disciplines. Theoretical literature has multiple explanations of reasons to support independence. Most of these approaches refer to the structural explanations of growing independence sentiments. This process includes a variety of actors fighting to win the argument in favor of independence.

The study analyses the period of the drastic rise in independence sentiments to bring to the fore the mechanisms of communicating the independentist agenda to the society. Framing public discourse plays a crucial role in this mechanism. Secessionism is an attitude, and this fact explains the possibility of fast changes. Our attitudes are considerably influenced by public discourse. It is not that important the essence of the issue but how it is framed and presented. My research seeks to analyse all the relevant political events and how they are reflected in the public discourse during the study period. It revises the role of regionalist parties in this process and uncovers the strategies to gain electoral success. Regionalist parties are the key actors in the public discourse about independence.

My research highlights the role of media and political communication in the process of growing secessionism. The theoretical literature suggests many explanations for increases in independence sentiments. Precisely, my research seeks to analyse the content of the message flows and demonstrate which arguments are used to justify secessionism in the public discourse and to what extent these messages are one-sided or two-sided. In other words, my research focuses on the variability of arguments used to justify independence as well as on the variability of framing and communicating these arguments to the public. The research will uncover the link between the theoretical arguments of secessionism and their role in the public discourse empirically. That is why the theoretical framework includes the arguments represented by the variety of theoretical explanations and reasons to support independence and the ways how they reach the target audience. These ways are the media bias and the frames highlighted in the public discourse. The media bias approach establishes that the narrative is persuasive if it is one-sided rather than two-

sided, and the role of the media is to give salience to the particular issues. The research accepts that arguments in the public discourse are influenced by the ‘material circumstances’, i.e. the important political events and contexts.

However, my research argues that the ways of how people think about the issue are also important because one person could be informed better than another and make decisions relying on facts rather than judgements. In order to frame public discourse, the one-sided bias should work together with the motivational and prognostic frames. Frames are strong when they are employed to represent a persuasive narrative about the future. In other words, the independence claims are both communicated in a biased way and framed in terms of motivational and prognostic frames. Among these future-oriented frames, the ‘hot’ (motivational) framing dominates over the ‘cold’ (prognostic) framing to better resonate public discourse. The theoretical framework brings together the argumentative strategies, media bias, framing, and the role of political parties to investigate how the public discourse evolved during the period of the fast growth of secessionism in Catalonia and Scotland.

2. Research Design and Methodology

Independence claims have the population of a region as the primary target in order to ensure popular support for the idea of secession. These claims are communicated to the people via media as the main source of political information for them. This paper's research goal is to empirically investigate how the secessionist agenda transmits to the audience by answering the research question 'How does the media communicate regionalist arguments to the audience?' The main source of information is regional newspaper media, because they still dominate as the main source of political information for people in these regions.

The theoretical literature suggests several reasons to justify independence, summarised into three broad categories: legitimacy, economic, and political arguments. My research seeks to understand the ways of delivering these arguments to the people by answering the question is 'How does the media convey independence claims?'. Political parties play an essential role in maintaining the regionalist agenda, because they try to increase their electoral support by giving salience to territorial demands. Regionalist parties in Catalonia and Scotland dominate their regional Parliaments. The period of secessionism growth presents an occasion to understand 'How do regionalist parties strategize their secessionist programs?'.

The media communicate the arguments concerning secessionism via framing the narrative and biased reports on the issue. The direction of messages regarding the center-periphery cleavage helps to set the agenda and support the saliency of the conflict between the central state and regional authorities. Every argument can be presented in terms of pro-region, pro-center direction, or neutrally. These message directions should not necessarily mean independence claims but reinforce the conflict between state and region. Additionally, the framing of independentist narratives in terms of future-oriented frames are extensively used in the media to support the idea of independence. As the primary beneficiaries of the center-periphery cleavage, regionalist parties try to subsume the political, legitimacy, and economic issue into the territorial dimension of their electoral discourse.

This chapter aims to introduce the methodology used in this research to address the research questions. Catalonia and Scotland are the case studies due to similar trends in the support for secessionism and the role of regionalist parties in regional Parliaments. These cases are investigated through the content and frame analysis of the media. This research develops the framing scheme and tracks the media bias in terms of the direction of messages using selected leading regional newspapers. However, the changes in argumentative strategies require understanding underlying political processes in the study period of independence growth. That is why the cases are examined by process tracing in addition to media analysis. The political parties' strategies are addressed with the help of the Regional Manifesto Project and content analysis of their public discourse. Having Catalonia and Scotland as the case studies allow me to use the most similar cases comparison to draw conclusions on similarities and dissimilarities of the secessionist processes in these two regions.

The chapter has two sections. The first section introduces the case-oriented approach and criteria to choose Catalonia and Scotland as case-studies. This section introduces the importance of a case study, the importance of comparison, and the selective criteria to deal with Catalonia and Scotland. In particular, process tracing is presented as method to address the importance of political processes in discursive strategies. The second section presents the way in which the content of media is studied. This section discusses the practical reasons to choose the selected media sources; it explains the differences between messages and frames; and presents the main arguments, frames, and direction of messages into a single coding scheme. Also, it explains the regional manifesto project approach to study the regionalist parties' strategies.

2.1. Case Selection and Methods

Case studies

An essential part of knowledge in social sciences has been derived from the case studies. A case study is a methodological approach that is widely applied to study political mobilization (Tilly, McAdam, & Tarrow, 2001), media bias (Teo, 2000), secessionism (Holesch & Jornada, 2021), political parties (Elias, 2019). Case studies are frequently used in qualitative analysis to test or generate hypotheses. The discussed literature in chapter 1 presents a great volume of studies that employed the case study approach to illustrate the applicability of the theory under investigation (e.g. Strömbäck, & Dimitrova, 2011; Snyder & Tilly, 1972; Snow, Vliegenthart & Corrigan-Brown, 2007; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). Consequently, the media discourse analysis of secessionist claims and regionalist party strategies requires particular cases to see this process in development.

A case is a phenomenon that is analysed empirically to explain a broader class of similar phenomena (Jervis, 1990). A case study is 'a research strategy based on the in-depth empirical investigation of one, or a small number, of phenomena to explore the configuration of each case and to elucidate features of a larger class of (similar) phenomena, by developing and evaluating theoretical explanations' (Ragin, 2000: pp. 64–87). Several points related to these definitions should be taken into account. Firstly, the case is a theoretical category, not just a unit of analysis. Secondly, the case selection is a process of theoretical conceptualisation by a researcher and the result of theoretically informed choice because 'case' is not a category that the researcher has at this disposal before the actual research. Thirdly, the phenomenon under investigation can be taken from the past, and it is not necessary to be contemporary. Fourthly, the data collection techniques can be quantitative and qualitative (Della Porta & Keating, 2008).

Della Porta and Keating (2008) distinguish some types of case studies. The *descriptive case study* is 'a systematic description of the phenomena with no explicit theoretical intention' (Della Porta & Keating, 2008: p. 227). The *interpretive case study* is based on theoretical frameworks

and provide explanations for particular cases and can lead to an evaluation or correction of theories. The *hypothesis-generating and refining case studies* aim to generate new hypotheses inductively or correct the existing hypotheses. It can include the clarification of the meaning of certain phenomena, the validity of empirical indicators, and alternative causal mechanisms suggestions. My research is an interpretive case study. On the one hand, it has its roots in the theoretical approaches like framing approach and message flows in political communication literature, relative deprivation theory in political mobilization literature, regionalist parties strategies based on content analysis of political parties programs. On the other hand, my research aims to explain the evolution of discourse in the selected cases. My research explains how the narratives of independence constructed and communicated to the audience and what factors influence the saliency of such narratives. It also includes the elements of descriptive case study, because my research presents 'the story' of independence process in the selected cases with the aim to empirically clarify the phenomenon.

As a research strategy, a case study requires a researcher to do 'casing' which overcomes 'the epistemological obstacles that stem from conventional categorisation' (Della Porta & Keating, 2008: p. 229). In other words, it is necessary to properly select cases that better inform the phenomenon under investigation among the great variety of similar occasions. Secondly, theory construction is the matter which is shaped by the case studies. Thirdly, case studies imply an in-depth empirical investigation, including different types of data-gathering. My research uses the case study as the general approach. The in-depth analysis of the selected cases applies other methods like process tracing, content analysis, and the method of comparison.

'Casing' requires the critical reflection on the boundaries and categories commonly accepted in political or social phenomena. The type of population under study is not predefined or given in advance: it results from the researcher's effort. The case is constructed by a theoretical approach that provides a framework of hypotheses to test the different aspects of the data. A case study converts the historical information into an analytical vocabulary that can be applied to other cases

(Alexander & Lauren, 1979). There is a theoretical intention that lately translated into a new analytical vocabulary to construct theories.

The detailed knowledge of a particular process is the matter of what case studies are exalted. Case studies are helpful for the discovery of social mechanisms (Della Porta & Keating, 2008). The case study goes beyond a single observation, and it can be beneficial for both theory building and theory testing. However, it has an obvious limitation that the outcome of this study is difficult to generalise to the population of similar cases. The case study works both for explaining the outliers and in-depth analysis of the regular cases. The case study can test the theory to explain the outlier case. This approach also provides an in-depth understanding of events within the boundaries of selected case. My research needs case studies that are suitable to investigate changes in political parties' discourse and how these changes are reflected in the media, in the context of sudden growth of support for secessionism. In a view to extend the boundaries of generalizability, the two selected cases are analysed in a comparative perspective.

Comparative case-oriented approach

Comparative case-study oriented approach seeks to combine in-depth understanding of the complex units with observation of patterns of similarities and differences across cases. The lack of statistically significant cross-case occurrences is compensated by 'systematic comparative illustrations' (Smelser, 2013: p. 157). The study of media content requires the non-automatic assessment of text and its meaning, so the sizeable quantitative analysis will not inform the peculiarities of media discourse. Media analysis involves the 'human interpretation' of the meanings. The reasons are that the text units' interpretation is needed to understand the underlying meaning of phrases. At the time of this research, the software is not developed enough to evaluate these hidden meanings. That is why this research analyzes the cases inside qualitatively.

The case-oriented strategy concentrates on a few cases and analyses them with attention to each one (Ragin, 2000: p. 22). It seeks to understand the case as a whole unit rather than establish the connection between variables.

The case-oriented comparative approach gives the ground for generalisations available only within the boundaries of the studied cases and which relevance should be tested in further studies. The case-oriented approach allows studying each case as a complex set of relationships and recognising casual complexity as a matter to be addressed. Case-based logic addresses diversity by a thick description of cases. These cases are compared or contrasted on several dimensions meaning that a small number of cases are analysed relying on a large number of characteristics. Explanations are narrative accounts with some degree of generalisation. The critical task is to select the comparable cases to let the case-oriented comparative study create conclusions.

Case selection in this approach can be based on a dependent variable and is considered a legitimate practice. Case-oriented research may intentionally select the positive cases meaning that the outcome is presented on both occasions. In this regard, the selected cases may differ little from each other concerning the outcome of the phenomenon under investigation.

Smelser (2013: p. 174) listed different criteria for case selection. The unit of analysis should be *appropriate* to the kind of theoretical problem under investigation, *relevant* to the issue being studied, empirically *invariant* concerning their classificatory criterion, *reflect the degree of data availability* referring to this unit, and decisions to select and classify units of analysis should be based *on standardised and repeatable procedures*. Gerring (2001), analysing the trade-offs in the case selection procedure, adds criteria including *comparability* (similarity of cases), *independence* (autonomy of units concerning each other), *representativeness* (the capacity of the sample to reflect the characteristics of the entire population), and *analytical utility*.

Comparative studies use the similarities and differences method. The method of difference introduced by Mill considers that 'when two or more similar cases have different values on a certain phenomenon we want to explain, we have to look for the one circumstance on which they differ' (Della Parta & Keating, 2008: p. 204). Similarities approach stipulates that if instances of an investigated phenomenon have only one of several casual circumstances in common, 'the cause of the phenomenon is the one circumstance that is presented in all analysed instances' (Ragin,

1987:36). Ferejohn (2004) distinguishes between external and internal explanations of comparative analysis. The external explanations mean that the causal configurations influence the outcomes of agent behaviour. The internal explanations refer to the reasons for these actions.

In regards to similarities and differences methods, it is possible to distinguish two strategies: the *most-similar systems* design and the *most-different systems* design (Della Parta & Keating, 2008). *Similar systems* design facilitates the reduction of ‘disturbing’ variables to be kept under control (Lijphart, 1975). If we consider countries as a unit of analysis, the prevalent strategy is to choose cases based on criteria including geographical area (West Europe, East Europe, Middle East), shared historical traditions as West European countries, cultural ties, or economic development. The advantage of this approach is that it considers the shared characteristics as constant and concentrates on differences or variations (Dogan & Pelassy, 1990). The disadvantage is that the results may be valid only in a restricted area, and the researcher cannot go beyond the middle-range theories. The researcher cannot exclude the role of the environment in the conclusions, which he or she cannot keep in constant.

A *most-different systems* design checks if there are correlations across different countries. It allows to generalise the research conclusions beyond the restricted area, but it inevitably increases the number of independent variables to be kept under control. Teune and Przeworski (1970: p. 35) have stated that choosing different cases gives the possibility to ‘identify those independent variables, observed within systems, that do not violate the assumption of the homogeneity of the total population’. This approach is used when the researcher's main aim is to find the explanation of the phenomena wherever they occur, regardless of the specific historical circumstances. This approach's evident shortcoming is the risk of generating a hypothesis that explains little in the worldwide context. The *most-different* approach is used mainly to obtain the generalisable results, whereas the *most-similar* is devoted to confirming a hypothesis developed in another case.

The use of the *most-similar comparison* is suitable to address the research questions of this study. It considers the relative similarity of political system, social environment, and the level of

technologies. The comparison is made in a similar context (independence growth), similar political system (decentralised state), international area (the EU), and level of means of communication (Internet). It uncovers the limitations of this research, like the possibility of generalising its outcomes only to the similar context of institutional, political, and technological development. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of 'independence in Europe' should fall into the research boundaries of generalisation.

My study uses the similarity method. The idea is that the changes in discourse happen under the influence of exogeneous political events and the presentation of these events in discourse follow a similar logic. Bear in mind that the interest of this research is the period of independentism growth; therefore, the context of the cases has to be similar.

My research uses the comparison of similar cases to understand how the context of both cases influences the media discourse and how regionalist parties strategize their secessionist agendas. Theoretically, the comparison allows me to understand common and different patterns in two instances of similar independentism growth.

The comparative case-oriented approach expands the boundaries of the outcomes' generalizability compared to the single case study. Different systems of research design follow distinctive logic and aims of the research. The comparative method is considered an equal substitution for experimental methods and is actively used in social sciences. This approach can produce acceptable outcomes even with some limitations like the contextual boundaries of the research in the case of *most-similar systems* or explanatory limits in the event of *most-different systems*. The discussion of the similar cases approach to comparative case studies brings us to the explanation of selecting the cases for investigation.

Casing

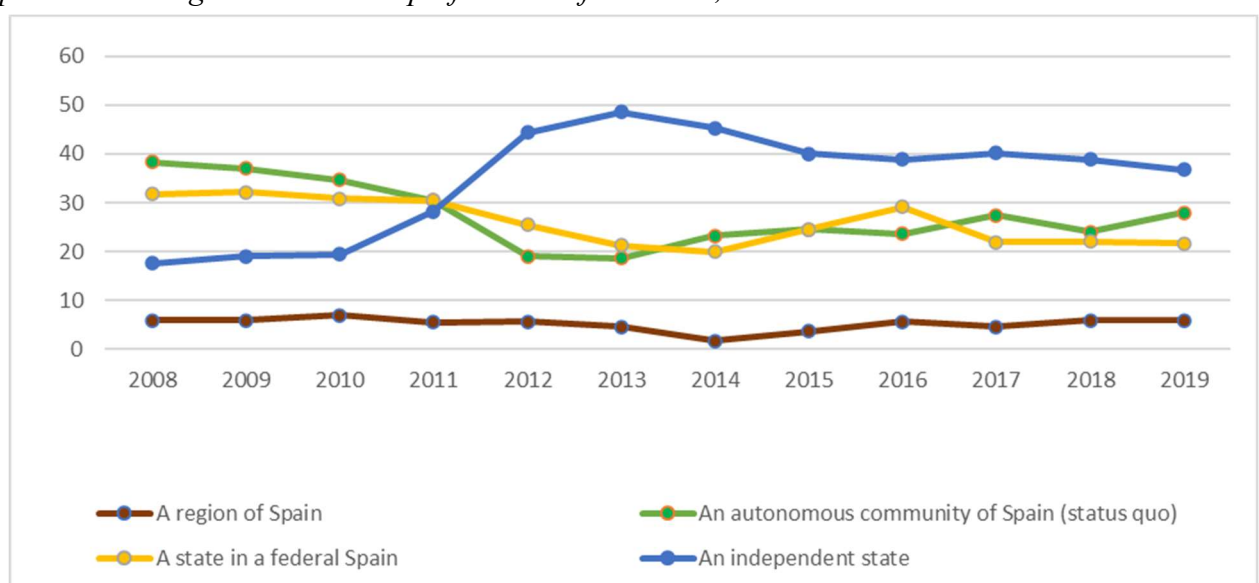
The comparative case-oriented approach is used in my research. The *most-similar systems* design is employed to analyse two, in many regards, similar cases and find out the common processes in growing independence sentiments. Due to the impossibility to employ experimental

methods, the comparison is a good substitution for it. A comparative approach will test the changes in contextually similar cases, such as Catalonia and Scotland. The selection of cases is based on the criteria provided by Smelser (2013) and Gerring (2001) considered in the previous sub-section.

The cases of Catalonia and Scotland are *appropriate* to study the theoretical problem of secessionism. Both cases have an experience of independence, and both of them demand independence at the current stage. They have undergone devolution reforms and represent similar secession demands, not autonomy or widening the political rights. Scotland received the Scotland Act, which established the Scotland Parliament in 1999 and broadened the regional powers and regional authority. Catalonia enjoyed the new Statute of Autonomy 2006, which expanded its regional authority despite some corrections and limitations.

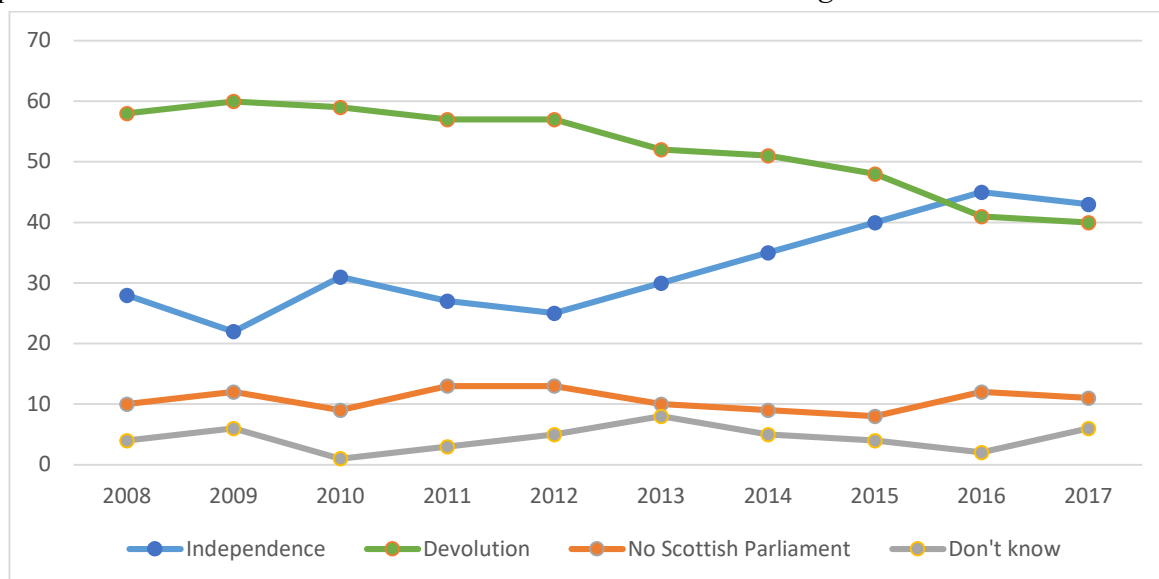
Catalonia and Scotland are *relevant* cases because both show the fast growth in the support for independence among the population. (graphs 2.1.1, 2.1.2) It is possible to track the same growth of independence sentiments, which almost doubled in 4-5 years, within the same period of time. For Catalonia, the growth of independentism is tracked between 2010 and 2014, whereas Scotland population increased their support for independence from 2012 to 2016. None of the other cases recently enjoyed such an immediate increase in independence demands among the population.

Graph 2.1.1. Changes in territorial preferences of Catalans, 2008-2019



Source: Centro de Estudios de Opinión Política, 3d wave, 2019

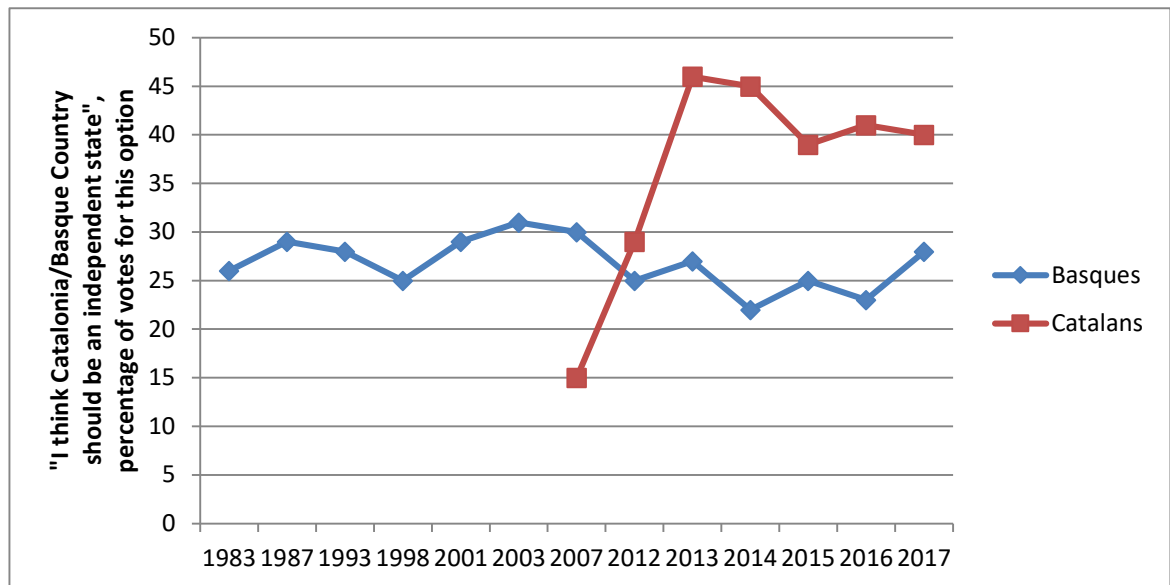
Graph 2.1.2. Attitudes in Scotland towards how Scotland should be governed, 2008-2017



Source: ScotCen Social Research available at <https://whatscotlandthinks.org/>

For example, another long-standing secessionism movement in Europe (the Basque Country) compared to Catalonia does not show the same trend (graph 2.1.3). The massive fluctuations in support for independence mean either that profound structural change has taken place or structural explanations cannot account for the whole story. The Basque and Catalan comparison suggests, for instance, that economic conditions cannot have been the sole explanation. The failure of a proposal for creating better economic conditions in the Basque Country (i.e. Plan Ibarretxe) did not exaggerate independence sentiments. In contrast, the similar situation of a fiscal pact in Catalonia had many more consequences. Moreover, both Autonomies are considered advanced in terms of their economic impact because they contribute a lot to the national GDP along with Madrid region. They both have more economic rights in relation to the central state compared to other Autonomies in Spain.

Graph 2.1.3. Preferences in the relationship between Catalonia/ Basque Country and Spain, 1983–2015.



Source: CEO, Euskobarometro (Note: there are comparative figures in Catalonia before 2007 on the same methodology because previously different opinion polls conducted surveys based on a simple yes-no question about secessionism.)

These cases are *invariant* in accordance with the selection criteria of the most prominent pro-independence political regions in the EU. They demonstrate the highest level of independence support in the EU along with the Basque Country (table 2.1.1.). Significantly, the ideas of self-determination in these regions evolved from the radical demands to the mainstream issue.

Table 2.1.1 The level of independence support in the EU, 2017

Region	Independence support (2017)
Scotland	42%
Flanders	22%
Basque Country	24%
Catalonia	48,7%

Sources: Euskobarometro 2017; CEO 2017; CSS; What Scotland Thinks

The decision to select these cases are based on *standardised, repeatable procedures*. I studied the survey data on population attitudes towards independence, gathered data on longitudinal changes of these demands and compared them with other cases in the EU using similar data (table 2.1.1).

Catalonia and Scotland meet the criteria of *comparability*. Both cases are characterised by heterogeneous population historically, linguistically, and culturally (Alonso, Cabeza & Gomez, 2015: 854). They both have their own language (Catalan and Gaelic), different from Spanish (Castilian) and English. However, Catalan is the first language for majority of people in Catalonia; Gaelic is the first language for less than 3 percent of Scots. Catalanian dance folklore is very developed, an example of which is the national Catalan dance Sardana. The national dress of the Catalans is barretina. Scotland also has a distinct culture. For instance, Scottish folk music is associated with the Great Highland Bagpipe. Both regions historically enjoyed a period of independent rule.

The criterion of *independence* is also satisfied. Despite being contextually similar, Catalonia and Scotland exist in different nation-states with different legal and political orders. Spain has its rigid Constitution, codified in a single document, where the territorial integrity and the unity of the nation are stipulated. According to Article 2 of the Spanish Constitution states: 'The Constitution is based on the indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation, the common and indivisible country of all Spaniards; it recognises and guarantees the right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions of which it is composed, and the solidarity amongst them all' (*Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 1979). The United Kingdom does not have a rigid Constitution that is codified in a single document. The legal relations between Scotland and Great Britain have their roots in the Act of Union 1707, which stipulated: "From 1 May 1707 the kingdoms of Scotland and England were to be 'united into one kingdom by the name of Great Britain'. The flags of St George and St Andrew were to be combined" (UK Parliament, 2021).

These cases are linked to each other. The period of independence growth overlaps in these cases. For example, the Scottish independence referendum 2014 served as an example and desire for the Catalan independentist forces. These regions are advanced economically in their nation-states. The *ERC* and the *SNP* members had informal meetings and kind political ties. For Catalonia, Scottish independence process works as a role model to achieve in negotiations with Madrid.

Scotland and Catalonia are *representative* cases. The democratisation of political systems allows us to discuss secessionism within a legal and political framework. Silaev (2015:24) differentiates 'systemic' and 'nonsystemic' secessionism. For example, *CiU* is representative of systemic type as far as it legally participates in politics and use methods of political competition within an allowed legal context. In contrast, Basque *Herri Batasuna* or Irish *IRA* is non-systemic. The comparison of Catalonia and Scotland provides empirical evidence for systemic secessionism in the EU with the fast growth of independence support and strong regionalist parties. Basque and Flanders systemic secessionist movements can serve as the control cases to check future research results' generalizability.

Furthermore, regionalist parties in Catalonia and Scotland have achieved electoral success with their secessionist agendas. Table 2.1.2 shows that these parties, among others, have gained regional power. Notably, the Scottish National Party (SNP) has been the most successful regionalist party, winning a majority government in 2011. The Catalan and Scottish regionalist parties are also the most successful among parties with secessionist programs. While the autonomist Femu a Corsica leads the Corsican alliance Pe a Corsica, the Basque National Party (PNV) is an autonomist party in coalition with the Basque socialist party and in opposition to the independentist EH Bildu. The New Flemish Alliance, which holds positions in both regional and federal governments, is similarly successful but has received fewer seats than the Catalan and Scottish parties.

Table 2.1.2. Regionalist parties in Europe, 2010-2016

Case	Party	Regional elections	Percent of seats	Power access
Catalonia	CiU	2010	46	government
	ERC		7,5	opposition
	CiU	2012	37	government
	ERC		15,5	coalition support
	JxSi (CDC, ERC, other pro-independence parties)	2015	46	government
	CUP		7,4	external support
Scotland	SNP	2011	53,5	government
	Scottish Greens		1,5	external support
	SNP	2016	48,8	government
	Scottish Greens		4,7	external support
Corsica	Le Partitu di a Nazione Corsa	2010	21,5	opposition
	Corsica Libera		10	opposition
	Pè a Corsica	2015	47	government
Basque Country	PNV	2012	36	government
	EH Bildu		28	opposition
	PNV	2016	37	government
	EH Bildu		24	opposition
Flanders	NVA	2014	35	government
	VB		0,5	opposition

All cases are part of the EU and experience the same possible consequences in the case of separation because they would be forced to leave the EU, according to the stance of top EU politicians. Additionally, regional parties in all regions gain power at the regional level. More

importantly, Spain, Great Britain are the Parliamentary Monarchies that make the role of political parties even more critical in the political system. Both cases represent the two-dimensional political space with the evident existence of a *small world* level. As far as one of the tasks is to explain regionalist parties strategic choices to win elections in their *small world*, it would be little to explain in the absence of such political context.

The analytical utility of the studied cases serves to answer the research questions. Firstly, there is a strong role of media in these regions. These regional media are independent and powerful to drive the agenda. Political leaders use the media space to sell their arguments to the population. Catalan and Scottish cases allow to track the changes in media discourse regarding the center-periphery cleavage. The center-periphery cleavage in these regions have long-established historical ties, because the independence sentiments emerged long time ago. The study of these cases uncovers the most prominent independence process in the EU at the current stage. The results of this research can be generalized to other EU secessionist movements and may be expanded to the wider democratic contexts like the Quebec secessionism.

To sum up, the comparison of the Catalanian and Scottish independence process promises a rich contribution to secessionist studies. Comparing the logic of the fast growth of independence sentiments in both cases should provide an answer of reasons of changes in the argumentative strategies of secessionist movements to address the role of different actors in these developments. Important note that the results of scientific investigation of selected cases should be valid within the institutionalised, systemic context. In other words, several conditions should be taken into account: the pro-EU stance of secessionist demands, the process is mainstream in the region, they are in the study period the part of the EU, the leading forces avoid violence and use institutional channels to sell their demands.

Process tracing

The important part of the case study is the empirical observation which can be translated into practice by process tracing. My research accepts that the period of secessionism growth has a complex nature and requires an in-depth understanding of the underlying processes. Notably, the changes in argumentative strategies in the media should be influenced by political events and internal developments. That is why the process tracing is used to address the analysis of Catalonia and Scotland cases. The process tracing explores the type of argument to be salient at a particular time during the study period.

Process tracing is 'a procedure for identifying steps in a causal process leading to the outcome of a given dependent variable of a particular case in a particular historical context' (George & Bennett 2005: 176). Process tracing allows assessing the theory by identifying the causal chains of linkages between the dependent and independent variables. Process tracing is useful for theory testing because it helps to discover a causal mechanism, demonstrate the conjunction and the temporal sequence of variables, operationalise variables, and increase the number of observable implications predicted by a theory (Elman, 1996).

Process tracing can bring together positivist and interpretivist approaches, allowing to answer both casual 'what' and 'how' (Lin, 1998). From an interpretivist perspective, this method can check the casual link in terms of the context in which it happens (Della Porta & Keating, 2008). The focus of the researcher is not only on what happened but also on how it happened. In other words, the reasons for the actor's behaviour, the links between beliefs and behaviour are possible to investigate with process tracing. Simon (1985: 295) states: 'Process tracing is a fundamental element of empirical case study research because it provides a way to learn and to evaluate empirically the preferences and perceptions of actors, their purposes, their goals, their values and their specification of the situations that face them'. In the cases of Catalonia and Scotland, the context is crucial. Catalonia demonstrates the popular mobilization, mass demonstrations, the political game not only between the regionalist and national parties but also between the regionalist ones. Scotland enjoyed less massive public demonstrations but more evident and higher support

for independence. Scotland and Catalonia have different legal contexts because the Catalan referendum was blocked, but the central authorities agreed on the Scottish one. To understand the changes in the leading arguments, it is necessary to look for the political decisions, the elections results, and how regional elites react to the challenges.

Process tracing is strongly linked to comparative analysis of case studies. As Lijphart (1971: 691) states: 'The case study method can and should be closely connected with the comparative method<...>; certain types of case studies can even be considered implicit parts of the comparative method'. Process tracing can be linked to both historiographic and theory-related research. The purpose of historiographic process tracing is to explain a specific outcome. Theory related process tracing can be done deductively (theory-testing) or inductively (theory-building).

Historical explanation process tracing starts from the selection of a salient outcome that needs to be better explained. A starting point in time is selected (the initial 'scene'), and the sequence of events produced by a dynamic interplay of context and actors is traced to the outcome. Another way is reversed, meaning that the process tracing starts from the outcome and when the sequence is reproduced by a backward process (Trampush & Palier, 2016).

The theory-testing approach starts from a theory and develops hypotheses that are empirically tested. This approach can empirically analyse one theory's explanatory power or compare the competing theories in terms of their validity to the problem under investigation (Trampush & Palier, 2016). In the theory-testing approach, two conditions should be taken into account: criteria of sufficiency and necessity (Rohlfing, 2014). The necessary criteria reflect the level of certainty. The sufficiency means that the case has enough uniqueness to represent the population.

This research relies on both theory-testing and historiographic process tracing to some extent. The process tracing of Catalonia and Scotland cases contributes to the theory's testing on the influence of media bias and frames by exploring the 'real world' context of media discourse and regionalist parties' strategic decisions. The historical explanation process tracing also contributes to the analysis because the empirical chapters on Catalonia and Scotland mainly represent the

‘story’ of all important events in these regions during the study period to demonstrate the historical logic and evolution of the political processes.

Process tracing has its limitations. First, the reliance on pre-existing theories because it presupposes the existence of theoretical frameworks which guide the researcher in the empirical investigation. But theories are often insufficiently specified to the problem under study. This fact forces the researcher to be engaged in the theory development where process tracing remains a reliable methodological solution (Della Porta & Keating, 2008). My research relies on the established theories of secessionism, political communication, and regionalist parties. The decision to convert the theories of secessionism into discursive arguments has the advantage to avoid the reliance on the explanatory power of these theories because they may not be sufficiently specified to contribute to the whole story. Instead of using them in the ‘what’ type of research questions, my research converts them into ‘how’ questions research design, where process tracing is necessary to conduct.

Secondly, the issue of autonomy of cases has been considered to be a challenge for a researcher. A process-tracing of cases relies on the assumption that each case is distinct and autonomous from one another. Process tracing treats the case as a separate unit of analysis. However, some political trends like the EU or the mutual interconnectedness of actors in the international system cannot be entirely autonomous. The researcher's task is to balance the distinctiveness of the cases and their common dimensions (Della Porta & Keating, 2008). However, my research employs process tracing as an additional analysis method; hence, the treatment of Catalonia and Scotland as separate units of analysis does not impede the possibility of comparing the results and checking for common and unique trends in media discourse.

The third limitation is the data gathering. Document analysis, interviews, and participant observations are the basis of the process-tracing method because it facilitates the establishment of previously unknown relations between factors. Process tracing requires a large amount of data to be at a researcher's disposal. Not all the data can be easily gathered, like the confidential and secret

data regarding foreign policy decisions. Even if the necessary data is acquired, much effort is needed to analyse and structure it (Della Porta & Keating, 2008). This study uses the daily reports of the newspapers as the empirical ground for process tracing. The newspapers give rich material to study. The newspapers report on every critical occasion in political life on a daily basis; hence it provides the bigger picture of the political developments. The reports of media tend to be biased, but it is the task of the researcher to distinguish facts from opinions. The reliance on media reports as a source of factual information does not allow me to call it historiographic process tracing but permits me to do simultaneously process tracing and content analysis of media.

The fourth limitation is familiar to any social science research. The cognitive bias can alter the researcher's reasoning and skew his results (Tetlock, 2009). Among the types of bias, it is essential to mention some of them. Confirmation bias means that a researcher may seek the information which approves his theory and disregard the contradictory data (George & Bennet, 2005). This bias can affect the data collection strategy or the report of the results.

Additionally, the results of process tracing might be in accordance with several theories, which make distinguishing between complementary and spurious explanations even more difficult. Also, the negative evidence may be ignored because the researcher may overlook things that do not happen (Della Porta & Keating, 2008). To avoid this kind of bias, some reliability tests have been conducted. The quality of process tracing and objectivity of the presentation of the events have been evaluated by external experts.

Despite some limitations, process tracing as a method has its absolute value. Beach and Pedersen (2019) point out that process tracing is the best method in political science to study causal mechanisms. Trampusch and Pailer (2016) argue that process tracing opens up a 'black box' of causality. Bennet and Checkel (2015) confirm that process tracing is crucial for capturing causal mechanisms in action. Process tracing clarifies how the main dependent variables interact with context and intervening variables in determining the outcome. It clears up how structure and agency (highlighting the decision-making rationales) interact in affecting the outcome. Process

tracing illustrates the importance of time in the unfolding of processes that lead to the outcome. Additionally, it spells out the level of endogeneity or exogeneity of factors included in explanatory frameworks.

To sum up, process tracing is the core of case study research. It can be linked to a single case study or comparative analysis of cases. Using a process-tracing requires the analysis of many documents related to the study period. Like in all methodological approaches, standards of transparency must be respected. My research employs process tracing as an additional method of case analysis to the content analysis of media. The main purpose of process tracing is to trace how the arguments changed in the discourse, what are exogeneous factors affect it. It shows the importance of political events in the communication of the secessionist agenda to the audience.

2.2. Empirical Strategy

Data collection

The support for secessionism is regularly measured by the research institutes in Catalonia and Scotland. During the independence referendum debates, many opinion polls were conducted in Scotland; Ipsos Mori, Panelbase, YouGov, TNS-BMRB, and ICM. Some were considered biased against independence (YouGov), while other sources were blamed for supporting independence (Panelbase). But their data was about the independence referendum; the design of their questions regarding independence had only options for or against it.

The ScotCen sociological research center issues the What Scotland Think survey consistently. Importantly, this survey uses a multi-option scale to measure independence sentiments. The scale includes such categories as *Independence*, *Devolution*, *No Scottish Parliament*, *Don't Know*.

The Catalan *Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió* (CEO) presents *Barometro de Opinion Politica* four times a year. It also uses several options to categorise the level of independence support like *a region of Spain*, *an autonomous community in Spain*, *a state in federal Spain*, and *an independent state*. The Catalan and Scotland categories match: Scotland's devolution' is equivalent to 'Autonomous community' in the Catalan survey. 'No Scottish Parliament' means the support for centralism and can be equalised with 'a region of Spain' in the CEO. Evidently, 'independence' in the Scottish survey is the same as 'an independent state' in Catalan. The only category that does not fit entirely is 'a state in a federal Spain', which locates between the status quo and independence. The similar approach to measure independence sentiments (multi-option scale) is used also by ICPS (eng. Institute of Political and Social Sciences). Even though the CEO changed its approach from in person interviews to phone calls, ICPS data used for robustness check confirms the same trend in independence sentiments among population, namely rise from 22 percent in 2010 to 42 in 2012, then the same level maintained in 2013-2014 followed by the decline up to 35 in 2015 (CEO, 2018; Medina&Rico, 2019).

The multi-option scale allows us to see a more nuanced picture of secessionism support in society. Devolution or federalisation is not the same option as independence in the case of dual scale with yes-no questions. The polls measuring other population attitudes about politics, elections, economy and the data from such surveys can provide a range of independent variables. Both sociological research centers are considered reliable sources of information, and the result of their investigation complies with sampling rules. Hence, the outcomes represent the collective opinion of people in a particular region, not just individual opinions in aggregate. Consequently, these two sources were chosen as a reference point to demonstrate the changes in the support for independence in Scotland and Catalonia.

The fluctuations in the support for independence in both regions define the time frame for analysis. The research concentrates on all events and decisions that have been made in Catalonia and Scotland during the study period, - which coincide with the period of the rapid growth of independence sentiments in each region. For Catalonia, the time frame of analysis is January 2010 to December 2014. As the data show, the level of support in 2013-2014 fluctuated between 45 and 48 percent, which can be considered statistical variation, especially bearing in mind that in 2013 numbers were at the historical maximum. Even though the political standoff between Catalonia and Spain reached its political peak in 2017 by announcing the referendum of independence in October and followed by arrests of Catalan leaders, the peak of independence support among population was in 2013-2014, as both *CEO* and *ICPS* data confirm (graph 2.1.1). This period includes the fastest growth of the likelihood to support independence and comprises important political events. These events include regional elections in 2010, national elections in 2011, regional elections in 2012, the Declaration of Sovereignty in 2013, and the self-proclaimed referendum in 2014. The considered Scotland's time frame is 2012 to 2016 based on sociological data on independence support among population (graph 2.1.2). The year 2012 is the starting year of consistent growth in support for independence. This period includes the Edinburgh Agreement in 2012, the White Paper for Independence in 2013, the Scottish Independence referendum in 2014,

National Elections in 2015, the Scottish Parliamentary elections in 2016, and Brexit referendum in 2016.

The next step is to choose the sources of media to develop a frame and media bias scheme and conduct a process tracing. The newspapers are selected as the source of media information. Firstly, despite Scottish newspapers' focus on corruption scandals and mediocrity in their early coverage of the devolved Scottish parliament, they remained a crucial source of news on Scottish politics along with Scottish broadcasting (McNair, 2008). This was especially true as Scottish stories became increasingly scarce in media outside of the region following devolution. With declining readership numbers, Scottish newspaper editors viewed the 2014 referendum as an opportunity to reinforce their connection with Scottish readers by positioning themselves as one of the few outlets for discussion on Scottish affairs (Dekavalla, 2015). Moreover, the special role of Scottish press is confirmed by several studies, as it helped to maintain a distinct civil society and public sphere from England throughout the three centuries (Connell, 2003; Schlesinger, 1998).

Secondly, the press is the second source of political information after the TV for people in Catalonia. According to the polls, 83,1 percent use TV to receive political news, 52,6 percent press, 40,9 radio, and only 36,7 Internet which is the fourth option for Catalans (Centro de Estudio de Opinion, 2013). As far as study the TV is not feasible, the press confirmed to be a good source to represent media during the study period.

Thirdly, newspapers are more intergenerational and interclass than the Internet. It still plays a vital role in the 'relay race' of discourses in the public sphere (Garton et al., 1991). This process involves print, broadcast, and online media working together to co-create public discourse and represent political debate across various platforms. As Law (2015) notes, these traditional media outlets were crucial in setting the tone for official political discourse and in capturing how social media both mimics and threatens to disrupt established patterns of political discourse. Newspapers were read by political elites and often contributed directly or indirectly to online conversations, shaping the conversation across multiple media platforms (Paterson, 2015). As such, newspapers

remain an important element to study as they continue to play a significant part in this multi-platform debate (Dekavalla, 2016)

Some essential considerations were taken into account to choose the newspapers. The first criterion is the readership in the regions of interest. The most read newspapers in Catalonia are *La Vanguardia*, *El Periodico*, *El Pais*. *Diari Ara*. (Centro de Estudio de Opinion, 2013) In Scotland, the most famous newspapers are *the Herald*, *the Courier*, *the Daily Mail*, *the Scottish Sun* (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2016). The following criterion is the frequency of issue publications. To do a process tracing and have a detailed view of processes in Catalonia and Scotland in this period, the source of information should be daily. The following criterion is the quality of the newspaper. The source of analysis should be a quality newspaper that publishes reliable information and opinion. Chong and Druckman (2007b) suggest that the source's credibility affects the strength of the frame. This criterion excluded the Daily Mail and the Scottish Sun from the potential analysis. Finally, the source should give decent coverage of political issues. The paper should present the section dedicated to the political news.

Consequently, the Catalan newspapers for analysis are *La Vanguardia* and *El Periodico*. They have the highest readership in Catalonia, the highest level of trust among the population, and comply with all criteria indicated (Centro de Estudio de Opinion, 2014). After excluding the two non-quality newspapers in Scotland, the *Herald* and *the Courier* have been chosen. It is important to note that the selection of newspapers for this study was based on factors such as readership, quality, and frequency. This resulted in the inclusion of four newspapers that were considered 'unionist', even though all of the newspapers positioned themselves as neutral. One example of this is the Herald, whose sister paper, the Sunday Herald, publicly supported independence in the 2014 referendum ("The Herald to Remain Neutral as Sunday Herald Declares Support for Yes Vote," 2014). However, the fact that these newspapers are 'unionist' adds an extra layer of complexity to the research. It is important to understand to what extent regional newspapers, regardless of their political stance, communicate pro-region messages and how they frame secessionist arguments.

While it is easy to predict a balance between pro-region and pro-centre messages in 'independentist' media sources, determining such a balance in 'unionist' newspapers present interesting insights in the independence process.

The analysis of media sources has two main objectives. The first one is to derive the message directions and frames to evaluate their frequency and importance in overall discourse about state-periphery relations. The frequency of frames is a criterion for the frame strength; that is why all the pieces of text regarding the frames and message directions have been counted quantitatively (Chong & Druckman, 2007b). The second task is to get factual data about the processes in Catalonia and Scotland. The daily newspapers present detailed coverage of all critical events in the study period. Apart from media coverage, additional sources were studied, including the Constitution of Spain, the Spanish Constitutional Court decision on the Statute of Autonomy, the White Paper for Scottish independence, and parties electoral programs. The aim is to diversify sources of information and get additional insights into the meaning of political events.

The newspaper articles for analysis were selected according to their connection to the central state–region relations. This selection includes mainly political and economic news. Special attention was paid to the dedicated sections of the selected newspapers. Each article related to this dimension was studied in terms of message directions and frames. In cases when the cover page contains frame or message direction, it is considered a unit of analysis too. Importantly, each article may have more than one argument. For example, the article may address the failure to negotiate autonomy deal and people support arguments. In other words, the arguments in one newspaper article are not mutually exclusive.

Operationalization

This study aims to analyze several theoretical expectations based on the existing literature. The *expectation 1 (E1)* is that *future-oriented framing should be more prominent than diagnosis framing*. This is because the competition for the hearts and minds of people involves building a

persuasive narrative about the desirability of independence, and constructing an appealing vision of the future is seen as a winning strategy by the agents of framing.

The expectation 2 (E2) is that the media can change the salience of arguments depending on the political reality. By giving extensive coverage and attention to certain arguments in the political discourse, the media can make them more salient. If the message loses its importance due to changes in the political circumstances, the media can shift focus to another argument.

The expectation 3 (E3) is that regional media, regardless of their political bias, tend to display a pro-regional bias when covering center-periphery debates. This is because newspapers with high readership in the region tend to reflect the prevailing trends in political debates and follow the messages from leading political forces. Since regionalist parties are the leading political forces in such debates, it is important to study their framing strategies as a part of their strategic choices.

Finally, *the expectation 4 (E4) is that the strategies of regionalist parties are expected to be subsuming.* This means that the framing strategies used by these parties are likely to encompass multiple issues and arguments, rather than focusing on a single issue or argument. Overall, these theoretical expectations highlight the importance of studying the strategies used by regionalist parties and the role of the media in shaping political discourse.

The operationalisation of Zaller (1996) approach requires the choice of a reference point. *One-sided positive* and *one-sided negative* messages are considered not in terms of emotions or reflections on a particular issue but regarding the article attitude on the center-periphery dimension. That is why the categories are *pro-center* and *pro-region*. *The pro-center message* is coded when the directional bias showing a positive image of central government or supporting centralism is evident. The cases of critique of regional government policies also fall into this category. *The pro-region message* means the directional bias and shows a negative image of central government or support secessionism. The cases of central government critique are coded into this category. Notably, pro-region messages do not necessarily mean pro-independence, it captures rather vague direction in favor of regionalism. In this sense, pro-region bias is close to regionalism

as discussed in the section 1.1. and based on conceptualization of De Winter (2003), Dandoy (2010), and Masseti and Schakel (2015). A *two-sided message* is a balanced piece of information showing both positive and negative images of central government or secessionism. A two-sided message either shows support or criticise both parts of the debate or provide neutral information such as statistics, opinion polls, or report of the events. These three categories of messages are mutually exclusive.

The categories of frames are also mutually exclusive. One piece of text may contain one of the frames: diagnostic, prognostic, or motivational. However, message directions and frames are not mutually exclusive. For example, one piece of text may have a pro-region bias and motivational framing. It is important to note that frames are coded only in case of pro-region bias with independentist demands. In other words, I analyze frames only when there is a direct bias in favor of independence. If the article has a pro-center bias, the frames are not coded. The reason is not to overcomplicate the scheme because the immediate attention is to study how secessionist demands are framed in the discourse. Adding frames to pro-center messages would require distinguishing between pro-region and pro-center frames and involve the further study of counter-frame influence. My research seeks to understand which type of frame (diagnosis, prognostic, or motivational) is more presented in framing secessionist demands and their proportional relations.

Another important note regarding the overlap between the direction of messages and their framing is that some messages were coded just as *pro-region* without additional attribution of framing. There is the case when a message has a clear *pro-region* direction but do not imply any reference to the demands of independence. In other words, frames are coded only when the *pro-region* message contains the reference to independence demands. In this case, it is important to understand how exactly the independence claim is framed. For example, ‘UK economic strategy is dominated by the needs of London and the south-east and Scotland is simply a distant and peripheral region’ (‘Great Prophets and Losses in the Debate on Independence,’ 2014). This message is coded as pro-region because it is biased against the central state, but no reference for

independence claims is tracked. The following message was coded as both pro-region and motivational: ‘The Union forces Scotland to spend our taxes on HS2 and HS3 instead of the A82 and A83. The only answer is independence’(Morris, 2014). It presented the negative information about the central state policy on the region and proposed the resolution to this issue – independence.

According to the studied literature, all the discursive arguments have been divided into three categories: legitimacy, economy, and political. Each category has three sub-arguments. These arguments can be communicated to the audience with a particular direction of the message and, in the case of justifying secessionism, with specific framing. The following paragraph explains the content of each argument in general terms; therefore, the list of examples illustrating each sub-argument is not exhaustive. Notably, the illustration is made from the *pro-region* part; however, the *pro-center* side also used the same argument but in a completely different meaning. Instead of articulating the identity distinctiveness, they justify the cultural unity; instead of blaming central state authorities for inadequate economic accommodation, they argue that the central state reforms are beneficial for Scotland/Catalonia; instead of ensuring the audience that Scotland/Catalonia will be a part of the EU in case of secession, they stress the idea of immediate withdrawal of these regions.

The *legitimacy* arguments justify secessionism in terms of legitimate reasons rooted in the legal norms, identity distinctiveness, or the people support as legitimising power of independence claims. The *democratic principle* sub-argument generally includes the demands for a referendum, the articulation of the right to decide, and the appeal to the principle of self-determination. The *democratic support* sub-argument coded in reference to the public demonstrations like *La Diada*, the reports on the attitudinal changes in the support for independence, the letters from the readers where they express their personal opinion on the secessionist process, and politician’s appeals that they demand secession because the majority of Scots/Catalans wants it. The *national sovereignty* sub-argument represents a sovereign right of a particular stateless territory, the cultural and identity

reasons. The main topics to fall into this category are the articulation of cultural distinctiveness, the distant identity from the Spanish/British, and the support for the regional language. For example, this argument was salient during the 2012 Olympic Games in London or the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Scotland.

The *economic arguments* subsume the economic problems into the *center-periphery* cleavage. The *central state economic policy* sub-argument incorporates the economic reforms and their influence on the region's wellbeing, the discussion on the financial relations between the region and the central state, the allocation of resources, and the politics of constraints from Westminster/Madrid. The *economic crisis* sub-argument includes the consistent discussion of the economic crisis and the ways to resolve it. It also includes blaming regional/central authorities for the bad economic conditions and providing statistics and expert views on the current state of the economy in the region. The *prospects of a future independent economy* comprise the debates on currency in the independent Scotland/ Catalonia, the oil revenues future, the access to the common market, and the analytical reports on the Catalonia/Scotland economic future in case of separation.

The *political arguments* are related to the state's political structure, the redistribution of powers, and the territorial order of the state. The *demands for decentralisation* sub-argument touch a state's territorial composition, the power share between center and region. The main topics in this category are the fiscal pact, the devolution reforms, the promises of more powers to the region, and the demands to have more regional authority like control over tax policy or public institutions. The *failure to negotiate autonomy deal* sub-argument relates to the Statute of Autonomy failure in Catalonia, the discussion of the new Scotland Act, and some references to the previous autonomy deals between Madrid/London and Barcelona/Edinburgh. The *EU membership* sub-argument coded in relation to Barroso position on independence in Europe, the discussion of Scotland membership in case of Brexit, the Catalan slogan of 'Catalonia is a new state of Europe'.

Several important issues regarding the arguments coding should be clarified. Firstly, the developed scheme adequately addresses the political discourse on relations between center and

region. However, some minor topics are found in the discourse, but they are not considered in the proposed scheme. In Scotland, there are some discussions on the implications of independence to NATO membership and the future of Trident in Clyde (Faslane) naval base. These issues are related to the security implications of independence and do not fall into developed categories. However, these topics did not dominate the debates. Secondly, some state-wide political parties like the *PSOE* in Spain proposed federalism as a third way between centralism and independence. The references to the federal proposals from the state-wide parties were coded as *demands for decentralisation two-sided message*. Thirdly, the proposal of a new fiscal pact for Catalonia was one of the main topics in 2010-2012. Unlike the Statute of Autonomy, the project of the fiscal pact touches only the financial part of the relations between Spain and Catalonia and demand more powers and competencies in this sphere. Statute of Autonomy is a complex document similar to the regional Constitution in its design and consider all the possible political, economic, cultural, and social relations. That is why the references to the Statute of Autonomy are coded as *failure to negotiate autonomy deal*, whereas fiscal pact falls into category *demands for decentralisation*. Finally, discursive arguments contain both empirical causes and reasons that justify independence. Empirical causes can be socio-economic and socio-cultural and they mainly represent structural conditions for independence. Reasons that justify independence are discourses that are put forwarded by pro-secession actors. Even though I admit the importance of analytical distinction between these categories, my interest is in in connections. Theoretical reasons are linked to empirical causes because actors use more credible arguments that reflect as much as possible the empirical reality.

Overall, 11279 pieces of text are coded into message flows and frames. The number of studied articles is close to 15000. This rich amount of empirical data allows me to make a process tracing and analysis of media to reach solid conclusions. The coding was conducted with Atlas.ti program. The assignment of codes was done manually. To test the reliability of manual coding, the external expert has been asked to analyse 100 meaningful articles. Each newspaper in this sample was

represented by 25 random articles. The similarity ratio was 77 percent, which is considered an acceptable result to go further with the analysis. The examples of arguments, message flows, and frames are presented in *appendix*.

To sum up, media and the additional primary sources provide a rich empirical dataset for both processes tracing and frame and message flows analysis. The research design does not strictly consider the size of the article or the number of lines. The central unit is a piece of text representing a particular message or frame. It could be an article as a whole or several parts of the articles if they contain different messages. This framework allows to study and compare the cases.

Regional manifesto project

The analysis of political parties strategies is done by applying *Regional Manifesto Project* (RMP) approach. The main goal of RMP is to measure the political parties' strategies in multi-level systems using the content analysis of their electoral manifestos. Initially, it was designed to analyse party programs at national elections. Still, recently the methodology has been updated to cover the regional level in multi-level systems (*What Is the RMP?*, 2021).

The unit of analysis in RMP methodology is *quasi-sentence*. It is a coding unit including only one argument. *Quasi-sentence* is not always equal to grammar sentences; the text should be unitised and coded. *Quasi-sentence* contains exactly one statement or 'message' (Alonso et al., 2020). Introductory remarks of party leaders, section heading, statistics, tables of content are not considered as text and ignored in the coding process.

The natural sentence is cut into several quasi-sentences when the sentence contains two statements that are unrelated, or the statements are related but consider different aspects of a larger policy. Examples, reasoning, and explanations are not separate quasi-sentences because they do not contain a separate argument (Alonso et al., 2020).

There are two steps in converting the party manifesto into RMP data. The first step is unitising text. At this step, the text is divided into quasi-sentences referring to the number of unique

statements made by political parties. The next step is coding, where each quasi-sentence is assigned a code referring to the political dimensions (Alonso et al., 2020).

Code of quasi-sentence has a two-digit structure. The first number refers to the territorial preferences of the party, the second part of the code is related to the policy preferences. Territorial authority claims consider the level of administration to be addressed or the relationships between the levels. The territorial claim can address one level of government, and then the preferred degree of authority for that level is considered. Also, the quasi-sentence may refer to more than one level of governance, and then the relationships between the levels are indicated. In sum, table 2.2.1. summarizes 20 codes related to the territorial dimensions derived from Alonso et al. (2020: p. 9).

Table 2.2.1. An overview of territorial preferences

Code	Explanation
10	Local level (No explicit claim for more or less authority)
11	Less authority for the local level
12	More authority for the local level
20	Regional level (No explicit claim for more or less authority)
21	Less authority for the regional level
22	More authority for the regional level
30	National level (No explicit claim for more or less authority)
31	Less authority for the national level
32	More authority for the national level
80	European level (No explicit claim for more or less authority)
81	Less authority for the European level
82	More authority for the European level
90	International level (No explicit claim for more or less authority)
91	Less authority for the international level
92	More authority for the international level
00	No level addressed, no territorial authority claim
01	In favor of a subsidiary principle
02	In favor of clear (jurisdictional) distinction between levels (accountability)
03	In favor of shared authority between some levels, including explicit calls for cooperation or coordination between higher and lower levels (vertical cooperation)
09	More than one level addressed at the same time; including all levels

The second part of the quasi-sentence code is assigned to the policy preferences classified by several domains. These domains are external relations, freedom and democracy, political system,

economy, welfare and quality of life, the fabric of society, social groups, gender¹. In general, the code to the quasi-sentence has the structure: XX_YYYY, where XX is the territorial preference, and YYYY(Y) is the policy preference of the political party (Alonso et al., 2020). The general calculation rule is that the number of quasi-sentences dedicated to each category is computed as a percentage of the overall quasi-sentences in the manifesto.

RMP allows the researcher to operationalise regionalist parties strategies in multi-level systems. Each party can give importance to the issue, denoted by the term *saliency*, and show its position on the territorial and economic dimensions.

The *saliency* is calculated at the percentage of quasi-sentences assigned to the particular dimension. There are two types of saliency in our case: territorial saliency (percentage related to the center-periphery dimension) and economic saliency (percentage related to the 'left-right dimension). The saliency range is between 0 and 100, where 0 means that the party gives no importance to the dimension, and 100 indicates that the party dedicates all the manifesto to this dimension (Alonso, Cabeza & Gomez, 2015).

The *position* is calculated by subtracting the percentages belonging to opposite categories. The position is calculated on economic dimension and range from -100, meaning that the party stands exclusively on the economic left to +100, meaning that the party positions itself as a strictly economic right. The same logic is on territorial dimension: -100 means the party is pro-center, and +100 position party as exclusively pro-region (Alonso, Cabeza & Gomez, 2015).

The positional *blurring* reflects the simultaneous presence of arguments for and against the same issue. It is calculated as subtraction of pro- and con-arguments on both dimensions and then the division of this figure in absolute values by the total number of quasi-sentences assigned to the dimension. The operationalised range of positional blurring is from 1 for a completely clear position on the issue to 0 for a blurred position (Alonso, Cabeza & Gomez, 2015).

¹ This is a new category that was not used in the coding to analyse 2010-2016 regional electoral manifestos in Scotland and Catalonia

The saliency scores are interpreted in relative terms rather than in absolute ones. The main look is at the relative weight of territorial issues vis-à-vis economic ones. It is computed as a ratio between the saliency of economic and territorial dimensions. A value of 1 means that both dimensions are equally important in relation to each other. A value greater than 1 refers to the relative importance of the economic dimension; a value less than 1 indicates that the party gives more salience to the territorial dimension. To operationalise the territorial domains, the codes of RMP has been selected (table 2.2.2.). The economic dimension is operationalised by all codes in domain 4 (Economy) of the RMP. In particular, codes 403 (market regulation), 404 (economic planning), 406 (protectionism: positive), 412 (controlled economy), 413 (nationalization) refer to economic left dimension. The codes 401 (free enterprise), 402 (incentives), 407 (protectionism: negative), 414 (economic orthodoxy) refer to the economic right dimension (Alonso, Cabeza & Gomez, 2015: p. 862).

Table 2.2.2. Codes on the territorial dimension from Regional Manifesto Project

Code(s)	Explanation	Direction
32	All quasi-sentences asking for authority for the national level	Pro-center
21	All quasi-sentences asking for less authority for the regional level	Pro-center
30_(601,6015,6016,608)	State-building policies promotion	Pro-center
20_602	Statements against regional nationalism	Pro-center
20_302 30_302	Positive statement about centralisation	Pro-center
22	Claims of more competencies for regional level	Pro-region
31	Claims of fewer competencies for the national level	Pro-region
20_(601,6015,6016,608)	Regional-building policies promotion	Pro-region
30_602	Statements against state nationalism	Pro-region
20_(301,3013,3014) 30_301	Statements in favor of decentralisation	Pro-region

Source: derived from Alonso, Cabeza & Gomez (2015: p. 861)

The operationalisation of position, salience and blurring allows the researcher to identify political parties' strategies. The *one-dimensional strategy* defines the situation when the regionalist

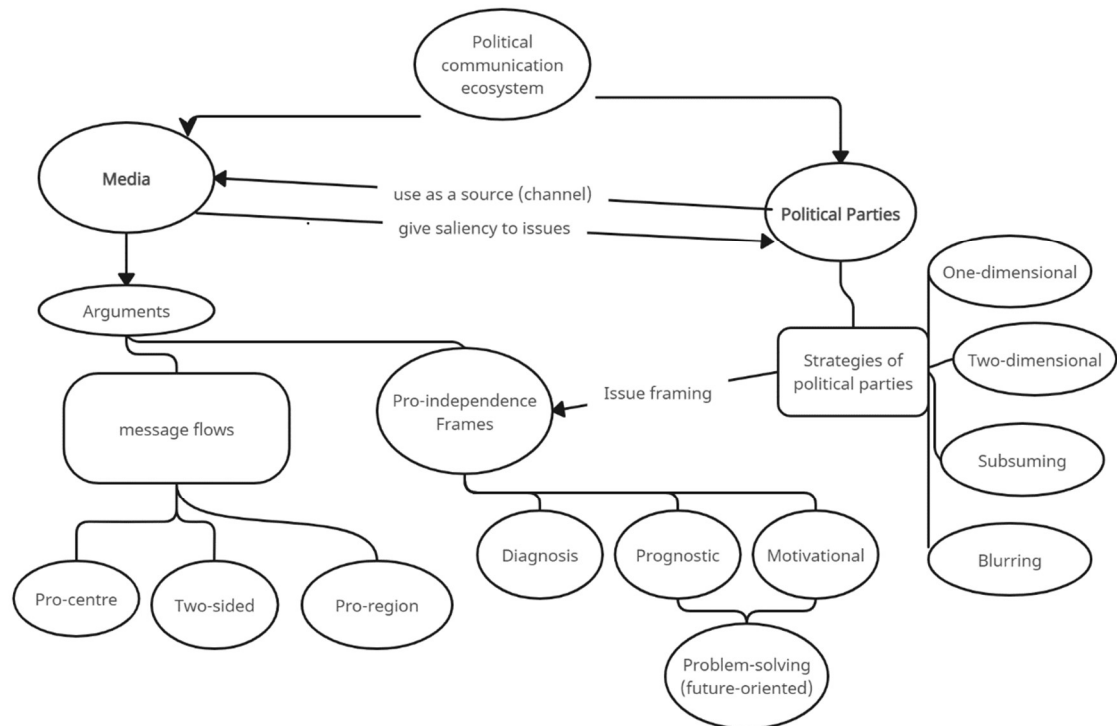
party gives saliency mainly to the territorial dimension setting aside the economic one (Elias et al., 2015). The *two-dimensional strategy* clearly defines the position of the regionalist party along the economic and territorial scale, giving importance to the two dimensions (Elias et al., 2015). The *blurring strategy* means that the regionalist party adopts a blurred position along the economic dimension (Alonso, Cabeza & Gomez, 2015). Following the Alonso, Cabeza, and Gomez (2015) approach, the *blurring* of the position on the secondary dimension exists when the indicator is below 0.5. The regionalist party emphasises both dimensions in the case of the 20-80 proportion ratio between economic and territorial dimensions. When the proportion is not reached, the regionalist party ignores the secondary dimension.

The operationalisation of the *subsuming strategy* requires a more qualitative rather than quantitative approach. Elias et al. (2015: 845) define this strategy as framing issues associated with the second dimension in core dimension terms. For regionalist parties, it means that economic issues are framed in terms of national identity discourse. The *issue framing* defines in the same approach as Goffman (1974). It represents 'the concrete argument used by political actors to define, represent and justify their position on a specific dimension' (Basile, 2015: 890). The list of frames is presented in the next section.

According to Anderson (2016), media and political parties are interconnected in the political communication ecosystem. Graph 2.2.1 provides a brief overview of their interconnections in the context of regionalist parties. Regionalist parties with secessionist programs use media to promote their political agendas and views on territorial conflicts, and regional newspapers give them a platform for visibility. However, the media ultimately controls the coverage and saliency of these debates. Despite this, my research found that more than 80% of all messages related to center-periphery issues come from political party leaders, emphasizing the need to study both media and regionalist parties' strategies. Media has the power to present arguments with particular biases, such as pro-centre, pro-region, or two-sided. Additionally, both media and political parties use

framing techniques to present arguments in a specific way, with issue framing being a strategic choice for regionalist parties along with issue positioning and saliency.

Graph 2.2.1. Role of media and political parties in political communications



Source: author own contribution, inspired by Esser&Pfetsch (2020)

To sum up, the RMP presents the dataset to analyse the regionalist parties strategies in two-dimensional political space. The methodology is based on content analysis of parties manifestos. The *quasi-sentence* is the unit of study that refers to one argument in the text. The quantitative approach allows operationalising *one-dimensional*, *two-dimensional*, *blurring strategies*. The operationalisation of *subsuming strategy* requires the analysis of rhetoric used in the manifestos as well as issue framing in core dimensional terms.

Conclusion

Understanding processes within the short-term changes in attitudes towards independence requires a detailed look at the cases under investigation. The phenomenon of regionalism is studied in the context of Catalan and Scottish independence growth by using most-similar cases comparative analysis, process tracing, content analysis. This approach allows generating conclusions that are representative in the given context of systemic secessionism within the EU.

The study analyses the period of the drastic rise in independence sentiments to bring to the fore the changes in discourse by claiming that framing and media bias plays a crucial role in this mechanism. My research will analyse all the relevant political events and how they have been reflected in the public discourse during the study period. That is why the process tracing is used to understand how the secessionist agenda evolved in both cases. The comparison of Scotland and Catalonia allows finding the common patterns of changes and uncovering the unique features of the process evolution.

The main contribution of the research is highlighting the role of media and political communication in territorial debates. The theoretical literature suggests many explanations for increases in independence sentiments. Frames and message flows are operationalised in the analytical scheme, which catches the territorial discourse profoundly. This scheme simultaneously addresses the particular argument to justify secessionist demands, the bias of this message, and how it is framed. Each argument does not exist alone in the discourse. It should try to convince the audience by using bias and framing. The role of media can be studied only by simultaneously analysing both instruments.

Precisely, my research is going to uncover the link between the theoretical arguments of secessionism and their role in the public discourse empirically, by analysing the content of the message flows and demonstrate which explanations are used to justify secessionism in the public discourse and to what extent these messages are one-sided or two-sided and how they are communicated to the people. As far as regionalist parties are both the primary actors in agenda-

setting and the main beneficiaries of secessionist debates in terms of electoral votes, their strategies to gain these results are studied using the content analysis of their manifestos with RMP approach and their discourses in the regional newspapers.

To sum up, the study of secessionism in Europe requires reliable cases to address the issue. These cases are Catalonia and Scotland because they experienced the fast growth of independence sentiments in a relatively short period of time. The comparative approach should generate representative outcomes because the experimental methods in social sciences are limited, and a comparison is a good substitution for it. The process tracing of cases under investigation provides insides in the process and highlights the important events and political decisions that may affect independence sentiments. The analysis of manifestos using the RMP methodology allows discovering the regionalist parties strategies in the context of secessionism growth. Finally, the media and frame analysis highlights the role of media and shows how media communicate to politicians' arguments to support independentism.

3. Catalan Independence Process (2010-2014)

The first attempt to secede from Spain was made during the Thirty Years' War. In 1640, Catalonia declared its independence, but the actual experience of independent rule lasted no more than a year. In 1641 Catalonia came under the jurisdiction of France, entering into a conspiracy with Cardinal Richelieu. But the capture of Barcelona by the Spaniards in 1652 returned Catalonia to the Spanish crown (Orlov, 2010).

However, Catalonia did not abandon attempts to secede. And the next opportunity erupted during the War of the Spanish Succession. But Catalans failed. Having relied on the Archduke Charles in the struggle for the Spanish throne, the Catalans had a fatal miscalculation. In 1714 Barcelona was forced to surrender to the Bourbon army. The result of the War of Spanish Succession was the loss of many privileges, the Catalan parliament was dissolved, and the local authorities were subjected to repression (Medrano, 1995).

The revival of Catalan secessionism was rather slow. Catalonia has its own national, distinctive language - Catalan. However, starting with King Philip V in 1711, who issued a decree on the widespread spread of the Castilian language, the Catalan language was subjected to discrimination (Volkova, 2014). It was only in the 19th century that it received a second life and was associated with the revival of the Catalan language, as well as with the activities of such personalities as Joaquim Rubió i Ors and Valentín Almirall (Gabriel, 2000).

In the 20th century, with the spread of the ideas of the First International and the emergence of the labour movement in this territory, a stream of catalanism was formed. Its main task was to establish the cultural, political, and linguistic identity of Catalonia. The ideas of regionalism and autonomy of Catalonia were gaining popularity. At the beginning of Spanish Civil War, Catalanism transformed into Catalan nationalism (Gabriel, 2000).

Catalonia received its autonomy in 1931 after the abolition of the monarchy in Spain. In 1932, the General Cortes approved the article on the independence of Catalonia. But after the right-wing

forces came to power (1933), it was frozen and then re-introduced after the victory of the Popular Front in the elections in 1936 (Orlov, 2015).

During the 1930s, Catalonia obtained autonomy within Spain with its own regional parliament and government. However, the Francoist dictatorship that followed the Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1939 repressed cultural rights for national minorities in Spain, including the Basques, Galicians, and Catalans, and imposed Spanish nationalism on state institutions (Balcells & Kuo, 2021).

Catalonia received autonomy only in 1979, after the end of the Franco regime and the introduction of the 1978 Constitution. This Constitution made possible the adoption of the new Autonomy Statute of Catalonia with additional political powers (Requejo & Sanjaume-Calvet, 2015).

The Catalan autonomy and special position in the territorial organization of the Spanish state was reflected in the Statute of Autonomy in 1979. In 2005 the Catalan Parliament adopted the proposal to reform the 1979 Statute by 120 deputies out of 135 seats. The Spanish Congress supported the draft by all parties except for the Popular Party (esp. *Partido Popular* – PP). In May 2006, the amendment text passed through the Spanish Parliament. Only two parties were against (for opposite reasons) – the PP and *ERC*. However, the *ERC* abstained the vote in Senate in order not to block the proposal. A referendum was held on 18 June 2006 and approved the new Statute by 78 percent of voters, though with only 49 percent of turnout. The PP appealed to the Constitutional Court of Spain (esp. *Tribunal Constitucional* – TC) and questioned 187 articles of the Statute (Visens, 2007).

Support for independence fluctuated between 14 and 19 percent at the time of *tripartit* rule. Given the focus on the new statute, independence claims were not on the agenda. Even before the socialist rule the nationalism of Pujol was autonomist, not independentist. Sanjaume-Calvet (2017) argues that the Catalan nationalist considered the Statute of 1979 as a win-win deal and ‘being moderate means that, on the one hand, you help Spain to democratize and, on the other hand, we

got power and money for Catalonia.’ The *CiU* was a coalition of the Democratic Convergence of Catalonia (cat. *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya – CDC*) and Democratic Union of Catalonia (cat. *Unió Democràtica de Catalunya – UDC*). But starting from the 2010s, the trend considerably changed in favor of the pro-independence territorial demands. Catalan nationalism, between 1977 and 2010, has been divided between autonomist and center-right *CiU* (the dominant force) and independentist and leftist *ERC* (Muñoz & Guinjoan, 2013).

Starting from 2003 regional elections the power in Catalonia transited from the coalition of *CiU* and *PP*, which had kept the *CiU* leader Pujol in power in 1999, to the three left-wing party coalition (*tripartit*). The *tripartit* is the Socialist Party of Catalonia (cat. *Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya – PSC*), *ERC*, Initiative for Catalonia Greens–United and Alternative Left (cat. *Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds–Esquerra Unida i Alternativa - ICV–EUiA*). *Tripartit* substituted the *CiU* in power after more than 23 years of Catalan nationalist dominance and was the final point of decline of *CiU* starting from the 1995 regional elections. The *CiU* still received the majority of seats but not enough to govern Catalonia. It was also the first elections for Mas as the leader of *CiU*. The President of *Generalitat* became Maragall from the *PSC* and under his leadership the project of the new Statute was adopted. Maragall was replaced by Montilla in 2006, after a snap regional election which confirmed the *tripartit* as the ruling government coalition. (Requejo & Sanjaume-Calvet, 2015)

The *tripartit* rule coincided with the world financial crisis which also damaged Spain and Catalonia. Unsatisfactory economic performance and deep recession damaged the image of the left coalition. The *ERC* also lost its electoral credibility because the coalition with *PSC* contradicted their independentist stance and forced them to compromise many of their core territorial demands (Elias, 2015).

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the sovereignty process in Catalonia between 2010 and 2014. The close look at the political events and the reaction of political elites help to trace the process and understand how it evolves from the marginal support for independence to the main

issue in the political agenda. The main focus is the evolution of the growing support for independence in Catalonia within this period. The main data used is the message flows and frames derived from the two leading media in Catalonia: *La Vanguardia*, *el Periodico*. Each article related to the Spanish – Catalan relations has been analyzed in terms of framed communications and message flows in order to understand how discourse changed in the study period. The chapter is divided into 6 paragraphs: 3.1. discusses the main events in 2010 and shows the outcomes of the *TC* ruling and regional elections of 2010; 3.2. outlines the developments of 2011 including the national elections; 3.3. analyses the year of the most drastic rise in independence support (2012); 3.3. discusses the sovereignty process of 2013 towards the referendum of independence; 3.4. put attention on the events of 2014 such as the political consultation in Catalonia. Finally, 3.6 overviews the longitudinal trend changes in message flows and frames in the Catalan media.

This chapter presents data mainly derived from the media coverage of the independence process in Catalonia on a daily basis. Apart from the media reports, this chapter employs the direct speeches of politicians, Parliamentary press releases, sociological data, and legislative documents. The goal is to trace the independent process in Catalonia and understand the connections between the events and their representation in media. This chapter takes into account the role of party competition in the independence process.

Each paragraph traces the ‘story’ of each year such as political events, reactions, comments, party electoral programs and positions, changes of attitudes. This is a media study because media remains the main communicative channel for messages and frames which affect public opinion. The analysis of this chapter is an in-depth analysis of how newspapers’ messages interact in the unfolding process.

To navigate the story, the table introduces the main actors of the Catalan process which were actively presented by media in the political discourse by 2010.

Table 3.0. The main political actors in Catalonia and Spain

Actor	Short description
Artur Mas	The leader of <i>CiU</i> from 2003 and President of Catalonia (2010-2016)
Jordi Pujol	The President of Catalonia (1980 – 2003), <i>CiU</i>
Oriol Pujol	The Speaker of the <i>CiU</i> in the Catalan Parliament (2007 – 2010)
Pasqual Maragall	The President of Catalonia (2003-2006), <i>PSC</i>
José Montilla	The President of Catalonia (2006-2010), <i>PSC</i>
José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero	The Prime Minister of Spain (2004-2011), Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (esp. <i>Partido Socialista Obrero Español – PSOE</i>)
Joaquím Nadal	The leader of opposition in the Catalan Parliament (2010-2012), <i>PSC</i>
Josep Antoni Duran i Lleida	The leader of the <i>UDC</i> , the General Secretary of the <i>CiU</i>
Joan Puigcercós	The <i>ERC</i> president (2008-2011)
Alícia Sánchez Camacho	The leader of Catalan PP
Mariano Rajoy	The leader of PP and Prime Minister of Spain (2011-2018)
Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba	The Secretary General of <i>PSOE</i> (2012-2014)
Carme Chacón	Minister of Defence (2008-2011), <i>PSC</i>
Joan Herrera	The leader of <i>ICV-EUiA</i>
Albert Rivera	The leader of Civilians (esp. <i>Ciudadanos – C's</i>)

The rest of important actors will be introduced in the paragraphs as they enter the political discourse in Catalonia. The analysis is designed year-by-year, so the main developments covered by the study period are the Statute of Autonomy Failure, the Regional Elections of 2010, the National Elections 2011, *la Diada* 2012, Regional Elections 2012, Declaration of Sovereignty 2013, and non-binding referendum 2014.

3.1. Catalonia in 2010: The Statute of Autonomy Failure and Regional Elections

Before the Constitutional Court ruling

Catalonia entered the new decade having *tripartit* (*PSC*, *ERC*, *IVC*) in power and *CiU* as the main opposition party. The political debates were concentrated around the economic crisis in Spain, the long-awaited decision of the TC about the Statute of Autonomy 2006, and the upcoming regional elections where *CiU* was considered as a favourite to end up the left coalition rule in Catalonia.

Artur Mas was proclaimed as a *CiU* candidate for presidency in January. Mas asked for ‘considerable majority to bring about the changes needed for Catalonia and recover after the *tripartit* rule’ (Gisbert, 2010a:16). The general criticism of the socialist rule was one of the important electoral messages from Mas. In line with such a criticism, the *CiU* voted against the ley of popular consultations, considering it as a ‘step back in the Catalan autonomy’ and a ‘concession for Zapatero government’ (Ellakuria, 2010a:15). According to the draft, central government is the only authority authorizing the public consultations via referendum which contradicts with the *CiU* vision because article 122 of the new Statute reserves this competence for *Generalitat*. This law was entered into force in April 2010 thanks for *tripartit* majority.

The criticism of the socialist coalition has been prominent not only for the *CiU* but also for media. In February, Ernest Maragall presented the electoral program of the *PSC* but he received a rather critical feedback, for example, from *La Vanguardia*, saying that ‘*el tripartit* does not have either leader, project, or program; it is only inertness and panic’ (Álvaro, 2010:14).

The popular consultations about independence mainly supported by the *ERC* and *CUP* continued in 80 municipalities. This project started in 2009 and had the aim to demonstrate the popular support for independence by conducting municipal consultations. The results showed the 21 percent of participation, 92 percent of which supported independence. The highest participation was in the municipality *La Nou de Bergueda* (56 percent of electorate). Even though being criticized by the central authorities, these consultations did not meet serious legal standards but

was successful in terms of organization (Ellakuria, 2010b). Moreover, the proposal for popular consultations via referendum was supported by *CiU*, *ERC*, and *ICV* in the Catalan Parliament to build up the legal ground for the official holding of a referendum about independence (Gisbert, 2010b).

The spring period in Catalonia was dominated by the upcoming decision of the *TC* regarding the Statute. The *TC* was highly divided regarding the final sentence and could not come up with the final decision. In March, *TC* lacked one vote against to fail the Statute and in April the situation repeated (Cols, 2010). It provoked the tense reaction among the Catalan parties and confirmed the existed since 1930s center-periphery cleavage on the issue.

Catalan parties insisted on the full renovation of the *TC* because of their inability to make the final decision and because the mandates of many judges expired. Mas called to ‘defend the position in which Constitutional Court would not touch any word in the text approved by Catalan people’ (Sen & Gisbert, 2010). Montilla added that ‘I will defend the Statute from the first to the last word’ (Sen & Gisbert, 2010). On the contrary, *PSOE* and *PP* allied in the defense of the *TC*. Zapatero said that he agrees with Mariano Rajoy in impossibility to change judges during the process and question the state institutions (Barbeta, 2010a). At the end of April, the Catalan Parliament declared the incompetence of the *TC* by 87 percent of parties’ support (*PSC*, *ERC*, *ICV-EUiA*, *CiU*) referring to the ‘maximum legitimacy of the Statute’ and asking to ‘respect the will of Catalan citizens’ (Sabria, 2010:18). The *CiU* insisted that the key problematic figure in the possible Statute failure is Zapatero and not Rajoy. That is why they called Montilla to put pressure on the Government if they really want to prevent the *TC* negative decision.

The Catalan Parliament decision stayed in line with the sociological data on people’s attitudes towards the Statute. The census data provides that 48% of respondents thought that the Constitutional Court of Spain was not legitimate and 57% thought that the Court cannot dictate constitutionality of the Statute accepted by the referendum (“Los Catalanes Niegan Legitimidad al Constitucional Para Juzgar El Estatut,” 2010). With regards to this topic, Catalan respondents

accused Zapatero (28%) and Rajoy (30%) for the possible Statute failure. In other words, Catalan people connected the Statute failure with the Spanish central authorities.

Spanish authorities denied the possibility to renew the TC and blocked all the Parliamentary initiatives to change the status quo. In the context of the Statute debates, Mas brought to the fore the very important legitimacy argument noted in the Catalan discourse as a 'right to decide': 'Catalonia has the right to decide as a people and a nation. When Spain closes the doors for the project of self-government, we have to articulate the right to decide in other way' (Julbe, 2010:15). Apart from the 'right to decide', Mas brought together all the most important issues which are going to dominate the public discourse the following years such as fiscal pact and the support for referendum: 'We have to go from autonomous to sovereign Catalonia and exercise the right to decide on the economic agreement in the next legislature' (Barbeta, 2010b:13). It is important to note that *CiU* promoted sovereignty as an alternative to independence as well as economic agreement (fiscal pact) as an issue to vote for exercising the 'right to decide'. The fiscal pact is the proposal to have the sovereign tax system similar to the Basque Country and Navarra. It was presented to the public few days before the decision of TC on the Statute of Autonomy.

During the study period, Mas referred to the 'right to decide' for the first time. This term was initially introduced in 2005 as a demand for a self-determination referendum by the Platform for the Right to Decide. This platform was formed by approximately 700 civic associations. (Lopez & Sanjaume, 2020). During that period, supporters of the 'right to decide' claimed that the negotiation process for a new Statute in the Spanish Congress should respect the will of the Catalan parliament. Therefore, they initially defended the 'right to decide' by linking it to the respect for the Catalan Parliament's will (Lopez & Sanjaume, 2020). Initially, Mas framed it in a way that links the 'right to decide' with fiscal pact and, to some extent, linked it with the Statute reform.

Statute of Autonomy Failure

The *TC* approved 90 percent of the provisions of the Autonomous statute in his final ruling of 28 June 2010. However, it declared unconstitutional fundamental articles for Catalonia. In short, all the changes can be summarized as follows:

- *Nation*: The Court preserves the declaration of Catalonia as a nation in the preamble but marks it as not having the legal meaning because it contradicts the art.2 of the Spanish Constitution.
- *Justice*: The Court annulled the establishment of the Council of Justice in Catalonia pretended to have powers to sanction judges
- *Language*: The Court annulled the word ‘preferred’ in the reference to the use of Catalan language in the administration and media and substituted by the word ‘normal’ because they cannot have the preference between the two official languages.
- *Immersion*: The Constitution endorses linguistic immersion, that is, Catalan as a vehicular language in teaching, which had come to be jeopardized during the deliberations. It is constitutionally required that the two co-official languages be recognized as vehicular, without prejudice to the fact that the legislator may adopt measures aimed at correcting historical situations of imbalance.
- *Bilaterality*: The Court maintains the bilateral relationship between the *Generalitat* and the State, although it qualifies that it should always not to alter the exercise of the State's powers. The State always shows a superiority with respect to the autonomies. It can only be admitted as a principle of cooperation.
- *Financing*: The Statute establishes Catalan solidarity with other autonomous communities “as long as they carry out a similar fiscal effort”. In fact, it closes the door for any separate possibility of fiscal pact
- *Competences*: The definition of exclusive competences of the *Generalitat* of the Statute is maintained, but they must not overlap the exclusive competences of the State listed in the Constitution. (*Sentencia 31/2010*)

The general reaction for the Court decision could be divided into two groups: the negative reaction of the Catalan parties (especially the regionalist ones) and positive of the central parties and some of their regional branches (like the PP Catalan). *ERC* leader Joan Puigcercós wrote an article entitled ‘Adeu, Espanya’ (cat. Goodbye, Spain) where he accused Spanish authorities for ‘grave aggression against the collective right of Catalans’ and called for the ‘national transition till independence’ (“*ERC No Acata El Fallo y Llama a Una Transición Hacia La Independencia*,” 2010). Joan Herrera (ICV) noted that this decision is the clash of legitimacies between the TC and the people of Catalonia which endorsed the Statute via referendum (“*ERC No Acata El Fallo y Llama a Una Transición Hacia La Independencia*,” 2010). Mas said that the judges forgot that the laws are for the service of democracy and not the vice versa. He mentioned that ‘the constitutional pact is exhausted; <...> In the centers of state power (the *TC* is one of them), neither the existence or the persistence of the Catalan nation is understood or tolerated’ (Mas, 2010:19).

Zapatero showed his satisfaction by saying that ‘It is good that we have a final sentence. It is a sentence for tranquillity. The Statute is constitutional in its vast majority and guarantees the highest level of self-government that Catalonia has had in its history within constitutional and democratic Spain’ (Merino, 2010:12). The PP declared its agreement with the TC decision: ‘The ruling fulfils part of our appeal and confirms our doubts’. Evidently, the satisfaction of PP was more declarative than real because most of their pleas were not satisfied by the decision which gave the opportunity for the PSOE to mention that ‘The TC has endorsed 95 percent of the Statute and has struck down 92 percent of the claims of unconstitutionality presented by Rajoy's party. The PP has suffered a defeat in every rule’ (Merino & Del Riego, 2010:17).

The complex position had the PSC. Recently after the announcement of the *TC* decision, Montilla called for the manifestation in the defence of the Statute and declared the ‘grave irresponsibility’ of the TC (Baldoma, 2010:3). However, Chacón ensured that she is frankly satisfied with the decision which considers the Statute mostly constitutional (Barbeta, 2010c). This double positioning and the disagreements in the line PSOE-PSC were one of the clear peculiarities

of the political debates in this period. The *PSC* has always tried to play the middle ground between the regionalist parties asking for more sovereignty and independence (*ERC*) and the central authorities supporting the current redistribution of powers between the state and the regions. The *CiU* proclaimed its unity with the socialist coalition against the *TC* ruling but promised their support only till the public demonstration.

A public demonstration of 10 July (10-J) took to the streets about 1,1 million of people. It was the first massive act with the slogans ‘We are the nation!’, ‘Independence’, ‘Catalonia is the oppressed nation’, ‘Catalonia is not Spain’ (Rico & Tapounet, 2010). Following this massive response from the people, Catalan Parliament adopted the resolution of Montilla to disagree the sentence of the Constitutional Court of Spain regarding the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia by *PSC*, *ERC*, *CiU*, *ICV*. But this resolution was rejected by the Congress and *the Catalan socialist members* voted against the resolution of their own president in order not to break the party discipline with *PSOE*.

Regional elections of 2010

As proclaimed Mas, the 10-J was the last act of unity with left parties because they all have different stances on the future of Catalonia. To consolidate its position, the *CiU* put not so much attention on the development of the future autonomy of Catalonia and its possible independence but concentrates on the development of economy and measures to overcome the economic crisis. At the same time, in the reasoning about the crisis, Artur Mas appealed to the fiscal pact. He also mentioned the move towards the right to decide of the Catalans on issues including infrastructure, airports, Mediterranean railways and with a referendum on self-determination on the horizon (Ellakuria, 2010c). The fight against the economic crisis has been proclaimed as the main priority for the party in their electoral program (Echaz, 2010). In other words, the ‘right to decide’ was connotated with the economy and local problems and not with the independence. The ‘fiscal pact’ was also associated not with the demands for independence but was presented as ‘the only way to rebuild the distancing and disaffection that the Constitutional Court ruling against the Statute has

caused in Catalonia' (Gisbert, 2010c:15). It had the clear negative message against the center but not the problem-solving nature in terms of independence.

The *PSC* stood for more decentralized territorial organization of the state. Turra said that the *PSC* wants reforms to reach the federal state (Pagan & Hinojosa, 2010). The position of the *PSC* is to make the Constitutional changes, but they disagree to violate the *Carta Magna* (Constitution) or support the disruption of the state via Catalan independence.

The *ERC* was the staunch supporter of independence. Puigcercós claimed several conditions to enter the government coalition: the holding of a consultation on the future of Catalonia; the financial agreement (similar to fiscal pact); create a Catalan public financial system to meet the difficulties of loans to companies, the self-employed workers and households; establish a fair price regime for producers that enhances agricultural and livestock production ("Mas Desconfia y Herrera Dice Que Montilla Se Rinde," 2010).

The Catalan PP concluded the Barcelona Compromise with the PP leaders of the Basque Country and Galicia to develop the self-government of their ACs within the Constitutional frames and their respective Statutes in charge (Ellakuria, 2010d). The *ICV* was very critical regarding both the fiscal pact and the referendum. Herrera ensured that 'the economic agreement does not solve everything, if it goes to the Constitutional court, they will surely knock it down' and asked for dialogue between Madrid and Barcelona (Barbeta, 2010d:16).

The results of November elections ended the left-wing *trípartito* (*PSC*, *ERC*, *ICV*) and gave 62 seats for *CiU* in Parliament (table 3.1.1) with 60% of participation.

Table 3.1.1. Election results in Catalonia, 2010

Party	%	Seats
CiU	38.4	62
PSC	18.4	28
PP	12.4	18
ICV-EUiA	7.4	10
ERC	7.0	10
C-PC	3.4	3
SI	3.3	4
Other	6.9	
Blank	2.9	
Null	0.7	
Abstention	41.2	
Total	100	135

Source: compiled from Rico 2012, p. 225.

The *CiU* received a relative majority of seats that made impossible to form government without them. But they lacked 6 seats for the absolute majority which required the support or, at least, abstention of one party to make Mas the president. Mas presented his program in December. The proposal that generated the most controversy was to initiate a “national transition towards the right to decide” in order to "redefine the Catalonia-Spain relationship" that must lead to the fiscal pact (Barbeta, 2010e).

Mas has ensured that there is a broad majority that supports the fiscal pact. According to data, among the *ERC* voters, 96 percents of respondents would support it, as well as 74 percent of the *PSC* voters and 37 percent of the PP. (“Una Amplia Mayoría Quiere El Concierto,” 2010). But the opposition parties (PP and *PSC*) interpreted the ‘national transition’ as a project for ‘independence in instalments’. Alicia Sánchez-Camacho hinted that initially the PP was willing to surprise and support the investiture of Artur Mas, but ‘the Catalan transition’ forced them to rectify (Hinojosa, 2010: 15). Finally, the *CiU* made a deal with the *PSC* which abstention in the second round of vote made Mas the next president of Catalonia (Tomas, 2010). The new head of the *PSC* Nadal became the leader of opposition. The *CiU* formed the minority government alone.

To sum up, 2010 is characterized by the relatively slight but stable growth of secessionism and dominance of ‘failure to negotiate autonomy deal’ message in the public discourse about

Catalonia-Spain relations. It is possible to track that "problem-solving" frames are not predominantly used and political leaders and other actors tend not to evidently refer to independence as the resolution of the conflict. Whereas the frame bringing in the alignment process appeared and let to see how the frame alignment process will develop later.

3.2. Catalonia in 2011: Austerity and National Elections

Fiscal pact and independence consultations

The newly elected President of Generalitat Mas started the year with the discussion of possible financial constraints that the central government was planning to impose to the Autonomous Communities. He accused the central government and the politics of the socialist coalition for the Catalan debt (Gisbert, 2011a:10). But the central state authorities stated that Mas has to find the way to resolve the economic crisis and stop trying to find the external enemies. The parliamentary spokesman, Millo (PP), has considered that 'It is disappointing that in the initial moments of the legislature, when the president must define the lines of his project to get Catalonia out of the crisis, he dedicates himself to stoking the fire between Catalonia and Spain.' (Azpeitia, 2011a:11). But Mas continued his rhetoric and accused Spanish political parties of using Catalonia as an electoral weapon and reacted that Catalonia is untouchable (Gisbert, 2011b).

Mas put considerable attention to economy saying that this it is the most controversial part of Spanish-Catalan relations, especially after the failure of Statute. As stated Barbeta (2011b:12) in *La Vanguardia* editorial, 'The finance and economy prevails on the political relations between Catalonia and Spain and it is the way to resolve the disaster about the Statute'.

This topic was the reason for tensions between Mas and Zapatero. Zapatero stated that all Autonomies should comply with the objectives of the deficit (Izquierdo, 2011a). On the contrary, Mas proposed the fiscal pact as an alternative for the current state-of-affairs but for Zapatero this was impossible. Added fuel to the argument for the fiscal pact the report of *La Vanguardia* stating that Catalanian people contribute the highest amount of tax payments in Spain (Barbeta, 2011c). Another candidate for Presidency, Rajoy avoided making definite statements about the economic agreement. He limits himself to say that "When the fiscal pact was planned, we were listening with attention" (Antich, 2011).

At the end of March, the government adopted the plan of double constraints on Catalonia. Among conditions, Spain obliged Catalonia to drastically decrease the debt (20 percent) and

rejected Mas-Colell plan (10 percent only). According to this amendment, a special law must establish the maximum percentage of the budget deficit depending on the level of GDP. Only in case of natural disaster, economic recession or in a situation where social damage can be real it will be possible to exceed the established maximum of deficit. The *CiU* advocated that autonomous communities should be allowed to take final decisions on the highest level of budget deficit (Seco & Blanco, 2011). The amendment to the Constitution further limited the powers of autonomous communities. For this reason, the representatives of the *CiU* abstained from voting on the amendment. *La Vanguardia* framed this event as an institutional conflict between Spain and Catalonia. Mas provided a very loaded definition that ‘Catalonia is the Germany of Spain’ and added that ‘Spain is living above the own possibilities meanwhile Catalonia is below ones’ (Barbeta, 2011d). Duran notes that ‘as in the case of Germany with Europe, we are tired of paying for subsidies to live elsewhere’ (Azpeitia, 2011b:18). In September, the *PSOE* and the PP jointly give the green light to the Constitutional reform that establishes as a constitutional obligation to pay debts and interests to banks before meeting any other commitment. This act was interpreted negatively in Catalonia as ‘privatization of the Constitution by the PP and the *PSOE*’. (Barbeta, 2011e)

Mas in 2010-2011 avoided the topic of independentism. He always refers to the ‘right to decide’, ‘sovereignty’ but not independence. Simultaneously, major changes occurred in the leadership of his own party – *CDC*. O. Pujol (the son of J. Pujol) was elected as the secretary general of the *CDC*. In his inauguration speech, O. Pujol noted the importance of the development and preservation of the Catalan nation for its viability (Vivanco, 2011). His father later added that ‘Catalonia will have to decide between surrender or independence’ (Barbeta, 2011a:12). The next round of municipal consultations about independence signaled the first division within the *CiU* regarding this topic. Mas surprisingly voted in favor of secession whereas his colleague Duran explicitly voted against and explained that ‘Current independentism can provoke division and frustration because of its unviability’ (Gisbert, 2011c:16).

The question in the ballots in these consultation framed independence in the European Union context, because the option for independence was: ‘*Catalan nation should become an independent, democratic and social state within the European Union*’ (Muñoz & Guinjoan, 2013). Overall, 58.3 percent of the municipalities, which accounted for 77.5 percent of the population, conducted unofficial referendums. While the average turnout for the referendums was 18.1 percent, the turnout in individual municipalities varied greatly, ranging from as low as 5 percent of the population to more than 90 percent in some areas (Muñoz & Guinjoan, 2013: 45).

The results of popular consultations did not provoke the political response. The Parliament of Catalonia rejected the proposal for Catalan independence. The *PSC*, the *PP*, and the *C*’s voted against and the *CiU* abstained. Spokesman of the *Generalitat* Homs explained that the independence is not the part of the *CiU* electoral horizon but the ‘the consultations are on the part of the national transition towards the right to decide that the President of the *Generalitat* raised in his inauguration speech and they reinforce our positions in line with the claim of the fiscal pact’ (Gisbert, 2011d:13). The importance of fiscal pact for the Spanish-Catalan relations strengthened Mas presenting the Government plan 2011-2014 for economic reinforcement (Gisbert, 2011e). Other political parties in Catalonia, in spite of not being truly supportive for the *CiU* initiatives, showed the partial agreement on the fiscal pact. For example, the *PSC* described the project as ‘partidism and electorism’ but simultaneously stated that they ‘should study it carefully’ (Vivanco & Izquierdo, 2011:16).

Municipal elections in Catalonia in comparison to the previous ones was considered as an electoral success of *CiU* where they got 27,2 percent of votes (*PSC* - 25,1; *PP* – 12,7; *ERC* – 9). For the first time after the Franko period, they won the majority in Barcelona. These results became the very worrying signal for *PSOE* before the national elections because in other ACs they also mostly lost the municipal elections against *PP* (Belmonte, 2011).

The general dissatisfaction with the austerity programs and the economic crisis took to the streets millions of people throughout Spain. This movement became famous as *indignados*. Their

general slogans were both against the central state economic policy and the Catalan government economic program of austerity. The highest act of their fight against authorities was the block of Catalan Parliament. The Catalan politicians had to use helicopters to access the Parliament (Mauri, 2011). This act was condemned by the major media, Catalan, and Spanish politicians. Rajoy said that no democrat can support what happened (Pamies, 2011:18).

National elections

In the light of National Parliament elections where Duran became the leading candidate from the *CiU* the fiscal pact became the core of the electoral program of Catalan candidate. In support of Duran candidacy, Mas claimed that ‘the proposal is fundamental for Catalonia, so it should have the maximum support here and the Catalan parties should have the maximum freedom of action in Madrid’. (Arenos, 2011:11) The head of the campaign, Llorens, affirmed that the basic electoral goals of the *CiU* are the fiscal pact and the recovery of ‘historical rights’ damaged by the ruling of the TC (Pagan & Ellakuria, 2011). Duran has confirmed that ‘the fiscal pact must be the instrument to defeat the crisis’ (Barbeta, 2011f:14). Their message voiced in the public sentiments because 75 percent of Catalans felt that it was necessary to reformulate the financial relations between Spain and Catalonia (Noxa Consulting, 2011). In this regard, Duran stated that ‘if you do not vote, they take money out of Catalonia’ (Gisbert, 2011f).

The Catalan PP also framed their electoral campaign mostly around the economic crisis. Sánchez-Camacho offered herself as an interlocutor between the *CiU* and a possible government of Rajoy to discuss the proposed fiscal pact. Sánchez-Camacho highlighted the ‘decisive’ role that the PP is playing in the current legislature in Catalonia, ‘guaranteeing the stability’ of the *CiU* Government, and gave as an example the approval of the budget (“Sánchez-Camacho Se Ofrece a Mediar Entre CiU y Rajoy Sobre El Pacto Fiscal,” 2011). Rajoy noted that ‘Spain will not come out of the crisis without Catalonia, nor Catalonia without the rest’ (Barbeta, 2011g).

The *PSOE* attacked the planned politics of the PP constraints and asked for massive support to prevent the right-wing one-party rule (Sierra, 2011). Rubalcaba appealed to Catalonia by saying

that without them the socialist would not win. He also supported the ‘linguistic immersion’ of Catalan and showed his respect to the manifestations of Catalans against the Catalan Supreme Court of Justice decision and in the defence of Catalan educational system. Rubalcaba tried to distance from some of Zapatero decisions, for example, saying that ‘unfair things had been said on Catalonia with the *TC* sentence on the Statute’ (Ellakuria, 2011).

The *ERC* found themselves in the complex situation where they need to make the ‘double critique’ on the *CiU* and the *PSC-PSOE*. The line against the *CiU* was the attempt to attract the independentists votes by criticising the sovereignty way, but they showed their disposal to collaborate on such issues as the linguistic immersion and the fiscal pact. The unacceptance of cuts was the attempt to play against the *PSC* on the left side of political spectrum. But the third problem was the *CUP* and *Solidaritat* calls for abstention. *CUP* and *Solidaritat* are the two most radical pro-independence political forces in Catalonia and their disagreement with *ERC* weakened the ability of Left Republicans to attract pro-independence electorate. To cover this waterway, Junqueras (new leader of the *ERC*) promoted a coalition with *Reagrupament* and *Catalunya Si*. (Rico, 2011) Nevertheless, the *ERC* confirmed their staunch support for independence by framing it in terms of ‘quality democracy’ backlash of the Spanish state (Elias & Franco-Guillén, 2021).

The outcomes of elections demonstrated the nationwide victory of Partido Popular and likely predictable failure of the *PSOE*. But the results in Catalonia was kind of outlier in the light of national vote. For the first time in history in Catalonia won the *CiU* leaded by the nationalist candidate. Duran interpreted it as the victory of the fiscal pact for Catalonia and the desires of economic independence. (table 3.2.1)

Table 3.2.1. The outcomes of National Elections, 2011. (selected parties)

Party	Number of seats
<i>Partido Popular</i>	186
<i>Partido Socialista de Obrero Español</i>	110
<i>Convergencia i Unio</i>	16
<i>Partido Socialista de Catalonia</i>	14
<i>Esquerra Republicana Catalana</i>	3

Source: compiled from El Periodico (2011, November 21)

Rajoy made the meeting with Duran as one of the first official negotiations after his victory. Rajoy delayed the fiscal pact for Catalonia but said that he was open for negotiations about the finance (Del Riego, 2011). This position provoked the disappointment in Catalonia and Duran said in response to Rajoy's rejection that 'Spain is making us more poor' (Izquierdo, 2011b:17).

To sum up, in 2011 it is observed the reduced interest in Spain-Catalonia relations per se and a slight increase in independence support. The victory in Catalonia of the *CiU* with their project of 'fiscal pact' and rejection of independence as the strategy for elections put fiscal pact and secessionism on different sides towards the future of Catalonia. Moreover, we see that the increased frequency of economy frames lack resonance potential because they propose more 'diagnosis' rather than 'problem solving' approach.

3.3. Catalonia in 2012: The National Day of Catalonia and Regional Elections

Fiscal pact and growing tensions

The misunderstanding about the fiscal pact between the Catalan and Spanish politicians became obvious at the beginning of the year. If Rajoy previously had been very careful speaking about the fiscal pact, but now he showed the clear opposition to this project. Mas announced that the fiscal pact is the last opportunity to redress the existing gap between Catalan and the State institutions (Barbeta, 2012a). Rajoy and Mas had a meeting in February and reached the initial agreement on financial, labour, development issues but fiscal pact was the case of dispute. Mas proclaimed that ‘without the fiscal pact, Catalonia will take its own way’ (Barbeta, 2012b:10). In this statement, the very first frame transformation signal can be tracked. Previously the fiscal pact and independence were not clearly interconnected, so now the ‘bridge’ among these narratives is coming to play. The *CiU* also increased investments in non-profit, nationalist civil society organization *Omnium Cultural* which would become one of the main organizers of the National Day of Catalonia (*La Diada*).

Nevertheless, the *CiU* politics of variable geometry (to make deals with different political forces when it is profitable) led them to join the PP adjustment plan in order to secure additional resources (Masreal & Santos, 2012; Martí, 2013). In February they signed the document with PP establishing 10 budget priorities of the year (Gisbert, 2012a). But already in March the *CiU* distanced themselves from the constraints imposed by the Rajoy’s government. Mas-Colell explained that Catalunya has an absolute disposition to maintain the austerity policies, but it is reluctant to carry more sacrifices than the general administration of the State is capable to manage (Barbeta, 2012d). In the light of such a discourse, media published that each Catalan pays more taxes than receives social benefits from Spain. According to the research, they pay 19,40 percent and receive only 14,03 percent (Gisbert, 2012b). The framing process became not only to transit quantitatively but also qualitatively including more and more connections to the secessionism. The transition enlightened in the ‘right to decide’ discourse when the speaker of Generalitat Catalan

Homs said: “The national transition is the way of Catalonia to self-defend <...> the ‘right to decide’ is an act against Government politics of constraints” (Ellakuria, 2012a:11).

The *CiU* and the PP cooperation ended up in the light of the state budget proposal. Initially, the *CiU*, the *PSC*, and the *ERC* voted for the fiscal pact which marked the distance with the PP (Ellakuria, 2012b). Mas commented that the fiscal pact is the only really viable alternative to be able to maintain the welfare state and to be able to carry out economic growth and job creation policies (Barbeta, 2012g). At the end of April, the disruption about budget became even more tense. Mas said that ‘the budget especially punish Catalonia’ (Barbeta, 2012h:11). Duran noted that ‘It is false that the State does not owe anything to Catalonia, as it is also wrong the cut of 10 thousand millions in education and health announced by Rajoy’ (Azpeitia, 2012). Homs declared that ‘everything has been broken and there is a fracture <...> There are fewer and fewer options to understand each other with Spain’ (Barbeta, 2012h:12). The meeting between Rajoy and Mas underlined this fracture because Rajoy proclaimed ‘very difficult’ the agreement about the fiscal pact (Barbeta, 2012i).

The political parties reacted on growing dissatisfaction with Spanish policy by changing their political discourse. The *PSC* presented their own plan for fiscal pact. The plan foresees that a consortium formed by the Catalan tax agency and the State tax agency collect taxes from the Catalans and distribute what corresponds to it between the State and the *Generalitat* to each one according to the financing system of the autonomous communities. (Barbeta, 2012c)

The *CDC* congress marked a change in the party stance on independence. The conference brought to the fore independentism because 91 percent of the delegates supported it (Graupera, 2012). Nevertheless, the final resolution of the conference became a contradictory point and provided different comments. Mas outlined that ‘we should support the fiscal pact first and then it is possible to speak about independence’ (Gisbert, 2012c:20). He simultaneously noted that ‘a nation, in order to exercise its will as such, needs a State that acts and feels as its own’ (Gisbert, 2012c:21). Jordi Pujol, on the contrary, told that ‘independence is not viable and unlikely to be

viable but the Catalonia that we want to build is not viable either <...> we will have a great confrontation. Let's try to avoid it, but we have to be prepared in case it arrives <...> If anyone is capable of guiding this battle, it is us' (Barbeta, 2012e:15). As an outcome, the final resolution of the *CDC* conference did not contain the word 'independence' but instead they used the concepts as 'full nation' (esp. *nacion plena*), 'full sovereignty' (esp. *plena soberania*). Oriol Pujol commenting the results told that economic independence is the primary aim and independence per se can be reached only as the result of sovereignty (Barbeta, 2012f).

Another member of the *CiU*, *Unió Democràtica de Catalunya (UDC)* held its own Congress in May 2012. The outcomes were quite different from the *CDC* stance on independence. The *UDC* leader Duran proclaimed the readiness of the *UDC* to defend the sovereignty of Catalonia but not independence because it is not the way to resolve the crisis (Gisbert, 2012d). *La Vanguardia* commented it as the veto for independence but mentioned that it is probably the 'double reading' of the same concept because independence and sovereignty are highly interconnected and the difference is in the wording of the same concept (Gisbert, 2012e).

One of the most important successes of Mas as a President is the conversion of fiscal pact into the matter of widespread support of all Catalans and the main aim to achieve. According to the Feedback survey, 80 percent of Catalans want the same financial conditions as for the Basque Country (Feedback, 2012). The first discussion about the fiscal pact among the Catalan parties were held at the end of May. The *CiU* position was full support of the plan. The rest of the parties found it difficult to reach the common agreement. The pro-independence *Catalunya SI* accused the *PSC* for being the 'Trojan horse' because their proposal is very similar to the *PSOE*'s. Another pro-independence party (*ERC*) doubted that whatever the alternative which depends on the good will of Spanish government always ends up with failure. The *PSC* maintained the middle ground stating the importance of the broad agreement in order to have negotiations power in Madrid. The *PP* was the opposition because any withdrawal from the common tax regime will bring confrontation and violation of the rules of the game (Gisbert & Ellakuria, 2012).

Despite several disagreements, Catalan Parliament adopted the fiscal pact at the end of July. The proposal was supported by 63 percent of votes with 83 votes from the *CiU*, the *ERC*, the *Iniciativa per Catalunya*, and MP Joah Laporta. The opposition to the proposal includes 23 votes from the PP, the *SI*, the *C's*. The *PSC*, as many times before, played the middle and decided to abstain. Maragall broke the voting discipline and supported the paragraph of the resolution that attributes to the Catalan Tax Agency control of the taxes (EP, 2012). As soon as the resolution was adopted, Sánchez Camacho notified Mas about the refusal of Rajoy to accept an economic agreement for Catalonia because it ‘violates the rules of the democratic game’. PSOE solidarized with the PP in rejection of fiscal pact despite the middle position of the *PSC* (Izquierdo & Merino, 2012:9).

La Diada and regional elections

Mas insisted that the fiscal pact is not only the government or political parties’ proposal, but rather the claim of Catalan people. He asked people to demonstrate on *La Diada* the support for the fiscal pact (Gisbert, 2012g).

The preparations for *La Diada* did not enjoy the wide media coverage, but it was planned as not the ordinary celebration, but a huge manifestation managed by *Assamblea Nacional Catalana* (*ANC*) with the support of *Omnium Cultural*. The *ANC* is a political organization formed in 2011 that seeks the political independence of Catalonia from Spain. It was designed as a civic association to support political events with secessionist agenda. They played huge role in the organization of *La Diada*, independence referendums, political demonstrations.

The major political parties with very caution expressed their opinions about the possible secessionist context of the manifestation. While the *ERC* portrayed that the aim of *La Diada* is the independence not fiscal pact, Mas has announced that he is not going to participate 11-S (*11 September*) (Ellakuria, 2012c). Duran stated his willingness to take part in *La Diada* in order to support the fiscal pact (Ellakuria, 2012d). Duran mentioned that ‘it is incoherent and strategically wrong to defend the fiscal pact and independence at the same time’ (Ellakuria, 2012e).

La Diada took on the streets about 1,5 million of people. This was the hugest mass demonstration in the history of Catalonia with the clear pro-independence message (Rico & Julve, 2012). Summarizing the outcomes, 11-S was against the bad accommodation of Spain, for fiscal pact and for independence. Even participants from *CiU* chanted “Spain is the new state of Europe” (Álvaro, 2012). Mas said that ‘Catalonia has never been so close for the national unity before’ (Barbeta, 2012j:18). This event is also important in the light of negotiations between Mas and Rajoy about fiscal pact in one week after the 11-S. *La Vanguardia* stated that ‘the multilevel mobilization will give the moral power to Artur Mas in the negotiations about fiscal pact’ (“Catalunya Prepara Su Diada Más Multitudinaria,” 2012).

Mas had the same feeling that the outcomes of *La Diada* may favorably influence the negotiations. He has noted that ‘we now have a mandate from the street, which cannot be ignored’ (Barbeta, 2012k:10). But the results of negotiations held on 20 September were the predictable failure and feeling of frustration. In response to Mas' demands, Rajoy rejected them outright and proposed a reform of the current fiscal system in late 2013, when it was set to be renegotiated. However, Mas quickly rejected this counter-offer, stating that it only offered an improvement to the current system, while the Catalan parliament called for a more drastic overhaul (Martí, 2013a). Mas said that ‘Rajoy has lost the historical opportunity for mutual understanding’ and in response started the process of own state as he promised (Masreal & Santos, 2012b:3). The resolution about the ‘own way’ (*propio camino*) was admitted by the majority of *CiU*, *ERC*, *ICV* (84 votes) and the new elections set on November, 25 (Barbeta, 2012l). The resolution contained the recognition of the success of 11-S with the main slogan ‘Catalonia is a new State of Europe’; the necessity to initiate the national transition based on the right to decide; the necessity to take ‘own way’ as the only possibility to guarantee the collective right of Catalans and ensure the social and economic development; the call for the Spanish state and international organizations to ensure the political dialogue; the necessity for the Catalan people to have the opportunity to decide their collective future freely and democratically (Resolución 742/IX).

The September events have changed the political stance of the *CiU*. The leader of the *CiU* promised the independence referendum within 4 years with or without Madrid consent (Barbeta, 2012l). In October, the *CiU* presented their electoral program where stated the creation of ‘own state’ within the EU and promote the consultation about the collective future of Catalans (Gisbert, 2012h). Importantly, Duran has noted that their electoral program has the primarily reference to Europe rather than the Spanish state and Mas proclaimed that ‘Catalonia has never failed Europe in its entire history, we hope that now Europe will not fail us’ (Barbeta, 2012n:16). Mas asked for the overwhelming majority votes to get the absolute dominance in the Catalan Parliament because ‘if people believe it, the force of democracy and civility cannot be stopped by anyone: not the courts, not the laws, not the constitutions’ (Azpeitia, 2012b:14).

The *ERC* continued its line as staunch supporters of the referendum and independence. For Junqueras, the independence cannot be asked, it can only be proclaimed and defended (Saura, 2012). Even before *La Diada*, Junqueras claimed that they are going to collaborate with the *CiU* in the government only if the promise of the independence referendum as well as the clear national agenda are set (Gisbert, 2012f). The *ERC* backed the new regional elections because they have clearly seen the opportunity to use the public mobilization for independence to increase their seats in Parliament. Junqueras noted that ‘in these moments, millions of citizens of Catalonia look at each other and put their hopes in what will happen in the next elections’ (Ellakuria, 2012f:14). He also criticized the possibilities to negotiate with Spain because ‘at best they deceive us’ (Barbeta, 2012o:15).

The *PSC* presented the federalism as the third way between centralism and independence. In the light of their federal proposal, they presented the ‘right to decide’. The leader of the *PSC* Navarro claimed that ‘No one can deny the desire and the right of the people of Catalonia to decide their future, this fact will be our proposal and our priority within the framework of the negotiation of the Constitution that will make Spain a federal state’ (Ellakuria, 2012h:15). The electoral

program of the Catalan socialist contained the proposal for referendum but only within the legislative boundaries.

The Catalan PP was the main voice of the central Spanish authorities and defenders of the ‘unity of Spanish nation’. The PP was the main organizers of the manifestation against independence in the *Dia de Hispanidad*. Sánchez Camacho has said that ‘in Catalonia there is another reality, which has the same legitimacy as other public demonstrations, there are no first-rate Catalans and second-rate Catalans’ (Ellakuria, 2012g:13). Sánchez Camacho was the main promoter of the ‘silent majority’ message to justify that the majority of Catalans do not support independence, but they are less active and mobilized than the pro-independence part of the Catalan society. About the ‘right to decide’ Alicia Sánchez-Camacho highlighted that ‘the right to decide is provided in the Constitution and is exercised by all Spaniards’ (Gisbert, 2012i:14).

The *ICV* concentrated their program against the politics of cuts and the defense of social rights in the same manner as the right to decide. (Buesa,2012) The *Candidatura d’Unitat Popular (CUP)* centered their political program around the claims for independence. (“La CUP Se Marca El Reto de Obtener Su Propio Grupo Parlamentario,” 2012) C’s, on the contrary, stood for the Spanish unity and against the right to decide. The leader of the party Rivera has said that ‘The solution is to fix Spain, reform it, not break it’ (Barbeta, 2012o:15).

The results of elections held on 25 November (69.8 percent of participation) were to some extent disappointing for the *CiU* and unpredictably favourable for ERC bearing in mind that the pre-electoral polls considered the *CiU* as a favorite.(table 3.3.1.) In spite of changing the electoral strategy to more radical demands for independence, the *CiU* lost 12 seats in Parliament whereas ERC representing the stable support for independence has been considered as the main champions of the elections.

Table 3.3.1. The results of Catalan Parliament elections, 2012

Party	%	Seats
CiU	31.2	50
PSC	14.6	20
ERC	13.9	21
PP	13.2	19
ICV-EUiA	10.0	13
Ciutadans	7.7	9
CUP	3.5	3
SI	1.3	
Other	4.6	
Blank	1.4	
Null	0.9	
Abstention	32.2	
Total	100	135

Source: compiled from Rico & Liñeira 2014, p. 266

Mas reacted to the results in the way that the ‘right to decide’ majority of political forces won, and now they all should take joint responsibility to take forward the future of Catalonia (Gisbert, 2012j:18). Junqueras celebrated the increase of his political party in the Parliament by saying that the process for independence has growth considerably as the result of these elections (El Periodico, 26.11.2012). The *ERC*’s focus on the ‘right to decide’ is one of the incentives to articulate a more detailed and positive case for creating a new state, with *ERC* interviewees referring to the 2012 Catalan election as a turning point in the party's discursive strategy (Elias& Franco-Guillén, 2021). The party shifted its focus onto creating a ‘programme of state’; the strategy aimed to promote the social growth of independence with a view to a hypothetical referendum (Ibid). The *PSC* got the worst results in their history but secured the third place and the possibility to be the main opposition force. Navarro has explained that in the context of so many screams people did not understand their proposal and the party now must continue working for explaining and monitoring the next Government (Rico, 2012). Sánchez Camacho accused Mas of ‘having paralyzed Catalonia for six months for nothing’, with elections ‘that nobody needed’ (Ellakuria, 2012i:24).

Not having received an absolute majority, the *CiU* has formed a parliamentary coalition with the *ERC*, despite some economic policy disagreements. And one of the conditions of support from the *ERC* was an opportunity for Catalonia to decide on its political status through a referendum on

the issue of from Spain, which was planned for 2014 (Barrena, 2012). Overall, the independentists gained 74 seats (*CiU*, *ERC*, *CUP*) which gave them an absolute majority in Parliament. Mas with the support from ERC was re-elected as the President of Generalitat.

To sum up, the year 2012 was marked by the very rapid growth of secessionism among the population and coincidental rise in the distribution of the ‘problem solving’ frames. The outcomes were the clear shift in the *CiU* strategic behaviour towards independence which defined the main objectives of the next legislature.

3.4. Catalonia in 2013: Declaration of Sovereignty and the Road to Referendum

Declaration of sovereignty

The sovereignty process in Catalonia increased in 2012 continued in the next year. The coalition of two pro-independence parties led the process in order to gain the independence referendum similar to Scotland. Leading regionalists parties were looking for the ‘Edinburgh Agreement’ with the Spanish state. But the central authorities did not change their strong opposition to any attempts to amplify the sovereignty process.

The first significant act of new the *CiU-ERC* coalition was the draft of the ‘declaration of sovereignty’. This declaration was adopted by the remarkable majority of 85 out of 135 votes. *CiU*(50), *ERC*(21), *ICV*(13), *CUP* (1) voted in favor, *PSC* (15), *PP* (17), *C’s* (9) voted against. Two MPs from the *CUP* abstained, five MPs from the *PSC* did not vote, and two MPs from the *PP* did not participate in the plenum (Barrena & Julve, 2013).

The ‘Declaration of Sovereignty’ contained the several important proclamations:

- *Sovereignty*: the people of Catalonia are the sovereign political and legal subject due to the democratic legitimacy character
- *Democratic legitimacy*: the exercise of the ‘right to decide’ is scrupulously democratic and guarantee the plurality of opinions through deliberation and dialogue within Catalan society and has the aim to express the will of democratic majority of Catalans
- *Transparency*: the population and civil society should have all the information and the precise knowledge for the exercise of right to decide
- *Dialogue*: people of Catalonia will negotiate with the Spanish state, European institutions, and the international community
- *Social cohesion*: The social and territorial cohesion of the country and the willingness expressed on multiple occasions by Catalan society to maintain Catalonia as a single people

- *Europeism*: Defence and promotion of the fundamental principles of the EU, solidarity with the different European people
- *Legality*: All existing legal tools will be used to make effective the strengthening of democracy and the exercise of the right to decide
- *Main role of the Parliament*: Parliament, as an institution representing the people of Catalonia, has a main role in this process and, therefore, it must agree and specify the mechanisms and work dynamics that guarantee this principle
- *Participation*: The Parliament and the *Generalitat* must make the local communities, economic and social agents, cultural and civic entities of Catalonia active participants in this whole process (Resolución 5/X).

This declaration avoided to use the term ‘independence’ to allow the double reading. For example, Duran has said that the ‘own state’ is not synonym of independence because it is possible to have the ‘own state’ within the confederal structure (Gisbert & Ellakuria, 2013a:10). On the contrary, Junqueras has proclaimed that ‘the sovereignty that is defined as the democratic will of citizens is above any imposition that comes from any legal framework’ (Hinojosa, 2013:14). Junqueras framed the democratic principle argument in terms of independence. Navarro has mentioned that the unilateral declaration of sovereignty is betting on independence and Sánchez Camacho has told that the right to decide is marked in the Spanish laws and the people of Catalonia are sovereign the same manner as the rest of Spaniards (Barrena & Julve, 2013). Rajoy has expressed the view of the central state by outlining that ‘approving resolutions that are not in the spirit of the Constitution at this time is useless’ (Del Riego, 2013a:11). The Council of Ministers, the State Advocacy and the State Council decided to appeal the Catalan declaration in the *TC*. Mas reacted on it as the demonstration of no will for dialogue despite the promises from the part of the State (Del Riego & Gisbert, 2013).

The ‘right to decide’ discussion overcomplicated the internal relations in the *PSC-PSOE*. The ‘Declaration of Sovereignty’ led to the internal disruption in the *PSC* because five MPs decided to

violate the party discipline and abstain the vote while the party voted against. In February the *PSC* broke the *PSOE* party discipline and voted for the resolution of the *CiU* and the *ICV* in favor of the right to decide in the Spanish Parliament. This was the very important issue because a large majority of the representation of Catalans in Congress voted in favor of the right to decide for the first time in the democratic history of Spain. Specifically, 35 of the 47 MPs elected by the four Catalan constituencies supported the *CiU* and the *ICV* resolution proposals (Merino & Ellakuria, 2013). Finally, the *PSC* joined the *CiU*, the *ERC*, and the *ICV* in the support of the resolution calling the *Generalitat* for starting negotiations with the Government about the possibility to have the popular consultation on the political future of Catalonia (exercise the ‘right to decide’) (Gisbert, 2013a). Rubalcaba explained the tensions *PSC-PSOE* by stating that in terms of federalism, the *PSC* always wants to do the step further and the *PSOE* wants to maintain the step in place (Merino, 2013a).

The several meetings between Catalan and state institutions did not ease the different stances on the territorial claims. Rajoy demonstrated the disposal to discuss the economic issues and make concessions in terms of budget deficit management but refused the possibility of political consultation. The PP and the *PSC* welcomed the restart of institutional dialogue, but the *ERC* expressed the ‘zero confidence’ in the state institutions (Barbeta, 2013a).

The meeting between Mas, Navarro and Rubalcaba showed the differences in the vision of the future relations Catalonia – Spain. Mas has claimed that ‘if you would like to talk about everything, you must also be able to talk about the right to decide of the people of Catalonia’ and Rubalcaba has responded that ‘the only solution is to open a dialogue with Catalonia and find a formula for coexistence that avoids the break with Spain’ (Barbeta, 2013b:11).

Mas described three possible alternatives: continue within the current system of autonomies, constitutional reform which modifies the position of Catalonia in Spain, and ‘own state’. The first option is ‘behave well with Madrid, hold the luges and bow your head’; the second option is not good because ‘neither the PP or the *PSOE* project are worth’; the third option is the most feasible

because ‘it will not depend on others but fundamentally based on the will of the people’ (Azpeitia, 2013:13). The project of the ‘own state’ and the support of the ‘right to decide’ voiced in the official position of the Executive Council. Homs confirmed that the *Generalitat* is determined to hold the consultation in spite of possible difficulties with Madrid (Gisbert & Ellakuria, 2013b). These difficulties re-entered the political landscape with the *TC* decision to annulate the ‘Declaration of Sovereignty’ by 8 against 4 votes. Herrera (ICV) reacted to the decision: ‘The Constitutional Court has lost the little credibility it had left’ (Brunet & Ellakuria, 2013:10).

The road to the referendum

At the end of May, the law of non-endorsement popular consultations (those that do not need the authorization of the State for their convocation) overcame the first obstacle in the Parliament. The plenary rejected by 104 votes to 28 the amendments of the PP and the *C's* against the proposed law endorsed by the *CiU*, the *ERC*, the *PSC*, the *ICV-EUiA* and the *CUP*. This law gave the green light to the processing of the legal norm that some parties think could serve as the basis for holding the consultation to decide on the future of Catalonia (Gisbert, 2013b). Rull, the *CDC*'s secretary of organization, said that the Parliament is already working on a consultation law with which Catalans could be asked in 2014 without the endorsement of the State. ‘In case there is no answer or if the answer is negative, we will have our law on consultations ready in October and then the parliamentary commission will set the date and the question for the consultation, which will be in 2014’ (“CDC Pide Que La Via Catalana Sea Integradora y Aglutine Mayorías,” 2013:10).

The closed link between the ‘right to decide’ and independence claims generated disputes in the *CiU*. The leader of the *UDC* Duran argued that there are conditions to delay the consultation which turn on the spark in the *CDC*. The national council of the *CDC* urges Duran to ‘stop generating doubts’ about the consultation. The Secretary General of the *UDC* Pelegri has demanded that the *CDC* do not question Duran and denounces ‘threats’. Duran announced that it was the last time when he tolerated the attacks from the *CDC*. Only direct intervention of Mas released the tension between Duran and the *CDC* members (Pagan, 2013).

The *PSC*, on the contrary, managed to ease disputes with the *PSOE* and jointly present the federal and counterindependence proposal for Spain. Rubalcaba has noted that ‘the *PSOE* and the *PSC* have recovered the same offer for Spain and Catalonia; federalism is the shared model with which we are going to address Catalans and all of Spanish society’ (Merino, 2013b). Additionally, the *PSC* announced that they officially mark distances with the Government regarding the consultation and it will not attend the constitution of the National Pact for the Right to Decide considering that ‘neutrality’ is not guaranteed (Ellakuria & Gisbert, 2013).

The tensions existed not only within the parties or between state and regionalist parties, but also between the Catalan parties itself. The celebration of *La Diada* confirmed it. That year the *ANC* organized *Via Catalana* to support independence and the celebration of referendum. But Mas and members of the *Generalitat* announced that they were not going to participate despite their sympathy to the event (Ellakuria, 2013a). Duran proclaimed its participation in ‘human chain’ in order to defend the referendum as he did the previous year to support the fiscal pact but not independence (Guerrero, 2013). The *ERC*, on the contrary, fully endorsed the event and tried to pressure Mas to take part in it.

La Diada marked the mass mobilization of 1.6 million of people and hundreds of kilometres of the ‘human chain’ (approx. 400). The president of the *ANC* Forcadell has proclaimed that ‘independence is possible, viable, and necessarily... We cannot wait more’ (Tomas, 2013a:3). Mas has noted that if the State do not listen to Catalan people, it will have the serious and grave problem with Catalonia (Masreal, 2013). Junqueras has insisted that ‘*Via Catalana* is the way to demonstrate to the world our will to be the people’ (Barbeta, 2013c:15). Sánchez Camacho and Sanatamaria refused the independentist message and stated for the unity of Spain and the unacceptance of separation and division (Paz, 2013). The *PSC* reaction was two-sided. Navarro has explained the necessity to change Catalan-Spanish relations but rejected the fixed date of the consultation considering it as a mistake (Barbeta, 2013c).

Mas and Rajoy reflected on the outcomes of *La Diada* by exchanging public letters. Rajoy offered the ‘dialogue without an expiration date’ on the issues related to all Spaniards including Catalans to which received the response from the vice-secretary of institutional coordination of the CDC Corominas stating that the letter proposes the dialogue but keep all the doors closed for the consultation (Barbeta, 2013d). Mas offered a ‘joint, unitary and consensual’ response from Parliament to the Spanish Government to live up to the ‘clamor’ of *La Diada*’ (“Mas Quiere Una Posición Unitaria En Defensa Del Derecho a Decidir,” 2013:20). Duran expressed his vision of the future of Catalonia by proposing his own ‘third way’ closed to the confederal system (Duran Lleida, 2013). This idea reflected in the Mas proposal to include the third option in the ballot at the consultation (Barbeta, 2013e).

Duran moved his *UDC* closer to the *PSC* rather than the *CDC*. Navarro and Duran had a meeting to discuss their federal and confederal proposals. They both agreed that the consultation should be legal and approved by the Spanish authorities (Ellakuria, 2013b). And they both received the criticism from the PP Catalan of not taking part in the celebration of the *Dia de Hispanidad* in Barcelona which attracted around 160 thousands people and promoted by PP and *C’s* (“PP y Ciudadans Reivindican El ‘Fin Del Silencio,’” 2013).

In the economic space, the political conflict can be observed at two levels. The first is between Spanish and Catalan authorities. Rajoy has said that ‘the treatment of Catalonia is the same as that being given to all the autonomous communities’ and rejected any possibility to reform it in favor of Catalonia (Del Riego, 2013b:9). But the *Generalitat* responded by calculating ‘the institutional disloyalty’ of the State with Catalonia ... 9,375.7 million euros in debts, which have therefore ‘the increase in social inequalities and discrimination of the citizens of Catalonia by reason of the territory in which they live’ (Gisbert, 2013c:11). Mas added that ‘all the positive data on the Spanish economy are thanks to Catalonia’ (Barbeta, 2013f). The second is between the *CiU* and the *ERC* as the members of the ruling coalition on the budget. After tense negotiations the *ERC* gave the green light for the *CiU* plan. The *ERC* member Aragones commented that ‘we do not like

these accounts, but they are the only way to maintain the welfare state and the way towards independence' (Gisbert & Ellakuria, 2013c:13).

The budget was the bargain chip for the *ERC* to influence *CiU* in order to plan the referendum on independence. Mas officially proclaimed the question of the referendum and the date. The question is multiple. 'Do you want Catalonia to become a State?' and 'Do you want this State to be independent?' The second question could only be answered by those who had answered Yes to the first one (Tomas, 2013b:2). In short, Mas showed his satisfaction with the possibility to give people to vote on their collective future. Junqueras lamented that the question of the referendum is not he wanted, but the ballot contains the thing that the *ERC* considers *imprescindible* (extremely important). Rajoy strictly rejected the referendum due to its incomparability with the Constitution and the unity of Spanish nation (Martin, 2013). Rubalcaba has maintained that Mas leads Catalonia to the way without escape (Sierra, 2013). Navarro and Sánchez Camacho also criticised the planned referendum.

To sum up, this year is remarked by the peak of independence support in Catalonia in the study period. The 'right to decide' is finally transformed into the problem-solving way to ease the tensions between Catalonia and the state. The 'fiscal pact' disappeared from the discourse but 'demands for decentralization' amplified by several project to reform the current state-of-affairs. The pro-referendum and pro-independence coalition the *CiU* and the *ERC* in spite of disagreements in economic terms finally drafted the independence referendum for the next year.

3.5. Catalonia in 2014: European Elections and Non-Binding Referendum on Independence

The EU and territorial debates

Generally, the elections to the European Parliament do not receive the same attention as national or regional elections in Europe. But for the Catalan independence process the European elections were one more occasion to play the sovereignty agenda. Mas asked the EU help in the Catalan process. In particular, he put attention on the mandate received from the people on the regional elections and expressed in popular action. He has demanded the referendum on independence because it is ‘democratic, peaceful, and transparent process’ (“Mas Solicita a Los Líderes de La UE Que Apoyen La Consulta,” 2014:19). The President of the EC Barroso has responded to this letter in the way that the EC does not have competence in such an internal matter as the constitutional relations of the EU member state (Navarro & Del Riego, 2014).

At the domestic level, the *CiU* continued its fight to legalize the referendum. The majority of the MPs (87 votes of *CiU* (50), *ERC*(21), *ICV*(13), *PSC*(3)) in Catalan Parliament approved to request the Congress to delegate the powers on popular consultations (Barbeta, 2014a). Rajoy immediately reacted: ‘As long as I am president, neither this illegal referendum will be held nor Spain will be fragmented’ (Barbeta, 2014b:16). After that the series of rejections from the part of the central state institutions followed. In February, the Congress rejected by 272 out of 316 votes the Catalan sovereigntist plan (Garcia, 2014). In March, the Government rejected the delegation of popular consultations powers to Catalonia (Del Riego, 2014a). The *TC* rejected and partially annulled the sovereign declaration of the Parliament of Catalonia. The *TC* has considered that the proclamation of a Catalan political sovereignty is contrary to the Constitution but admits that ‘it is possible to defend the right to decide, within the framework of the Magna Carta, which in any case can be reformed’ (Brunet & Gisbert, 2014:11). In April, the Congress rejected by 299 votes against and 47 votes in favor the request for the consultation (Tomas, 2014).

Mas has said that it is not the end of the process because the will of the Catalans cannot be impeded by this vote. Rovira (*ERC*) stressed the obligation to defend the consultation in order to

fulfil the democratic mandate. Rajoy stayed tough in his defence of territorial integrity and Constitution of Spain. Rubalcaba has noted that the process which forces people to choose between being Spaniard or Catalan is not tolerable. Duran called the central state to convoke the referendum on their own and see what the views of Catalan people are (Barbeta, 2014c). Mas added that ‘in Madrid they practice the culture of power and, on the other hand, in Catalonia we practice the culture of the pact, and it is not the same’ (Azpeitia, 2014a:18).

That is why the European elections were the important opportunity for pro-independence parties to reinforce their message about the ‘right to decide’ which could attract the international attention to the process. The first success on the ‘internationalization’ of the process was the recognition and support of the ‘right to decide’ by the Liberal International (LI), the international consortium of liberal parties including the *CDC*. The 59th Congress of this organization ‘support any decision taken by the people of Catalonia to decide their own future’ (“La Internacional Liberal Apoya La Consulta Catalana,” 2014:18). The *CiU* candidate Tremosa stressed that ‘Europe cannot lose Catalonia, because if not the south hangs down, the continent will break’ (Gisbert, 2014a:14).

On the debates between the Catalan candidates in the European elections the PP candidate Fisas proclaimed that he is the only one candidate from Catalonia who are not going to support the ‘right to decide’ in the EU. The *ERC* candidate Terricabras replied that the democratic principles manifesto has to be drafted by the European Parliament (Barbeta, 2014d). The EC presidency debates was also marked by the discussion of the Catalan process. The conservatives candidate Juncker has stated that the prevalence of the national constitutions should be respected and in case of any problem the discussion has to be within the constitutional framework. The socialist candidate Schulz has outlined that the case of the Scottish referendum is not transferable to other countries and the respect of national constitutional order should be accepted. The liberal candidate Verhofstadt has warned that the EU should interfere in this issue as Barroso did by noticing the impossibility for the independent state to re-join EU automatically. The green candidate Keller predisposed Catalan reunification with the EU in case of her presidency. The left candidate Tsipras

has accepted the self-determination principle of the international law but notified that he cannot encourage the modification of borders (Navarro, 2014). Mas commented the outcomes of the EC electoral debates by specifying the curiosity of the presence of the Catalan issue on European but not Spanish stage (Gisbert, 2014b).

The outcomes of the European elections in Catalonia signalled the rise of the support of ‘right to decide’ political parties by 18 percentage points comparing to the previous European elections. The overall support for these parties reached 55 percent. The *ERC* continued its electoral rise and got the historic first place in Catalonia by getting 23.6 percents of votes. The *CiU* stayed in the second place with 21.8 percent. The third place secured the *PSC* with 14.2 percent of votes and got the worst result in the European elections history for them by losing more than half of their votes comparing to the previous elections. Another ‘sovereignty’ party the *ICV* received 10.2 percent and outperformed the *PP* with 9.8 percent of votes. The overall Spanish results were the first signal of the end of bi-party rule in Spain because the *PP* and the *PSOE* received only 30 MEPs comparing to 47 in the previous elections (Saez, 2014).

The results did not change the stance of the central state regarding the referendum. Rajoy has said that Mas has the ‘open doors in Moncloa in every moment’ (Garcia & Gisbert, 2014:17). But he has ascertained that ‘in order not to create the false expectations I confirm that national sovereignty is not negotiable and therefore I would not allow the illegal consultation to take place’ (Navarro & Ellakuria, 2014:12). The new leader of *PSOE* Sanchez joined the position of Rajoy in terms of non-acceptance of consultation and independentism, but he continued the federalist line of Rubalcaba and proposed the federal reform of Spain (Merino, 2014a). The center – region conflict continued in the economic space. The released data showed that Catalonia maintained a fiscal deficit with the Spanish State at an average of 8 percent of its GDP. Mas-Colell stated that ‘the figures amply show that Catalonia pays for everything it receives and still has a lot left over to contribute to solidarity with the rest of Spain’ (Gisbert, 2014c:11).

The relations between the *CDC* and the *UDC* significantly deteriorated. The drop started in 2012 when the *CDC* proclaimed its support for independence, then in 2013 Duran had a tense dispute with the *CDC* members about the ‘right to decide’. In 2014 Duran officially had left the position of the general secretary of the *CiU* and lately he left the similar post in the *UDC* (Gisbert, 2014d). Moreover, Pujol became the suspect in the corruption scandal and the members of the *CiU* asked him to leave the party membership (Gonzales, 2014).

‘Independence referendum’

Mas tried to use the Moncloa ‘open doors’ to negotiate the referendum. As in the previous cases, he did not succeed. Rajoy affirmed the same line of the Congress and the *TC* on the illegality of the consultation and the impossibility to allow it. Mas criticized in the way that ‘Rajoy has reiterated to me that the consultation cannot be done, because according to him it is illegal. And there is no alternative proposal. Beyond saying that everything we do is illegal, I was expecting a proposal. But today it does not exist’ (Merino, 2014b:14). The *ERC* supported Mas by proclaiming that the will of Catalan people outweigh the ‘papers’ of the *TC* or central Government (Pagan, 2014a:9). The similar outcomes had the meeting between Mas and Sanchez. Sanchez offered to reform the Constitution ‘among all’, submit it to a referendum and avoid the ‘fracture and social tear’ that the current sovereign process ‘will cause’ in Catalonia and the rest of Spain (Ellakuria, 2014:13).

In the line with the regionalist parties message about the will of Catalan people, *La Diada* became the proclamation of the ‘right to decide’. It was the anniversary of the National Day of Catalonia which took to the street 1,8 million of people according to Urban Guard. They created the symbol ‘V’ meaning *Voluntad* (the Will) (Tapounet, 2014a). Mas promised to do everything necessary in order not to crack the unity of people and force Madrid to negotiate (Masreal, 2014a). Junqueras has said ‘if on 9-N there are two million people on the street and 8,000 polling stations open, it is very difficult that one cannot vote’ (Pagan, 2014b:16). Arrufat (*CUP*) was radical in stating that Catalans should prepare for the historical and democratic battle against the state.

Herrera expressed the hope ‘the Government does not have an allergy to democracy and listen to the demand of the Catalans’ (Pagan, 2014b:16). The PSC member Iceta used the possibility to criticize Rajoy for not being responsible politicians (Pagan, 2014b).

The national parties’ reaction was the opposite. Rajoy has noted that ‘solidarity is the best manifestation of Spanish identity. An Andalusian can live with a Catalan heart’ (Robles & Santos, 2014:14). Sánchez Camacho has notified that ‘silent Catalonia has begun to raise its voice. The independence movement, as we have seen, is in the doldrums’ (Pagan, 2014b:16). Rivera criticized the pro-independence politicians for their irresponsibility and asked for abandoning the politics of confrontation and division (Pagan, 2014b:16). Sanchez asked to create bridges and not borders as his reaction on the Catalan independence movement (“Pedro Sánchez: «Es Día Para Tender Puentes y No Para Hacer Frentes»,” 2014).

The support for the independence referendum was massively demonstrated in *La Diada* but the regionalist parties found it difficult to agree among themselves on how to use this message. Junqueras called to skip the Spanish legality and create the own because voting is fundamental right prevailing over any law. The new *UDC* leader Espadaler disagreed by noticing that the skipping of Spanish legality would lead to nowhere. Duran was even more strict by saying that the proposed disobedience is the ‘shot in the foot to the process’ (Gisbert, 2014e:11). The division was evident in the voting on several independentists proposals in the Catalan Parliament. In short, the combination on votes was the following:

- *Structures of the state*: 73 in favor – *CiU*, *ERC*, *CUP*. 47 against – *PP*, *PSC*, *C’s*. 13 abstained – *ICV*
- *Support for the consultation*: 89 in favor – *CiU*, *ERC*, *ICV*, *CUP*, *PSC* (3). 44 against – *PP*, *PSC*, *C’s*
- *Pujol case*: 83 in favor – *ERC*, *PSC*, *PP*, *ICV*, *CUP*. 49 against – *CiU*.

We see the general support for the consultation from the pro-independence block of the *CiU*, the *ERC*, the *CUP*, and the *ICV* but in the more nuanced voting on the structures of the state the

ICV, for example, decided to abstain (Gisbert, 2014f). Moreover, the voting showed the tense disagreements between Mas and Junqueras on sovereignty process. Junqueras accused Mas of breaking the compromise about the consultation because no one act in unity among the parties signed the declaration of sovereignty. Mas responded that the consultation is agreed and there is no reason to criticize the *CiU* (Rico, 2014). Finally, the Parliament adopted the law of non-endorsement popular consultations and citizen participation by significant majority of 106 votes including the *CiU*, the *ERC*, the *PSC*, the *CUP*, the *ICV* (Pagan, 2014c). Based on this law Mas officially convoked the popular consultation on the 9 of November. The *CDC* announced that they would join the Yes-Yes campaign of the *ERC* without waiting for the *UDC* (Gisbert & Tort, 2014). The announcement of the consultation provoked the negative reaction from the national parties and state institutions. The most heated reaction was from Iturgaiz (PP): ‘Today the ally to the coup that Mr. Artur Mas wants to give is ETA, very clearly’ (Merino & Del Riego, 2014:28).

The *TC* immediately suspended the consultation (Juliana, 2014). The *Generalitat* reacted that ‘if legal channels are closed to institutionalize the expression of political opinion, as they demanded by many citizens in Catalonia, it will be difficult to foresee the consequences’ (Tort & Gisbert, 2014a:12). This decision fuels the relations between the pro-independence formations. The *ERC* was the staunch supporters of the legal disobedience and wanted to ignore the *TC* decision. The *UDC* eased their position about independence and include this option on the official document as compatible with the confederal model they support (Azpeitia, 2014b). Mas asked the pro-referendum parties to stop fighting each other because the real enemy is in Madrid. He also proposed to create the ‘united list’ for the ‘plebiscitary’ elections which also caused disagreement of the *UDC* and the *ERC* (Azpeitia, 2014c).

But the highest level of tension among pro-referendum parties provoked Mas decision to convoke the non-referendary 9-N participative consultation in substitution of cancelled by the *TC*. Junqueras called for the substitutive process till independence (so-called Unilateral Declaration of Independence (esp. *DIU*)) because the previous ‘legal’ consultation was impossible to realize. He

accused the *CiU* of non-compliance with the coalition agreement and announced the lost of trust in the coalition. The *UDC* proclaimed that the *DIU* is not the plan for the current legislature (Masreal & Barrena, 2014). Herrera has claimed that this decision is not the attempt to save the consultation but to save the promise, so the *ICV* refuses to endorse it. The *CUP* joined the critics (Tort & Gisbert, 2014b).

The turning point was the massive demonstration at the Catalonia Square of more than 100 thousand people organized by the *ANC* and *Omnium Cultural* in the defence of the consultation. The president of *Omnium Cultural* Casals summarized the message: ‘Unity of all parties, ballot boxes, and independence in case of majority’ (Masreal, 2014b:3). As the outcome, the *ERC* ‘reluctantly accepted’ the alternative consultation of Mas and agreed to leave their discrepancies until the 9-N (Tort & Gisbert, 2014c). However, the *UDC* and the *CDC* agreed to launch their referendum campaigns separately. Union campaigned for Yes-No, and *Convergencia* – for Yes-Yes (Gisbert, 2014g).

The new consultation was also annulated by the *TC*. The reasoning was the similar to the previous decision: the contradiction with the Constitution, the same question in the ballot papers, the absence of the *Generalitat* competence to convoke this kind of consultation (Batallas, 2014). Nevertheless, Catalan politicians decided to go ahead and convoke it. Rajoy reacted: ‘I do not know how it can be called, but it is not a referendum, nor a consultation, or anything like it. It does not produce effects’ (Del Riego, 2014b:23). Sanchez criticised both Rajoy and Catalan parties: ‘Rajoy’s immobility is gasoline for independence. The socialists defend democracy, and that is why we want the Catalans to vote, but with all of the law! We say yes to the constitutional reform, yes to the new statute of Catalonia and yes to unity in the diversity of Spain, federal Spain’ (Merino, 2014c:24).

Finally, more than 2.2 million of people participated in the 9-N. Yes-Yes variant won with 80.7 percent of support, the Yes-No option got 10.1 percent, and No to independence received 4.5 percent of votes. The sovereigntist parties reaction was very enthusiastic. Fernandez (*CUP*) has

said that ‘this is a democratic tsunami against a demophobic state’, and Junqueras has clarified that ‘the day has been an example of the justice and freedom of the citizens of Catalonia’ (Tapounet, 2014b:2). On the contrary, Rajoy characterized it as the ‘act of massive political propaganda of the great severity’ (Del Riego, 2014c:14). Moreover, the public prosecution office opened an official investigation against Mas for the organization of 9-N. In this case, the sovereigntist parties were united in the defence of Mas (Tort & Gisbert, 2014d).

The president of the *Generalitat* reflected the outcomes of 9-N by proposing his plan for independence by 2016. It has two stages: first, the ‘plebiscitary’ elections with the ‘unified list’ of candidates supporting independence; second, if this list gets the majority, Catalonia will communicate its desire to be independent to Spain and international community and draft its own Constitution. At the end of this process, the new elections and referendum on independence to set up the Catalan state should be held (Gisbert, 2014h). However, even the first step met the refuse from the *ERC*. At the end of the year, Mas and Junqueras had a meeting where the leader of the *ERC* showed his readiness to substitute Mas as the head of Government because ‘at two times the president has won the elections, the *ERC* has not respected it and has supported other options, we give it a low credibility’. (Hinojosa, 2014:21)

To sum up, the support for independence in 2014 for the first time in the study period slightly declined, especially after the 9-N. As Cetrá and Harvey (2019) point out, the 9-N was largely viewed as a form of protest by the pro-independence faction rather than a definitive test of support for independence. This was mainly due to the fact that the vote was boycotted by the majority of unionists. Moreover, the results of the process finally contributed to the disrupt between the *CDC* and *ERC* on the framing of the ‘right to decide’. The initial demand for ‘the right to decide was gradually replaced by the goal of independence, though both continue to ambiguously coexist in the pro-independence discourse (Cetrá & Harvey, 2019). The failure to officially legalize the referendum put regional elites in the necessity to continue the independence game by proposing the plebiscitary elections in 2015.

3.6. Catalan Independence Process in the Media

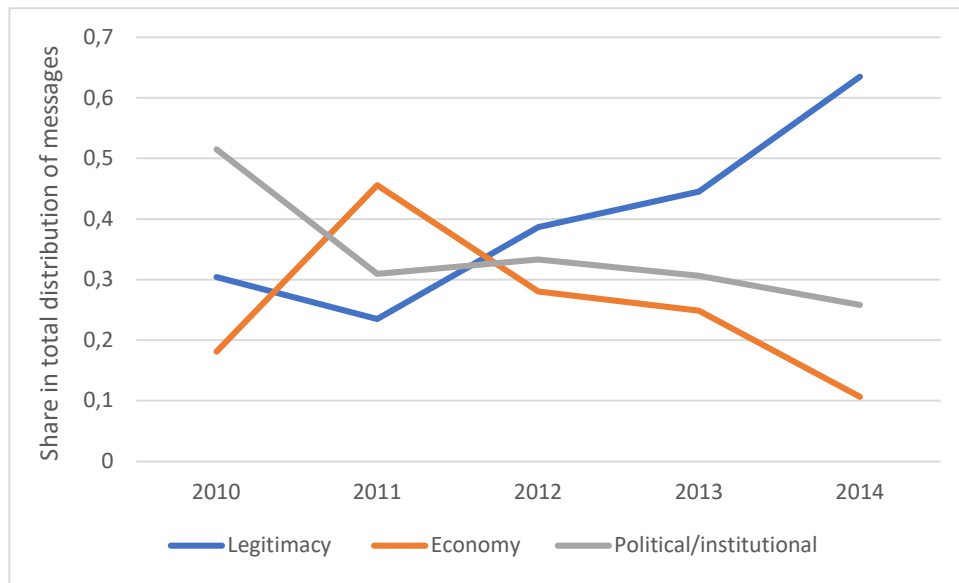
Framing the macroarguments

This five-year period included a lot of changes in the Catalan society and the political landscape. The process shifted from the low regional support for independence into the mainstream political issue. The politization of the Catalan society crystallizes in the massive public demonstration with pro-independence slogans.

Mainstream Catalan media closely follow all the important political events and offer people their reflection. Starting from 2012, almost every issue of *La Vanguardia* has noted the Catalan-Spanish relations. The intensity of articles especially increased around important political events. To illustrate, the number of frames and message flows from September to December 2012 accounts for 60 percent of the total 2012 Spanish-Catalan discourse. It coincides with the major political events including *La Diada*, fiscal pact rejection, and regional elections.

The Catalan discourse intensified in autumn. In the same manner, the major political events in Catalonia happened in autumn of each year. The only exception of this trend is the year of 2010. The failure of the Statute of Autonomy and the mass demonstration against it happened in the summer. The media reflected the discourse in the following way: from January to May 2010 it was 33 percent of the total discourse, from June to August – 31 percent, and from September to December – 36 percent. It means that both the Statute of Autonomy Court decision and the regional elections 2010 attributed equal attention in terms of the Catalan-Spanish relations.

Graph 3.6.1. Changes in macrogroups of arguments, Catalonia (2010-2014)

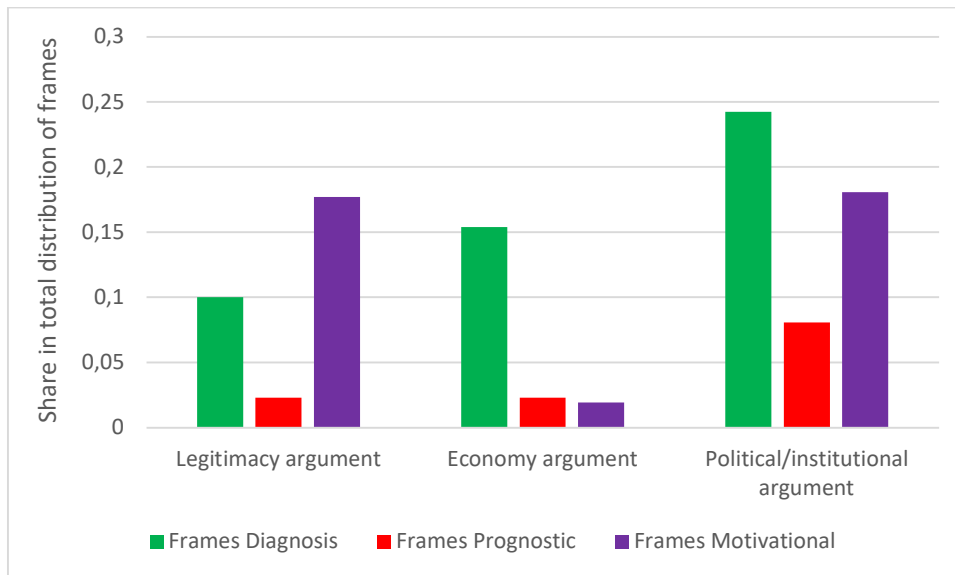


Source: author own data

The fluctuations in macrogroups of arguments (graph 3.6.1) demonstrate that events in 2012 changed the discourse. This year merged closely all the arguments and after they followed completely different trends. The legitimacy arguments rise the saliency, whereas the economic arguments declined. Before the 2012, the economic arguments peaked in 2011 and played a significant role in the discourse. These observations confirm that the political events of 2012 serve as a focal point. The radicalization of demands for independence coincided with the rise of legitimacy group vis-à-vis the economic one.

Starting from 2012, the legitimacy arguments dominated the discourse and constantly increased its saliency. The political arguments reached the point in 2010 but after they stabilized in the second place. The growth of the legitimacy arguments occurred due to the reduction of both political and economic ones.

Graph 3.6.2. The distribution of frames among macrogroups, Catalonia 2010

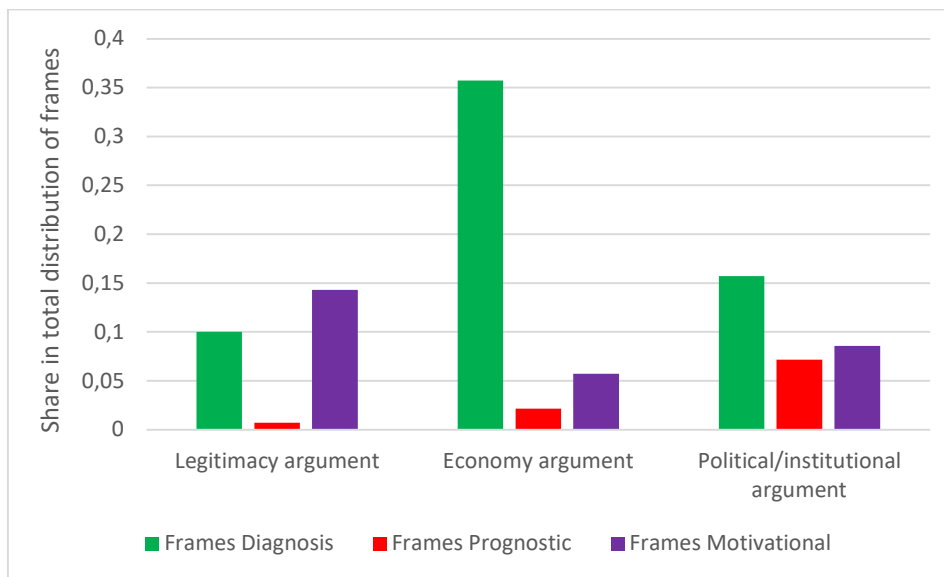


Source: author own data

The failure of the Statute led to political/institutional argument to dominate the discourse in 2010. However, the framing of this issue demonstrates the strength of diagnosis nature. The media attention divided between the reflection of the current state-of-affairs between Spain and Catalonia in the light of the Court decision, and the proposals for the future resolution of this problem. Both diagnosis and problem-solving frames within the political category are equally distributed. The project of Catalan independence due to the Statute failure had a strong opposition.

The economic arguments were the most salient in 2011. This year was marked by the deep economic crisis in Spain and the anti-austerity movement. The *indignados* protested the political elites and policies. Both regional and national leaders received criticism for inadequate economic policy. This year had low pro-independence support growth and smaller attention to the Spanish-Catalan relations.

Graph 3.6.3. The distribution of frames among macrogroups, Catalonia 2011



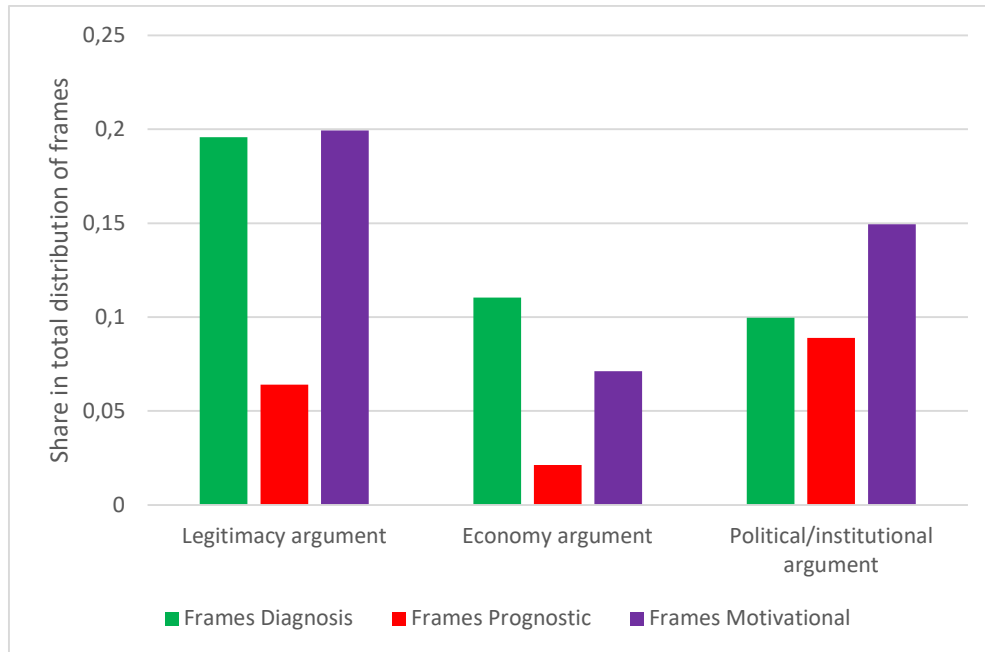
Source: author own data

The framing of economic arguments (graph 3.6.3.) demonstrates that the reflection of the current situation was more prominent than the attempts playing the economy card to gain independence. The diagnosis framing significantly outperformed the problem-solving within the economy category. The *indignados* movement had no common ground with the Catalan independence supporters. The main message disregarded both the regional and national elites. Additionally, the National elections in 2011 had little space for intensifying the independence messages. Duran claimed the new economic agreement between Catalonia and Spain, but the independence was not the part of his electoral agenda.

In 2012 all arguments came closer to each other. The decline of economic, the stabilization of political, and the rise of legitimacy arguments found themselves in a changing point of the discourse. The intensity of Catalan-Spanish debates increased in comparison to 2011. The framing of the leading legitimacy arguments (graph 3.6.4) illustrates this change. The most dominant group (legitimacy) is equally distributed between motivational and diagnosis, but the prognostic frames added value to problem-solving. The 'political/institutional' group is strongly dominated by

problem-solving frames (motivational and prognostic). In the ‘economy argument’ group the slight prevalence has the diagnosis framing.

Graph 3.6.4. The distribution of frames among macrogroups, Catalonia 2012

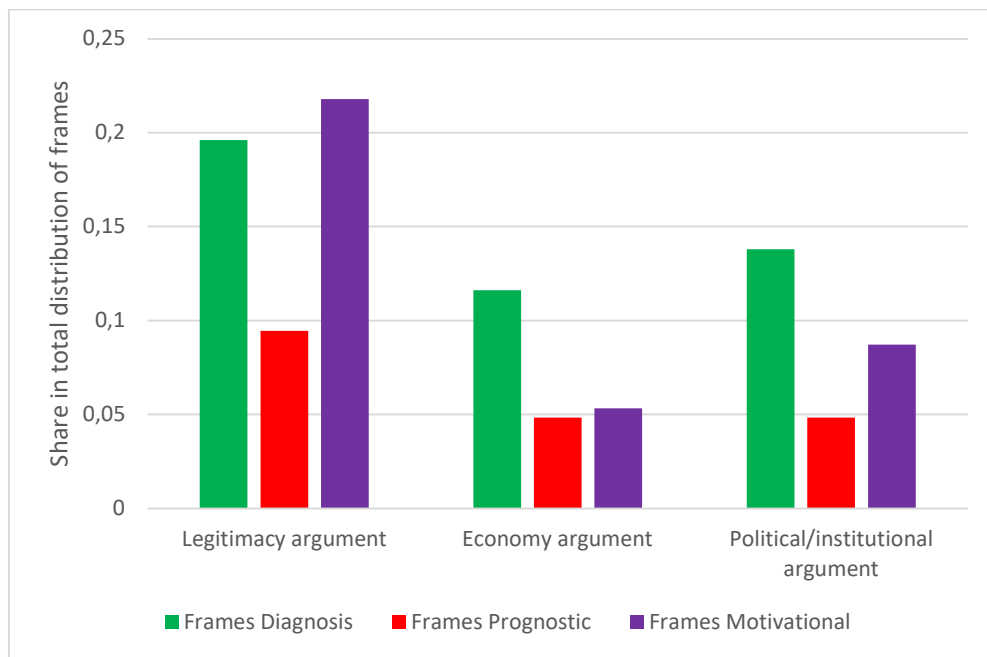


Source: author own data

The public demonstration and the rejection of the fiscal pact reflected in the media as the necessity to drastically change the Catalan-Spanish relations. Media increased the ‘problem-solving’ framing as way to go for independence. Legitimacy and political/institutional arguments were framed in terms of independence as a resolution for the current Catalan problems.

The trend of framing legitimacy arguments as predominantly problem-solving continued in 2013. Generally, the legitimacy arguments are the most prominent and dominated by problem-solving frames. The ‘economic’ and ‘political’ macrogroups are more balanced in terms of diagnosis and problem-solving frames (graph 3.6.5.).

Graph 3.6.5. The distribution of frames in macrogroups, Catalonia 2013

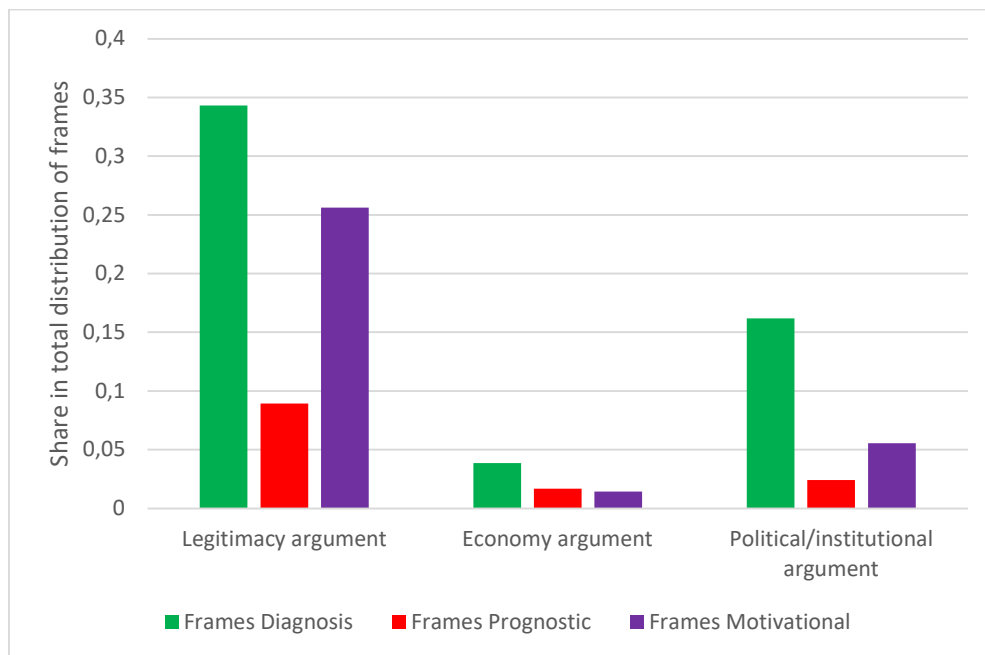


Source: author own data

The conflict over legitimacy between Spain and Catalonia was reflected in public discourse in 2013. The demands for the independence referendum along with the Declaration of Sovereignty was the ‘problem-solving’ projects for the independent Catalan future. The Catalan media caught this argument and the distribution of motivational framing was the most prominent.

Finally, the year of 2014 became the quintessence of the battle over legitimacy. The dominance of this group peaked in comparison to the rest arguments. However, all three macro groups are dominated by the diagnosis frames (graph 3.6.6). Only in ‘legitimacy argument’ group motivational and prognostic frames combined account for almost half of the frames. ‘Political/institutional’ and ‘economic arguments’ are overtopped by the diagnosis frames.

Graph 3.6.6. The distribution of frames in macrogroups, Catalonia 2014



Source: author own data

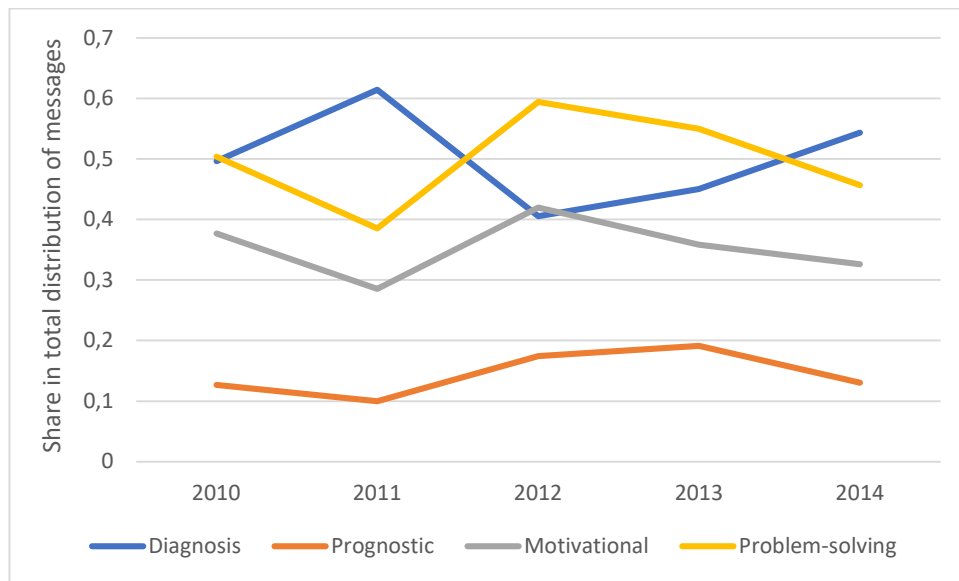
The opposition of the state reached the highest point on the legitimacy issue. The project of independence being on the rise in terms of ‘problem-solving’ framing faced the reality. In this reality the Spanish state demonstrated its willingness to fight against independence by using all the legal instruments. The framing of legitimacy argument from the ‘problem-solving’ independence started to transform into the diagnosis reflection of the current state-of-affairs. These two streams, the motivational demand for independence because it is a legitimate move and the diagnosis analysis of the current legitimacy conflict, found themselves in a balanced conflict.

Framing the discourse

The main difference between framing independence lies in its reference to the future. The diagnosis frame labels the current issue as problematic but fails to provide a way out. Diagnosis framing reflects the reality and discusses the current problems. Presenting independence in terms of diagnosis framing means to discuss the current events without provision of the way out.

Prognostic and motivational framing are the two sides of the same coin. Prognostic frames refer to the future and propose independence as the way out of the current situation. But this is a ‘cold’ frame and do not contain the incentives for action. It describes the potential independence future without description of concrete actions to gain it. Motivational frames stipulate the incentives to gain independence. This is a ‘hot’ frame which contains motivational vocabulary to get concrete steps for achieving the independence goal.

Graph 3.6.7. Changes in frames, Catalonia (2010-2014)



Source: author own data

Motivational framing outperformed the prognostic one within the ‘problem-solving’ group in the study period (graph 3.6.7). The data suggests that media preferred ‘hot’ framing of the independence claims vis-à-vis the ‘cold’ one. In 2010 and 2012 the gap between motivational and prognostic frames accounted to 0,25 percentage points that was coincided with two critical events: the Statute failure and *la Diada* demonstration.

The balance between diagnosis and problem-solving frames changed several times in the study period. The overall distribution of frames show that the leading problem-solving frame is motivational and combined they equalize with the diagnosis framing in 2010. Meanwhile, we see a slight rise in independence sentiments from 19 to 25 percents. The problem-solving frames that propose mobilization of any form in order to benefit in the future did not dominate the public

discourse in 2010. So, it is possible to see that the dissatisfaction with TC decision added value to the independence sentiments, but there was no dominance of one group on another.

The diagnosis framing was the most occurrent group in the media in 2011. Simultaneously, the growth for independence in the period was only from 26 to 29 percent because the economic frames can be related as the reason to vote independence but being "diagnosis" in nature does not stimulate the necessary resonance.

The ratio between diagnosis and problem-solving frames drastically changed in 2012. The level for independence support rose from 28 to 46 percent. The gap between these two types of framing was the widest during the whole study period. Media switched from diagnostic reflection of the independence topic to the problem-solving motivation. In fact, motivational framing led the media discourse in 2012 which coincided with the fastest growth of independence sentiment.

The advantage of problem-solving vis-à-vis diagnosis framing confirmed in 2013. Despite the gap between problem-solving and diagnosis frames narrowed, the support of independence reached the highest level in the study period. The ratio between motivational and prognostic frames also reduced. Evidently, the trend of problem-solving framing of independence continued from 2012 with some corrections. This year was the only one without significant political events. The Declaration of Sovereignty considered to be more routine process in the independentist agenda. However, the project of independence got its problem-solving plan which media reflect in the similar manner.

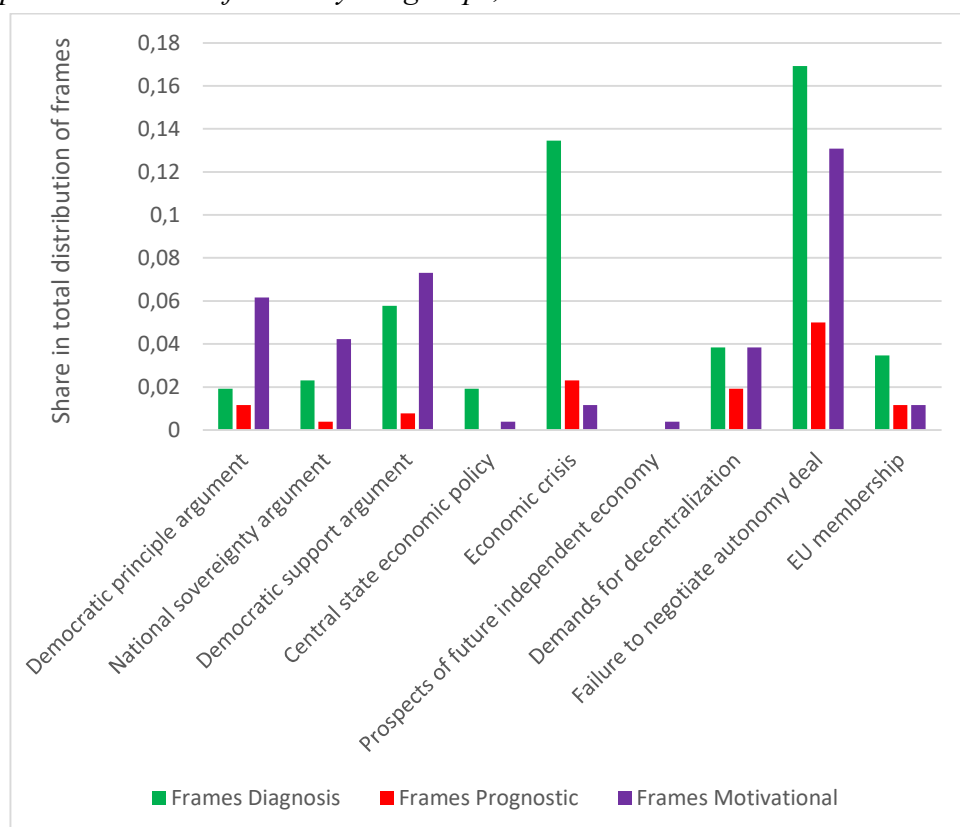
But this project faced the 2014 with the unsatisfied outcomes of the political consultation on independence and return of the diagnosis framing of the independence demands. In 2012 and 2013 the problem-solving frames were more prominent than the diagnosis ones. In 2014, the diagnosis frames returned to lead the media discourse as in 2011. Within the problem-solving group, the motivational frames contribute to 72 percent of all problem-solving frames. In comparison, motivational frames make up 65 percent of problem-solving in 2013. On the one hand, the

diagnosis reflection of media returned its saliency in the discourse. On the other hand, the problem-solving framing radicalized again in comparison to 2013.

Framing the arguments

Quantitative changes in the frequency of diagnosis and problem-solving frame refer to the intensity and saliency of the issues. Another part of the understanding the way of presenting the independentism consist of the changes in the meaning of important frames.

Graph 3.6.8. Overall frames by subgroups, Catalonia 2010

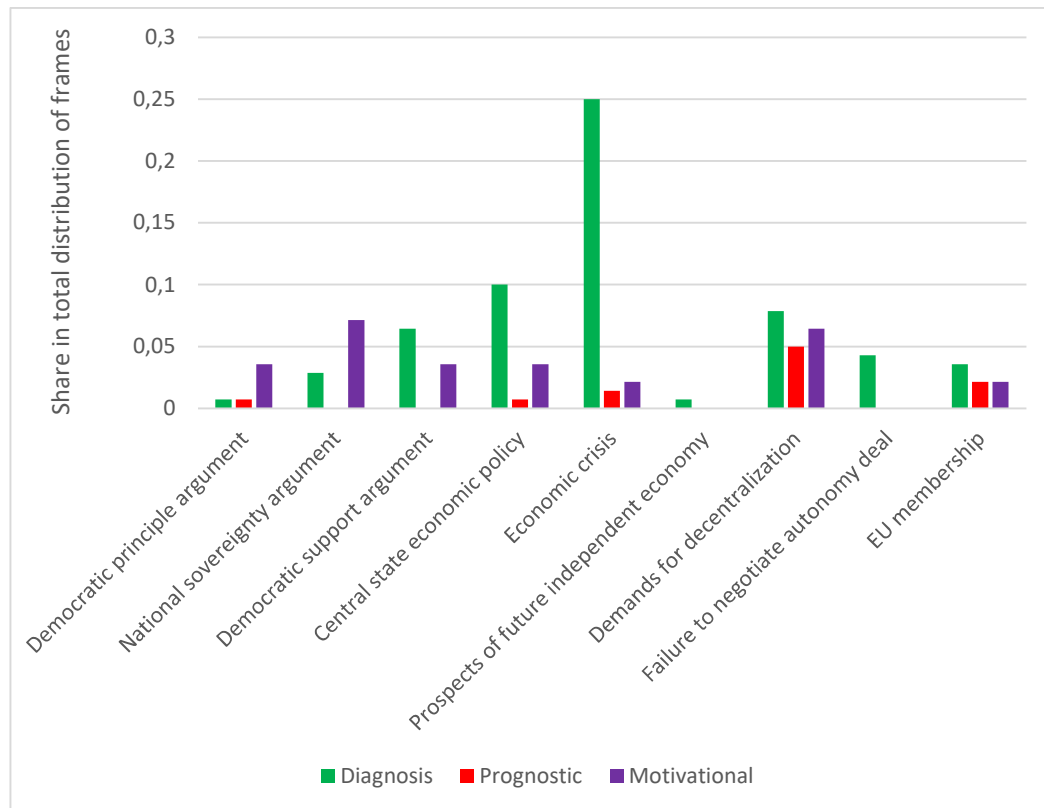


Source: author own data

The distribution of diagnosis and problem-solving frames was dispersed in 2010 (graph 3.6.8.). Speaking about the ‘economic crisis’, media made it diagnosis, whereas the ‘democratic principle’ was more dominated by the motivational one. The ‘failure to negotiate autonomy deal’ shows us the slight prevalence of problem-solving frames. The ‘right to decide’ frame denoted to the democratic principle group was introduced by Mas. Initially, he framed it as a synonym to sovereignty but the opposition to independence. Speaking about the ‘right to decide’, Mas referred

to the own way of Catalonia and the possibilities to propose the referendum about the future relations with Spain.

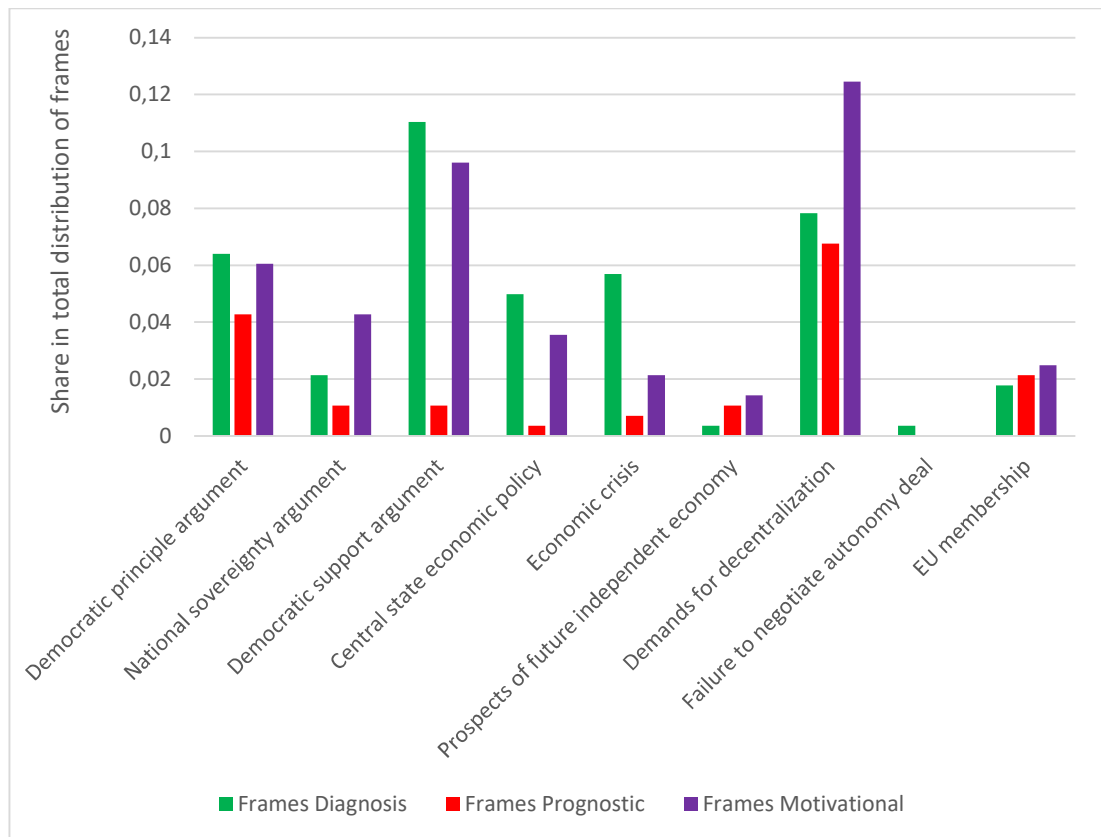
Graph 3.6.9. Overall frames by subgroups, Catalonia 2011



Source: author own data

The fast growth of frequency demonstrated the fiscal pact denoted in the demands for decentralization group in 2011. Duran made it the main goal for the electoral campaign. This message not only amplified quantitatively but also in meaning. If initially it was more generally presented as a mode of relationships with Spain which can be beneficial for Catalonia but now this is the way to leave the current economic crisis. Moreover, it is presented as a ‘solution’ to deal with Spanish inadequate economic accommodation of Catalonia. Such values as democracy, dignity, stability, prosperity was attempted to associate with fiscal pact. Nevertheless, the fiscal pact was presented by its main promoters (Mas and Duran) as an alternative for independence. Also, the ‘right to decide’ (democratic principle group) which is more associated with possible independence was at the marginal position (graph 3.6.9).

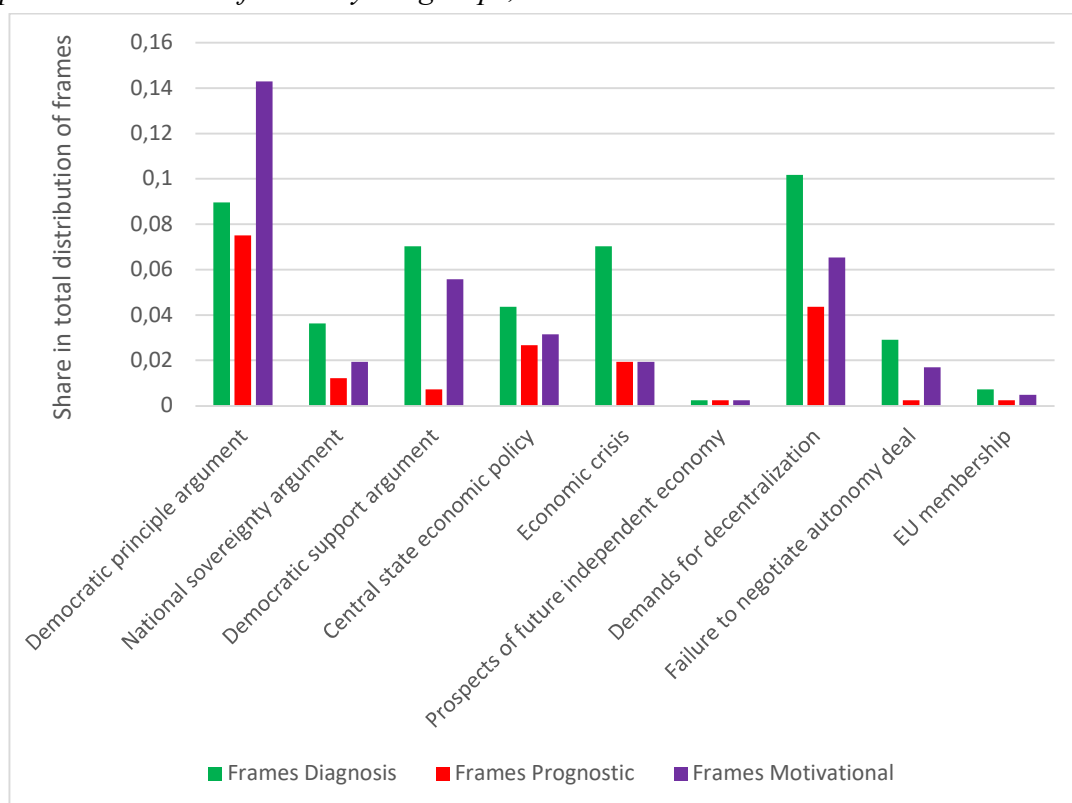
Graph 3.6.10. Overall frames by subgroups, Catalonia 2012



Source: author own data

The overall diffusion of frames expresses the motivational ‘demands for decentralization’ as the most prominent (graph 3.6.10.) in 2012. For the first time the leading argument had a clear motivational framing. The fiscal pact argument was widely promoted and became the most heated topic in the political discourse. But the narrative of the frame has undergone changes. In 2011, it was presented as an alternative for independence; but in 2012 ‘fiscal pact’ was the necessary condition not to provoke huge secessionism. We see the process of frame transformation from an alternative way to highly correlated with secessionism. That is why the rejection of fiscal pact provoked the frustration and immediate change in strategy of the *CiU* as a major political party. In the same manner the ‘right to decide’ frame transformed. Firstly, it became more relevant in the media discourse. Secondly, it served as the main indicator of the legitimacy dispute with Spain.

Graph 3.6.11. Overall frames by subgroups, Catalonia 2013

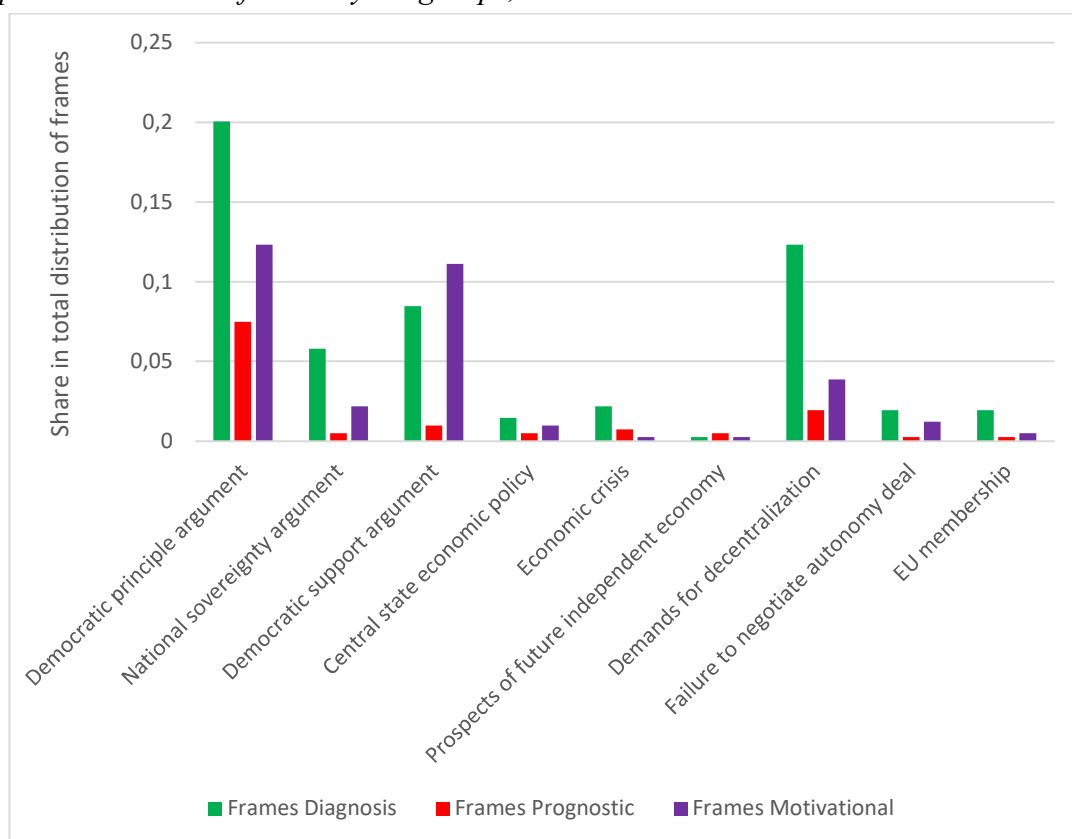


Source: author own data

This legitimacy dispute reflected in the media as regional politicians discussed the independence referendum in 2013 (graph 3.6.11). Comparing to 2010 - 2012, the democratic principal argument substantively changed. The motivational component raised up as well as its overall role in the discourse. By moving from the minor issue into the leading question of the Spanish-Catalan relationships, the ‘right to decide’ finally transformed from the association with sovereignty into the motivational demand for independence via referendum.

The second most frequent argument is the ‘demands for decentralization’. The essence of this frame changed from the fiscal pact to the projects of institutional relations with Spain. This argument was more balanced in terms of frames. The reason is because there are at least four proposals promoted by the political elites including independence, federalism, confederal system, or recentralization. The third one is the ‘central state economic policy’ which was mostly problem-solving, especially in the light of Spanish-Catalan disputes over deficit and budget.

Graph 3.6.12. Overall frames by subgroups, Catalonia 2014



Source: author own data

Finally, the diagnosis ‘democratic principle’ accounted to the 20 percent of the Spanish-Catalan discourse in 2014 (graph 3.6.12.). It is followed by motivational ‘democratic principle’ and ‘democratic support’, and diagnosis ‘demands for decentralization’. Two significant changes should be noted.

Firstly, media completely changed the framing of ‘democratic principle’ argument. Comparing to 2012-2013, the distribution among problem-solving and diagnosis frames equalized. The ‘right to decide’ moved from the strongly motivational framing into more balanced.

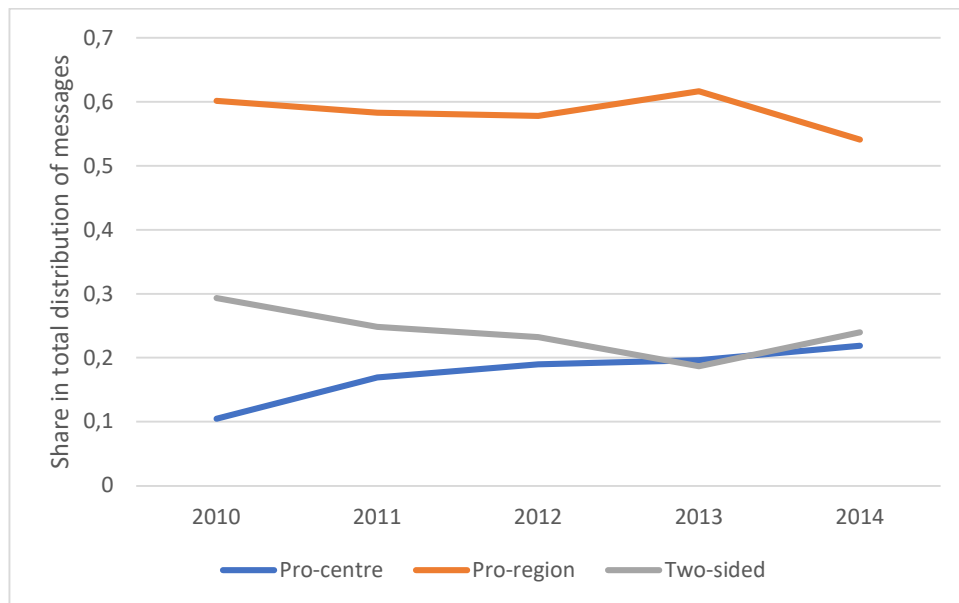
Secondly, ‘demands for decentralization’ frame transformed into mostly diagnosis one. This fact drastically changed the essence of this argument. In 2012, ‘demands for decentralization’ had clear problem-solving motivational nature, whereas in 2014 this argument became predominantly diagnosis. As soon as the ‘fiscal pact’ disappeared, the motivational framing of this argument continuously declined.

Saliency of arguments and message flows

The political events itself serve as a driver for political changes. The elections, political scandals, or political decisions affect the society and their perception of the political course. At the same time, the exogeneous importance of political events can be underlined by the media.

Catalonian mainstream newspapers faced a choice to report on different political events. To compare, *la Diada* event received an extensive media coverage. Almost full issue of *La Vanguardia* from 12 September reported on it. Simultaneously, the celebration of the pro-center manifestation on the *Dia de la Hispanidad* received unproportionally less attention and discussion.

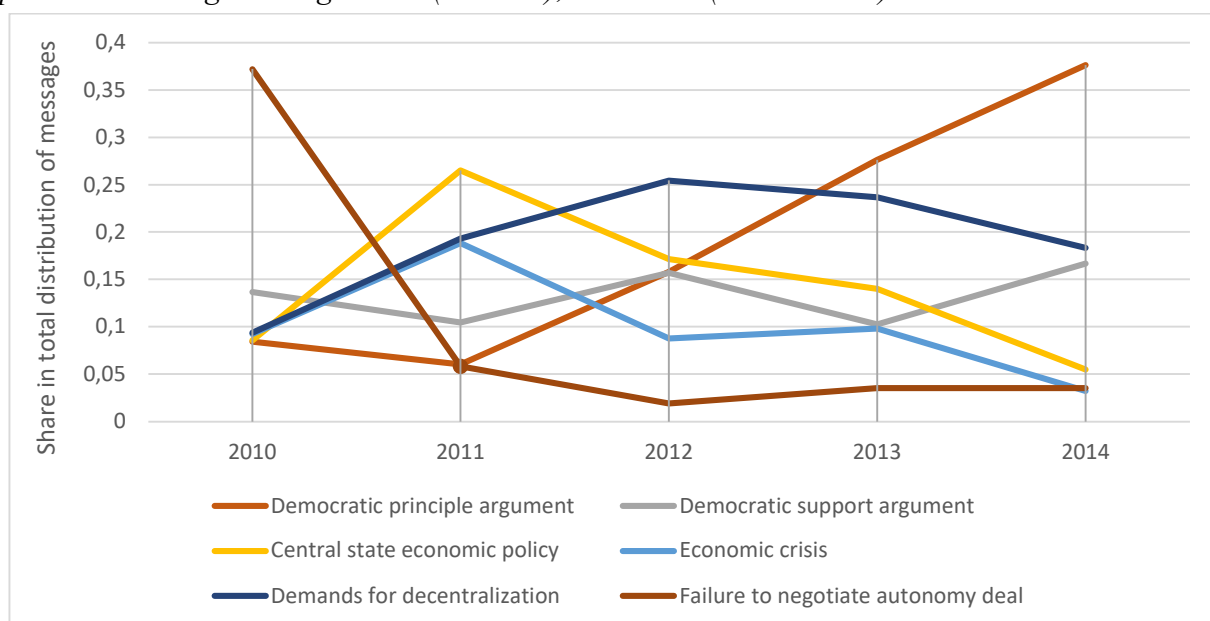
Graph 3.6.13. Changes in message flows, Catalonia (2010-2014)



Source: author own data

The strong pro-region bias in media reporting of the Catalan-Spanish relations confirms the intention to set up a regionalist agenda during the process (graph 3.6.13). Around 60 percent of all messages contribute to the pro-regional stance. The way of reporting the Catalan-Spanish relations confirms the predominantly negative connotation of the topic. Among the pro-region messages the overwhelming majority criticised the center authorities rather than created a positive image of the regional elites. Most of the messages reaffirm the standoff between Spain and Catalonia.

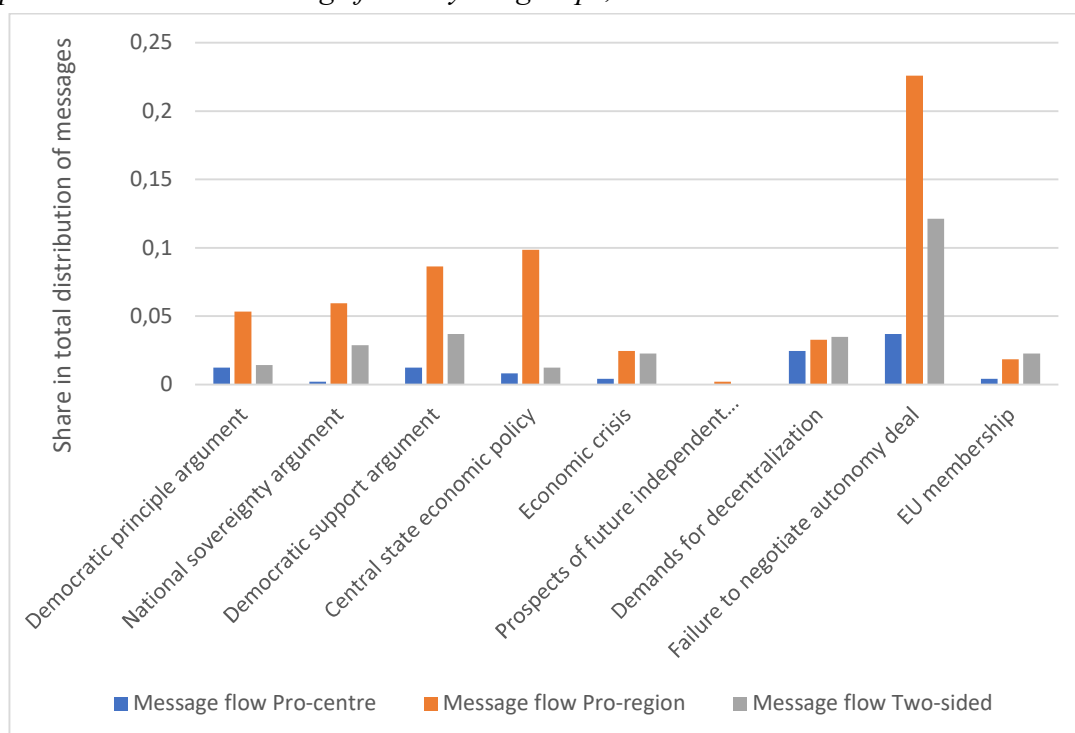
Graph 3.6.14. Changes in arguments (selected), Catalonia (2010 – 2014)



Source: author own data

The saliency of arguments follows the political process in Catalonia (graph 3.6.14). In 2010, the major political event was the Court decision of the Statute. The austerity policy and the economic crisis in 2011 led to the mass demonstrations. The fiscal pact failure and *La Diada* manifestation made the ‘demands for decentralization’ the most salient topic. The year of 2013 marked the way to conduct the referendum on independence, that is the ‘democratic principle’ argument became the most salient. Finally, the political consultation on independence in 2014 signalled the highest tension on legitimacy between Catalonia and Spain.

Graph 3.6.15. Overall message flows by subgroups, Catalonia 2010

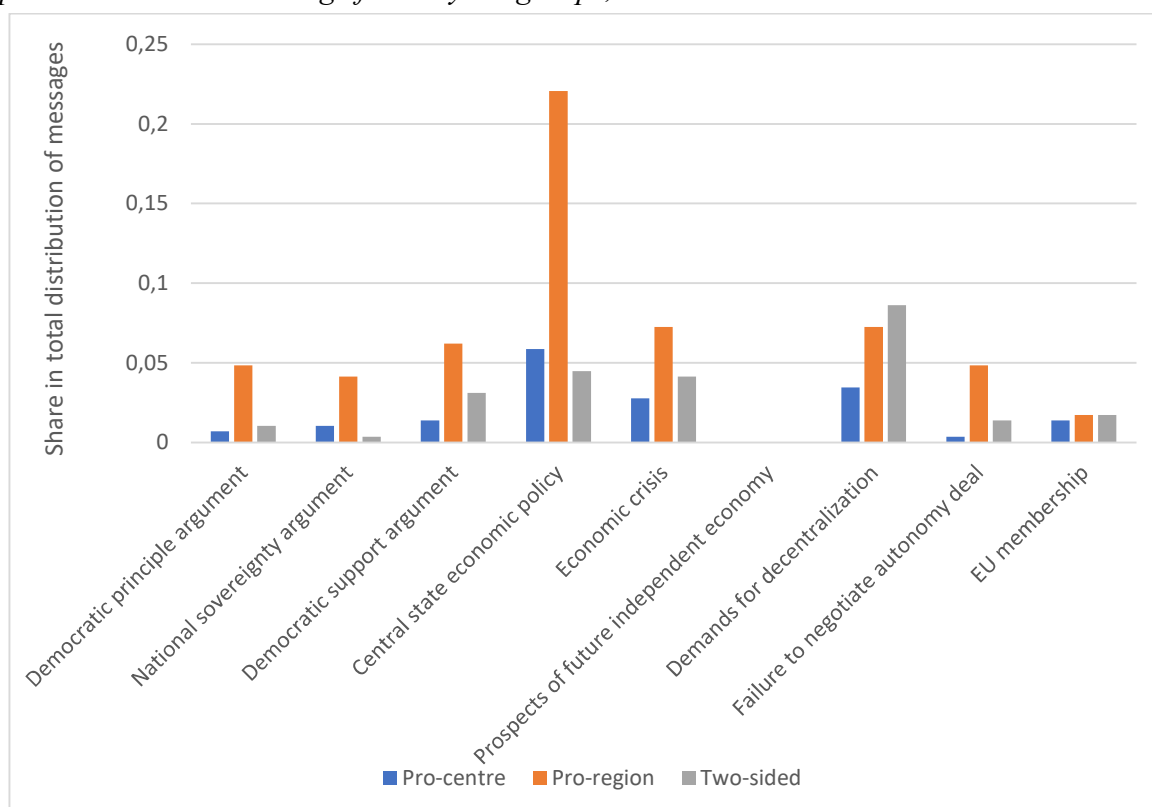


Source: author own data

The message accusing Spain for the Statute failure were dominated in the public discourse in 2010. As the response to the unfavourable ruling, the 10-J manifestation of major political parties and evident public support were held (graph 3.6.15). The autonomy deal argument come up 72 percent of the total political/institutional arguments and made this group dominant over economy and legitimacy arguments.

Comparing to 2010, the distribution is significantly changed (graph 3.6.16.). Firstly, the ‘failure to negotiate autonomy deal’ message from being the most frequent drastically reduced its presence. This is a very important insight and put on serious doubt the substantial importance of negative Court decision as the reason for growing secessionism (Carrera, 2014: 80). The only time in the year when this message appeared more or less frequently was July with regards to the anniversary of 10-J manifestation. Mas claimed that “The spirit of 10-J is still absolutely alive” (“Mas Apela a La Perseverancia Para Avanzar En El Derecho a Decidir,” 2011). But later on, it is hard to find any cases of references to the Statute as the problematic topic.

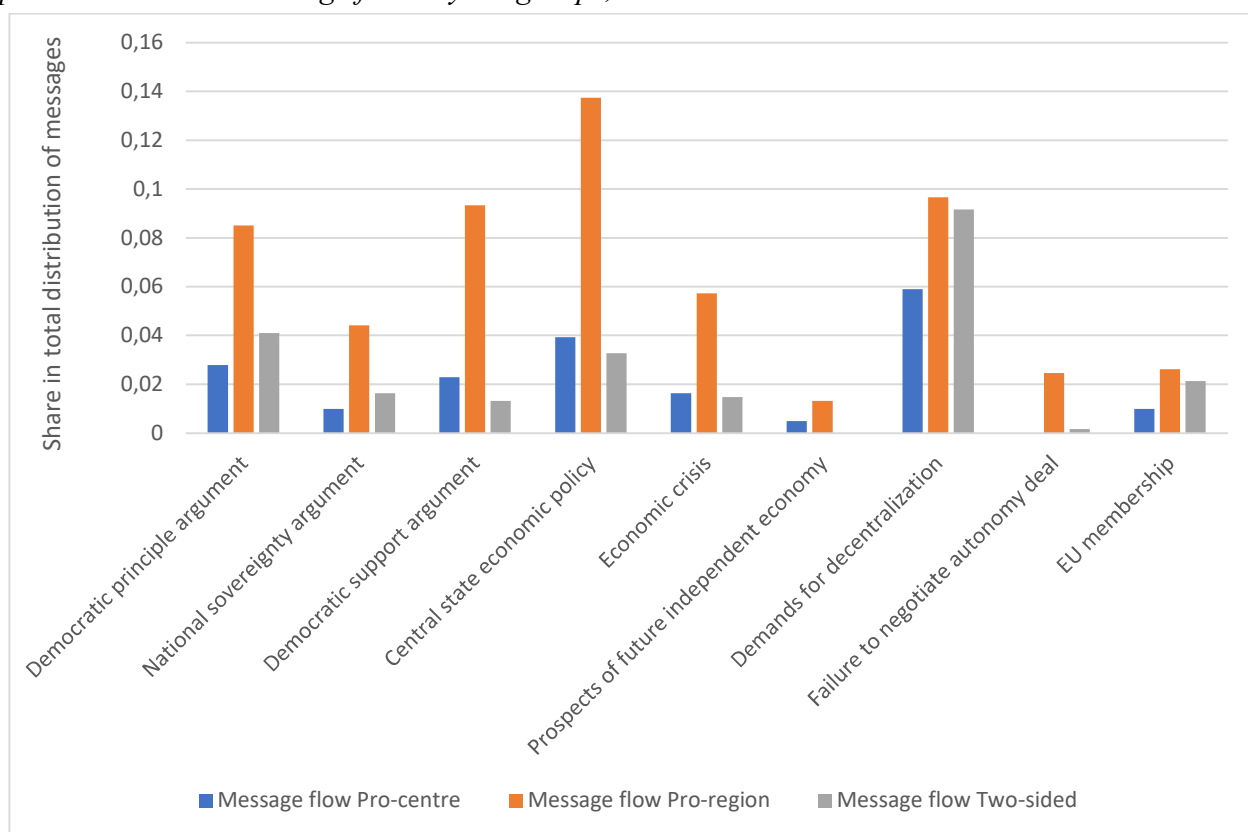
Graph 3.6.16. Overall message flows by subgroups, Catalonia 2011



Source: author own data

Overall distribution of messages in the public discourse shows us that the most frequent are the two economic arguments ('central state economic policy', 'economic crisis') and one political ('demands for decentralization'). 'Failure to negotiate autonomy deal' occupies the minor position in the public discourse as the rest of the arguments.

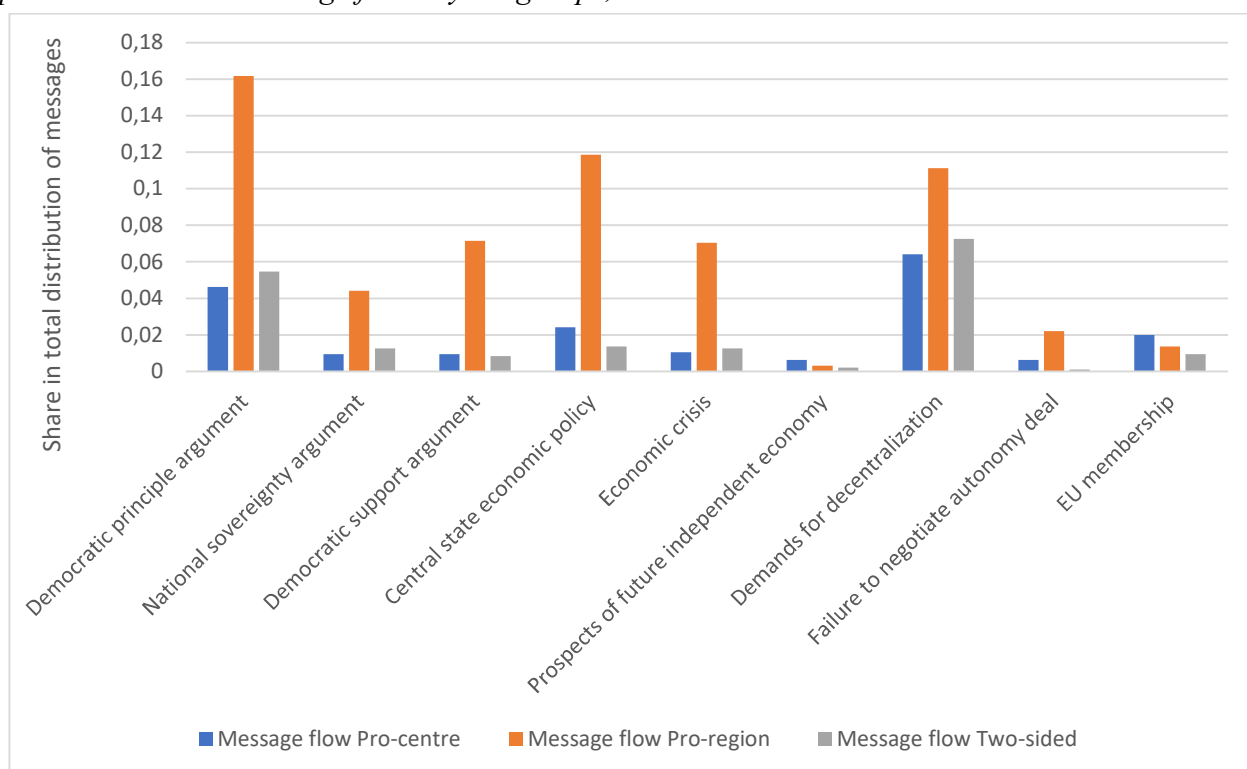
Graph 3.6.17. Overall message flows by subgroups, Catalonia 2012



Source: author own data

Noticeably, ‘demands for decentralization’ significantly increased its presence in the public discourse in 2012 (graph 3.6.17). But the distribution of messages was still at the balance between pro-region and two-sided messages. This is the only argument in the discourse which has this balanced reporting. The big role in balancing this issues played the *PSC* position and their promotion of the federal project.

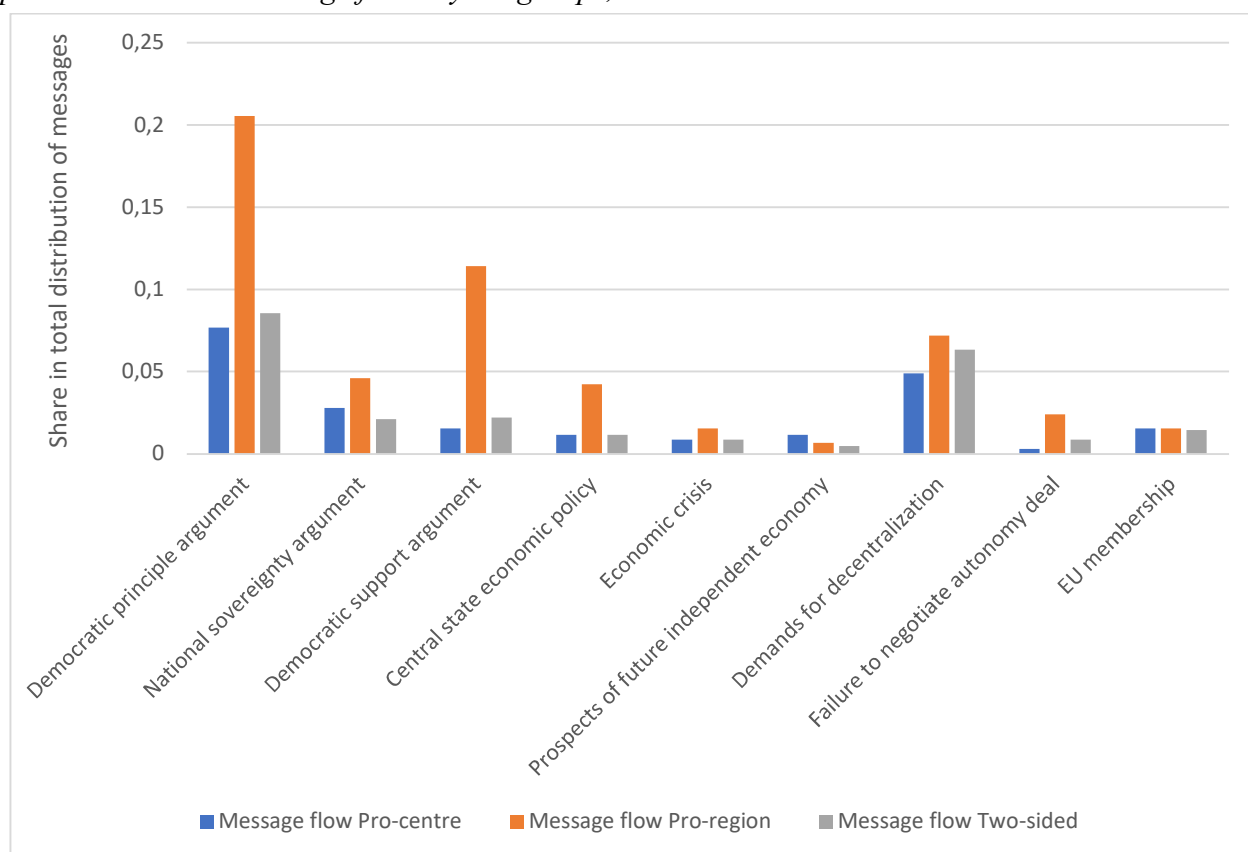
Graph 3.6.18. Overall message flows by subgroups, Catalonia 2013



Source: author own data

The move from balanced to pro-region bias in ‘demands to decentralization’ became evident in 2013 (graph 3.6.18). This shift confirms the radicalization of the position on the future Catalan project towards independence. Additionally, the ‘central state economic policy’ argument continues to be strongly dominated by the pro-region bias. Even though the economic arguments saliency declined, the blame for inadequate economic accommodation reserved the dominance in this category.

Graph 3.6.19. Overall message flows by subgroups, Catalonia 2014



Source: author own data

The ‘right to decide’ was the most important topic in 2014 (graph 3.6.19). Its dominance in the discourse was comparable with the Statute failure in 2010. The ‘demands for decentralization’ argument even in the absence of fiscal pact as a topic in discourse in 2014 continues to be the very prominent. However, the proportion in the discourse decreased as well as the balance between pro-region and two-sided arguments returned to 2010-2012 numbers. It was the only political/institutional argument which sustain its importance in the political discourse. Two legitimacy arguments ‘democratic support’ and ‘national sovereignty’ were also quite prominent and occupy the third and fourth place in terms of frequency.

At the same time, the diagnosis frames were the more frequent than the problem-solving ones. The most frequent argument was as in 2013 the ‘democratic principle’. But in 2013 it was dominated by the problem-solving frames whereas in 2014 the diagnosis nature prevailed. While the motivational ‘right to decide’ more or less sustained, the shift from prognostic to diagnosis occurred. It can be explained by the fact that in 2013 the independence referendum was planned

and related to the future tool to resolve the Spanish-Catalan crisis. In 2014, the referendum as planned did not happen and it was the time to reflect on it. Thus, the sovereigntist parties in spite of playing the pro-regional message were not united and disputed with each other. It led to the fragmentation of the process and some contradictions in delivering the pro-independence message to the public.

Conclusion

This chapter traces all the important event in Catalonia from 2010 to 2014. The interplay between regionalist and national parties, regional elites and civil society organizations, state and local authorities drive the independence process in Catalonia. Overall, the support for independence enjoyed the double increase within the study period.

Strong media bias is tracked. All study period is characterized by the dominance of pro-region message flows. The nature of these messages is diverse: it was the strong criticism of the central state authorities for their reluctance, absence of dialogue, or inappropriate economic accommodation; or it was the supportive messages for regional elites to get the better deal or respect the national culture, language, or sovereignty. Nevertheless, the negative connotation of pro-region messages was predominant.

The framing of independence process undergone changes. In 2010, the diagnosis and problem-solving frames were at balance. In 2011, the diagnosis of bad economic conditions was more frequent than the problem-solving fiscal pact. In 2012, the problem-solving framing was the leader of the pro-region discourse and continued to be on top in 2013. In 2014, the diagnosis framing returned its leadership in political discourse.

Frame alignment process played a role in political discourse. Initially, the fiscal pact was introduced as alternative to independence and had a diagnosis nature. The leader of the *UDC* Duran called people for support of fiscal pact in *La Diada*. But this frame undergoes transformation in 2012. Mas as the main promoter of it transformed the meaning of fiscal pact as the way not to provoke more frustration and demands for independence among population. And the fiscal pact played a crucial role in the estimation of independence among population. Frame extension process is evident in the case of 'right to decide'. Right to decide is presented as the 'solution' to Catalan-Spanish relations and its frequency also drastically increased in 2012. Promoters may have to extend the boundaries of its primary framework so as to encompass interests or points of view that are incidental to its primary objectives but of considerable salience to potential adherents. In effect,

the movement is attempting to enlarge its adherent pool by portraying its objectives or activities as attending to or being congruent with the values or interests of potential adherents (Snow et al, 1986: 484). Initially, the 'right to decide' represented the reaction to unfavourable constitutional ruling and referendum for the Statute. Then it started to associate with the referendum as the way to resolve common problems and finally after the 11-S 'right to decide' started to spread in the light of 'referendum for independence'.

The discourse transformed in terms of the main arguments promoted. The failure to negotiate autonomy deal because of the Statute failure was the main topic for 2010 and predisposed the leadership of political/institutional arguments in the discourse. The economic crisis and the policy of constraints was the main concern in 2011 and made the economic argument the leading one. Starting from 2012, the legitimacy arguments became the most discussed and promoted. The 'right to decide' noted in the 'democratic principle' argument was the most important in 2013 and 2014 but even in 2012 it was massively presented in the discourse. The important role played the 'demands for decentralization'. In 2012, it was the most frequent, in 2011, 2013, and 2014 it secured the second place in discourse. This argument was mainly presented by the fiscal pact which undergo frame transformation.

Some political parties transformed their stance on independence. The *CiU* is a case in point. They started as being the main opposition party but in 2010 they returned to power with 46 percent of the seats in the Catalan Parliament. These elections they introduced the fiscal pact and concentrated on the economic battle with Spain. Their stance on territorial issue can be characterized as 'more autonomy'. But in 2012 coalition parties the *CDC* and the *UDC* got the first disparity in their vision. The *CDC* on their spring party conference showed the cautious support for independence whereas the *UDC* stayed on their confederal stance. But after the massive *La Diada* of 2012 and the rigorous rejection of fiscal pact from Rajoy the *CiU* decided to lead the sovereignty process. This decision costed them 12 seats in the elections of 2012 in spite of remaining in power and being the most voted party in Catalonia.

The *ERC* was the most stable party in terms of their support for independence. Interestingly, they are not the most popular party in Catalonia, but they were almost constantly in the government coalition. In 2010 they were in the *tripartit* and in 2012 in the pro-sovereignty coalition with the *CiU*. The main electoral success for them was the elections of 2012 when they became the second largest party in the Parliament.

The socialist suffered the massive electoral decline. They lost elections in 2010, 2011, and 2012. They changed three party leaders. They always tried to play the middleperson between the anti-independentist PP and pro-sovereignty regionalist parties. In fact, they criticized both sides and tried to promote their federalist view. But the electorate in Catalonia radicalized enough and did not accept the third way message. Plus, socialists were considered as the main begetters of the bad economic conditions in Spain and the failure of the Catalan Statute. Moreover, they had tensions on the line *PSOE-PSC* and sometimes their MPs break the party discipline in voting on some independentists proposals including their two-sided position on the ‘right to decide’.

The independence process had two main obstacles. Firstly, it is the strong opposition of the state. All pro-sovereignty initiatives including the Statute of Autonomy, the fiscal pact, and the independence referendum were rejected by the state institutions and personally by Rajoy. In 2014 the unacceptance of any pro-independence initiatives became even more evident by the rejection of the non-endorsement consultation. This fact led to the change in discourse. In 2013, the ‘right to decide’ was dominated by prognostic and motivational framing because it was the hope to resolve the crisis by the referendum. In 2014 the ‘right to decide’ was more diagnosis because the opposition of the state was evident, and it was the time of reflection in the public discourse. Secondly, the absence of unity in the pro-independence coalition. The *ERC* and the *ICV* criticised the *CiU* for the lack of responsibility to lead the process. Within the *CiU* it was the tense debates between the *CDC* and the *UDC* on the vision of the Catalan future. These coalition disputes led to the resignation of Duran from coalition leadership.

4. Scottish Independence Process (2012-2016)

The history of relations between Scotland and England goes back to the Norman conquest of England in 1066. Since then, England's cultural and political influence became evident because affected the traditional royal court, and then the episcopal principles of the Scottish Church. In Scotland, a new feudal system based on the Francophone Anglo-Norman aristocracy was formed. During the reign of King Alexander II of Scotland (1214-1249), representative bodies of legislative power were formed, which led to the creation of the Scottish Parliament in 1235. The Parliament of Scotland, together with the King, was the supreme legislative and judicial body (Gutarova, 2010).

In the 13th and 14th centuries, England made multiple attempts to conquer Scotland, but in 1328 England and Scotland concluded the Peace Treaty recognizing the full sovereignty of Scotland. In 1331, a new internecine war flared up in Scotland, into which England successfully intervened and established vassalage over Scotland. Tensions between England and Scotland persisted until the reign of James VI Stuart. Having inherited the English throne, James VI became King of England and Scotland. The United flag of the Union Jack became the symbol of the continuous and systematic unification of the two states. Charles I took several steps in this direction, including the reform of the Scottish Church (Gutarova, 2010).

At the beginning of the 18th century, the Scottish Parliament became the arena of debates over the merger with England into a single state. Representatives of Scotland proposed to unify countries on the basis of federalism principle aimed at the preservation of the Scottish Parliament. With the Union Act of 1707 the two countries established the United Kingdom of Great Britain. The Scottish Parliament was abolished, and the joint British Parliament was created, with an overwhelming majority of English representatives. In lieu of an independent Parliament, Scots received equal trading rights with England. The Presbyterian Scottish Church was declared inviolable. Scottish judicial system remained independent from the English (Gutarova, 2010).

Considering the historical developments, the 19th century was characterized by a rapprochement between England and Scotland. After WWI Scotland's national identity became stronger, gradually leading to the formation of a social and political movement for self-government. In 1926, the newspaper *The Scots Independent* began to be published, and in 1934, as a result of the merger of the National Party of Scotland and the Scotland Party, the SNP was founded. Step by step the SNP grew into a real electoral force. In 1946, an SNP splinter group, the Scotland Convention, led by McCormick, launched a campaign for a National Covenant to create a representative body for Scotland. In 1947, the Scottish National Assembly was convened, and in 1949, two million Scots signed the Declaration of the Covenant submitted to the House of Commons, but the Labour government rejected it. The Conservative Cabinet of Churchill expanded the functions of the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland in 1954 (Eremina, 2010).

Since the beginning of the 1960s, the popularity of the SNP has been growing. In 1962 there were less than 2 thousand SNP memberships; in 1968 there were 120 thousands members. In 1967, the SNP's first representative entered the House of Commons, and in the municipal elections of 1968, the SNP received a third of the votes. The SNP put forward the demand for independence as a condition for the modernization of the Scottish economy, which was facilitated by the discovery of oil on the North Sea shelf. This demand received broad support among the population, and in 1974 the SNP received 21.9 percent of the votes in Scotland and seven seats in the British House of Commons (Zinkevich, 2010).

In 1973, the Royal Constitutional Commission on Devolution was formed. Building on the results of this commission's activities, the new Labour government in 1975 published a White Paper on the need for limited autonomy for Scotland and Wales. Based on these suggestions, the Bill of Scotland and Wales was adopted in 1978 (Zinkevich, 2010). According to this document, regional assemblies was planned to be organized with some executive and legislative freedom. Additionally, this document introduced the possibility of referendum for devolution. However, the

Conservatives did not support the idea of a referendum, and they succeeded in establishing the criteria that 40 percent of all registered voters must support devolution. The referendum was held on 1 March 1979. The turnout was 62.9 percent; 51.5 percent voted in favor, but this accounted for only 32.5 percent of the total number of citizens who had the right to vote (Zinkevich, 2010). Consequently, devolution was defeated.

The second referendum on devolution took place in September 1997. This time 74.3 percent of participants voted for the creation of the local Parliament, which amounted to 44.87 percent of the total number of Scottish voters. Thus, the 40 percent barrier was surpassed. The following year, the Parliament of Great Britain adopted the Scottish Act, and Scotland established its own parliament and local government (Orlov, 2015).

The Labour Party was the first party to win the majority in a newly established Parliament with 135 seats, and its Scottish leader Dewar became the First Minister of Scotland. The following elections did not bring changes in the Scottish political landscape as the Scottish Labour Party remained in power. A change occurred in the 2007 elections, when the SNP won the relative majority of 47 seats and outperformed the Labours by just one seat. With the support of the Scottish Greens, Salmond formed the minority SNP government and became the First Minister. The disengagement with Westminster policies was reinforced by the austerity politics of the Conservatives in Westminster, the Iraq war and welfare cuts (Dekavalla, 2016).

Starting in 2003, the independence issue was reintroduced into the core of the SNP political program and linked with economic prosperity. The party emphasized the necessity of a referendum to proceed with a radical constitutional change. In the wake of the economic crisis, the SNP sought to present itself as the best guarantee of Scotland's rights and defence from the Westminster cuts. The independence referendum became the core electoral goal of the SNP. The 2011 Holyrood elections gave the SNP an absolute majority of 69 seats and legitimacy for Salmond to demand the referendum (Elias, 2019).

The support for independence in post-devolution Scotland has fluctuated between 25 and 35 percent. There was a brief period in 2011 when support rose to 33 percent in connection with the SNP electoral victory, but the beginning of 2012 was marked by the return of the indicator of independence support to 22 percent. However, the beginning of the referendum debates gave importance to the growth of secessionism.

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the independence process from 2012 to 2016 in Scotland. The main issue is the heated political debates that included the demand for autonomy. A detailed evaluation of the events and discourse changes should clarify the processes behind the rise of support for independence. Each section of the chapter is devoted to a particular year in chronological order: Section 4.1. is named 'Scotland in 2012: The Edinburgh agreement' and analyses the start of the referendum campaign; paragraph 4.2. 'Scotland in 2013: The White Paper' traces the main political events in the light of the proposed plan for independence; paragraph 4.3. 'Scotland in 2014: The independence referendum' is about the main political event of the study period; paragraph 4.4. 'Scotland in 2015: The National elections' examines the post-referendum debates on devolution powers; paragraph 'Scotland in 2016: The Brexit referendum' studies the game-changing referendum of the EU membership of the UK which results were framed as the opportunity for the second independence referendum for Scotland. Finally, paragraph 4.6. 'Scottish independence process in media' puts together the longitudinal trends in changes of message flows and frames in regards to center-periphery discourse.

Each section represents a 'story'. The 'story' subsections analyses the main political events of the year with the reactions, comments, and political programme speeches or manifestos. Table 4.0. summarizes the primary agents of political debates at the beginning of 2012.

Table 4.0. The main political actors in Scotland and the United Kingdom

Actor	Short description
Alex Salmond	The First Minister of Scotland (2007 – 2014), SNP
Michael Moore	Secretary of State for Scotland (2010-2013), Scottish Liberal Democrats (LibDem)
Ruth Davidson	Leader of Scottish Conservative Party (2011-2019), Tory
Willie Rennie	Leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats (from 2011)
Johann Lamont	Leader of the Scottish Labour Party (2011-2014)
David Cameron	Prime Minister of the UK (2010-2016), Tory
Angus Robertson	Leader of the SNP in the House of Commons (2007-2017)
Nick Clegg	Leader of the Liberal Democrats (2007-2015)
Ed Miliband	Leader of the Labour Party (2010-2015)
Alistair Darling	Chairman of the Better Together campaign, Labour
Nicola Sturgeon	Deputy First Minister of Scotland (2007-2014), SNP

Other essential players appear in the sections.

4.1. Scotland in 2012: the Edinburgh Agreement

Launch of campaigns

The Holyrood elections of 2011 opened doors for the SNP to start the process of negotiating the independence referendum. At the end of January, Salmond addressed the MSPs with the set-up speech for the consultation process. He noted several vital principles for the referendum to take place: clarity, transparency, and eligibility. Clarity means a straightforward question. Salmond proposed as a possible referendum question, ‘Do you agree that Scotland should be an independent country?’ He also did not exclude the possibility of the devo max option in the ballot paper. Devo max means the devolution of all powers to Holyrood except defense and foreign affairs. Transparency would be ensured by the Electoral Commission appointed to regulate the referendum. Eligibility to vote would be determined by residency. However, Salmond also asked to extend the franchise to 16-year-old Scottish residents (‘Alex Salmond Sets out Vision for Independence Referendum’, 2012).

The first meeting between Salmond and the opposition leaders about the independence referendum was held in February. It was a preliminary talk, without important decisions as the outcome, but two issues were considered: leaders agreed that the terms of the referendum should be established in Scotland and not dictated by Westminster; the franchise for youth to vote should be discussed more precisely (Dinwoodie, 2012a). The same issue on youth was noted by Salmond as the point of disagreement with Westminster in his talks with Moore. Another issue for Westminster was timing. Moore expressed the view that the referendum should take place sooner rather than later (Herald View, 2012).

Soon after the meeting with Moore, the First Minister had talks with Cameron. The Prime Minister focused on sovereignty arguments: ‘My absolute priority is to keep the United Kingdom together. It has worked for all our countries, it has made us safer, it has made us stronger, it has made us richer, it has helped us in times of difficulty. We should not give up this great thing - our United Kingdom’ (‘David Cameron: I Hope and Wish Scots Will Vote to Stay in UK’, 2012). In

response, the First Minister accused the central authorities of not delivering more economic powers, stacking the Scotland Bill, and not having concrete proposals on devolved powers. In short, Cameron promised more powers for Holyrood in case of No vote, but he failed to clarify them (Ibid). This lack of concrete devolution proposal from Cameron will be used extensively in the campaign for Scottish independence as the argument against Westminster. Labour leader Lamont framed the devo-max option as the alternative to independence. Lamont considered it possible to have the second 'devolution' referendum in case of No vote ('Lamont Plans Commission on Devolution', 2012).

Robertson reinforced the economic argument. He noted that 'we are extremely confident of winning the economic and financial case for independence, since with access to all of our resources Scotland would be the sixth-richest country in the developed world in terms of GDP per head – compared to the UK's 16th place' (Dinwoodie, 2012b). Conversely, Clegg in his keynote speech to the Scottish Liberal Democrat conference argued that 'Scotland, like the other parts of the UK, has fared better in this global economic crisis than many of our European neighbours because we are part of one of the world's strongest economies' ('Nick Clegg's Speech to the Scottish Liberal Democrat Conference, Inverness', 2012). Cameron addressed the Scottish Conservative Party conference by putting attention on Scotland being better off in Britain and promised new tax powers to be included in the Scotland Bill ('Cameron to Urge Salmond to "Fulfil Promise"', 2012).

The UK Government public consultations on the referendum issue showed clear support for a single question referendum (more than 75 percent of respondents). The survey data revealed that 63 percent of people supported delivering the powers to hold the referendum to the Scottish Parliament. The overwhelming majority supported the residency eligibility criteria to vote in the referendum. The only issue which failed to distinguish the public opinion is the youth vote because 44 supported it and 47 refused. ('UK Government: Most Scots Want a Single Question in Referendum', 2012).

In May, the Scottish council elections were held. The results were considered satisfactory for SNP and Labour. SNP won the majority of seats and increased their presence in councils by 4.5 percent. The Labour party got the second place with a 3.2 percent increase and the very important victory in Glasgow because this city is the area of close competition between the SNP and Labours (News reporter, 2012a). The first significant success for Lamont as the Scottish Labour leader was considered to slow down the SNP path. The SNP and Labour were forced to look for coalitions because they both failed to get the distinct majority.

The SNP was the first to launch the referendum campaign. They were joined by the Scottish Green party (in October) and endorsed by some Scottish celebrities, including Connery. Salmond proclaimed that 'We want a Scotland that's greener, that is fairer and more prosperous. We realise that the power of an independent Scotland is necessary to achieve these great ends' ('Campaign for Independence Is Launched', 2012). The Yes campaign started the initiative to collect one million signatures for the declaration of independence by the time of the referendum, planned for autumn 2014 (Ibid.). The first political act of the Yes camp was the Parliamentary vote of support for the motion: 'The Parliament agrees that Scotland should be an independent country'. This declaration of independence was backed by 69 votes (SNP (66), Greens (2), and Independent (1)) to 52. This voting did not have a legal meaning, but Salmond used the possibility to share his vision on the future of independent Scotland. According to his plan, Scotland would remain in the EU, the Queen would be the head of state, and sterling would be used as the currency. (Currie, 2012)

The No campaign was launched one month later. The official name was 'Better Together' because the leaders wanted to avoid the negative connotation of No and spread the positive vision of Scotland being part of the United Kingdom. The head of the campaign, Darling, declared 'I really do care very much about the future of the country in which I live. We are better together, and it is something that I am prepared to devote the time that's needed to it' ('Better Together Pro-Union Campaign Launched', 2012). Miliband addressed the identity factor 'we are stronger

together as a United Kingdom, and that essential strength comes from our ability to embrace multiple identities' ('Ed Miliband Speech in Full: Defending the Union', 2012).

One of the rivalries between camps arose around the second question in the referendum. The Yes camp wanted the devo-max to be included because many recent polls indicated the support for this option. Better Together strictly stood for the single question and criticized the opponents for the lack of strategy and the attempts to 'save face' if the Yes option failed. The disagreement came from the radical Yes camp as well, because they considered the devo-max option meaningless. Salmond tried to play the double game on this occasion. He publicly pronounced his support for clarity and a single referendum question. However, he considered 'his duty' to include the second question in case of groundswell support ('Salmond in Secret Push to Obtain a Devo Max Option', 2012).

The Edinburgh agreement

The Yes camp made Sturgeon the campaign leader. According to the polls, the reason behind this was the attempt to attract the undecided female voters, because their support for independence was lower than among men (Macwhirter, 2012). Another sign of low pro-independence mobilization was the participation of five thousand people in the first rally for independence in Edinburgh. In comparison, more than 1.5 million people participated in the pro-independence rally in Catalonia a few days before (Young, 2012).

Salmond opted for the single question in the referendum but accused the central authorities of the lack of compromise: 'The UK Government is clearly unwilling to offer devo-max or fiscal autonomy as an option. So I suspect - a lot is going to depend on people who support economic powers for the Scottish Parliament but find the UK Government's stopping them being able to move forward. I think people in these circumstances would want a change.' ('Salmond Signals a Single Question Referendum', 2012)

The referendum deal was officialized by the Edinburgh Agreement signed by Cameron, Salmond, Sturgeon, and Moore. The Agreement passed the power for holding the referendum to

the Scottish Parliament under Section 30 of the Scotland Act 1998. The franchise would be extended for 16 and 17-years-old people. The Agreement established the single question and defined the end of 2014 as the deadline to have a referendum. Salmond highlighted that this Agreement ensured that the referendum would be ‘made in Scotland’ whereas Cameron promised to make the Union preservation his top priority (News reporter, 2012b).

The Edinburgh Agreement was an evident success for Salmond. But after the First Minister received massive criticism for the EU membership issue. Sturgeon announced: ‘In light of the Edinburgh agreement, by which both governments have agreed the process for Scotland to achieve independence, I can confirm that the (Scottish) Government has now commissioned specific legal advice from our law officers on the position of Scotland within the European Union if independence is achieved through this process’ (‘Scottish Government Admits: We’ve Taken No Legal Advice on EU’, 2012). In other words, Sturgeon accepted that SNP had not received any legal advice on the EU membership from the EU side. Earlier Agnew, Information Commissioner, asked for disclosure of the legal advice on Scotland's EU membership, but Salmond refused. (McKie, 2012)

This fact provoked a furious attack on Salmond in the media, considering him a ‘liar’. Davidson claimed that ‘We find out, despite desperate claims of knowing the answer, despite thousands of pounds in taxpayers' money spent in courtrooms to keep information from the Scottish people, the SNP have never taken advice on a separate Scotland's place in the European Union.’ (‘Scottish Government Admits: We’ve Taken No Legal Advice on EU’, 2012) Rennie recalled that ‘the First Minister said his White Paper would be consistent with the legal advice. She has had to tell us he has not got any, it was all imaginary.’ (Ibid)

The debates continued at the UK level. The UK Government refused to receive an opinion about Scotland membership in the EU from the EC. The government stated that they would not pre-negotiate the separation. However, conservatives MP Lord Tugendhat sent a letter to Barroso to clarify the EU's position on Scotland membership in case of independence. The president of the

EC replied: 'A new independent state would, by the fact of its independence, become a third country with respect to the EU, and the treaties would no longer apply on its territory.' (News reporter, 2012d) The view of Barroso had been accepted by the Better Together supporters and widely used in their anti-independence campaign. Scottish Labour's Ferguson claimed that 'the people of Scotland have to be given the facts before they choose Scotland's future, and all the SNP can offer at the moment is uncertainty and hope for the best' (News reporter, 2012c).

However, Sturgeon tried to play back. She made a statement on the EU membership of Scotland in case of independence. In short, she argued that Barroso's view was not a 'ruling' but an expression of his opinion; there was no provision of disapplication of the EU law to people exercising their right to self-determination; the EC was not the final instance in such a matter; in case of Scottish independence, the UK would dissolve, so they should also apply for the EU membership under this logic; she appealed to the flexibility of the EU towards the member-states and remind the case of East Germany; the elimination of Scotland is not in the interest of the EU (Dinwoodie, 2012c).

To sum up, Scotland launched its road to the referendum. The growth of the independence support was around 5 percent. The Edinburgh Agreement provided the legal grounds for the referendum to take place. The SNP led the Scotland independence process with the Scottish Greens support. Labour, Conservative, and LibDem found themselves sharing the Better Together platform. The important issue became Barroso's stance on excluding the independent state from the EU and the absence of legal advice about the EU membership.

4.2. Scotland in 2013: the White Paper

Economic and membership debates

The debates on Scottish independence dominated the headlines in 2013. Better Together and Yes campaigns very actively promoted their vision of Scotland's future. At the end of the year, the long-awaited White Paper had been released. It summarized the main pro-independence arguments and was the topic for heated debates.

British politicians mainly played two issues in their program speeches: economy, and identity. It was considered an attempt to win the war for minds (economy) and hearts (identity). In the aftermath of the Olympic Games, pro-independence supporters found it difficult to play the 'identity' game. Initially, Sturgeon tried to present the independence support as rational: 'I ask you, as you make up your minds over these next two years, to base your decision, not on how Scottish or British you feel, but on what kind of country you want Scotland to be and how best you think that can be achieved' (Bell, 2013). Moreover, the sociological data proved that the Scottish identity is not the key factor for independence. ScotCen released that just 53 percent who describe themselves as 'Scottish, not British' said they want independence ('Experts Predict Economy Will Determine Independence Vote', 2013). Scottish Government spokesperson added to rational argument the political component by saying that independence was the only option for Parliament to get full powers in order to achieve a better country (Gardham, 2013a).

In the meantime, the struggle over EU membership continued. Cameron promised Brexit referendum in case of a Conservative victory in the National Elections. He has criticised the Eurozone problems but stated that his main goal is a better deal for Europe and Britain and the continued membership of the UK (Settle, 2013a). As for the Scotland membership, Sturgeon appealed to 'common sense' and asked for the transition from the membership as part of the UK to the independent country membership without changing the *status quo*. Nevertheless, she admitted the impossibility to take the EU membership for granted and accepted the possibility of negotiations with other member-states ('Sturgeon: Independent Scotland Would Not Need to Sign

New EU Accession Treaty', 2013). Commenting on the possible Brexit referendum, Sturgeon demonstrated her pro-EU stance: 'Instead of leading the EU, the UK is in danger of sleepwalking towards the exit. Such an outcome for Scotland would be contrary to public opinion and against the public interest' ('Sturgeon: Independent Scotland Would Have to Apply for EU Membership', 2013). Finally, Sturgeon admitted that Scotland received legal advice about the EU membership but rejected disclosing it because of confidentiality issues. She promised to note the content of this advice in the White Paper ('Scottish Ministers: We've Now Got Official Advice on EU Membership', 2013).

The Brexit referendum was still a matter for the distant future, whereas the Scotland Independence Referendum Bill has already officialised the Scottish independence referendum. Salmond announced that the 18th of September would be the date and confirmed that 'only the powers of an independent Parliament with control of the economy, of international representation and of security will allow us to make the most of our huge national potential'. (Andrews, 2013a:13) Earlier, the Electoral Commission reported the initial referendum question bias. Hence, the Referendum Bill proposed the new one: 'Should Scotland be an independent country?'. ('A Historic Document', 2013) In his keynote speech at the SNP Spring conference Salmond mentioned Trident, the Iraq war, and North Sea oil as 'why' reasons for independence. In particular, he has stated that 'what won't happen in an independent Scotland will be getting dragged into illegal wars, having Trident nuclear weapons dumped on the Clyde for another 50 years, or the imposition of bedroom taxes'. (Gardham, 2013b)

The mention of bedroom tax was not occasional. At the end of March, the mass rally against this tax occurred in Glasgow. Bedroom tax means reducing Housing Benefits and Universal Credit by 14 percent (one additional room) or 25 percent (two or more) if the working-age council or housing association are considered to rent the property more than they need (*Social Security: Housing Cost Support - Gov.Scot*, 2021). Scotland did not support this tax, and only 4 out of 45 Scottish MPs favored it. The participants proclaimed that 'We need to fight back so that never

again will the people of this country be robbed by Westminster' (Stewart, 2013). Salmond promised to abandon the bedroom tax in independent Scotland (Gardham, 2013d). Lately, he reserved this argument as the demonstration of Westminster inadequate economic policy towards Scotland.

The disagreement with the Westminster economic accommodation of Scotland was expressed in the data report saying that Scots are paying more taxes than the average UK as a whole ('New Report: Scots Paying More Tax than Rest of UK', 2013). However, the UK authorities had their economic arguments to introduce. Chancellor of the Exchequer Osborne has warned that an independent Scotland could trouble to keep the currency union with the UK. He considered the four currency options for independent Scotland, but none of them would be as suitable as the current system. He labelled it as a 'very deep dive into uncharted waters' ('Osborne: Indy Scotland Currency Deal Would Be Deep Dive into Unknown Water', 2013). The currency issue was the main topic in the first referendum TV debates between Sturgeon and Moore (Gardham, 2013c). Cameron attacked Robertson claim about the 'Project of Fear' in the light of the currency union by saying that 'the fact is the Scottish Nationalists are losing the argument. They are losing the argument on jobs, they are losing the argument on the economy, they are losing the argument on the influence that Scotland would have in the world.' (Settle, 2013b)

Another topic is the Trident and NATO membership. The Scottish Government announced their plans to remove Trident from its Faslane military base. The nuclear-free future was one of the essential program points of the SNP. NATO proclaimed its challenging position on it. They announced that in case of independence, Scotland should reapply for NATO membership. ('Yes Allies Attack Salmond NATO Plan', 2013) Lately, they added that Scotland could be denied NATO membership in case of involvement in the dispute over the basing of nuclear weapons (Bussey, 2013).

The White Paper

The one-year countdown before the independence referendum was marked the symbolic grassroots and political acts. The SNP used its majority in the Scottish Parliament to endorse the motion to leave the UK by 66 votes to 49. Salmond has said that ‘Scotland's Parliament has voted decisively in favor of all decisions affecting the people of Scotland being taken here rather than at Westminster’ (‘MSPs Show Preference to Go It Alone in Symbolic Vote at Holyrood’, 2013). Recently, the pro-independence rally attracted 20 thousand people, according to organizers (Gordon, 2013).

The newly released sociological data confirmed that the battle for minds would be more critical than for the hearts. According to the National Institute for Economic and Social Research, 47 percent would vote for independence if they were assured it would make them 500 pounds better off a year (Herald View, 2013). Taking into consideration the ScotCen results on identity released earlier that year, Rennie stated that the figures confirm the identity issue not to play the crucial battleground in deciding Scotland's future (‘Census Shows Almost Two-Thirds See Themselves as “Scottish Only”’, 2013). Managing director of PanelBase Knox noted: ‘if patriotism and national pride were the key issues, Yes would win hands down. They aren't: while most voters are proud to call themselves Scots, people remain unconvinced that independence would bring economic benefits’ (‘No Vote Has Nine Point Lead, Says New Poll’, 2013).

That is why the critical speeches of political leaders aimed to win the economic argument. Davidson accused Salmond of having a lack of idea on how to pay independence. She claimed that ‘the First Minister has made £32 billion-worth of uncoded promises in an attempt to persuade voters to back independence’ (Herald Staff, 2013). One of these promises is to scrap the bedroom tax. Salmond noted that ‘the bedroom tax is becoming a symbol of why independence is necessary’ (‘In Full: Alex Salmond’s Conference Speech, October 19, 2013 Perth’, 2013).

Yes campaign tried to present their message as positive and in opposition to the negativity of Better Together. Yes Scotland chief Jenkins summarized this strategy: ‘We have our vision and our values. They have their scares and their smears. This referendum is a contest between Project

Hope and Project Fear' ('Head of Yes Scotland Campaign Delivers Rallying Cry for Independence', 2013). References to the Project Fear has been made by Sturgeon replying to warnings from the Conservative party about possible difficulties with pension payments ('Salmond: DWP Confirmed No Change to Pensions Post-Independence', 2013). Salmond also referred to the Better Together campaign by saying that "When even the bitterest opponents of Scottish independence agree that Scotland has got what it takes, then it's clear the only thing people have to fear is 'Project Fear' itself" (Gardham, 2013e).

Two main occasions distinguished the end of November. The first is the final passage of the Referendum Bill which finally clarified the date, the question, and the extended franchise for 16-years-old to vote. Sturgeon announced: 'We can be proud today that we're passing legislation that will put Scotland's future into Scotland's hand' ('Holyrood Passes Indyref Legislation', 2013). The second is the release of the White Paper on independence (Press Association, 2013).

The White Paper is an unofficial name for the 670-page book 'Scotland's Future. Your Guide to an Independent Scotland' containing 650 questions and answers about the independence of Scotland. The Paper establishes:

- 18 months transition period between the referendum and actual independence
- independent Scotland to be the 29th member of the EU based on the principle of continuity of effect, 194th independent country to join the UN
- 82.5 households will benefit from the abolition of the bedroom tax
- The currency union as the best option for both Scotland and the rUK
- Scotland's public finances to be stronger than the rUK
- Oil and gas make the Scotland GDP per capita one-fifth bigger than the rUK
- Under the Westminster system, Scotland's economy locked into one of the most unequal economic models of the developed world
- Scottish Government is responsible for only 7 percent of taxes raised in Scotland, and independence will allow controlling 100 percent

- the removal of nuclear weapons
- the reintroduction of student's visas removed by Westminster to attract young talented people to Scotland
- British citizens 'habitually resident in Scotland' will automatically get the Scottish citizenship
- Scotland substantial energy resources will provide the enhanced security of supply, greater long-term stability in energy prices, decarbonization of electricity generation, the protection and creation of jobs and further community empowerment
- The written constitution
- The Queen as the head of state (The Scottish Government, 2013).

The reaction was mixed. Salmond has argued that 'we will have to tackle a legacy of debt, of low growth, of social inequality, bequeathed to us by Westminster control of our economy' ('Salmond: Scotland's Future Is Now in Scotland's Hands', 2013). Sturgeon has been very enthusiastic to say that 'Our message to the people of Scotland is this: take the opportunity to read Scotland's Future, pair it with the relentless negativity of the other side of this debate, and make up your own mind' (Andrews, 2013b:17). Green party co-leader Harvie claimed 'the white paper is a hefty document that deserves serious consideration. It's simply not credible for Better Together campaigners to dismiss it out of hand within seconds of the launch' ('Reaction: Darling Says White Paper Is a Work of Fiction', 2013).

The pro-UK side found out issues to criticize. Rennie disregarded the SNP childcare plans: 'The SNP has the power to deliver better childcare now, but their message to our children is: you will not get what you need until we get what we need' ('Salmond Warns of "severest" Cuts', 2013:13). Darling rejected the neutral transition costs assumption by saying that 'it is difficult to imagine the rest of the UK would pay up for a new HMRC north of the border' ('Transitions "Cost Neutral"', 2013:13). Davidson asked for clarification on legal advice about the EU membership (Andrews, 2013c). Lamont attacked Scotland currency plans because true fiscal independence is

impossible under the reliance on foreign bank and foreign taxpayers (Salmond Warns of “severest” Cuts’, 2013). New Scottish Secretary Carmichael told the document left voters ‘none the wiser’ on many issues (‘Reaction: Darling Says White Paper Is a Work of Fiction’, 2013). Chief Secretary to the Treasury Alexander warned a tax hike to bridge the financial gap caused by independence (Andrews, 2013b:17).

The White Paper attracted international attention. Rajoy cast doubts on the automatic EU membership of Scotland in case of independence. Cameron had a meeting with the Spanish Prime Minister to discuss the independence issue (‘Cameron and Rajoy Consult on Scotland and Catalonia’, 2013). Salmond criticized Rajoy’s intervention. He accused the Spanish politician of speaking for Cameron and the Tories ‘by proxy’ (‘Salmond: Spain Is Working with UK to Thwart Yes Vote’, 2013).

To sum up, the White Paper became the program document of SNP to gain independence. The discussion moved to the economic space, whereas the identity component was disregarded as the vital issue to fight in the independence debates. The independence growth was stable and around 6 percent.

4.3. Scotland in 2014: the Independence Referendum

Dispute over the finance

The highest level of tension between the Yes and No sides comes with the independence referendum. The sociological data released before the voting showed very close results. The referendum itself became one of the massive democratic events in Scotland's modern history and the celebration of Scottish identity. The Yes campaign started the year many points behind the Better Together. However, Salmond hoped to use the Commonwealth Games to reinforce the Yes vote as the Olympic Games in London helped the UK underline Britishness.

Sturgeon made a considerable attack on the pro-UK side by releasing her 50 questions to No vote campaign. The arguments were similar to the White paper appeals against the UK policies, including economic imbalances, financial instability, Trident removal, and devolution promises (Gardham, 2014a). Swinney joined the economic argument attack by accusing Westminster of the austerity programme: 'Within our limited powers this Government is doing everything possible to tackle the effects of Westminster's cuts to the Scottish budget on our economy, their damaging welfare reform agenda and their relentless austerity agenda' ('Swinney: Scottish Government's Done Everything Possible to Counter Westminster's Austerity Agenda', 2014). The ScotGen survey results confirmed the importance of struggling on the economic side: 30 percent believe that the independent economy will perform better whereas 34 percent consider worse (Gardham, 2014b).

The pro-UK side counterattacked by Osborne warnings about the future of the currency union. His speech was considered influential because he doubted the White Paper financial plan where the pound should continue to be the currency in Scotland. He argued: 'The SNP continue to pretend that an independent Scotland could continue to share the pound. It could not, without agreement. And because a currency would not work for anyone, it simply is not going to happen. If Scotland walks away from the UK, it walks away from the pound' (Bussey, 2014:14). The influence of this

message was confirmed by the fact that senior Yes campaign strategists urged Salmond to come up with an alternative currency plan (Hutcheon, 2014a).

The currency plan became the main topic of debates between Sturgeon and Lamont. The Deputy First Minister refused to come up with the plan B because the UK should accept the currency union for the sake of its own interests. The Scottish Labour leader insisted by asking: ‘Do you know what the word No means?’ (Gardham, 2014c). Lately, Alexander has confirmed that the Scottish Government are not going to produce plan B for the currency (‘Danny Alexander: Currency Union Decision Is Final’, 2014). The Yes campaign counterattacked the currency argument by commenting on the information from an anonymous UK minister who has argued that ‘of course it would be a deal to formally share sterling if there is a Yes vote on September 18’. Mr Swinney said that this fact demolished the central argument against independence (‘Swinney Condemns Currency “Bluff”’, 2014).

In March, Scottish Conservative and Labour parties held their conferences where they framed the anti-independence message. Both parties outlined the negative consequences of the Yes vote. Cameron noted that there is no second chance to return but promised further devolution by saying that vote ‘no’ does not mean a vote for ‘no change’ (Herald Staff, 2014a). Cameron feared that the Yes vote would mean the end of devolution and the start of irreversible separation. Speaking about the devolution plans, he declined to outline the specific powers but noted the tax power changes as an option (‘Cameron: Voting No in Indyref Will Ensure More Powers for Holyrood’, 2014). Scottish Labour Miliband proclaimed: ‘If Scotland was to go independent, it would be a race to the bottom not just on tax rates, but on wage rates, on terms and conditions, on zero-hours contracts, on taking on the energy companies, on reforming the banks’ (Herald Staff, 2014b). Sturgeon caught the negative message to reinforce the ‘Project Fear’ frame: ‘Those opposed to independence claim that the UK, as it currently stands, is an equal partnership of nations and people. But in its attempts to scare voters in Scotland, the No campaign is destroying the very idea that the UK is a partnership of equals’ (‘Pro-Union Campaign “Destroying Equal UK”’, 2014).

The SNP had its party conference in April. To bolster the reasons for independence Salmond added the NHS issue into the center-region conflict as another example of harmful Westminster policy. He criticized: ‘And there is no better example of why decisions about Scotland are best taken in Scotland than the future of our National Health Service. At Westminster, the NHS is being softened up for privatization. The Tories are forcing through a costly, confusing and harmful top-down re-organization’ (‘Alex Salmond, SNP Conference Speech’, 2014).

Two campaigns game on economic argument continued with the release of two contradictory reports. The SNP report claimed that each Scottish person would be 1000 pounds better off, whereas the Treasury promised a 1400 dividend in case of remaining in the UK. Sir Hunter criticized both sides for issuing ‘farcical’ documents and showing disrespect of the electorate (Herald View, 2014). For the same matter, the Yes campaign accused the BBC. From their point of view, BBC coverage was biased in favor of No side, and they conducted a demonstration in front of the BBC. Pro-independence campaigner Williams said: ‘We organized this event because we are witnessing increasing discontent over BBC referendum coverage, and we felt we needed to stand against this unhealthy bias’ (Gardham, 2014d).

After the mainly unfavorable for the Yes camp debates on the EU membership, the proposed by Tories in/out referendum was the chance to win back the EU argument. Salmond used this opportunity by outlining that ‘the handling of the whole affair now puts the UK on the fast-track out of Europe, with the danger for us in Scotland that we are dragged to the exit door too unless we take our destiny in our own hands this September’ (Leask, 2014). He accused Cameron of playing the ‘European roulette with Scotland’s future’ because Scotland's economic well-being depends on the EU ties (the Courier 08.07.2014). Finally, he claimed that ‘only a Yes vote on September 18 will restore Scotland's ancient status as an independent European nation and help secure our future prosperity’ (‘Cameron Playing “Euro Roulette”’, 2014:14).

Independence referendum

After the Commonwealth Games' closure in Glasgow, Salmond and Darling met each other in the TV debates about independence. The results of the TV performance were unexpected. According to the poll, 53 percent considered Darling was a winner, while only 28 percent was up for Salmond. More importantly, the majority of people – 65 percent – claimed that the television clash had not changed their opinion, while 22 percent claimed that they were more likely to vote No, and 13 percent were more likely to support Yes ('New Poll: 53% Think Darling Won TV Debate, 28% Back Salmond, 19% Undecided', 2014). Salmond's line of argumentation relied on the oil revenues, criticism of the Tory government, the pound as the only currency option, and nuclear weapons issue for Scotland. Darling counterattacked by mentioning the volatility of the oil prices, the democratic principle of choosing the government the majority voted for, the criticism of the absence of plan B for currency, and security risks of going it alone (Andrews, 2014a). The first TV debates were the clear advantage for Better Together.

The second independence referendum debates were the chance used by Salmond to pay back. The ICM research showed that 71 percent of people considered Salmond was a better performer, whereas only 29 percent made the decision for Darling ('Yes Hope for Boost after Salmond's Debate Win', 2014). Once again, the currency issue dominated the discussion. However, this time Salmond put considerable attention on the welfare reforms and additional powers for the Scottish Parliament. Darling ensured that the No vote will not prevent the devolution and the extension of tax powers for Scotland.

The final days before the referendum were very intense. YouGov poll showed 51 v. 49 percent after the removal of undecided voters to support independence (Andrews, 2014b). This result shocked the public because the previous results consistently demonstrated the Better Together lead. Darling admitted that 'the poll must now serve as a wake-up call to anyone who thought the referendum result was a foregone conclusion' (Shearer et al., 2014). The tension forced three UK party leaders Cameron, Miliband, and Clegg to make a 'vow' of new devolution powers for Scotland in case of No vote. The statement promised that 'because of the continuation of the

Barnett allocation for resources, and the powers of the Scottish Parliament to raise revenue, we can state categorically that the final say on how much is spent on the NHS will be a matter for the Scottish Parliament' (Clegg, 2014). Salmond made an emotional plea by saying that the vote for independence is the 'last chance for a generation to secure an independent Scotland' (Devlin, 2014:6). Cameron appealed to be 'heartbroken' in case of Yes vote (Devlin & Settle, 2014:1). The support for the union was evidenced by the mass Orange Order demonstration (Ellis-Petersen, 2014).

The independence referendum was held on 18th September 2014. The participation was 85 percent of eligible voters, including 16-17 youngsters. The majority of people (55,3 percent) voted No, whereas 44,7 percent supported Scottish independence (BBC News, 2014). Salmond immediately announced his resignation. In his final speech, he proclaimed that 'my time as leader is nearly over, but for Scotland, the dream shall never die' (Gardham, 2014e:1). The same message about the dream became the main slogan of the massive pro-independence demonstration (Gordon, 2014b).

On the one hand, the independence referendum results were the victory of the No camp and the triumph of Darling and all Better Together campaign. On the other hand, it should be noted that the Yes side won the sympathy of the Scottish people and enjoyed the political gains. To illustrate, 5000 recruits joined the SNP, and 1200 joined the Scottish Green party recently after the No vote (Hutcheon, 2014b).

Salmond accused Better Together of tricking people into voting No because of the Vow (Gordon, 2014a). The Vow became the central issue in the post-referendum debates. Following the promise, the Smith Commission was formed to discuss the future devolved powers for Scotland. Sturgeon called for the 'Devo-max' option for Scotland, which included the full tax-raising and policy-making powers apart from defence, foreign affairs and currency. (Gardham, 2014f) Salmond feared the UK by the second independence referendum should the Vow promises not to be delivered (Settle, 2014a).

The Edinburgh meeting of the Smith Commission agreed on several principles, including substantive package of powers substantive for the people of Scotland, strengthening the Scottish Parliament within the UK, durable but responsive democratic constitutional settlement, not being conditional on other UK political negotiations, causing neither the UK nor Scottish Governments to gain or lose financially, and being implementable (Dinwoodie, 2014). However, the Smith Commission final recommendations were considered by the SNP disappointing. The newly elected First Minister of Scotland Sturgeon insisted ‘the package of measures, including giving Holyrood almost full control of income tax, failed to live up to expectations’ (Gardham et al., 2014). The disappointment arose as agreed plans to give Holyrood new powers over lotteries, abortion law, and workplace safety were dropped. The Smith Commission concluded to extend the voting franchise for youngsters at the Holyrood Elections in 2015 (Settle, 2014b).

Another clash erupted between Sturgeon and Cameron. Sturgeon continued to play the pro-EU game by proposing the ‘Scottish veto’ on the EU referendum. She argued that all four constituencies of the UK should vote Leave, not just the electorate of the UK as a whole (Andrews, 2014c). Nevertheless, the Prime Minister refused the proposal by saying that ‘there will be one in/out referendum and that will be decided on a majority of those who vote; that is how the rules should work’ (Dinwoodie & Settle, 2014:6).

To sum up, 2014 is the year of the most heated debates over independence. The victory of the Better Together side made impossible the independence of Scotland in the near future. However, the Yes side was considered the winner of the debates in terms of political gains. Surprisingly, but the independentist agenda did not disappear from the political discourse after the referendum.

4.4. Scotland in 2015: The National Elections

Electoral campaign

The referendum had to resolve the independence issue for generations. Salmond framed it as once in a lifetime opportunity, and Sturgeon initially continued this line. The stream of pressure changed from the direct demands for independence to the maximum devolution. Sturgeon has stated that ‘Westminster will not be able to ignore Scotland and the promise of a powerhouse parliament that can create more jobs and protect our public services will have to be delivered’ (Gordon, 2015:9). Salmond added: ‘Home rule is control of all domestic affairs and taxation. Reserved to Westminster would be defence and foreign affairs. There is massive evidence that what’s Scotland wants’ (Torrance, 2015).

In light of the devolution demands, Cameron presented the draft of the new Scotland Bill, which considered the Smith Commission conclusions. In summary, these powers include: (Settle, 2015a)

- *Constitutional*: Section 30 Order to enable 16 and 17-years-old to vote in Scottish Parliamentary elections
- *Tax and spending*: the new package of powers means the Scottish Government should not only spend money but also raise it. Holyrood will raise more than 50 percent of the money it spends.
- *Welfare*: powers to make alternative payment arrangements on Universal Credit, i.e. scrapping the bedroom tax
- *Public bodies*: the adjustment in the agreements on BBC, MG Alba, Maritime Coastguard Authority, Ofgem, Crown Estate
- *Civil protections*: tribunals (transfer of functions from reserved tribunals to Scottish ones), consumer advice (electricity, gas, and postal service)
- *Transport*: franchising of rail passengers service, policing of railways, road traffic signs and speed limits

- *Energy*: energy efficiency (supplier obligations implementation), oil and gas (license exploration and extraction of onshore oil and gas)

Sturgeon and Cameron had a war of words over this draft. The Prime Minister claimed that ‘the draft fulfilled every dot and comma of the pro-UK parties high-profile referendum pledge’ (Gardham, 2015a:1). The First Minister criticized the new tax and welfare proposal because it allows UK ministers to veto changes in Universal Credit, including the SNP plans to end the bedroom tax.

New Scottish Labour Leader Murphy and ex-Prime Minister Brown unveiled the ‘Vow Plus’ to counterbalance the Tory draft. The proposal includes broader powers than the Smith Commission. To illustrate, the Vow Plus proposes Holyrood to gain extensive powers to create benefits and top up the UK welfare entitlements, complete control over housing benefits, and additional powers over employment incentives. The opponents dismissed this draft, including the SNP, which characterized it as a panic measure (Gardham, 2015b).

The electoral battle between major political parties erupted on different issues. Sturgeon warned the Tories of a potential second independence referendum if Scotland forced to leave the EU against its will (‘Break up UK If It Exits EU, Says Former SNP Leader’, 2015). Conservative Party was predicted to be the favourite in these elections. That is why the post-election pact between the SNP and Labour was the topic of debates. Sturgeon mentioned the constructive role of the SNP in national politics (Settle, 2015b). At the SNP party conference, she alluded to the deal with Labour by sending the message of ‘solidarity and friendship’ (Bussey, 2015a:17). However, Miliband refused any agreement with the SNP because of nationalists pro-independence stance. Both party leaders accused each other of risking another Tory government (Devlin & Settle, 2015).

At the TV debates, Sturgeon appeared to be the best performer. She avoided the independence question but insisted on the topics like the NHS privatization, anti-austerity programme, and anti-Trident. Her main message was that as far as Scotland is the part of Westminster, they will make

a positive contribution. Even though the SNP represents the Scottish interests, people are tired of the Tory government, not only in Scotland (Devlin, 2015a). Apparently, in the subsequent TV debates, she refused to rule out the second independence referendum. She mentioned that this question relies on the power of Scotland people. She also offered her help to make Miliband the next Prime Minister because she does not want Cameron to remain in Downing Street. However, the Scottish Labour leader categorically refused the help from nationalists by mentioning that the only help they need is people's votes across the UK to get out the Tory government (Bussey, 2015b). Finally, Miliband ensured that he would instead refuse the cabinet which makes deals with nationalists (Devlin & Gardham, 2015).

Cameron ruled out the second referendum on independence by saying that this issue is settled, and his government would block any attempt to organize the second voting (Settle, 2015c). Lately, he added that the devolution reforms should be balanced not to lose the union and make sure that the rest of the country will not lose from the reforms (Devlin, 2015b).

The SNP published its electoral manifesto at the end of April. The main topic of attention is economic and social policy. Sturgeon proclaimed the austerity ending as the number one priority. She proposed to reinvest money from Trident removal to the NHS and get rid of the bedroom tax. The manifesto demanded 'full fiscal responsibility', including powers over employment policy, welfare, and National Insurance. The independence issue was also presented. The manifesto claims that SNP will always support independence, but these elections are about making Scotland stronger. In this regard, SNP ensures the promises made during the referendum to be delivered and the Smith Commission recommendations to be implemented quickly and in full. The anti-Brexit stance is mentioned in the manifesto. The SNP programme is to make sure that Scotland will not go out of the EU against its will (Scottish National Party, 2015).

Conservative party stands for Smith Commission recommendations on more powers for Scotland but establish Carlisle Principle to control the possible detrimental effect of the devolution on the rUK. They propose the in/out referendum on the UK membership in the EU. Labour party

promises the 'Vow Plus' for Scotland. They also support the in/out referendum but remain the pro-EU stance. LibDem supports 'Home Rule' for Scotland within the federal UK and back the Smith Commission results. They have a pro-EU position and see Brexit referendum as a threat. Greens support Scottish independence and want a written Constitution. They are pro-EU but believe that the reforms are needed (Settle et al., 2015).

The results of National Elections were considered to have clear and shadow winners. The Conservative party won 330 out of 650 seats and got the absolute majority. But the SNP had a dominant performance in Scotland. They won 56 out of 59 seats and left only one seat to each Tory, Labour, and LibDem parties (Andrews, 2015). Labour party was the main defeated party that failed to get Cameron out from Downing Street, and the Scottish Labour leader Murphy lost his mandate to be beaten by SNP Oswald (Lord, 2015). The results forced Miliband to resign from party leadership. Salmond secured his place at Westminster by winning in Gordon and announced that Cameron has no legitimacy in Scotland. Sturgeon said that it would be not any more business as usual (Gardham & McArdle, 2015). It should be noted that it was the best SNP results at National Elections in history.

The shadow of the second independence referendum

The landslide victory of the SNP in Scotland at the National Elections gave her leaders the confidence and feeling of increased democratic legitimacy of the party. The two closely related issues dominated the public speeches of the SNP leaders: the possibility of the second independence referendum and the devolution of powers to Scotland.

Cameron also enjoyed the rise of confidence after the nationwide victory at the elections. He ruled out the second independence referendum by saying that 'Scotland voted emphatically to stay in the United Kingdom, which was an affirmation of what a great country it is' (Settle, 2015d:1). Sturgeon replied in the way that the 56 seats are the powerful mandate to secure the SNP key manifesto aims and warned Cameron not to ignore the demands for more devolved powers if he wanted to avoid the second independence referendum (Gardham, 2015c).

Their exchange of warnings ended up in the face-to-face meeting in Edinburgh. The main topic of their discussion was the Scotland Bill about the more devolution powers. Sturgeon asked for additional powers like minimum wage and national insurance contributions. Cameron noted that he is open for ‘sensible suggestions’ but denied the full fiscal autonomy as a good option: ‘I think it would land Scottish taxpayers with 7 billion pounds of extra taxes or extra cuts’ (Sanderson, 2015:1). Lately, Cameron added critics and called the Scottish Government to ‘stop talking and start acting because the ‘devolution is not just about getting new powers, it is also about the responsibility of how those powers are used’ (Settle, 2015e:1). He accused SNP of Full Fiscal Shambles as the SNP is more interested in the process and not politics (Devlin, 2015c).

In the Queen’s speech, Cameron mentioned the Bill for the in/out referendum on the EU membership. Sturgeon reacted by promising that the second referendum will be unstoppable if Scotland is forced to leave the EU despite voting to stay (Gardham, 2015d). In her keynote speech at Brussels, she argued that ‘as a country of five million people, we understand that we cannot act in isolation’ (Gardham, 2015e:6).

Salmond raised the second referendum issue by criticising the Tory austerity programme. He said: ‘Instead of Devo to the max, we are getting austerity to the max, and that divergent view of what’s right in social terms between Scotland and England is another issue that is moving things towards another referendum’ (Settle, 2015f:1). Cameron replied that ‘the independence issue is settled for 30 years’ (Hughes, 2015:19). Salmond explained three material circumstances which can lead to the second referendum: refusal to deliver on the Vow of more devolved powers; risk of being outside the EU in case of Brexit; austerity to the max because of Westminster (Settle, 2015g).

The pro-independence march in Glasgow showed that the idea of independence is still alive among the population (‘Pro-Independence Procession’, 2015). To celebrate the one year after the independence referendum Hope Over Fear rally was organized (Goodwin, 2015). In her keynote speech on the anniversary of the referendum, Sturgeon claimed Westminster policy as the reason

for the growing support for independence in Scotland. She accused the Prime Minister of ignoring Scotland's voice (Gardham, 2015f).

The Scotland Bill entered in the second reading in the House of Commons (Andrews, 2015b). In the light of this, Cameron government promised the new substantive powers for Scotland in autumn. However, Ministers refused to clarify the details of these powers. They just mentioned that it would be 'more than merely drafting fixes' (Devlin & Gordon, 2015:1). These fixes were included in the final draft, which passed the House of Commons in November. The Scotland Bill included control over almost all income taxes, the ability to create the Scottish welfare system, and the power to decide legislation on abortion. A Labour amendment over VAT control was denied. The SNP amendment to give the Parliament of Scotland powers to call the second independence referendum also did not pass the legislation. Secretary of State for Scotland Mundell rejected the demands for full fiscal autonomy as 'not in the interest of the people of Scotland' (Alexander, 2015).

Another chance to reinforce the independence claim was the UK Parliament decision to authorize the airstrikes on Syria. The Conservative party used their majority to adopt the decision despite most of the Labour (including their new leader Corbin) and all SNP members voted against it (Andrews, 2015c). SNP Westminster leader Robertson cited a self-selecting online survey to prove that the opposition to airstrikes is stronger in Scotland than in England (Gardham, 2015g).

To sum up, the independence debates continued even after the referendum fell into history. The proponents of independence change their framing from insisting on the potential economic gains to demands for more devolution powers. The result of the efforts was the Scotland Bill which passed the House of Commons. Sturgeon mentioned significant changes to occur in order to celebrate another referendum. The story shows that this change will occur.

4.5. Scotland in 2016: Brexit referendum

Holyrood elections

The in/out referendum on the UK membership in the EU became the main political event for Scotland and Great Britain as a whole. Before this game-changing event, the Regional elections in Scotland took place, and the SNP was expected to gain the majority after the party success at the National elections.

Cameron portrayed himself as the opposition to the UK withdrawal from the EU. He expected to make a deal with the EU and, at least, delay the referendum. However, he proclaimed the free vote on the referendum for the ministers of his cabinet. This fact provoked a furious reaction by accusing Cameron to violate cabinet collective responsibility. Yousaf said that this decision is deeply worrying and could push the UK closer to the breakup with the EU (Settle, 2016a). The Prime Minister announced that he reached a deal with the EU on the 'special status' of the UK, including the migration deal and opt/out from 'ever-closer union' seek. Nevertheless, the 23rd of June has been confirmed as Brexit referendum day (Woodcock, 2016). Sturgeon warned that 'if we were to be taken out of the EU when we had expressly said we had wanted to stay in, then that would trigger a demand for a second independence referendum' (News Reporter, 2016:14). In spite of being on the same side in terms of Brexit, Sturgeon drastically refused to share a platform with Cameron and warned him not to campaign in Scotland in order to avoid the harm of the cause (Devlin, 2016a).

These Brexit referendum debates coincided with the complex negotiations about the new fiscal framework for Scotland. Previously, both leaders agreed to make the deal by 12th February, but it became clear that the differences are too wide to reach the agreement on time. These tax negotiations were extremely important for SNP in light of the upcoming elections. Failure to reach an agreement would delay the devolution of new powers from 2017 to 2018 and provoke a constitutional crisis. Deputy First Minister Swinney has concerned that 'the people of Scotland would not forgive me if I signed up to a deal that is financially damaging to the people of Scotland

and I would not do it' (Settle, 2016b). The agreement was finally concluded with a delay. The new fiscal framework devolved almost complete control over income tax and a 2.5 billion pounds welfare budget. Osborne proclaimed that this deal fulfilled the referendum Vow of the UK parties. Sturgeon noted that the more power Parliament has, the more it can deliver to the people of Scotland (Gardham & Settle, 2016). At the end of March, the Scotland Act has been enacted, and Mundell called it the beginning of a 'new exciting era in Scottish politics' ('Bill Means Holyrood Is Set for Exciting New Era', 2016).

However, the devolution, which was considered to make the Scottish Parliament one of the most powerful devolved parliaments globally, did not impede the demands for independence. Sturgeon announced her plans to convert the No voters to the support for 'beautiful dream of independence'. She admitted that in 2014 the argument for independence was not complete and persuasive enough and promised to rethink the economic and currency argument (Gordon, 2016a:4).

Cameron expressed concern that Brexit vote could trigger the independence support in Scotland and materialize the demands for the second referendum. New Scottish Labour leader Dugdale joined the fear play of Scottish independence by stating that 'it is not inconceivable she could vote for Scottish independence if Britain votes to leave the EU' because she is ready 'to do everything possible to promote and protect Scotland's place in the EU' (Gardham, 2016a:6).

The Brexit referendum influenced the electoral campaign for Holyrood elections. The SNP Manifesto clarified that 'the Parliament should have the right to hold another referendum if there is sustained evidence that independence has become the preferred option of a majority of Scottish people' (Scottish National Party, 2016). The document stipulates the 'significant and material change in the circumstances that prevailed in 2014' as the reason for another referendum that clearly references the unsatisfactory Brexit referendum vote (Scottish National Party, 2016). These statements provoked an adverse reaction from the SNP opponents. Davidson replied in the way that Sturgeon missed the opportunity to leave the division of referendum behind. The Scottish

Liberal Democrat leader Rennie said: ‘The truth is that for the SNP, the timing of any second referendum is down to the option of Nicola Sturgeon’ (Gardham, 2016b:6).

The results of the Scottish Parliamentary elections gave the SNP the possibility to form the minority government. In spite of taking the record of more than 1 million votes (46,5 percent), the SNP received only 63 seats out of 129, which is 6 seats less than in the 2011 elections. The Conservative party received 31 seats and became the second-largest party in Scotland beating the Labours with 24 seats. Greens received 6 seats and Liberal Democrats – 5 (Andrews, 2016a). Sturgeon ruled out a coalition and promised to lead inclusive minority government. She mentioned that the SNP would make a case for independence with passion and respect, but the aim is to persuade and not divide (Andrews, 2016a). The Green Party co-convener Harvie ensured that his party would not block a bid for another independence referendum (‘Greens Won’t Block Second Indyref’, 2016). The support of the Green Party is decisive because it gives the potential absolute majority of independentists in the bid for referendum. Davidson celebrated the performance of her party and claimed that ‘the SNP’s pursuit of independence has been utterly shredded’ because they failed to get the absolute majority (McPherson, 2016a:3).

Sturgeon has been re-elected as the First Minister by beating another candidate Rennie with 63 to 5 votes and 59 abstentions. She promised to make education and economy the first priorities of the new Cabinet, leaving the independence issue behind these two (Gardham, 2016c).

Brexit referendum

The Holyrood elections were a significant political event, but Brexit referendum had the potential to be a game-changing occasion. Despite the main debates in this referendum on job security, migration, EU deal, fisheries, etc., the shadow of Scottish independence was also the field to play.

The Prime Minister reassured that Brexit could lead to the second referendum vote in Scotland by declaring: ‘if you love your country, you do not want to act in a way that could lead to its break-up’ (Settle, 2016c:6). The pre-Brexit debates showed the total absence of unity in the Remain

camp. Each side played its own game and accused each other of speculations and not persuasive arguments. In a few weeks, Tories attacked both SNP and Labours, Labours attacked Tories, SNP attacked pro-EU Tories.

Sturgeon participated in the TV debates with London mayor Johnson. Sturgeon tried to convince the audience that she was leaving the independence argument aside to put forward the view that ‘independent nations had to operate in an independent world and work together for a greater good’ (Settle, 2016d:1). Lately, she called Scottish officials to employ all possible measures to protect the relationships with the EU. She clarified that these measures rather include the second independence referendum than legal or parliamentary mechanisms to block Brexit (Gardham, 2016d). She also did not rule out the adoption of the euro in case of Brexit despite the categorical denial of this option during the independence referendum debates (Sanderson, 2016a).

The results of the in/out referendum provoked a shock. Remain option has been defeated by almost 52 percent against 48. In the meantime, Scotland voted 62 percent Remain and 38 percent Leave (McPherson, 2016b). Sturgeon proclaimed: ‘Scotland faces being taken out of the EU against our will. I regard that as democratically unacceptable’ (Devlin & Gardham, 2016:1). She assured to use the ‘Sewel Convention’ to stop Brexit (Gardham, 2016e). Sewel Convention is a procedure when the UK Parliament wants to legislate on a devolved competence matter of Scottish, Welsh, or Northern Ireland parliaments. The UK Parliament is ‘not normally do so without the relevant devolved institution having passed a legislative consent motion’ (*Sewel Convention*, 2021). Salmond predicted that Scotland would become an independent country as the results of Brexit vote (Devlin, 2016b).

The First Minister made a trip to Brussels in order to urgently negotiate with EU officials the consequences of Brexit for Scotland. She received a mixed response. President of the European Parliament Schulz and the President of the European Commission Juncker agreed to meet with Sturgeon. Juncker said, ‘Scotland won a right to be heard.’ Sturgeon commented that the EC President gave her a ‘very sympathetic response’ (Sanderson & Settle, 2016:1). However, the

Spanish PM and French President jointly rejected the Scotland bid. Rajoy insisted that Scotland has no competence to negotiate its membership status in the EU (McPherson, 2016c).

The Brexit led to the resignation of Cameron. New Prime Minister May made a trip to Scotland in order to negotiate with Sturgeon. The PM promised not to start the talks with the EU until all parts of the UK are on the same page. She admitted the more nuanced role of Scotland in these negotiations. Regarding the second independence referendum, May has ensured: 'the Scottish people had their vote, and a very clear message came through. Both the United Kingdom and the Scottish Governments said they would abide by that' (McPherson, 2016d). Sturgeon came up with the idea of 'reversed Greenland' by claiming that Scotland could remain in both unions. She noted that the UK stays in uncharted territory. The things 'that might have previously been unthinkable could shape the future' (Sanderson, 2016b:7). The debates between First and Prime ministers ended up by denial of Sturgeon's claim 'remain means remain' by May's counterclaim 'Brexit means Brexit' (Settle, 2016e:1).

Sturgeon announced five Brexit tests before starting a race for the second independence referendum: (Gardham, 2016f:1)

- The need to make sure Scotland's voices are heard and wishes respected
- Free movement of labour and access to the single market
- Protection of workers and broader human rights
- The ability to work with other nations to tackle issues such as terrorism and climate change
- Having a say in the rules of the single market

The demands for a second independence referendum was outspoken in the mass rally in Glasgow with more than 5000 participants (Whitaker, 2016a). Another mass demonstration occurred in the commemoration of the independence referendum of 2014 (Whitaker, 2016b). The main message was similar to the SNP reasoning in light of Brexit vote. People chanted that they are terrified by the unpredictable future because of withdrawal from the EU, and the only option to secure Scotland's place is to vote in another independence referendum. In the light of the latest

developments, Sturgeon officially renewed her bid for independence by starting the snap poll about independence (Devlin, 2016d). She said: ‘The debate is now whatever you should go forward, protecting our place as a European nation, or go backwards, under a Tory government with very different priorities’ (Devlin, 2016c). A draft law for a second independence referendum has been unveiled in October. Sturgeon commented: ‘If there is an independence referendum, it will not be because the results of the 2014 referendum have not been respected – it will be because the promise made to Scotland have not been kept’ (‘Referendum Bill Unveiled’, 2016:1).

However, the strive for independence and separate agreement on EU faced strong opposition in the UK. May dashed any special Brexit deal for Scotland by stating that the UK Government aims to ensure Brexit is a success for Scotland's people (Settle, 2016f). Lately, she denied the decisive role of Holyrood in Brexit negotiations by stipulating that Westminster is the only authority on this occasion (Settle, 2016g). Davidson at the annual Tory conference opposed the second independence referendum by stating that ‘debate on UK division is over’ (Settle, 2016h:1). Finally, chancellor Hammond categorically ruled out Sturgeon’s bid for Scotland deal on Brexit, which included separate immigration and trade systems. He stipulated that ‘those hoping for a separate deal are clutching at straws’ (Gordon, 2016b:1).

At the end of the year, Sturgeon came up with a plan ‘Scotland’s place in Europe’. The main idea was to join the European Free Trade Association (Efta), which let Scotland maintain an open border with the rest of the UK. It has to be Norwegian-style membership. The plan proposes new devolved powers for Scotland in immigration and foreign affairs. In summary, Sturgeon noted that an independent Scotland with full EU membership is the best option, but this plan is a significant compromise from the SNP part. May played down any separate deal for Scotland by affirming the United Kingdom approach (Andrews & McPherson, 2016).

To sum up, Brexit referendum results were an earthquake for the political landscape. The Holyrood elections strategy more the SNP were more concentrated on economic and social matters than independence. However, the independentist agenda has never disappeared from the political

ideology of SNP, and vote Leave despite the majority of Scots supported Remain was used by SNP as a legitimate justification to reintroduce the independence at the core of their political stream.

4.6. Scottish Independence Process in the Media

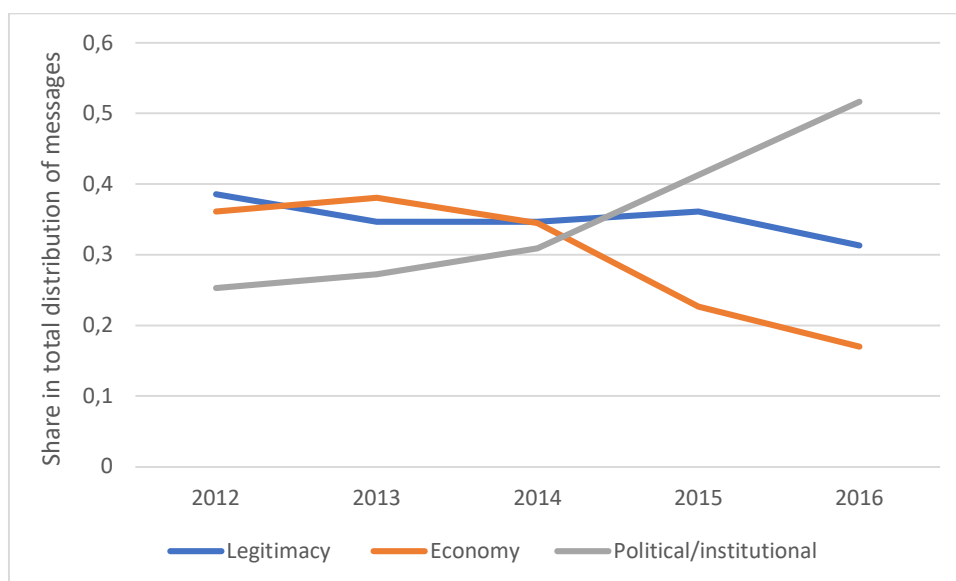
Framing the macroarguments

The independence debates in the Scottish media underwent changes in the five-year period. The media attention shifted from the economic arguments to the political dispute. Elias (2019) confirmed the prominence of the economic case for independence during the independence referendum debates. In the post-referendum period, the economic battle declined and left the floor for the speculations on the EU membership.

Mainstream Scottish media closely reported on all the important political events in Scotland. The period 2012-2014 was dominated by the independence referendum debates. All issues of *the Herald* had a discussion on possible implications of the independence to the Scotland's future. The closer was the date of the referendum, the more intensity of the Scotland-UK relations was possible to track. To illustrate, 1138 frames and message flows were coded in 2012, whereas in 2014 the number was 2017.

The Scottish political calendar included resonant political events at different time of the year. The independence referendum and the Edinburg Agreement occurred in autumn. The regional elections happened in spring. The resonant Brexit referendum was held in summer. The overall distribution of frames and message flows were balanced within the years of study. However, the media increased intensity of the UK-Scotland issue around major political events.

Graph 4.6.1. Changes in macrogroups of arguments, Scotland (2012-2016)



Source: author own data

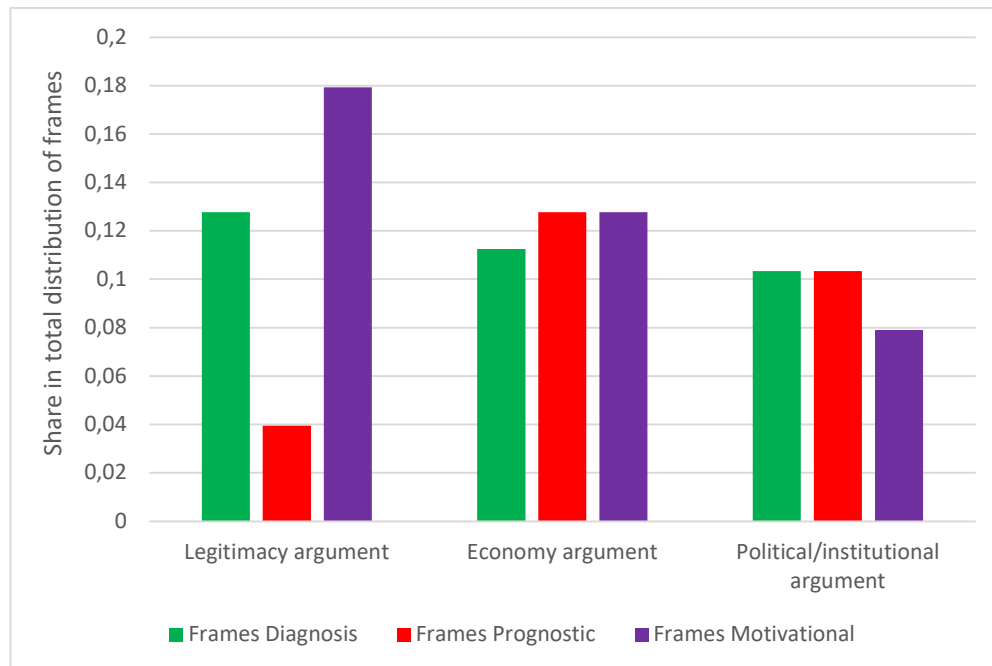
The changing trends in macrogroups of arguments demonstrate the importance of the independence referendum 2014 in transforming the discourse (graph 4.6.1.). The independence referendum perceived to be ‘all in’ game when all the arguments received almost equal attention in the discourse. The battle over independence in 2014 required to win the argument in as much as possible spheres.

Before 2014, the economic and legitimacy arguments received equally major attention in the media discourse, whereas the political arguments stayed behind. The White Paper on independence confirmed the importance of the economic arguments for independence. The Vow of national party leaders released before the referendum contained economic promises. Both economic and legitimacy arguments were bridged because media considered the economic discussions mainly in the legitimacy context of the referendum.

After 2014 all three groups of arguments followed completely different paths. The economic arguments drastically reduced the presence in the discourse. At the same time, the political arguments experienced the growth from bottom to the top of political discourse. These changes signaled the serious contextual transformations. The context of the referendum disappeared as well as the battle for the economic independent future. At the same time, the demands for

decentralization and EU membership issue in the light of Brexit referendum became the leading discursive issue in the media.

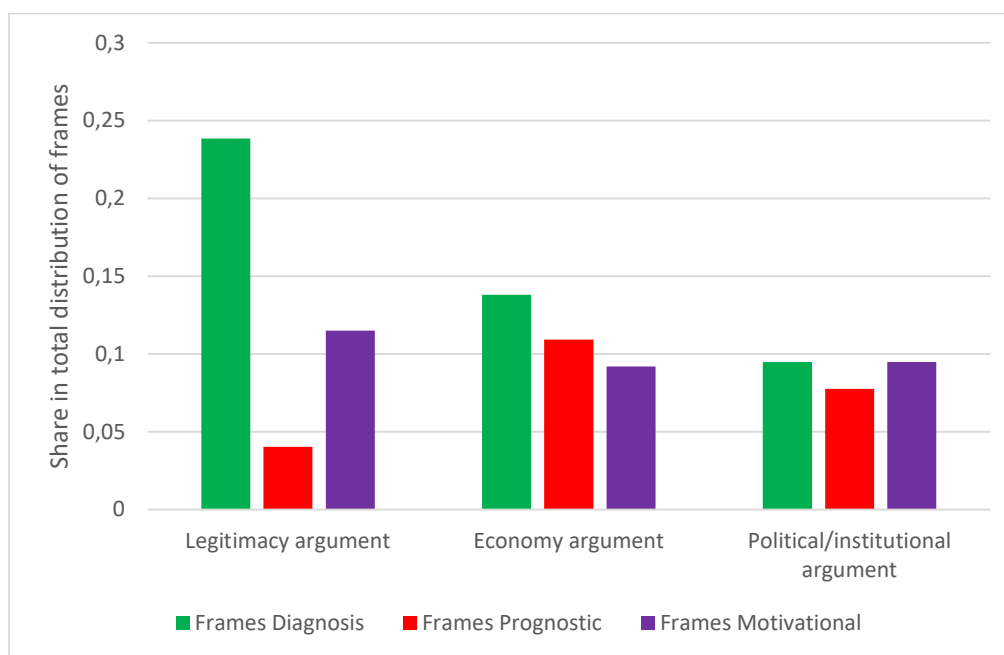
Graph 4.6.2. The distribution of frames among macrogroups, Scotland 2012



Source: author own data

The Edinburg Agreement to legalize the independence referendum was signed in 2012, and the legitimacy arguments attracted considerable attention. The framing of these arguments was predominantly motivational because the proponents of the referendum put a lot of attention to create a positive message (graph 4.6.2). The SNP had the referendum as the main promise to fulfill. The prognostic frames make the difference and predispose the problem-solving precedence in all groups. The prognostic frames equalize with motivational in economy arguments and precede in a political group.

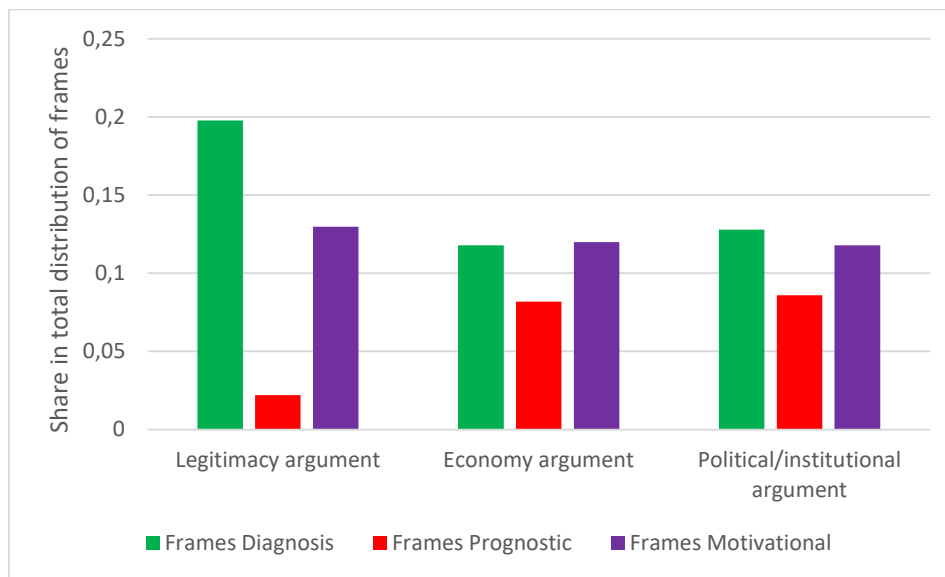
Graph 4.6.3. The distribution of frames among macrogroups, Scotland 2013



Source: author own data

The context of independence referendum established in 2012 defined the discourse in 2013 (graph 4.6.3.). The legitimacy arguments framing significantly shifted from motivational to diagnosis framing. The legitimacy aims to have a referendum was realised in 2012 that led to lack of incentives to motivate on this issue. On the contrary, the legitimacy arguments framing moved to the reflection of the reality of independence debates. The main issue was to understand the current problems of the independence debates. The rest of the groups are equally distributed between the three types of frames. However, problem-solving framing combined was more present in economy and political arguments.

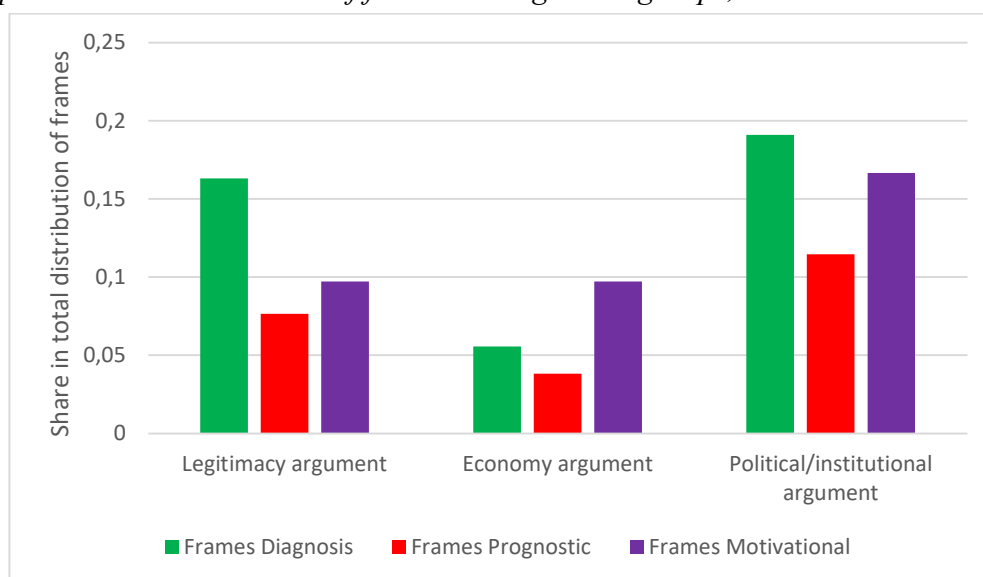
Graph 4.6.4. The distribution of frames among macrogroups, Scotland 2014



Source: author own data

The motivational and diagnosis frames were balanced in the economy and political arguments in 2014 (graph 4.6.4.). As in 2013, the legitimacy argument was dominated by the diagnosis framing. It confirms that in the context of legally confirmed referendum, the media had lack of incentives to play motivational framing. Controversially, the media reflected the context of referendum debates and concentrated on the current issues. However, the prognostic frames made the difference in favor of the problem-solving prevalence. The problem-solving frames were the most frequent in the rest of the groups.

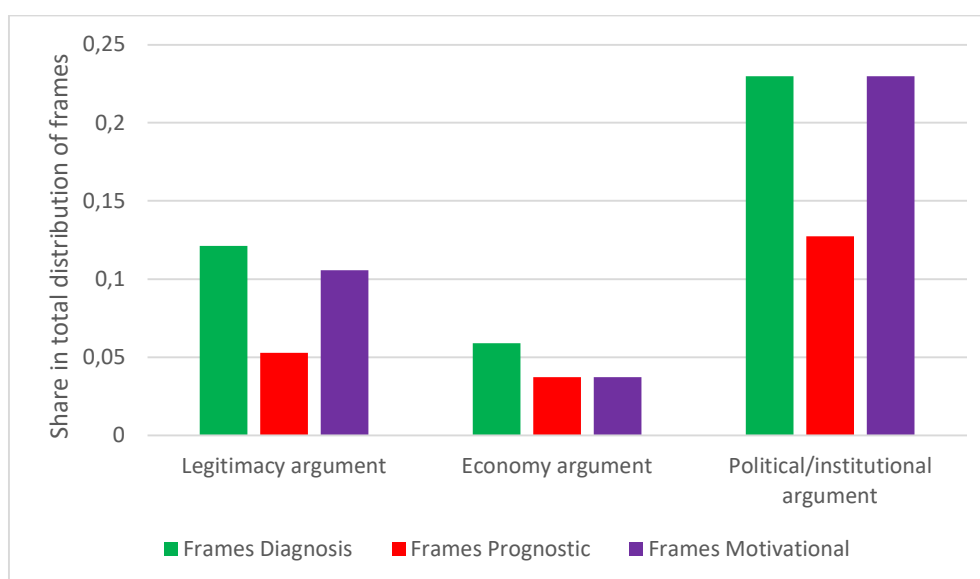
Graph 4.6.5. The distribution of frames among macrogroups, Scotland 2015



Source: author own data

In the post-referendum period, the framing of arguments changed (graph 4.6.5.). All groups of arguments were framed in the problem-solving manner rather than diagnosis in 2015. The diagnosis frames were more frequent in legitimacy and political/institutional group taking separately the problem-solving framing. However, the motivational and prognostic frames taken together as problem-solving were more frequent in each argumentation group. The rise of political/institutional arguments and simultaneous decline of the economic arguments confirm that the battle for the economic argument was lost by the independence supporters. In order to keep the independence on track, it required to change the attention. The political process presented this opportunity because the Scottish political elites started to increasingly insist on more devolution powers. These powers were promised by the national parties leaders in September 2014.

Graph 4.6.6. The distribution of frames among macrogroups, Scotland 2016



Source: author own data

Similar to 2015, the rise of political and fall of economic arguments continued in 2016 (graph 4.6.6.). In all three macro groups, the problem-solving frames are more frequent than the diagnosis. Only economic arguments are more or less balanced in terms of framing, but they occupy a minor position in the overall distribution. Evidently, the major role in this process played Brexit referendum. The political arguments remained in the first place for the second consecutive year. Hence, the predominantly problem-solving framing of the political arguments have remained unchanged since 2012.

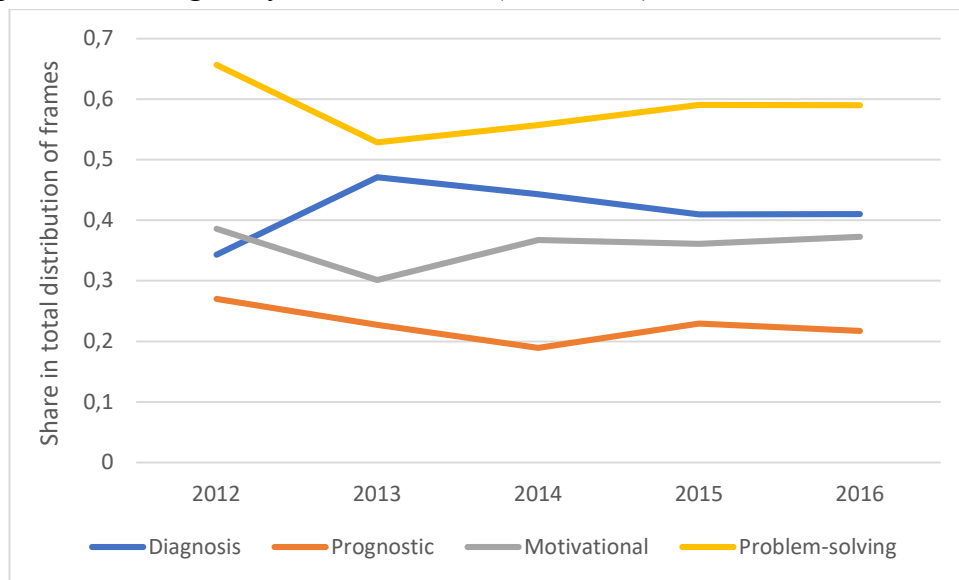
Overall, the shifts in framing occurred regarding to the legitimacy arguments, whereas political and economic arguments were framed in a similar manner. The explanation for this is a changing context of the debates. The legitimacy arguments mainly referred to the referendum itself. The changes in circumstances from the seek for agreement through the institutionalized referendum debates till the failure to get independence via referendum led to the transformations of presenting these arguments in the public discourse.

Framing the discourse and arguments

The difference between three types of frames is explained in the methodology chapter as well as in the empirical chapter about Catalonia. In short, the reference to the future is a border line

between diagnosis and problem-solving framing. The problem-solving group consists of ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ frames. The ‘hot’ is motivational framing because it has incentives in vocabulary to gain independence. The ‘cold’ group refers the future with propositions of the potential state-of-affairs in case of independence.

Graph 4.6.7. Changes in frames, Scotland (2012-2016)



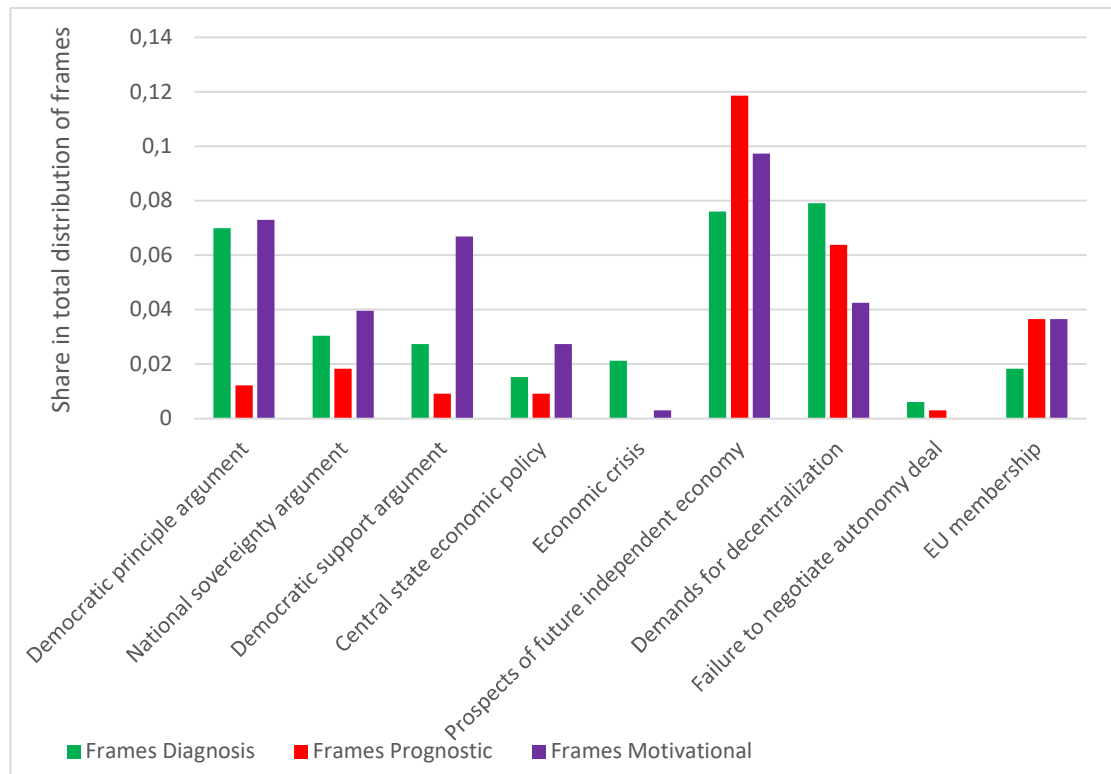
Source: author own data

The study period is characterized by the constant lead of problem-solving frames vis-à-vis the diagnosis (graph 4.6.7). In the problem-solving group media communicated mostly with motivational framing. All three types of frames reached close to each other in 2012 at the beginning of the referendum debates. This year the Yes and No camps was in the process of formation. The diagnosis framing reached its highest level in 2013, whereas motivational one got the lowest one in the study period. This trend changed in 2014 when the problem-solving framing through the rise of motivational framing started to increase vis-à-vis the diagnosis one. This observation confirms the contextual changes in framing the independence after the referendum debates.

The constant lead of problem-solving framing coincided with the stable growth of pro-independence support in the Scottish society. In most of the cases it is possible to see the balance between the distribution of motivational and prognostic frames. In such a scenario, the prognostic

framing made the difference in favor of the overall problem-solving framing of independence discourse.

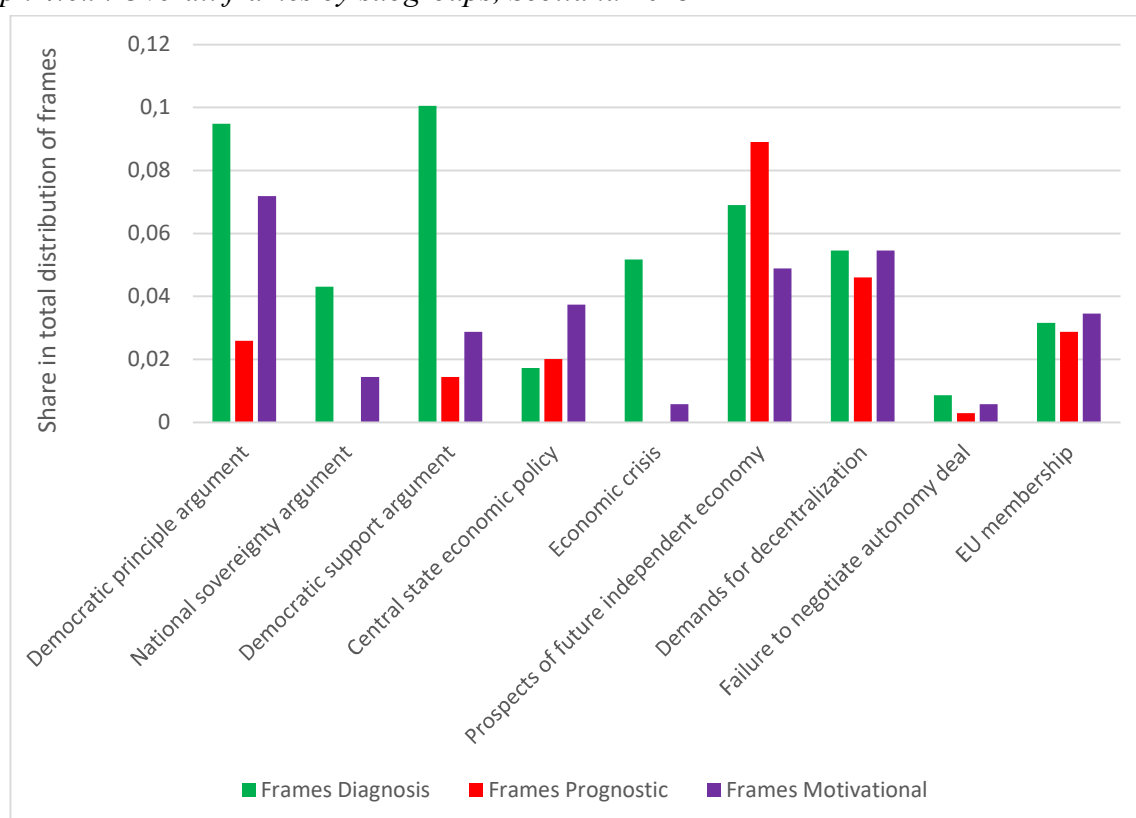
Graph 4.6.8. Overall frames by subgroups, Scotland 2012



Source: author own data

The most persistent frame was prognostic ‘future independent economy’ in 2012 (graph 4.6.8.). Notably, the economic arguments are subsumed in the legitimacy context. In other words, the framework of the referendum (legitimacy) contextualized the economic debates about the future of an independent economy and central state economic policy. The legitimacy and economic arguments were bridged. The same bridging can be tracked between legitimacy and political arguments. The EU membership was a case in point. Recently after the Edinburgh Agreement, the tense debates about the future of Scotland in the EU erupted.

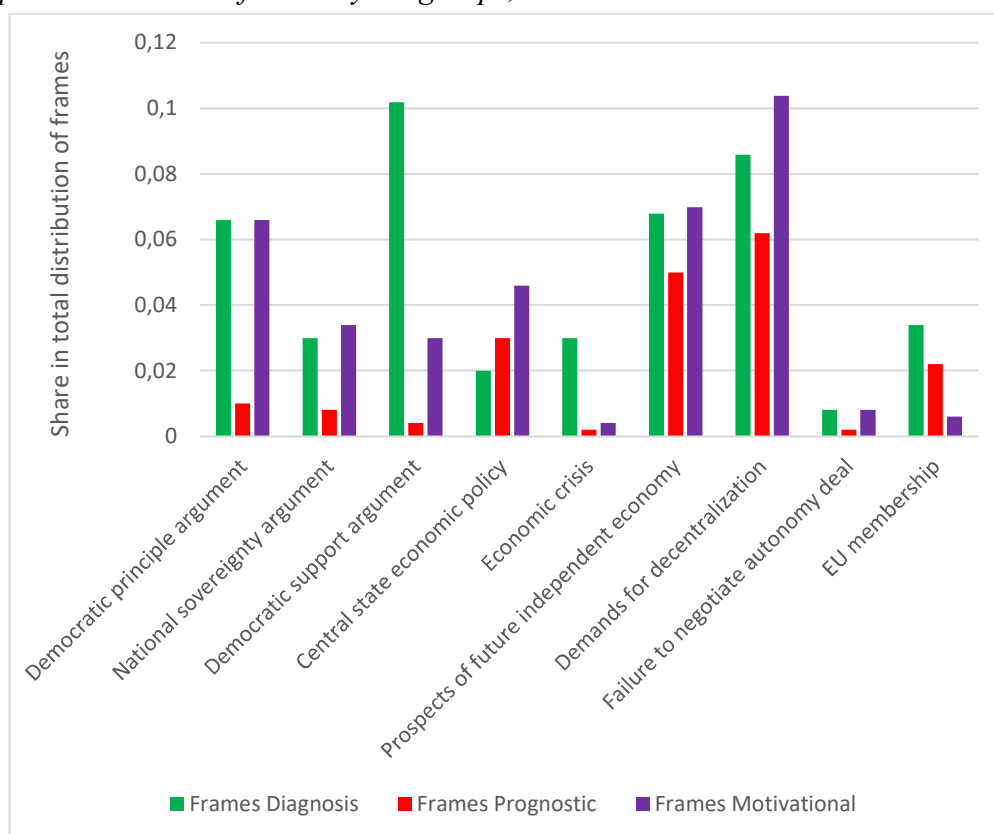
Graph 4.6.9. Overall frames by subgroups, Scotland 2013



Source: author own data

Comparing to 2012, the framing of ‘democratic principle’ and ‘democratic support’ changed in favor of diagnosis framing in 2013 (graph 4.6.9.). The institutionalized context of debates left less floor for motivational framing of these arguments. Prognostic ‘future of independent economy’ keeps its position at the top of framed messages. Apart from ‘democratic support’, only ‘national sovereignty’ and ‘economic crisis’ arguments were dominated by the diagnosis frames. The ‘central state economic policy’ framing amplified by including the bedroom tax issue as the motivation for independence. The bedroom tax became a representation of inadequate economic accommodation of Scotland by Westminster. ‘Demands for decentralization’ also amplified by including the necessity of additional powers to Parliament to pursue a better Scotland future. ‘Demands for decentralization’ also enlarged to include additional powers to Parliament necessary to pursue a better Scotland future.

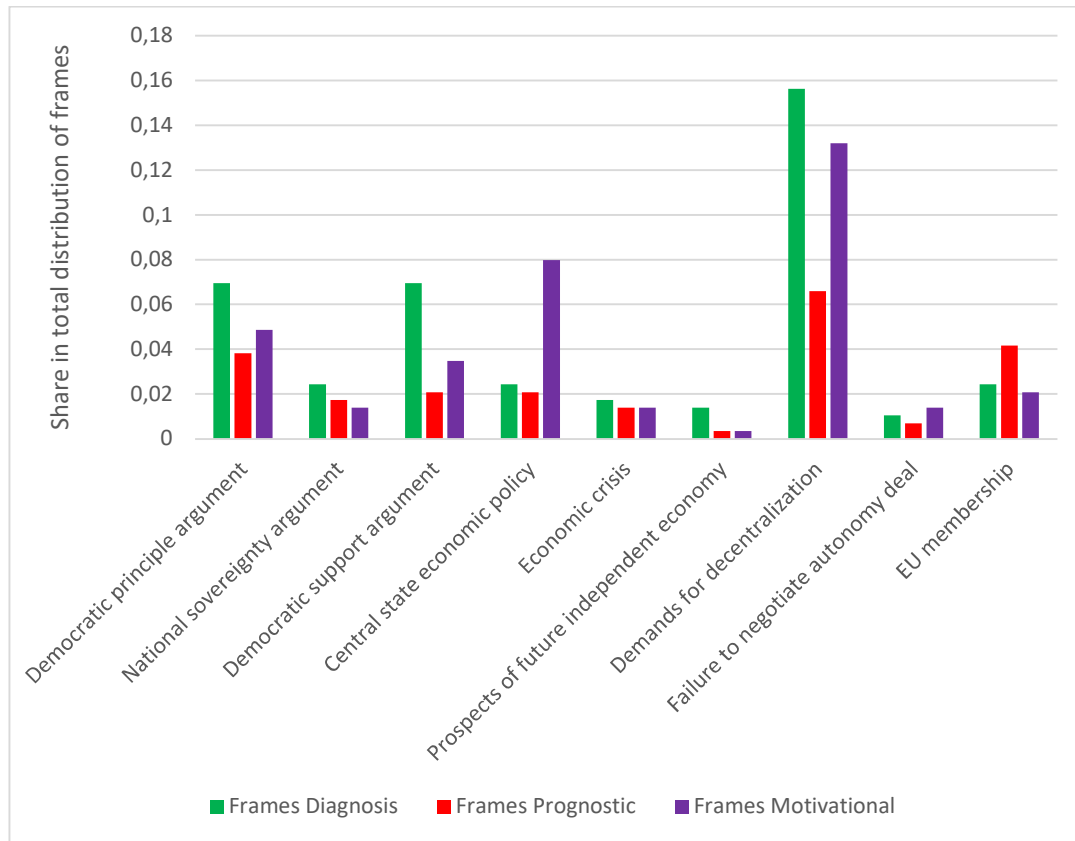
Graph 4.6.10. Overall frames by subgroups, Scotland 2014



Source: author own data

Important role in framing independence discourse played the results of survey data. They denoted in ‘democratic support’ category, and media framed them diagnostically. In 2014 the results of one of the surveys showed the led of the Yes camp vis-à-vis Better Together just a few weeks before the referendum. This fact forced the leaders of the main national parties to give Scotland a Vow of new devolved powers. The defeat of the Yes camp in the referendum made them to change the strategy. The ‘demands for decentralization’ in the lights of referendum results and a Vow became the main argument to play (graph 4.6.10.). The economic arguments started to be framed less frequently. The ‘prospects of future independent economy’ transformed into the battle over currency union. Osborne made a strong argument. The rest of the debates before the referendum, the pro-independence camp tried to play the argument down. In the light of the currency union, they mostly used prognostic framing, whereas the rest of the economic arguments were delighted to motivational framing. ‘Demands for decentralization’ was amplified by the battle over new devolved powers promised by the Vow.

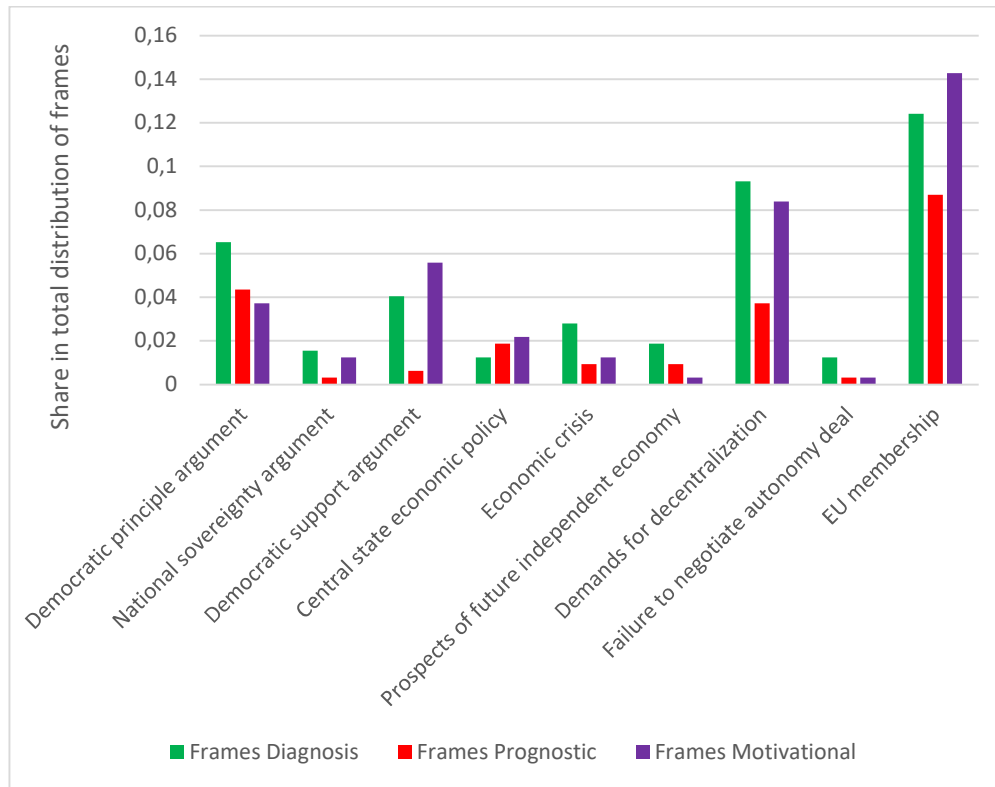
Graph 4.6.11. Overall frames by subgroups, Scotland 2015



Source: author own data

After losing the economic argument in the independence referendum, the ‘demands for decentralization’ turned into the most salient pro-independence frame in 2015 (graph 4.6.11). The problem-solving nature of this frame prevails the diagnosis. Motivational ‘central state economic policy’ was in the second place. This frame was amplified significantly by Salmond and Sturgeon in their bid for the second independence referendum. Media transformed the ‘democratic principle’ argument. Before, it was the symbol of democracy and legitimacy of the agreed independence referendum, and it was mostly balanced in terms of diagnostic and problem-solving frames. However, this year ‘democratic principle’ started to reflect the demands for the second independence referendum and increased problem-solving share.

Graph 4.6.12. Overall frames by subgroups, Scotland 2016



Source: author own data

The EU membership argument was the most important in terms of frames in 2016 (graph 4.6.12.). The motivational component prevailed in this argument and, combined with prognostic, made up the solid problem-solving direction. Most other arguments also have the problem-solving prevalence. The main framed argument ‘EU membership’ underwent the frame transformation. Before the independence referendum, the EU membership was mainly pro-center argument to fear the Scottish voters by the possible withdrawal from the EU in Yes vote. After the referendum and before Brexit vote, the framed message was used as the strategy to inspire Britain and Scottish loyalist voters to vote Remain to avoid the second independence referendum. After Brexit vote, EU membership represented the ‘change in material circumstances’ and used to explain and motivate the second independence referendum.

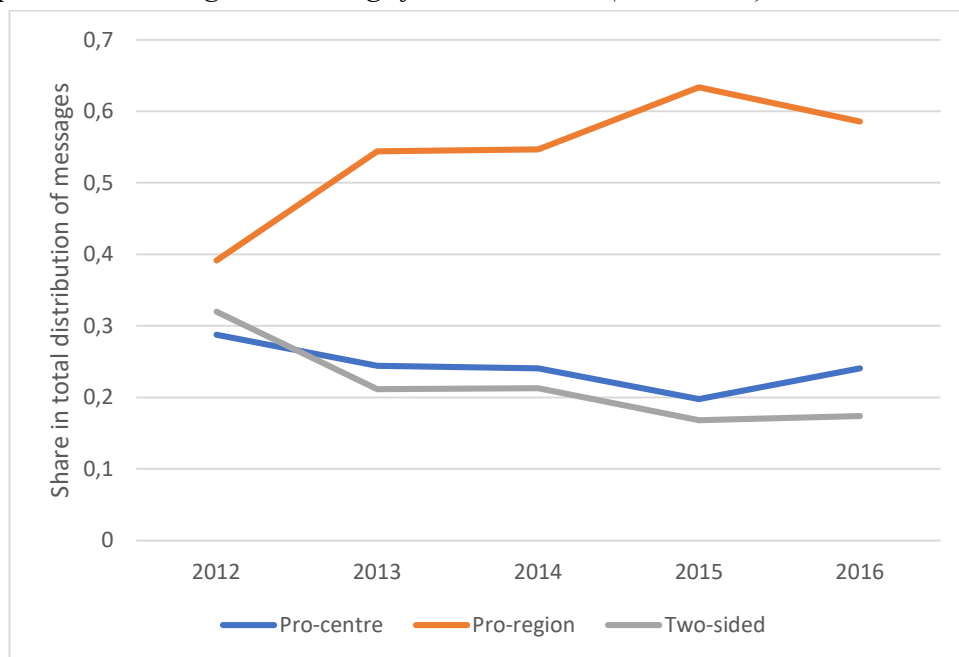
Saliency of arguments and message flows

The way how media report the major political events influence public opinion. The exogenous importance of the independence referendum in 2014 in Scotland and Brexit

referendum in 2016 influence the political landscape. However, the perception of the society of these events affected by the media coverage.

The context of institutionalized debates on independence granted the media additional importance. The Herald and the Courier as the main newspapers in Scotland converted into a battleground for the Yes and Better Together camps. The power of media lies in the possibility to gave more wider floor for one of the camps.

Graph 4.6.13. Changes in message flows, Scotland (2012-2016)



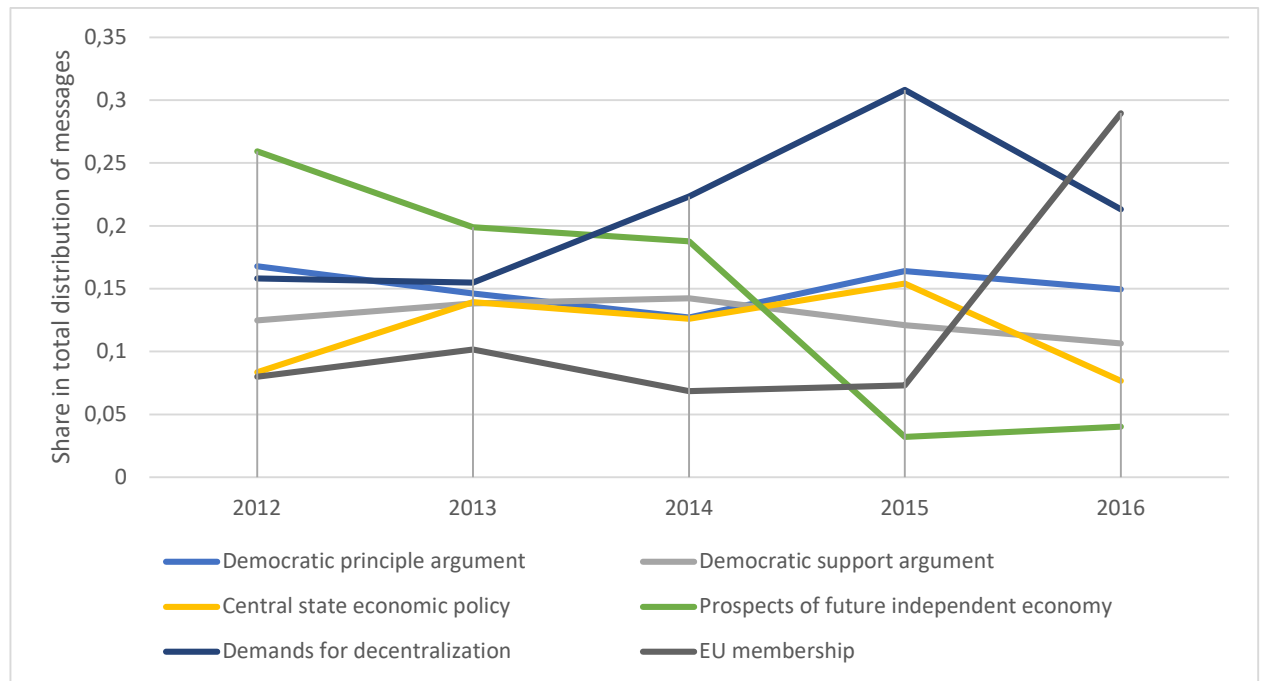
Source: author own data

The strong regionalist agenda is confirmed by the constant dominance of the pro-region message flows during the study period (graph 4.6.13.). The gap between pro-region and pro-center message was widening. At the end, pro-region messages accounted to the 60 percent of the whole Scotland-UK media discourse.

However, the essence of these pro-region message flows considered to be balanced. The pro-region bias consisted of both the anti-center rhetoric and the pro-region views. The negative narration of the state position against the will of the Scotland coincided with the attempts to create a positive image of Scotland. This reporting of pro-region message flows complied with the overall

Yes camp discursive strategy. The Yes camp affirmed the main target as the creation of the positive image of the independent Scotland. The main reflection of this strategy was the White Paper.

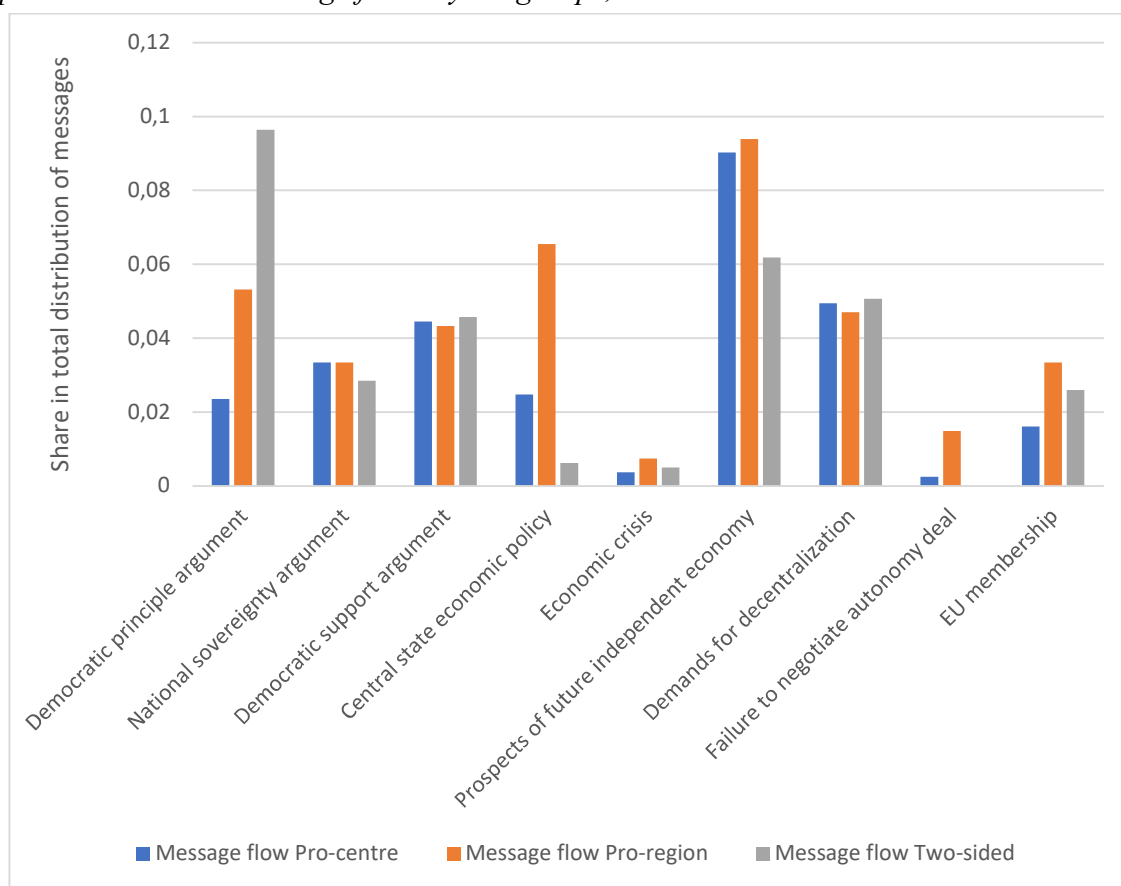
Graph 4.6.14. Changes in arguments (selected), Scotland (2012-2016)



Source: author own data

The saliency of arguments reflects the political process in Scotland at the time of independence sentiments growth (graph 4.6.14.). The leading position of the ‘prospects of the future independent economy’ argument in 2012-2013 confirms the main battle at the referendum debates. The economic case for independence was proclaimed by the SNP and converted into the main battlefield between Yes and Better Together camps. After 2014 the context significantly changed. The economic argument almost disappeared from the UK-Scotland discourse, whereas the ‘demands for decentralization’ signalled the change of media attention. Finally, Brexit referendum debates converted the ‘EU membership’ into the leading argument of the discourse.

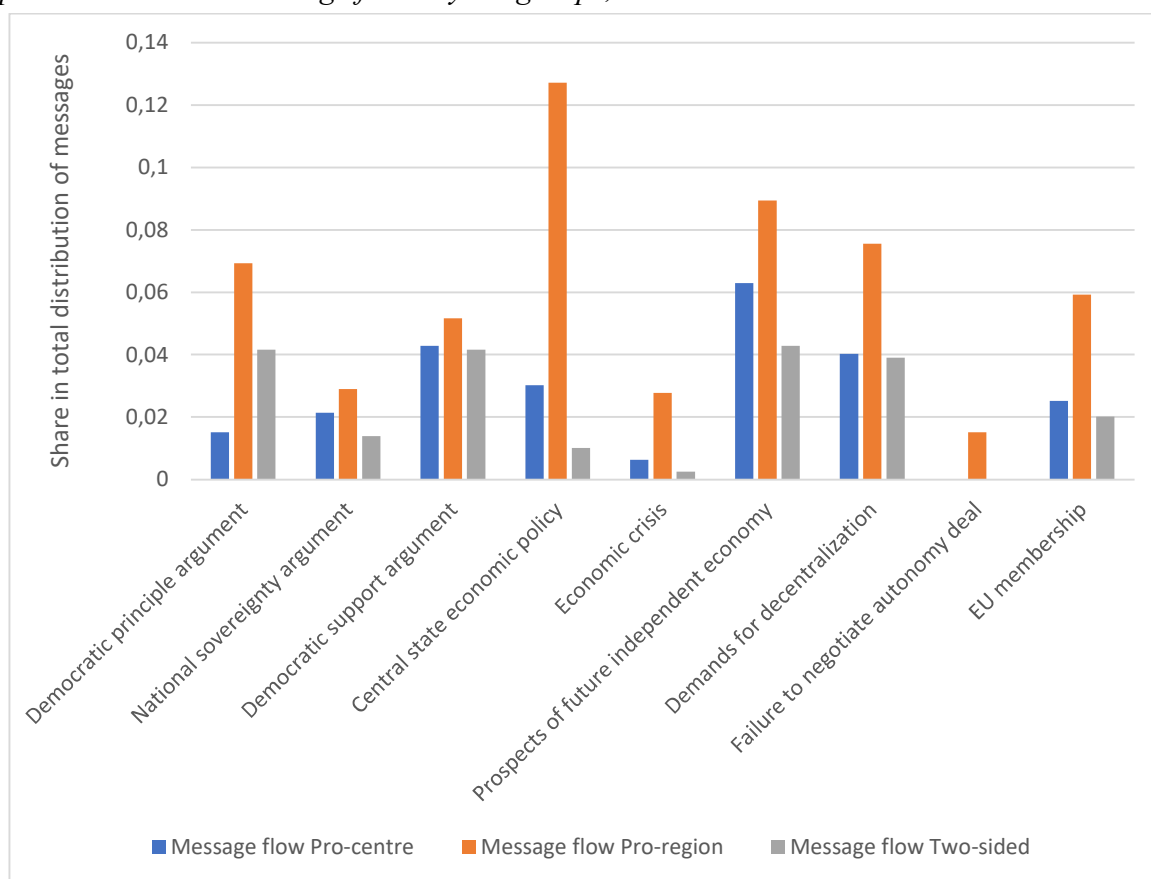
Graph 4.6.15. Overall message flows by subgroups, Scotland 2012



Source: author own data

The battle for the economic future led the discourse in 2012 (graph 4.6.15). The contention between confirmed by the balance between pro-center and pro-region messages within the argument. Both Better Together and Yes campaigns fought fiercely to take ownership of this argument. However, neither campaign managed to dominate this argument, as its equal distribution between pro-center and pro-region messages shows. The second most widespread argument was ‘democratic principle’. This argument supported a referendum but disputed its timing and format. The third most diffuse argument was ‘demands for decentralization’. This argument framed the battle between those seeking independence or those seeking devolution. Devolution in its various forms - devo max, devo-plus - had consensus among political parties. However, pro-independence supporters argued the devolution projects of Labour and Tories merely maintained the status-quo and made purely cosmetic changes.

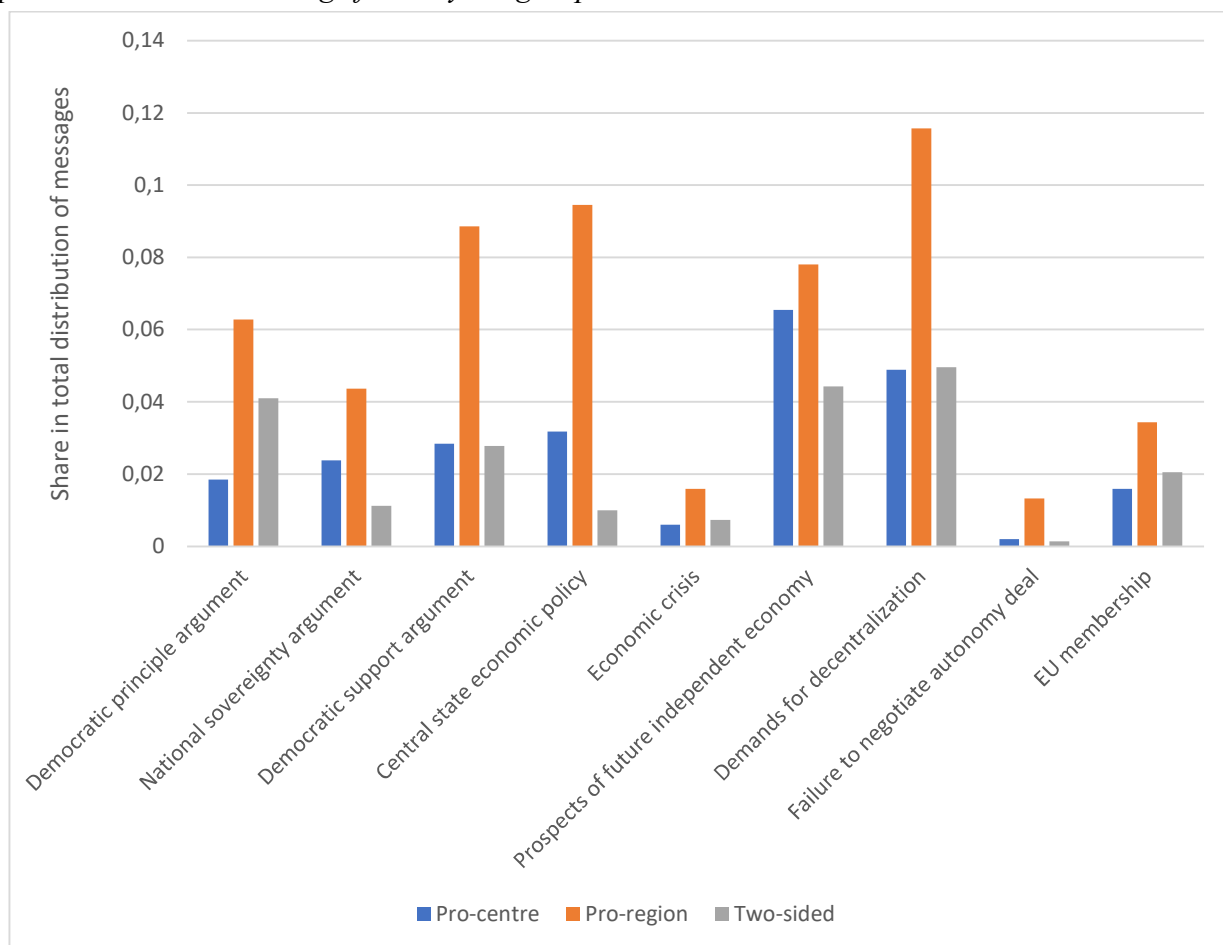
Graph 4.6.16. Overall message flows by subgroups, Scotland 2013



Source: author own data

The economic case for independence receives considerable attention in political discourse in 2013 (graph 4.6.16.). Pro-region ‘central state economic policy’ was the most frequent message, and it is followed by pro-region ‘prospects of future independent economy’ and ‘demands for decentralization’. The second consecutive year, the ‘future of independent economy’ remained in the first place. In fact, the White Paper was mainly devoted to this argument. Another economic argument (‘central state economic policy’) was also on the top of the discourse. The decreasing role of the two-sided message flows showed the radicalization of the discourse. This trend is noticeable in case of subsequent rise of pro-region messages in ‘central state economic policy’ and ‘democratic principle’ shift from two-sided to pro-region message flows.

Graph 4.6.17. Overall message flows by subgroups, Scotland 2014

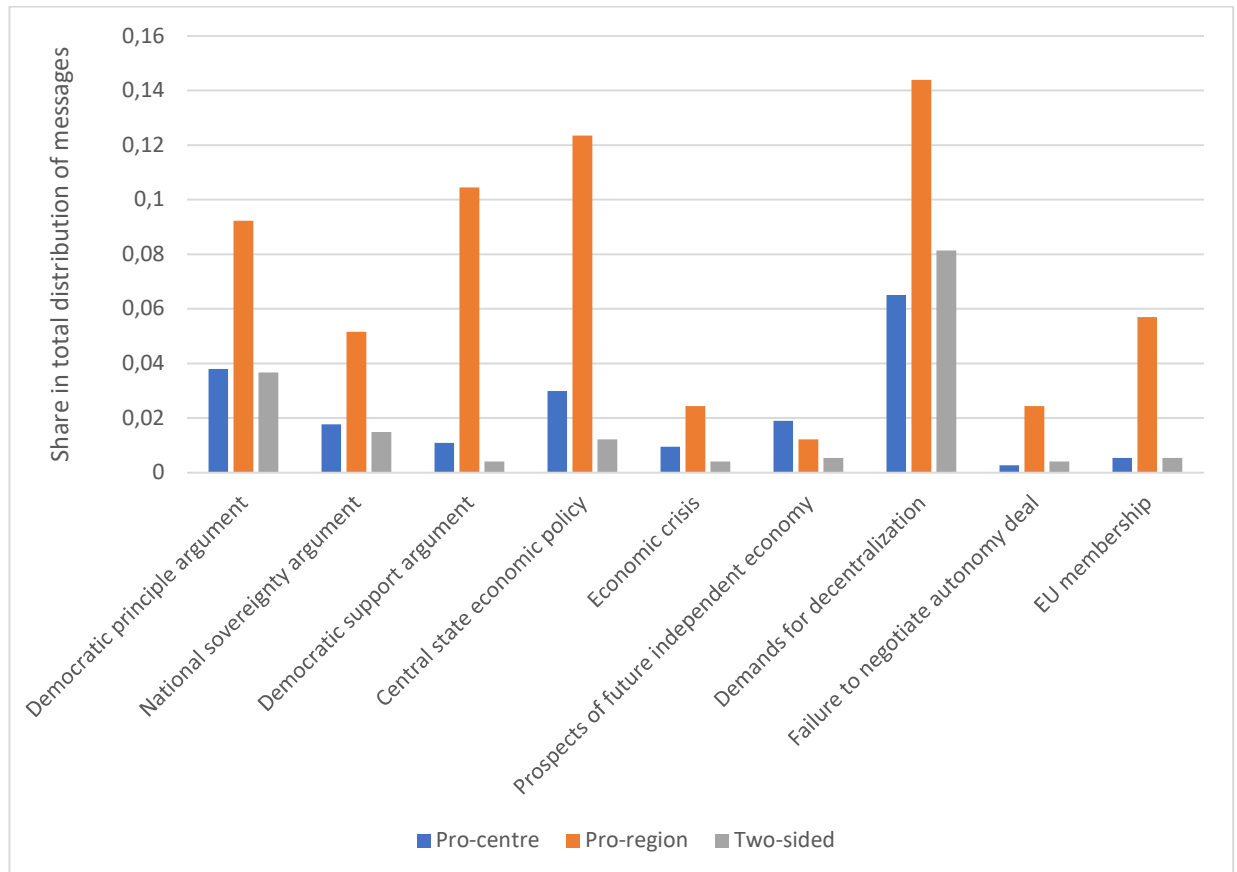


Source: author own data

In the wake of the independence referendum, demands for more devolved powers became the most intense message from the pro-region side (graph 3.6.17.). The Vow of three prominent UK party leaders became the message to play after the defeat at the referendum for the SNP. The battle for ‘future independent economy’ argument continued in 2014. The Osborne speech on currency union defined the debates on this argument. However, its salience in the light of independence referendum reduced. The trend of the debates’ polarization confirmed. The media reports became much more biased than in the previous years because of the upcoming referendum and the increased tensions. Political camps were prone to issue biased economic reports on the future of independence, and the mainstream media were accused of the biased coverage of the debates. For example, the BBC was considered biased against independence, and the Sunday Herald (do not mix with the Herald Scotland) announced its support for the Yes side. The ‘democratic support’

continued to be in the group of the most frequent messages. Political leaders realized that the battle for independence is at the end of the battle for people's support. Both camps subsumed this message in their line of argumentation.

Graph 4.6.18. Overall message flows by subgroups, Scotland 2015

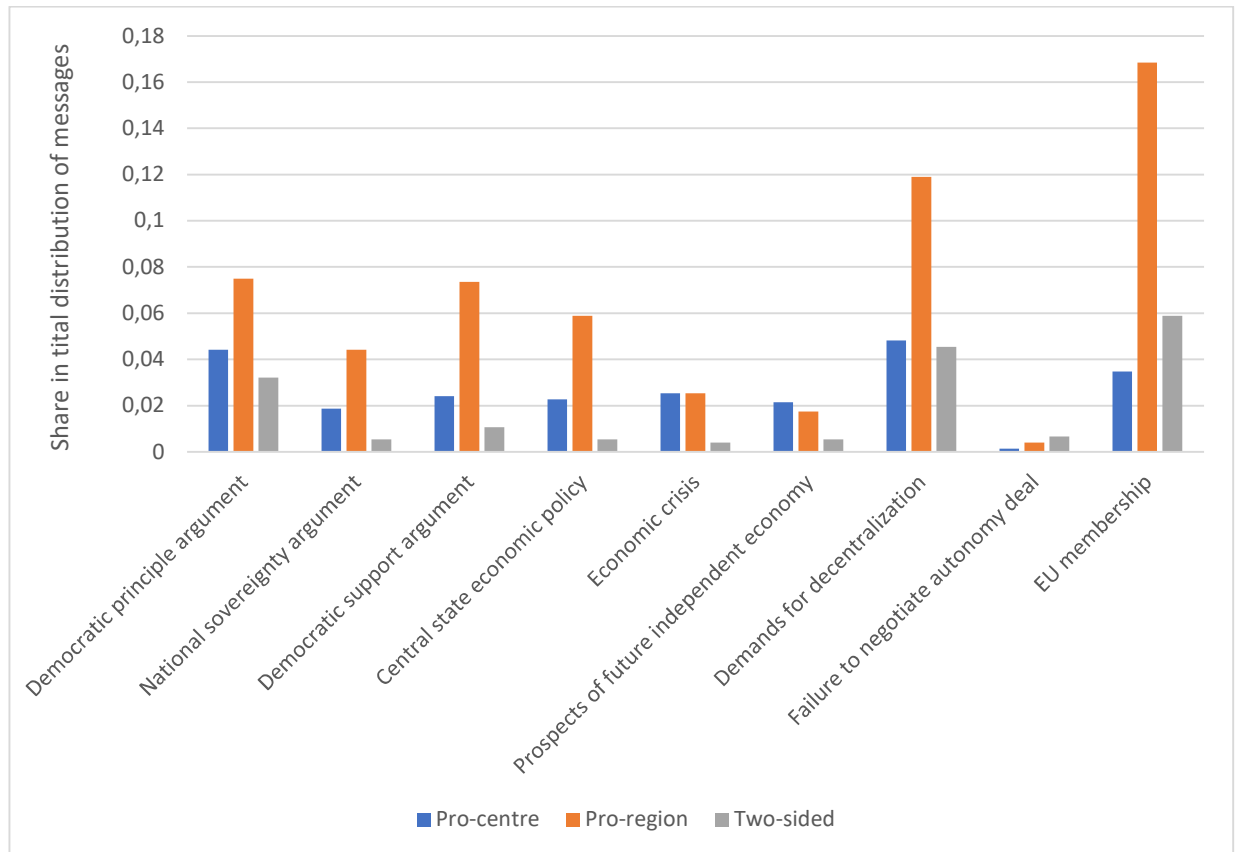


Source: author own data

After the referendum, the balance between pro-region and pro-center message flows in the main arguments completely disappeared (graph 4.6.18). The overall level of frustration with the independence referendum results reflects the strong dominance of the pro-region message flows in each macro group of arguments. Three previous years were contextualized in the framework of the referendum debates. The changes in the argumentation line mark the first year out of the referendum. Contextual changes in the circumstances reshaped the distribution of arguments in the political discourse. Failing to gain independence, the regional elites insisted on 'demands for decentralization'. Previously, this argument was also essential and reached first place in the previous year. But in 2015 it drastically increased its dominance. Another severe change was the

dramatic reduction of the ‘prospects of future independent economy’ argument from being one of the most important to the least important. This change signalled the final defeat of the economic case for independence and reflected the changing the narrative of independence.

Graph 4.6.19. Overall message flows by subgroups, Scotland 2016



Source: author own data

The importance of Brexit contextualized into the UK-Scotland discourse (graph 4.6.19). The distribution of message flows confirms that pro-region ‘EU membership’ was the most frequent message flow of the year. Another political argument ‘demands for decentralization’ was in the second place. The devolution debates mainly note this argument both before and after Brexit. The third place is the ‘democratic principle’, which is framed in the way to directly demand the second independence referendum because it is the democratic way to resolve the evident conflict between state and region in terms of Brexit and constitutional rights of Scottish people. Basically, three most prominent arguments had a clear reference to the necessity of the second independence referendum and contained a strong call for independence.

To sum up, media communicated the UK-Scotland relationships via strong pro-region bias. The overall discourse can be divided into pre- and post-referendum context. The main issue for referendum debates was the economic arguments. After the 2014 referendum, the political and legitimacy arguments experienced the rise in the discourse saliency. The constant dominance of problem-solving framing of independence coincided with the constant growth of the independence support among the population.

Conclusion

Independence support among the population stably grew up between 2012 and 2016. Overall, the secessionist sentiments doubled within the research period. At the same time, the political discourse's main peculiarity is the strong media pro-region bias. Pro-region message flows are most frequent, especially after 2012, where we can track cases of pro-region messages being twice more frequent than pro-center and two-sided. Interestingly, that pro-region messages are more or less balanced in terms of sentiments. In other words, both positive messages in favor of regional path and anti-centric messages are presented in the pro-region message flows in a similar weight.

In terms of frames, the stable growth of secessionism also coincided with the dominance of problem-solving frames. Problem-solving frames are more frequent than diagnosis every year of study. Moreover, the motivational component of problem-solving increased its weight in comparison to prognostic.

The context of the independence referendum of 2014 predetermined the conditions for political debates. The center-periphery cleavage was an important field to play for both regional and national actors. For example, the debates on devolution of powers, or economic arguments were the apparent clash where each side tried to win the argument by insisting on rival camp wrongdoings.

The initial frames have undergone transformations. The 'democratic principle' in 2012 was bridged with the constitutional framework created by the Edinburgh agreement. The main appeal of the pro-independence side was for Section 30 and constitutional rights delivered by Westminster to vote. After 2014, the 'democratic principle' was transformed from a constitutional context to international law. Consequently, the pro-independents started to appeal for the right to self-determination and the devolution of referendum powers similar to the 'right to decide'.

The 'democratic support' argument was predominantly diagnostic in 2013-2014 and consisted of survey data regarding Yes/No sentiments about the referendum. In 2016 this argument was presented as the will of people to secede in the light of considerable political changes.

‘EU membership’ framing experienced serious transformations. At the beginning of the study period, the essence of this argument was the debates about potential Scotland membership in the EU in case of Yes victory at the referendum. Importantly, this argument before the independence referendum was at the minor positions in the overall discourse and was considered as more confident for the Better Together side. The reason is that the pro-EU stance is at the core of the SNP ideology, and fears of being driven to withdraw from the EU was used as a referendum weapon by Better Together. However, after the referendum the content of this argument changed drastically. Firstly, it started to dominate the political discourse. Secondly, it became the electoral weapon of SNP in light of Brexit. The SNP promoters framed it in the way of material circumstances, the change of which can trigger the demands for the second independence referendum. The SNP justified the second independence referendum race by Brexit and threat for the EU membership of Scotland. Precisely the similar way as pro-UK parties used it before 2014.

The independence referendum 2014 was the main point of change in the political discourse. In the context of referendum debates, the economic arguments were the main to discuss. Future of independent economy in the light of currency union or bedroom tax as a symbol of bad Westminster economic policy towards Scotland were the most important. Noticeably, most of the pro-center and pro-region arguments were incorporated into the legitimacy context of the referendum. In other words, all discussions about the economic future or the devolution of powers and EU membership were subsumed into a referendum framework. The keynote speeches of political leaders of both sides always had a reference to the referendum as ‘the most important political event in the history’, ‘decision the people of Scotland should be responsible for’, or ‘once in a lifetime opportunity’.

Legitimacy and economic arguments were very close to each other in terms of redistribution. However, as soon as the referendum context disappeared, the economic argument drastically decreased its presence in the discourse, and political argument led by ‘demands for decentralization’ and ‘EU membership’ started to dominate. The detectable change occurred with

the ‘future of the independent economy’. Three years in a row, this argument was the most frequent from 2012 to 2014, but after it almost vanished from the political debates.

The SNP was the consistent supporter of independence and the primary driver of the pro-independence agenda. Only in 2015, the SNP tried to leave independentism aside and concentrate on demands for devolved powers. Nevertheless, in 2016 they renewed their bid for independence in the light of Brexit vote. The Labour party struggled to find the right place in the territorial debates. In the referendum campaign, they shared the platform of Better Together with their main rivals from the Conservative party. In the light of the National elections, they were closer to SNP despite categorically denying the coalition. The Brexit debates were an even more challenging task because they had to collaborate both with SNP and pro-Remain conservatives. It ended up with shocking statements of the possibility to support the independence of Scotland in order to stop Brexit even though lately denied. As a result, Labour failed to find common ground and their distinct path and lost the National elections, Holyrood elections, and Brexit referendum.

The analysis of reasons for the Leave vote in Brexit referendum is not part of this research. Nevertheless, two issues have to be taken into consideration. Scotland independence was one of the heated issues to debate. Both Leave and Remain camps used the possibility of Scottish independence as the electoral weapon, including Cameron, which, at first, ruled out the second independence referendum but later used the fear of such a referendum to affirm people to vote Remain. Secondly, the Remain camp failed to create a common strategy to defend their argument. SNP, Labour, and Conservatives were more successful in blaming each other for wrongdoings. For example, Sturgeon categorically denied sharing the platform with Cameron, and Labour did the same about SNP.

5. Comparing the Media Bias, Frames, and Party Strategies in Catalonia and Scotland

Previous chapters on Catalan and Scottish independence processes identified the major political events within the periods of rising independence sentiments. The Catalan case shows the crucial role of competition between regionalist parties and state-wide parties in the regional elections. The main steps to legitimize independence from the pro-region point of view were covered and analyzed. The Catalan case proves the role of social movements in the independence process.

The Scottish case suggested the role of the leading regionalist political party in their contest against the central state authorities. The regional level of Scotland is dominated by the main regionalist party which set up the pro-independence agenda and capitalized on the anti-center rhetoric. The less prominent role of social movements is also considered.

This chapter aims to summarize the main findings of these cases and compare them by discussing common and different trends in the independence processes. This chapter brings together the analysis of message flows, frames, arguments, and political parties' strategies to answer the research questions. These research questions deal with the main issue of how the independence process evolved from minor support for secessionism into the main political topic for the region. Political elites and regionalist parties make different strategic and discursive choices to gain popular support for the idea of independence.

Section 5.1. 'Catalan and Scottish independence processes in the media' answers the research question on how regionalist arguments are communicated by the media to the audience. Firstly, this section summarizes the main insights of the Catalan and Scottish independence processes. Secondly, it overviews the media coverage changes that occurred in both cases. Thirdly, these observations contribute to understanding how arguments' saliency changed and what reasons led to such transformations. Finally, the comparison of message flows in Catalonia and Scotland brings us to answer the main research question of this section.

Section 5.2. 'Framing Catalan and Scottish independence processes' replies to the research question on how media convey independence claims. Firstly, media frames in Catalonia are analyzed with an emphasis on the content of frames and their transformations in meaning. Secondly, the framing of independence claims in Scotland is scrutinized to understand the connections between the arguments and the way how they are presented to support the idea of independence. Thirdly, the comparison of framing in Catalonia and Scotland establishes the links between the major political events and their representation in the public discourse. Finally, the comparative approach suggests the general logic of framing independence and conditions to change the framing strategy.

Section 5.3. 'Regionalist parties' strategies' examines the answer to the research question about the strategic choices of political parties at the regional elections. Firstly, regionalist parties are the main actors in the independence process. They seek electoral power to promote their political agenda. At the time of rising independence sentiments, regionalist parties electorally benefited from this process. They got the position and power to politically promote the independence process.

Firstly, the SNP strategy is analyzed in two regional elections (2011 and 2016). The Scottish Greens' manifestos are not considered due to the impossibility of getting the coded version in the Regional Manifesto project and their minor role in comparison to the SNP. Secondly, the *CiU* strategy is considered as well as the changes in their stance towards independence in regional elections (2010, 2012). Thirdly, the *ERC* strategy is scrutinized to understand how this party benefited from the rising independence sentiments despite the unsuccessful and damaging role of the participation in *tripartit* government for their credibility. Finally, the analysis uncovers the strategies of the regionalist parties in the regional elections. It contributes to understanding internal and external factors to change the strategy.

This chapter summarizes previous empirical findings and explains the links between theory, methodology, and empirical strategy. The main arguments identified in the theoretical literature

are analyzed comparatively in the two cases. The ways of communication include media bias and framing of issues. Media bias in Scotland is compared with Catalonia to find the common peculiarities. Framing independence sentiments is compared between Catalonia and Scotland to see the influence of the political process on the strategies. The regionalist parties' strategies in Catalonia are compared to the Scottish case to understand how regionalist parties get electoral support for their independentist agenda.

This chapter creates the links between the political process and its communication via the media. It argues that this is a two-way road. The analysis explains how reality influences media coverage. But the media coverage largely contributes to the process by attributing meanings to major political events.

This chapter dialogues with the theoretical literature on the importance of particular conditions for people to support independence. Based on the scholarship, this chapter uses three major arguments, in turn, sub-divided into three minor arguments. The results provide an answer to the question of whether there is one argument or set of arguments that played a more important role in developing the secessionist agenda.

Finally, this chapter suggests the role of regionalist parties in establishing the independentist agenda. It is the power of the media to give the floor to particular political forces. However, the direct agenda-setters are individuals who directly communicate their messages via media.

5.1. Catalan and Scottish Independence Processes in Media

Catalan independence process

Independence sentiments were growing for five years in Catalonia and Scotland. The rise of independence support doubled within such a short period. Both processes are characterized by people's mobilization, regional and national elections with pro-periphery slogans, and direct public voting on the possibilities to get independence.

The independence process in Catalonia started with the Constitutional Court ruling on the Catalan Statute of Autonomy. The dissatisfaction with the cancellation and modifications of several articles in the Statute led to mass demonstrations in Catalonia and converted Catalan-Spanish relations into the main topic of regional elections in 2010. Next year the Catalan-Spanish relations were incorporated into the Duran electoral program for National elections. At that time the standoff between Catalonia and Spain on the territorial domain was contextualized into general economic disparities. In the light of these economic tensions, the idea of a fiscal pact gained popularity (“Una Amplia Mayoría Quiere el Concierto”, 2010).

Gradually, pro-independence civil institutions started to be organized. The ANC was established in March 2012 (Argelaguet, 2014). They quickly spread their branches across Catalonia and conducted several public events to discuss the right to self-determination (Martí, 2013b). In August 2012, the Catalan administration had to ask Madrid for a bailout. The basic area expenditures like health and education were in trouble. Considering that Catalonia was one of the main net contributors to the Spanish budget, the bailout appeal could be perceived as a humiliation of Catalan society (Bofil, 2014). *La Diada's* demonstration and the rejection of the fiscal pact added fuel to these tensions. Catalan society was radicalized with independentism. The mainstream regionalist party *CiU* transformed their demands from autonomy to independence. These changes brought them into the same pro-independence camp as the *ERC*. The *ERC* capitalized on the regional elections in 2012 where the *CiU* aimed to get an absolute majority. However, the

outcomes of these elections forced the *CiU* and the *ERC* to make a coalition on a pro-independence basis (Arguelaget, 2014).

The new Parliament approved the Declaration of Sovereignty as one of the first decisions taken. This document created a roadmap for the 'right to decide'. The right to decide appeared in 2010, but only in 2013 it gained absolute popularity in the discourse. The political course of the new coalition confirmed the inspiration to conduct a Scotland-like referendum on independence. Spanish central authorities appealed to the Constitutional Court because of the contradiction with the Spanish Constitution (article 2). The Constitutional Court canceled this declaration and de facto closed the doors for the legally approved referendum.

However, the pro-independence coalition continued the path to referendum. The *ERC* used the budget negotiations with the *CiU* as a bargaining chip to convince Mas to go ahead with the referendum (Tomas, 2013b). In April 2014 a delegation of a Catalan Parliament made a formal request to obtain powers from the Spanish Parliament for a referendum (Cetra & Harvey, 2019). This request echoed the Scottish model to get referendum powers from the UK. The Spanish government overwhelmingly denied any possibility to transfer referendum powers.

The *CiU-ERC* coalition experienced tension on a matter of sovereignty and consultation. The *ERC* proclaimed its readiness to conduct the referendum at all costs (Masreal & Barrera, 2014). The *CiU* party coalition decided to have separate referendum campaigns. The *CDC* campaigned for independence, whereas the *UDC* compromised to have a confederal option (Azpeitia, 2014b). The political consultation on independence failed to get at least 50 percent of participants and was considered non-legally binding (Martí & Cetra, 2016).

Scottish independence process

The independence issue took on renewed importance in 2007 with the SNP victory in regional elections (Quinlan, Shephard, & Paterson, 2015). Four years later, the SNP received an absolute majority of seats in the Scottish Parliament. Their electoral program included the bid for the

independence referendum (Scottish National Party manifesto, 2011). This referendum was institutionalized by the Edinburg Agreement in 2012.

The institutionalized nature of this referendum led to the conduct of official campaigns. The SNP led the Yes camp together with the Scottish Greens party. The No camp with an official Better Together name united the Labor, the Conservative, and the Liberal Democratic party. Better Together camp tried to avoid the negative connotations, but the Yes camp tried to play on it.

The heated referendum debates contextualized the political landscape in Scotland. The Olympic Games in London, the EU membership legal advice, the bedroom tax, the Trident issue, and the future of the currency union were subsumed into the referendum debates. The White Paper on independence confirmed the economic future of Scotland to be the most resonant issue, especially the future of the currency.

The Osborne intervention on the impossibility to keep the currency union in case of Scotland's independence doubted the White Paper's promises (Bussey, 2014). To bolster the Yes campaign, Salmond added the NHS issue to represent the inadequate Westminster policies towards Scotland ('Alex Salmond, SNP Conference Speech', 2014). All of these issues were addressed in the independence debates between Salmond and Darling. The first TV debates were considered a Better Together victory, whereas Salmond took revenge in the next event ('Yes Hope for Boost after Salmond's Debate Win', 2014).

Ahead of the independence referendum, the You Gov poll showed that the Yes camp took a lead for the first time during the campaign (Andrews, 2014b). In an attempt to dampen the support for independence, the Vow promised new devolved powers for Scotland (Cetra & Harvey, 2019). The referendum resulted in the Better Together camp's victory over the Yes camp. This outcome forced Salmond to leave the SNP leadership. The new course of the SNP converted from independence to the extension of the devolved powers (Elias, 2019).

The SNP's defeat in the referendum did not undermine its position as the leading regionalist party in Scotland. The National Parliamentary elections of 2015 had major and minor winners.

Tories secured the absolute majority in the Parliament, whereas the SNP won almost all seats devoted to Scotland (Andrews, 2015). The Tory's victory opened a franchise for Cameron to have a referendum on the EU membership. Sturgeon reacted to this initiative to demand a second independence referendum in case of the Leave vote (Gardham, 2015d).

The promised additional powers were enacted in the Scotland Bill 2016 (Bill Means Holyrood Is Set for Exciting New Era', 2016). However, the bunch of new powers did not impede the renewed secessionist demands. This argument returned to the SNP agenda in light of the Brexit referendum. The Leave victory forced Sturgeon to claim serious changes and renew the bid for a second independence referendum. Despite losing some seats in the regional elections in 2016, the SNP continued to be in government and remained the most powerful party in the region.

Summary of media coverage changes

Media communication of center-periphery cleavage strongly lies in the pro-region direction of message flows. Both Catalan and Scottish media consistently reported with strong pro-region bias. This observation accounts for the first part of the research question on how media communicate regionalist arguments. In both cases, the media set the independentist agenda with media bias.

The second observation lies in the coincidence between the dominance of problem-solving frames in the discourse with the rise of independence sentiments. In Scotland, the problem-solving framing dominated the discourse, and the rise of independence sentiments was stably around 4-6 percent per year. In Catalonia, the balance between problem-solving and diagnosis framing was observed in 2010 with a 6 percent independence growth. Then the rise slowed down up to 3 percent with strong dominance of diagnosis framing. In 2012 the framing independence claims completely changed in favor of problem-solving framing. This year the highest increase in independence support in Catalonia was recorded. The next year the trend of problem-solving vis-à-vis diagnosis framing continued, and the support for independence in Catalonia reached its highest point. In the

final year of study, the diagnosis framing returned to the top, and independence sentiments experienced a short decline.

The analysis of the causal link between the independence sentiments and the type of regionalist claims framing stays beyond the scope of this research. However, Beckert (2013) points out the importance of creating a persuasive narrative. People are motivated by the imagined future. They are open to manipulations by powerful actors. The dominance of problem-solving frames confirms the expectations of the attempts to construct the attractiveness of independence. It also confirms the more resonating potential of future-oriented rather than diagnosis framing.

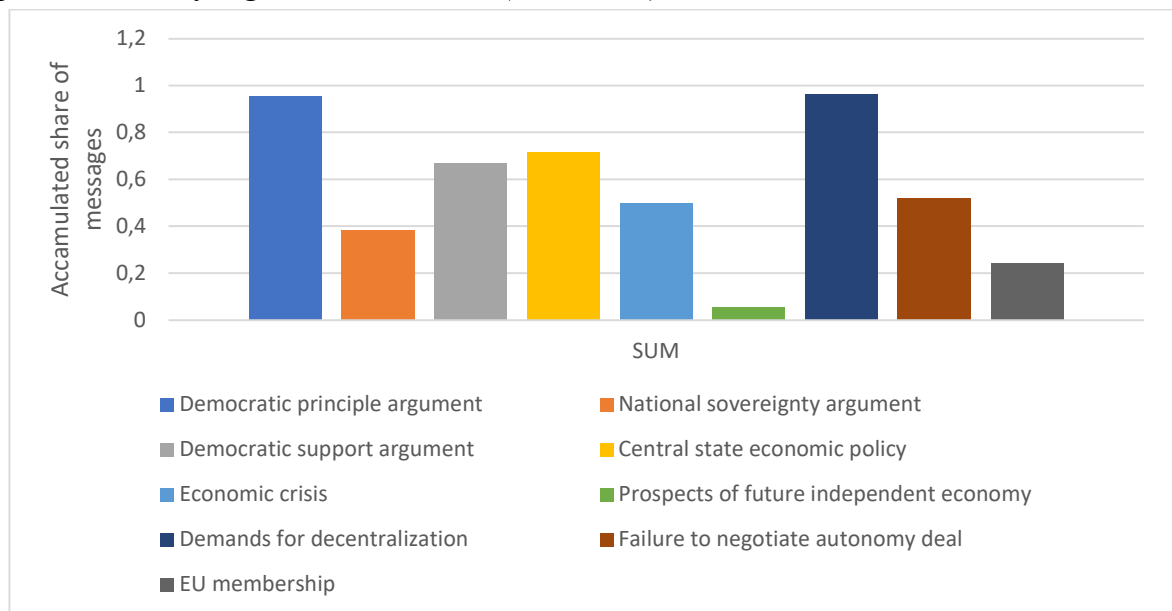
Catalan pro-region bias was based on the negative messages promoting the anti-center rhetoric. The Catalan mobilization voiced this direction. For example, among the *La Diada* slogans, the messages blaming Spain for inadequate accommodation were the most widespread. Scotland's pro-region bias was more balanced. The anti-center and regionally positive messages coincided in an equalized way. The Yes camp made a strategic choice during the referendum campaign in favor of contrasting the positive image of an independent future against the 'fear' messages of the Better Together camp. Moreover, the parity between anti-center and positive messages creates a false image of balanced debates. To illustrate, many pro-region articles in the Herald had a catchy pro-region message in the title like 'Yes camp fightback takes off thanks to airlines' (2014). Then, the whole article discusses how the Yes camp was boosted by the support of two 'the UK airline industry's most senior figures'. However, at the very end of this piece, they reported the reply of the Better Together campaign accusing Scotland of trying to break up the Union in favor of the tax holidays ('Yes camp fightback takes off thanks to airlines', 2014). This short remark cannot change the strong pro-region message voiced in this article. The Yes camp used widely the 'project of fear' connotation against Better Together. However, after the referendum debates, the balanced shifted towards the anti-center rhetoric in pro-region message flows.

The independence referendum in Scotland in 2014 and the autumn of 2012 in Catalonia created opportunities to change the center-periphery discourse. Political arguments grew up in Scotland, and legitimacy arguments increased in Catalonia. The Catalan discourse after 2012 represented the constant battle on the Scottish-like referendum on independence. The Catalan political elites tried to legalize the referendum, whereas Scotland had to find alternative opportunities in the light of its defeat in 2014. The legitimacy arguments reached the highest point in Scottish discourse in 2012 when the Edinburg Agreement was prepared.

The saliency of arguments in Catalonia

The saliency of regionalist arguments in Catalonia closely followed the resonant political events. The failure of the Statute made it the most discussed issue in 2010. The political consultation was reflected in the discourse by the importance of the 'democratic principle argument' in 2014. The austerity policy and the *indignados* movement brought the 'central state economic policy' to the agenda in 2011.

Graph 5.1.1. Sum of arguments, Catalonia (2010-2014)



Source: author own data

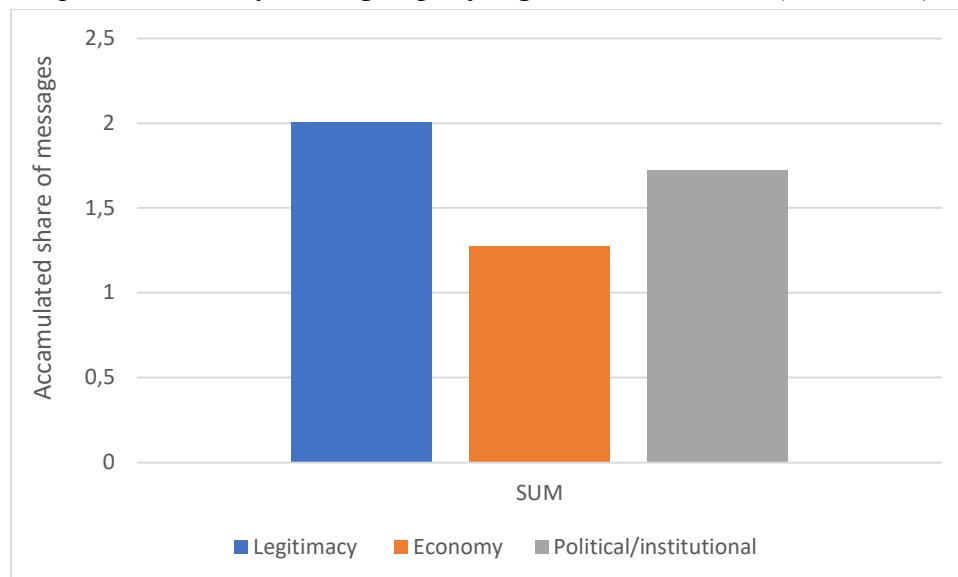
The legitimacy 'democratic principle' and the political 'demands for decentralization' accounted to be the most salient arguments in the Catalonia-Spain discourse (graph 5.1.1.). The 'central state economic policy' after 2011 experienced a constant decline in discursive frequency.

These changes were caused by the shift of attention of the political leaders. The Catalan authorities experienced the problems to resolve the economic and financial issues. They pledged for the fiscal pact to demand more fiscal powers. The fiscal pact received more attention rather than the direct blame for inadequate economic policy.

The 'democratic principle' constantly rose till dominance in 2013-2014. The clear demand for the referendum received from *La Diada* among with the dissatisfaction about the fiscal pact failure boosted this argument to the top of the agenda. The legal standoff between Madrid and Barcelona over the consultation added value to this argument as well.

Importantly, the number of messages intensified around the big political events. The Statute failure, *la Diada*, fiscal pact rejection, regional elections, and political consultation on independence received unproportionally higher attention than any other issue in the media coverage. The changes in argument's saliency confirm that the media plays the pro-region bias on arguments that are salient at the current moment. The noticeable illustration of this trend is the 'failure to negotiate autonomy deal'. After 2010 this message disappeared from the leading board.

Graph 5.1.2. Sum of macrogroups of arguments, Catalonia (2010-2014)



Source: author own data

The main struggle of the independentist process lies in the legalization of the referendum (graph 5.1.2.). The data confirmed the importance of this issue for the whole independence process.

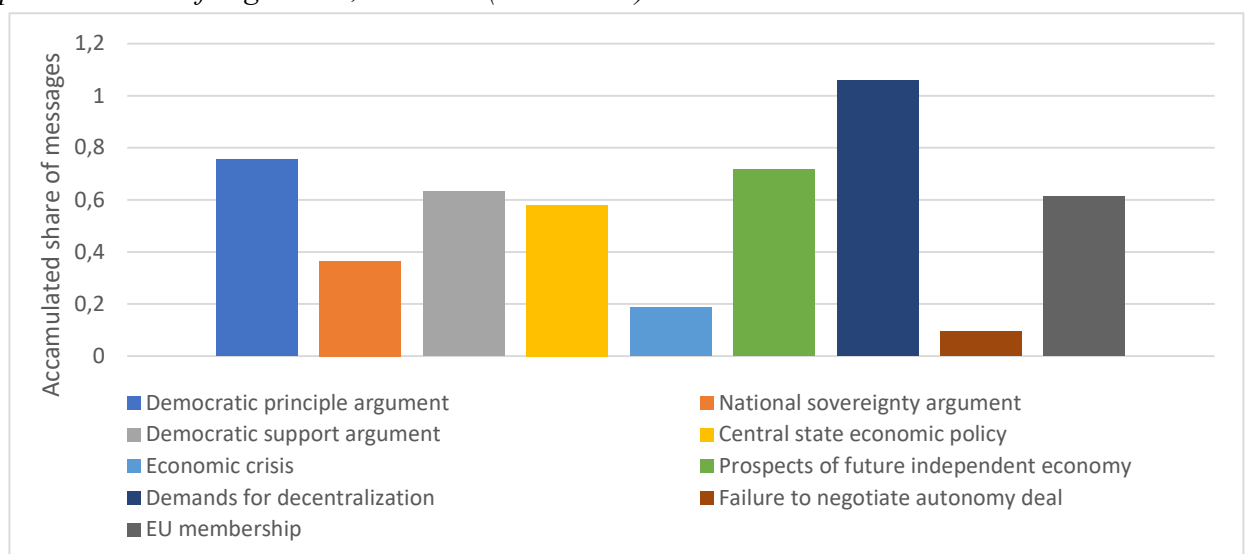
The drastic fall of economic arguments after 2011 and the absence of attention to the ‘future of independent economy’ argument made this group of arguments less salient in the whole study period. Catalan leaders fought to institutionalize the independence process.

To sum up, the media reflects reality and follows it. In Catalonia, the regionalist arguments were communicated via pro-region bias and reality-driven changes in the arguments. The primary tasks of democratizing the process led to the importance of legitimacy arguments.

Saliency of arguments in Scotland

The discussion of the economic future dominated the debates within the referendum context. In 2012-2013 the media followed the debates on currency union, possible gains and losses of the independent economy, and the impact of possible independence on different economic sectors. Up to September 2014, the ‘future independent economy’ argument remained the most salient in the discourse. After the referendum, the economic future saliency declined and was replaced by the ‘demands for decentralization’ at the top of the agenda. The decline of this argument looks similar to the Catalan decline of ‘failure to negotiate autonomy deal’. As soon as the real chance to get independence disappeared, the regionalist argumentation line transformed into more feasible ‘demands for decentralization’.

Graph 5.1.3. Sum of arguments, Scotland (2012-2016)



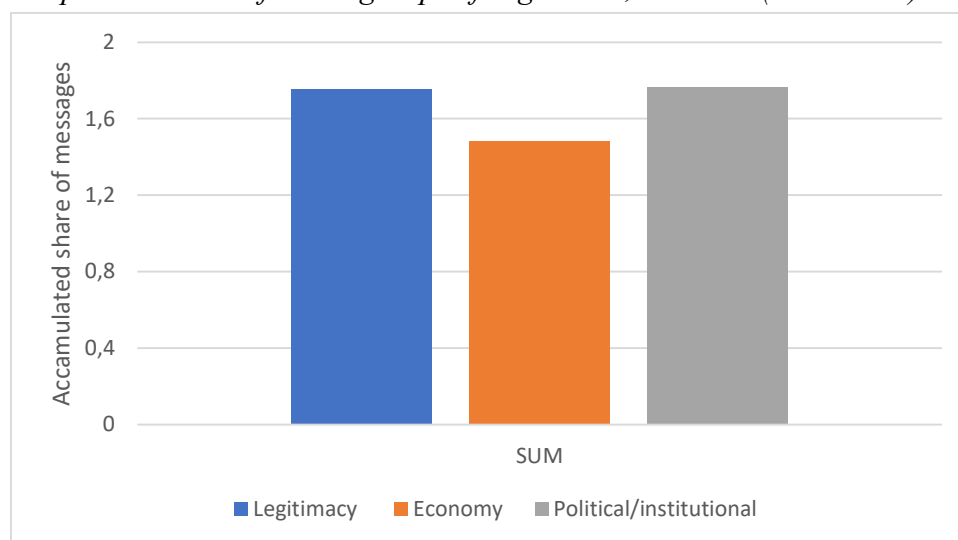
Source: author own data

The 'demands for decentralization' are considered to be the most prominent argument in the whole study period (graph 5.1.3.). This argument has constantly grown since 2013. In 2015 'demands for decentralization' enjoyed the highest level of frequency in the light of the tense negotiations of the Smith Commission on a package of new powers for Scotland. In 2016 the 'EU membership' argument replaced it because of the Brexit referendum issue. Both observations demonstrate how media follow the changes in the political process to give more saliency to the issues which are more prominent in the particular period.

To illustrate, the 'national sovereignty' argument did not enjoy much attention in the media. However, there were at least two periods where it got attention. The first one was the Olympic Games in London in 2012 when the British identity narrative came into play. The second period was the Commonwealth Games in Scotland as the challenge of Scottish identity.

The second most popular argument was the 'democratic principle'. Its saliency changed depending on the context transformations. Before the Edinburg Agreement, the discussion of the democratic essence of the referendum received extensive coverage. In the context of referendum debates, its frequency declined to rise again after the referendum. The 'democratic principle' never led the discourse while being important but not dominant in the UK-Scotland discussion. The legalized context of referendum debates left less floor to play on this argument.

Graph 5.1.4. Sum of macrogroups of arguments, Scotland (2012-2016)



Source: author own data

However, the overall distribution of arguments shows more balance in Scotland than in Catalonia (graph 5.1.4.). All three macro groups of argument received a decent amount of attention in the media with a small lead of political/institutional arguments. The political/institutional arguments rise after 2014 happened at the cost of economic arguments decline. ‘Demands for decentralization’ and ‘EU membership’ political arguments replaced the ‘future independent economy’ and ‘central state economic policy’.

The intensity of coverage increased around major political events. The independence referendum in 2014 and the Brexit referendum in 2016 were the most salient issues in the UK-Scotland debates. This observation shows the importance of the political process on the saliency of regionalist arguments.

To sum up, the media has the power to decide which topics give saliency. However, the media cannot ignore major political events. Scottish media followed the independence process and changed the frequency of argument coverage depending on the political situation. The media had in its hands the possibility to report these issues in a particular way. The analysis states that pro-region bias was constant in media communication of the center-periphery cleavage.

Comparing the message flows in Catalonia and Scotland

The analysis of Scottish and Catalan media coverage of the independence process approves the idea of the role of major political events. Basta (2017) stated the role of transformative political events and their social construction. My analysis suggests the role of political events in agenda-setting. Their exogeneous importance is confirmed by the intensity of media coverage in both cases. However, the most important part of this story lies in how the media reported on them.

The media gives salience to the arguments being the most prominent in the current period. Major political events establish the prominence of arguments. To illustrate, ‘failure to negotiate autonomy deal’ received the highest frequency in Catalonia in 2010. As soon as the event passed, the media switched its attention to other important issues. The Scottish media gave the most

saliency to the 'EU membership' argument in Scotland in 2016 in light of the Brexit referendum. Previously, this argument received little attention in the discourse.

Some arguments in total received more attention than others. 'Demands for decentralization' argument was the most frequent message flow in both cases. Despite being mostly pro-region, this message flow represents the controversy between pro-region and two-sided messages. The Catalan case is in point. The media reporting of this argument received a significant number of two-sided messages. The main promoter of the two-sided stance was the *PSC*. Their federalist project played a counterbalance to the fiscal pact of the *CiU* and subsequent demands after the 2012 events.

The Scottish case demonstrates how the media reporting of this argument changed after the 2014 referendum. In the context of referendum debates, this argument received a relatively high number of two-sided messages. The projects of *devo-max* and *devo-plus* were discussed extensively as an alternative to the full powers of independence. After the 2014 Yes camp defeat, pro-region message flows started to dominate extensively. The amount of pro-region messages and the overall saliency of this argument grew up simultaneously.

The second important argument was the 'democratic principle' in media coverage. This argument got mostly two-sided reporting in Scotland (2012), whereas the Catalan case shows a constant pro-region lead. The frequency of this argument significantly increased in Catalonia starting in 2012. The two-sided reporting in Scotland (2012) and pro-region Catalan bias approved the importance of legalized/non-legalized context. The agreed referendum in Scotland caused more balanced reporting at the beginning. But during the debates and especially after the proclamation of the second independence referendum bid the coverage transformed in favor of pro-region bias. The Catalan case represents the constant struggle for the legalization of this referendum and, subsequently, the constant pro-region bias.

The low role of 'national sovereignty' arguments is supported by the analysis of both cases. The primordialist approach and cultural factors of independence received less attraction in the discourse. The reason should lie in the slow changes in cultural characteristics. This argument is

very difficult to play in such a short period. It was possible to track only a few periods of attention to this argument: the Olympic Games (2012) and Commonwealth Games (2014) in Scotland, and the Statute failure in Catalonia (2010). In both cases, the 'battle for hearts' was outperformed by the 'battle for minds'.

The political and legitimacy arguments received more attention than the economic ones. The austerity politics created the opportunities to play the economic arguments in Catalonia (2011). However, the saliency of economic arguments immediately declined in the following years. The Scottish battle for economic future defined the independence referendum debates. As soon as this argument was defeated, the media attention switched to legitimacy and political arguments. The logic of the independence process demonstrates that the political/institutional arguments were mere as a bargaining chip for Scotland. Especially it became evident in the light of the Scotland Act debates. Catalonia played the radicalization strategy to perceive the political/institutional arguments as an 'all or nothing' game. In both cases, they received strong opposition from the central state.

The 'future of independent economy' argument played a different role in Catalan and Scottish cases. As the research observes, this argument was salient in Scottish discourse around the referendum and received little attention in Catalonia. The difference is explained in regard to the economic position of the region vis-à-vis the central state. Catalonia is a net contributor to the Spanish budget and it has a solid position in the overall Spanish economy. Having such a position, there is no need to spend much time to overcome the fear of citizens that they would lose central state support in case of independence. In contrast, Scotland is subsidized by the central state which is why the debates on the economic future were around the future of currency, taxes, and subsidies. No camp used this fear of reduced state support to counterplay the independence argument.

To sum up, this discussion brings us to answer the research question on how regionalist arguments are communicated via the media to the audience. This way of communication has two important features. First, the media reports these arguments with pro-region bias. Secondly, they

play the arguments following the political process. The saliency of arguments changed from year to year in both cases. The saliency was influenced by major political events. The only thing that remained unchanged was pro-region bias.

5.2. Framing Catalan and Scottish Independence Processes

Media frames in Catalonia

The overview of the framing independence process in Catalonia demonstrates that the periods of growth coincided with the dominance of problem-solving frames. Chong and Druckman (2007a) argue that small changes in the meaning of the argument could lead to significant changes in public opinion. These transformations in the meaning of the frames occurred in Catalonia.

Mas introduced the ‘demands for decentralization’ and ‘democratic principle’ arguments to the public discourse in 2010 and presented the latter argument in terms of the ‘right to decide’ (Julbe, 2010:15). Importantly, the substantive meaning was framed softly. Mas referred to the ‘other way’ but failed to connect it with independence demands.

The *CiU* announced the transition *till* the right to decide but rejected putting independence into the party's agenda (Gisbert, 2011d:13). The *CiU* politicians and especially Mas dominated the discourse, so the ‘right to decide’ promotion stayed in their hands. The ‘right to decide’ received little attention in 2010-2011 as well as its more radical interpretations.

The clear transformation occurred in 2012. At the beginning of the year, Homs framed the ‘right to decide’ as an act against the government's constraints (Ellakuria, 2012a:11). This notion established the bridge with independence but still lack a clear connection to it.

After *La Diada* and fiscal pact negotiations, the Parliament of Catalonia adopted the resolution on *propio camino* (‘own way’) with the support of *CiU*, *ERC*, and *ICV* (Barbeta, 2012l). The wording of this resolution proclaimed ‘national transition *based on* (italics inserted) the right to decide’. In 2011 the ‘right to decide’ was considered as the final aim (till), then in 2012 the same argument served to get the final independence.

As soon as the ‘right to decide’ was connected with the demands for independence, it increased its frequency in the media discourse. Junqueras converted the ‘democratic principle’ argument into the synonym of independence (Hinojosa, 2013:14). The disputes over this frame confirmed the transformation of the ‘right to decide’ into a problem-solving frame.

However, there were some attempts to bring back the meaning of the 'right to decide' into soft sovereignty demands. Duran showed support for the 'right to decide' but opposed independence (Guerrero, 2013). He moved into the federalist proposal which crystallized in the support of the 'yes-no' answer in the 2014 political consultation.

The trend of increasing the problem-solving pro-independence nature of 'democratic principle' was suspended in 2014. Firstly, the pro-independence coalition *CiU-ERC* fell into serious disputes. The planned consultation faced the *TC's* decision to recognize it as illegal (Juliana, 2014). Junqueras called Mas for the full realization of the 'right to decide'. He negatively reacted to the proposed 'non-endorsement political consultation' as the substitution of the canceled referendum (Masreal & Barrena, 2014). Secondly, the hard stance of Madrid against the 'right to decide' led to the changing rhetoric in the media. The 'right to decide' received many diagnostically framed messages because politicians and media tried to reflect the topic. The motivational component proposed by the *ERC* and the *CDC* remained high, but the opposite received widespread coverage as well.

The 'demands for decentralization' moved from a predominantly problem-solving nature in 2010-2013 to diagnosis in 2014, in which the main component of this argument until 2012 was the fiscal pact. Mas mentioned the importance of an economic agreement similar to the Basque Country in 2010. In 2011 Duran became the main promoter of this framing during the electoral campaign (Barbeta, 2011f:14) and in his terms, the 'fiscal pact' served as an alternative for independence, and the benefits of this project were framed instrumentally. The fight against the economic crisis occupied the political agenda and the austerity politics of Spain added frustration. The 'fiscal pact' was problem-solving but the main problem was the economic relations and not independence.

The transformation from economic to independent problem-solving occurred in September 2012. The *CiU* managed to include the frustration with the fiscal pact into independence demands. Mas said that Madrid had lost the historic opportunity for mutual understanding (Masreal &

Santos, 2012b). However, this effect lasted briefly. The 'fiscal pact' in the 'demands for decentralization' lost its dominant presence after 2012. Only Duran continued to mention it in light of *La Diada* 2013.

A serious contribution to the 'demands for decentralization' made by the *PSC-PSOE*. Their federalist proposals created a counter-independence project with strong pro-periphery demands. Overall, the 'demands for decentralization' contained many messages including the dissatisfaction with the current political powers, the composition of the state, and the lack of voice at the national level. The fiscal pact was important in this group but as soon as the initial frustration ended, the message almost disappeared.

The same pattern can be observed with the framing of 'failure to negotiate autonomy deal', with the decision of the *TC* claiming some of the articles as unconstitutional received many framed messages in 2010. The framing of this argument was split between diagnosis and problem-solving. On the one hand, the *TC* decision was regarded as problematic, and the Spanish state was considered accountable for it. On the other hand, this decision provoked frustration and calls to take action to get independence. The July rally was the manifestation of this will. However, in 2011 this message already lost its extensive framing in the media discourse.

Political leaders in Catalonia tended to use euphemistic language to frame the independence process. *Consulta* was used instead of the referendum because the referendum required central state approval while consultation theoretically stays in regional competence. However, the *TC* canceled even 'non-endorsement consultation'.

Estado propio reflected the idea of independence and subsumed into the 'demands for decentralization'. This euphemism left the doors open for federalist and confederal proposals, but the exact meaning was directly linked to independence.

Soberania served as an alternative euphemism for the proper state. Mas initially employed the sovereignty frame to support the idea of more political and economic powers for Catalonia.

The Declaration of Sovereignty 2013 granted the Catalan people political and legal subjectiveness. The sovereignty frame justified the legality to exercise the 'right to decide'.

Federalismo is considered the vaguest euphemism. The different federalist projects were presented by Navarro, Rubalcaba, Duran, and Diaz. Intentionally, federalism was framed as a 'third way' between independence and centralism. But the electoral results and public opinion confirmed that this idea did not find support.

The word *independencia* was predominantly avoided in the public speeches of politicians. The *CDC* mainly employed euphemisms and only the *ERC* among the Parliamentary parties delivered this message directly before 2012.

Pueblo is the most contested word within the 'national sovereignty' frame. Catalan politicians referred to the people while justifying the path toward independence. Madrid responded by references to the Constitution to prove that the independence process does not comply with the Spanish legal framework.

Transicion nacional was imported by Mas during his first Presidential term. The national transition describes the process at the end of which Catalonia should either be independent or obtain extensive political and economic powers. This notion radicalized toward independence demands in 2012. Interestingly, this framing was born as the synonym for the democratic transition of Spain in the 1980s.

To sum up, the framing of the independence process in Catalonia has several features: firstly, many frames were bridged with independence demands between 2011 and 2013; secondly, the diagnosis framing increased its presence during the period of the highest tension between Madrid and Barcelona regarding the referendum; thirdly, the use of language radicalized after 2012 to make the independence message more evident.

Media frames in Scotland

Independence debates in Scotland were dominated by the problem-solving framing vis-à-vis the diagnosis. The trend of growing independence sentiments among the population are characterized by stable growth.

The media discourse during the referendum campaign was presented as a battle for hearts and minds. The appeal for 'hearts' was voiced in the 'national sovereignty' frame. However, this frame became visible only around big sporting events. The Olympic Games in London 2012 played the role in reinforcing Britishness. Jonson argued that the Olympic Games' appeal to Britishness will cost Salmond his dream of independence' ("Olympics have cost Salmond his dream of independence", 2012).

The Commonwealth Games in Scotland 2014 took place right before the referendum and considered the opportunity to reinforce Scottish identity. Sturgeon appealed that 'the momentum is with us and as we come out of the Commonwealth Games at the weekend that is us into the final strait of the campaign and that momentum will be visible' ("Clegg: Sturgeon was 'misplaced and gauche' to link Games with Yes vote", 2012). In other words, calls for 'Scottishness' and 'Britishness' increased around the important events.

Another source of 'national sovereignty' framing was public speeches, especially at the party's conferences. Salmond included the motivational 'heart' component in his speech at the SNP conference in 2014: 'A movement of glorious diversity, reflecting our country's rich spirit <...> Our country, our Scotland. Our independence' ('Alex Salmond – 2014 Speech to SNP Conference', 2015).

The battle for 'minds' subsumed into the economic argument frames. The analysis of frames frequency confirms that the 'mind' component is perceived to be more important than the 'heart'. Problem-solving framing of 'future independent economy' received overwhelmingly more attention than any other type of framing until the independence referendum. All the economic arguments were subsumed into the legitimacy context because of all the economic disputes felt in the referendum debates. In other words, the legitimacy and economic framing were bridged.

Some frames underwent a *frame amplification process*. The ‘central state economic policy’ was amplified with the bedroom tax discussion. Salmond framed the bedroom tax as the ‘symbol’ of the necessity to get independence (‘In Full: Alex Salmond’s Conference Speech, October 19, 2013, Perth’, 2013). This notion reflects the use of the negative image of the central government and the motivation for independence.

Salmond amplified the economic arguments with NHS to demonstrate Westminster’s inappropriate economic policy. After 2014, Sturgeon would use this issue under the ‘demands for decentralization’ framing (Devlin, 2015a). The transfer of NHS from economic to political arguments confirms the framing strategy changes that occurred after the defeat in the referendum.

‘Prospects of future independent economy’ mainly contained frames around the currency issue in the referendum debates. The Better Together camp tried to justify that the currency union between the UK and Scotland in case of independence would be impossible. The Yes camp had to react to it and use diagnosis framing. The Better Together put the Yes camp in the defense position where the use of motivational framing is limited.

One of the most frequent frames was the ‘demands for decentralization’. At the beginning of the referendum campaign, this frame referred to the direct demands for independence. In 2013 this frame was amplified to include additional powers for the Scotland Parliament to pursue a better economic future. In 2015 the decentralization demands moved from independence to devolution. The ‘independence’ component lost its saliency. In light of the Smith Commission discussions, devolution was considered a more viable option.

The ‘democratic principle’ frame transformed during the independence process, with the context of referendum debates influencing it. Initially, the framing of this argument was based on the constitutional framework of the referendum. The Edinburgh Agreement created the legal context for this referendum. In 2015 the context dissolved. The ‘democratic principle’ transformed into the bid for the second independence referendum. Instead of internal law, the international law

arguments became louder. The independence referendum was presented as a 'sovereign right' (Andrews, 2015d).

The most significant transformation happened with the 'EU membership' frame. In the context of referendum debates, the EU membership did not play a significant role in the media discourse. The frequency of this frame remained behind the leading economic and legitimacy arguments. The EU membership had a direct correlation with the possible exclusion of Scotland from the EU in the case of the Yes camp victory. The EU officials made this argument clear, and the Better Together camp insisted on this rhetoric. In sum, the 'EU membership' was employed by anti-independence supporters. As in the case of the currency union, the Yes camp found itself in the defense position.

After the independence referendum, Cameron announced the Brexit referendum. The content of the 'EU membership' changed. Starting in 2015, the EU membership was used to highlight changes in material circumstances and justify the bid for a second independence referendum. As soon as this transformation occurred, the saliency of this frame increased. The prognostic and motivational framing of this argument dominated the overall discourse in 2016.

The influence of the referendum context is tracked in case of transformation of the 'democratic support' frame. Before 2014 this argument had a strong diagnosis component. Contextually, 'democratic support' mainly referred to the analysis of survey data by a diagnosis of the support of independence in the given moment. Out of the referendum debates, this frame acquired the meaning of the will of the people to secede. Even before 2014 the 'will of people to secede' was presented in the framing of this argument; but after 2014 the frequency considerably changed vis-à-vis the diagnostic component. Sturgeon said 'We believe that Scottish Parliament should have a right to hold another independence referendum if there is clear and sustained evidence that independence has become the preferred option of a majority of the Scottish people' ('My pitch to the Scottish people', 2016)

To sum up, the framing of the independence process in Scotland was affected by the context of referendum debates. The year 2014 could be considered a changing point in the framing strategy. Previously, the economic arguments received close attention and framing. After the referendum debates, the framing opportunity structure changed. The legitimacy and political arguments underwent frame transformations. The 'EU membership' framing is a case in point.

Comparing media frames in Catalonia and Scotland

How does the media convey independence claims? The research question refers to the various ways of communicating the independence agenda to the audience. The correlation between problem-solving frames and the rise of independence sentiments exists in both cases.

Economic arguments in Catalonia were mainly framed diagnostically. They blamed Spanish authorities for the worsening economic conditions, economic crisis, and austerity politics but lacked future-oriented resolutions to the problems. The fiscal pact served as the main problem-solving alternative but established the links with independence claims only after the failure of the negotiation in September 2012.

The Scottish case was different regarding the economic arguments, where the proponents of independence tried to present a future-oriented economic project, being part of their 'battle for minds'. The White Paper summarized the main economic arguments about the independent economic future. Scotland's independence process up to 2014 represented the battle for an economic future, whereas Catalonia's was lacking a future-oriented economic project.

The main similarity between Catalonia and Scotland concludes in the agents of framing. This research refers to the media frames because it is always their choice to give the floor and organize the coverage of the main political events. However, the direct agents of framing are political leaders. Catalan regional elites including Mas and Junqueras mainly spread pro-independence messages. Analysis shows that Mas was the most cited politician in *La Vanguardia* and *El Periodico*, with his interventions accounting for the majority of pro-independence frames.

Scottish regional newspapers also gave the main floor to the regional politicians. Salmond was the most cited person up to 2014, then Sturgeon replaced him both as the SNP leader and as the most influential politician. However, the important contribution to the independence debates added letters from the readers unlike in Catalonia.

Prognostic framing played a more important role in Scotland than in Catalonia. Many arguments in Scottish discourse (demands for decentralization, democratic principle, EU membership) were more or less equally distributed between diagnosis and motivational frames. The prognostic frames made a difference in such categories in favor of problem-solving framing. The Catalan independence process had an evident lack of prognostic framing. The main battle was between diagnostic and motivational frames.

Catalonian independence process characterizes by more grassroots mobilization than the Scottish one. *La Diada* events took to the street of more than 1 million people. The Scottish independence demonstrations involved just thousands of citizens. Catalonia had 7,4 million inhabitants and Scotland had 5,3 million (Eurostat, 2021). Media framed Scottish secessionism as ‘boring’ in comparison to Catalan (‘As Others See Us: How International Press Covered the Indyplan,’ 2013).

Civil society organizations played a pivotal role in the mobilization for Catalan independence (Crameri, 2015). Thanks to social media, small teams could organize public demonstrations like ‘Libdub for Independence’ in the town of Vic in 2010 (“Oriol Freixenet Guitart, Dels Cors Clav’e als lipdub.”, 2010). The *ERC* organized referendums in different Catalan towns from 2009-to 2010 and served as a feedback mechanism for the Catalan elites. Despite the small participation rate, the overwhelming majority of people voting (including Mas) gave consent for Catalan independence.

Civil society mediated the political consultation in 2014. The organized by *Omnium cultural* and *ANC* mass demonstration in 2014 motivated the *CiU* and the *ERC* top officials to conduct this consultation despite mutual disagreements. In sum, the political structure in Catalonia already

favors grassroots strategies. Framing independence as the 'will of the people' served as a legitimization strategy for the independence bid.

The Scottish independence process is presented as a clear 'top-down' example (Guibernau, 2014). The 'will of the people' argument (democratic support) is framed in terms of voting for the SNP and extracted mainly by reporting survey data on independence sentiments. Different social groups of independence like 'Generation Yes' or 'Women for Independence' were not active in the media during the referendum campaign (Electoral Commission, 2014).

This study shows that big political events provoke only short-term changes rather than signal a stable trend. For example, the *TC* decision on Statute led to the mass demonstration and a small increase in independence support. Already in 2011 data signals the slowdown of this trend. The Brexit referendum in 2016 led to some demonstrations in Scotland but did not drastically change the independence sentiments.

Legitimacy arguments in Catalonia were framed as a 'legal conflict' with the state. The Statute decision, the fiscal pact failure, and the suspension of the referendum contributed to the chain of misunderstandings with the Spanish state. The conflict over legitimacy became much more salient after 2012, while in Scotland the same 'legitimacy conflict' became salient after the referendum in 2014.

All of these changes are the byproduct of the political process. The shift from economy to legitimacy arguments took place both in Catalonia and Scotland at the focal points. The legitimacy arguments were more frequently framed in Catalonia (2012) and Scotland (2014). The framing of political events depends on the political process in the region. In both cases, the regional elites faced strong opposition from the central government. The framing strategy relied on the standoff against the central state.

For example, as soon as the opposition of the state became evident for the second independence referendum in Scotland, the framing of 'democratic principle' changed in the way

of Catalan. In other words, the appeal to international law principles became evident because of the democratic nature of the referendum as a resolution of the territorial integrity problems.

The context influenced the 'demands for decentralization' framing. Before 2012 the 'fiscal pact' contributed more to the framing of this argument in Catalonia. After the contextual changes in 2012, this argument transformed into a bid for independence. The Scottish framing changed in favor of the devolution of powers in light of the referendum defeat. However, after Brexit, the bid for a second independence referendum was renewed.

To sum up, the answer to the research question on how independence sentiments are framed in the discourse depends on several factors. First, it is always the byproduct of the political process. Secondly, the problem-solving framing has increased the potential to influence public opinion. Thirdly, mass mobilization is possible only when the social group's opportunity structures allow it. The Catalan and Scottish cases illustrate the shift from economic to legitimacy arguments as the reaction of the central state level of oppression against the independence process.

5.3. Regionalist Parties' Strategies

The SNP strategy

The prominent role of the SNP in the Scottish independence process was confirmed with the analysis of message flows and frames. The SNP leaders dominate the headlines of the mainstream regional newspapers. The SNP officially led the Yes camp during the referendum campaign.

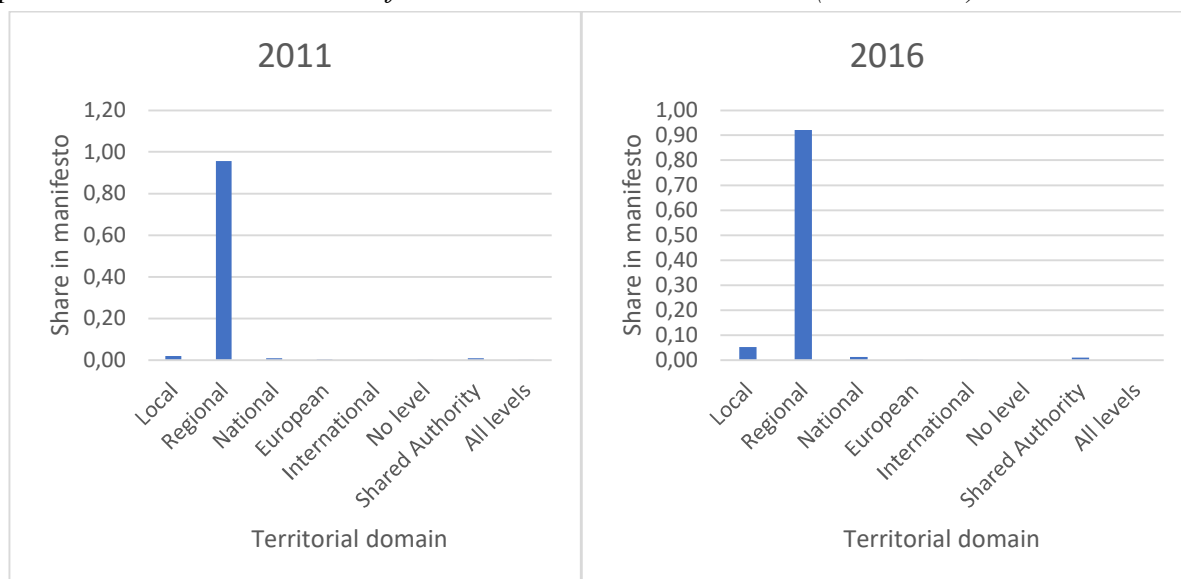
The rise of independence sentiments in Scotland coincided with the growing support for the SNP at the regional elections. In 2011 the SNP won the absolute majority of the seats in the Scottish Parliament and enjoyed an increase in party membership right after the defeat in the referendum (Hutcheon, 2014b). The regional elections in 2016 allowed the SNP to form a minority government.

The position of the SNP at the level of 'small world' can be characterized as dominant. Grabevnik (2021) considers the SNP as having high institutional and electoral strength at the regional level. The Scottish Greens is another regionalist party in Scotland and the ally of the SNP in the Yes camp. However, their electoral and institutional strength is not comparable.

The SNP started the 2011 regional elections with a bid for an independence referendum. The SNP manifesto 2011 contains the full chapter justifying the necessity of independence for Scotland. In the preface, it is stated that 'We can enhance the Bill and give our nation the freedom it needs to flourish by taking on more responsibilities here in Scotland. The independence we propose for Scotland is exactly for this purpose' (Scottish National Party, 2011).

The SNP 2016 manifesto decreased the intensity of pro-independence rhetoric. However, the pro-independence stance remained clear because the manifesto says 'We believe that independence offers the best future for Scotland (Scottish National Party, 2016). The text of the manifesto contains a chapter on the possible scenarios to conduct the second independence referendum.

Graph 5.3.1. Accumulated share of the territorial domain, the SNP (2011, 2016)

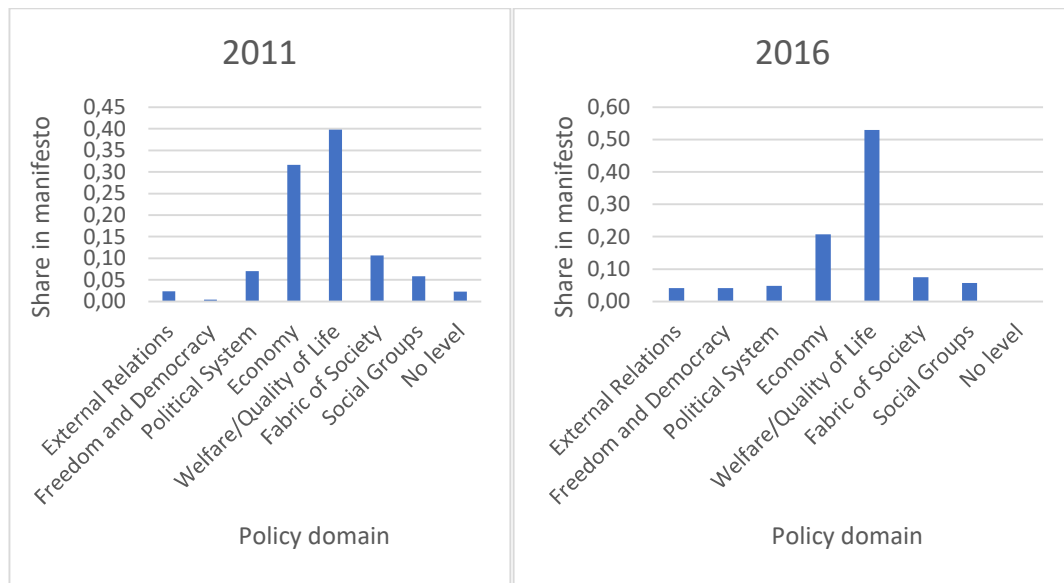


Source: calculations based on Regional Manifesto project data

The SNP appeals to the regional level in their electoral manifestos (graph 5.3.1.). However, the SNP avoided putting extensive pressure on the demands for more regional-level powers. The 2011 manifesto contains 90 percent of regional level appeals without demands for more powers, whereas only 6 percent of quasi-sentences referred to more regional competencies. The 2016 manifesto has a similar structure: 86 percent of non-loaded references for the regional level and 6 percent of demands for more authority. This data confirms that the SNP avoided driving the radicalization of demands and preferred to stay in the mainstream position.

The general strategy to be the mainstream party pressures the SNP to put attention on the welfare category (graph 5.3.2.). Both 2011 and 2016 manifestos confirm the dominance of the 'welfare/quality of life' category. This category signals the left-wing position of the SNP. However, Benoit and Daubler (2021) argue that this category contributes much less to separating right-wing from left-wing parties. The social security category is rather a valence category than a political spectrum position. Nevertheless, the welfare category contributes to the notion of a mainstream party.

Graph 5.3.2. Accumulated share of the policy domain, the SNP (2011,2016)



Source: calculations based on Regional Manifesto project data

The welfare policy domain is framed with quasi-sentences related to the NHS issues. The 'welfare state expansion' was the most prominent category in both manifestos. Similarly, the SNP officials employed extensively the NHS issue in their pro-independence appeals in the media. In conclusion, the welfare domain contributed to the framing of independence claims despite being a valence category.

The economic political domain is the second most salient in the SNP manifestos. The frequency of this domain slightly decreased in comparison to 2011. The referendum's defeat of the economic argument for independence influenced it. However, the attention to the economic field still played a definitive role in the strategic fight against the national parties at the regional elections.

Table 5.3.1. Position, saliency, and blurring of territorial and economic domains, SNP (2011, 2016)

Indicator	Manifesto 2011	Manifesto 2016
Territorial saliency	0,07	0,08
Economic saliency	0,05	0,06
Coefficient of saliency	0,71	0,70
Left position	0,03	0,04
Right position	0,02	0,02
Center position	0	0
Periphery position	0,07	0,08
Economic position	-0,26% (left)	-1,80% (left)
Territorial position	7,25% (periphery)	8,41% (periphery)
Territorial blurring coefficient	1 (clear periphery position)	1 (clear periphery position)
Economic blurring coefficient	0,04 (blurring position)	0,31 (blurring)

Source: calculations based on Regional Manifesto project data

The economic dimension was less salient in the SNP manifestos (table 5.3.1.). The proportion of territorial vis-à-vis the economic one equals 0,71. At first glance, this number signals that the party does not use the one-dimensional strategy because both domains are relatively salient. However, the analysis was also unable to find support for the two-dimensional strategy. In both elections, the SNP blurred on the secondary dimension which is the economic one (coefficient below the threshold 0.5). The SNP was positioned on the left side of the economic spectrum (-0,26 and -1,80) but the overall economic position was not clear (0,04 and 0,31 blurring coefficients

below 0.5 threshold). Indeed, the SNP shifted to the clearer left economic position in comparison to the 2011 elections.

The content of the manifesto and the electoral campaign of the SNP leaders give support for the subsuming strategy in 2011. Elias et al. (2015) clarify that the subsuming strategy implies framing the secondary dimension in core primary dimension terms.

The SNP case demonstrates the economic domain as the secondary vis-à-vis the territorial one. The 2011 manifesto states that ‘with independence, we can work together to make Scotland a more ambitious and dynamic country. We will be able to create an environment where our existing and new private industries can grow more easily. We will have the economic levers to create new jobs and take full advantage of our second, green energy windfall’ (Scottish National Party, 2011). The manifesto also promised to have more jobs and higher levels of economic growth (Scottish National Party, 2011).

The economic case for independence was promoted by Salmond in the run-up to the 2011 elections by stating that ‘the referendum we wish to have is first and foremost a jobs referendum. The Independence I seek is the independence to create jobs’ (BBC News, 2010).

The referendum campaign 2014 was also centered around the economic issues. Salmond tried to create a persuasive narrative of attractive economic conditions in the independent Scotland. The White Book 2013 summarized the main economic arguments for independence. However, outcomes of the referendum forced the SNP to reevaluate their strategy in terms of economy.

The economic case became less evident in the 2016 electoral campaign. Sturgeon promised to make the case for independence ‘positively and powerfully- and in realistic and relevant way’ (SNP, 2016). The manifesto promised the new independence referendum in two main ways: ‘clear and sustained evidence that independence had become the preferred option of a majority of the Scottish people’, and ‘a significant and material change in the circumstances that prevailed in 2014’ (Scottish National Party, 2016).

As a secessionist party, the SNP maintained a clear pro-periphery position. The economic position in the manifesto is blurred. The overall saliency of the economic arguments significantly decreased as media analysis shows. All in all, this research concludes that the SNP shifted from a subsuming strategy to a blurring strategy.

This shift was forced by the referendum defeat in which two changes occurred: Firstly, the SNP lost the promised referendum and had to shift from definite demands for independence to the bid for the next referendum. Secondly, the economic case for independence was lost, and the SNP had to find a new strategy to secure its leading position at the regional level.

Finally, the Scottish Greens supported the SNP bid for independence. They supported the SNP's plan for independence from 1999. This party had the lack of capabilities to create an alternative for the SNP at the regional level. They played as a 'small partner' of the SNP staying on the same left-wing and pro-periphery side of the spectrum. This external support helped the SNP to concentrate on the political battle with the national parties.

To sum up, the SNP electoral strategy changed from 2011 to 2016: the 2011 analysis suggests the subsuming strategy of the economic case for independence, while the 2016 electoral campaign demonstrates a blurring strategy. At the same time, the SNP changed its position from a majority to a minority government.

The CiU strategy

Historically, the *CiU* represented itself as the main defender of Catalan autonomy. They had won – in seats - every single election since 1980 (Marti & Cetra, 2016). Jordi Pujol followed the strategy of bargaining small concessions to increase the Catalan self-government (Aragones & Ponsati, 2016). All in all, the *CiU* had a moderate nationalist position at the time of their rule.

The bid for extensive devolved powers was officialized with the adoption of the Statute of Autonomy 2006. The *CiU* supported the Statute because it complied with their moderate position of additional powers for Catalonia.

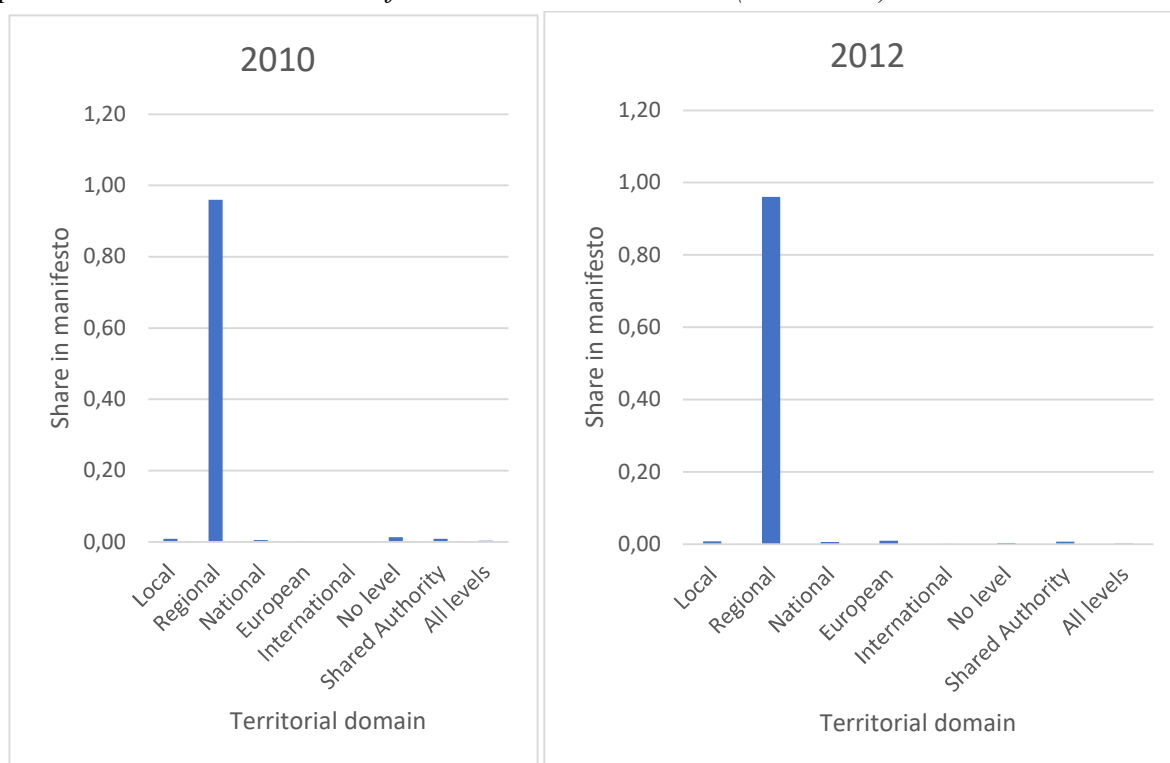
The start of the independence process in Catalonia coincided with the changes in Catalan Parliament. The left-wing coalition lost the regional elections in 2010 giving the possibility for the *CiU* to return to government. Mas formed a minority government.

The context of the 2010 regional elections was influenced by the Constitutional Court ruling and the economic crisis. However, the territorial domain rhetoric of the *CiU* remained autonomist rather than independentist. The *CiU* manifesto avoided the term 'independence', as well as the political leaders, tried to distance themselves from direct independence demands.

However, the 'right to decide' notion in the manifesto referred to possible independence scenarios. The manifesto says that 'through the exercise of the right to decide, we propose a possible and real way to achieve the self-government that Catalonia needs and demands' (Convergència I Unió, 2010: 6).

The 2012 manifesto radicalized the territorial rhetoric. The *CiU* moved the demands for independence in the light of the fiscal pact failure and *La Diada* demonstration. The 'right to decide' started to be associated with the own state structures and the self-determination principle of international law. For example, the manifesto 2012 states that 'the Government will work on the construction of state structures that accompany this process of exercising the right to decide of the people of Catalonia and that allow the country to be strengthened in all areas' (Convergència I Unió, 2012: 15).

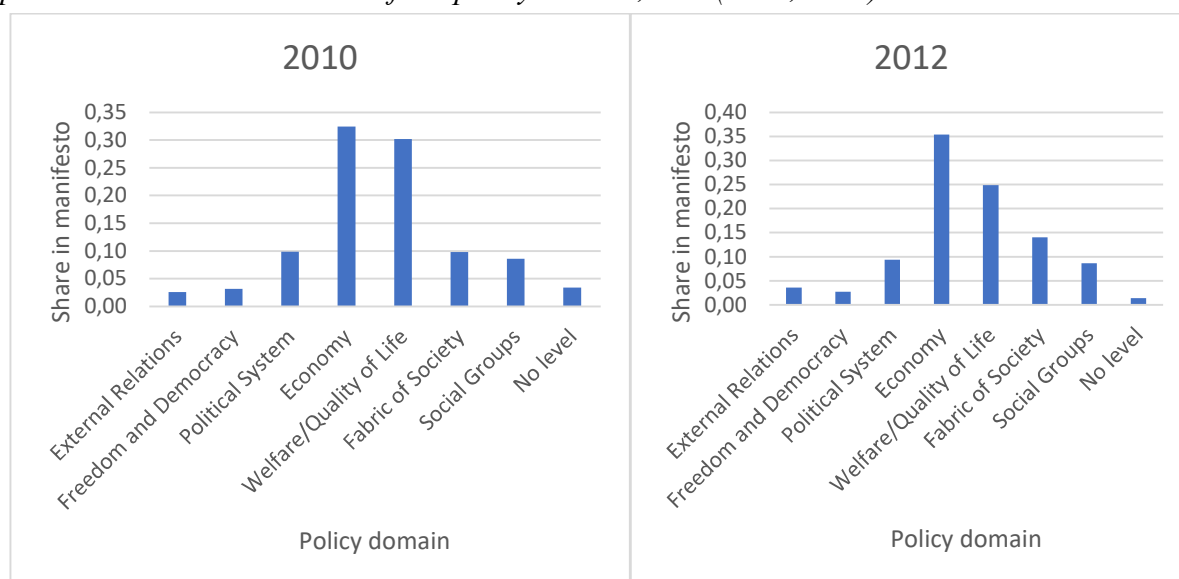
Graph 5.3.3. Accumulated share of territorial demands, CiU (2010,2012)



Source: calculations based on Regional manifesto project

The appeal to the regional level in the territorial domain remained unchanged (graph 5.3.3.). The neutral quasi-sentences without references for more regional powers accounted for 92 percent in 2010 and 81 percent in 2012. However, the structure of the regional authority appeal transformed. The demands for more regional authority increased from 4 percent to 15 percent of the total manifesto content. This data shows that the *CiU* intensified its regional authority bid but maintained the predominantly neutral appeal concerning the regional level.

Graph 5.3.4. Accumulated share of the policy domain, CiU (2010, 2012)



Source: calculations based on Regional manifesto project

The neutral appeal at the regional level reflects the mainstream role of the *CiU*. The strategic choice to be the representative mainstream party at the regional level is confirmed by the analysis of the policy domain (graph 5.3.4.). 'Welfare/ Quality of Life' and 'Economy' dominate the manifestos of 2010 and 2012. The most frequent economic sub-category in both manifestos is 'technology and infrastructure'. The most prominent welfare category is 'welfare state expansion'. The analysis shows that the changes in territorial preferences had little impact on policy domain transformations.

The economic crisis in Catalonia including the austerity policy forced the *CiU* to put more attention on the economy. Mas clearly stated that the economic issues were the most important for his program in the 2010 elections (Echauz, 2010). After the fiscal pact failure, the 2012 elections required the *CiU* to present an alternative solution for the ongoing economic crisis.

Table 5.3.2. Position, saliency, and blurring of territorial and economic domains, *CiU* (2011, 2016)

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Manifesto 2010</i>	<i>Manifesto 2012</i>
Territorial saliency	0,09	0,20
Economic saliency	0,07	0,12

Coefficient of saliency	0,80	0,60
Left position	0,03	0,05
Right position	0,04	0,06
Center position	0	0
Periphery position	0,09	0,20
Economic position	0,62% (right)	0,36% (right)
Territorial position	9,07% (periphery)	19,89% (periphery)
Territorial blurring coefficient	1 (clear periphery position)	1 (clear periphery position)
Economic blurring coefficient	0,09 (blurring)	0,03 (blurring)

Source: calculations based on Regional Manifesto project data

However, the welfare policy occupied an important space in the *CiU* programs. The center-right party stance allows the *CiU* to put pressure on the economy, but the social dimension is a part of a larger strategy for the mainstream party.

The territorial domain was more salient in both the *CiU* manifestos (table 5.3.2.). Importantly, the saliency of the territorial domain vis-à-vis the economic one sufficiently increased in comparison to 2010. However, both coefficients of saliency signal that both dimensions were important for the *CiU*. In light of these numbers, the one-dimensional strategy is excluded.

A two-dimensional strategy is unlikely to find supportive evidence. The economic domain analysis shows that the *CiU* had a blurred position on this issue (coefficients of blurring are 0,09 in 2010 and 0,03 in 2012 that is far below 0.5 threshold). The coefficients almost equaled 0 which signals the complete blurring. However, the right-wing quasi-sentences slightly prevailed over the left-wing ones. Therefore, the center-right position of the *CiU* can be confirmed.

The economic domain was subsumed into the territorial demands. The 2010 manifesto states the fiscal pact to resolve the economic problems by granting Catalonia additional financial responsibilities. The electoral program 2010 argues that ‘we will exercise the right to decide in

Catalonia on our infrastructures (airports, suburbs, water, energy)’ (Convergenci I Unio, 2010: 82).

The 2012 manifesto inflated the complaint about self-government to deal with the current economic problems. The electoral program states that ‘it is a matter of being able to decide what policies we are pursuing (which we can now do only in a limited way and with the constant interference of the State), within a European framework, and to have control over the resources that we collectively generate (which we cannot do now)’ (Covergencia I Unio, 2012: 16).

In conclusion, the *CiU* followed the subsuming strategy in both regional elections. The 2010 elections allowed them to form a minority government. The 2012 elections forced them to enter the coalition with the *ERC* based on their similar territorial demands. The *CiU* increased the saliency of the territorial issue in 2012. The *CiU* tried to benefit from the pro-independence influx in society. However, the appeal for the absolute majority and the shift from autonomy to independence did not help them to get it. The strategic behavior of the *CiU* was complicated by the presence of the strong regionalist opponent – the *ERC*.

The ERC strategy

Aragones and Ponsari (2016) argue that during the period 1990-2010 it was more costly to compromise the positions on the policy dimension than on the territorial one for political parties. The *tripartit* rule was the best evidence of it. The *PSC* and the *ERC* found themselves in a coalition with the *ICV* based on their left-wing ideology position. The territorial preferences of the socialists and the *ERC* did not coincide. The *ERC* was a staunch supporter of Catalan independence. They even failed to vote for the final project of the Statute of Autonomy 2006 because it promised fewer powers than the *ERC* argued for (Elias, 2015).

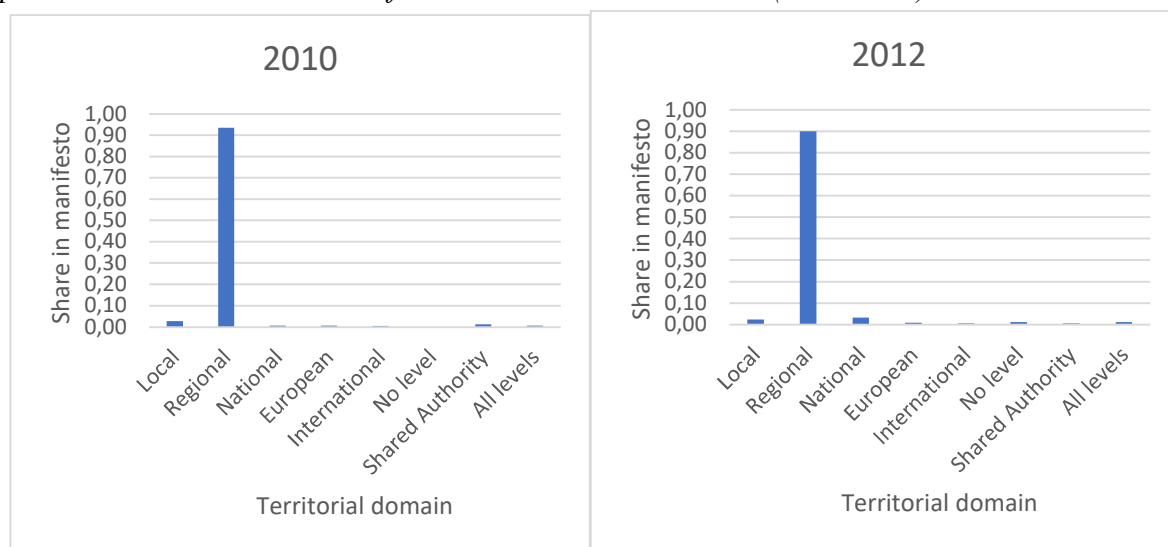
The compromise with the *PSC* on territorial demands complicated the position of the *ERC* in regional elections in 2010. The socialist coalition was blamed for its incapability to deal with the financial crisis. Additionally, the *ERC* lost its credibility as a pro-independence supporter. One of the *ERC* officials said that ‘people refused to believe that we would not form another coalition

government' (Elias, 2015:90). As a result, the *ERC* lost 11 seats and the coalition position in comparison to 2006.

The radicalization of demands for independence in Catalan society gave the possibility for the *ERC* to return their votes. The *ERC* officials actively promoted their territorial stance, and they took an active part in *La Diada*. The 2012 regional elections turned into a success with 21 seats. The *ERC* became the second-largest party in the Catalan Parliament. The *CiU* had to deal in a coalition with the *ERC* to remain in the cabinet. Unlike the *tripartit*, the *ERC* gained much more political influence in the coalition and could foster their territorial demands.

Unlike the *CiU*, the *ERC* did not avoid the use of the term 'independence'. The 2010 electoral program confirms that 'the renewed *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* becomes the political organization of reference for an independence movement <...> An independence movement that wants to make real politics' (*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, 2010: 7). The 2012 electoral program contains a more radical bid for independence: 'Esquerra Republicana understands that the process that has begun and that must allow the independence of Catalonia is the beginning of the path towards independence and the national and federal reunification of the territories that make up the Catalan Countries' (*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, 2012: 6). The saliency of pro-independence demands increased in the 2012 program compared to 2010.

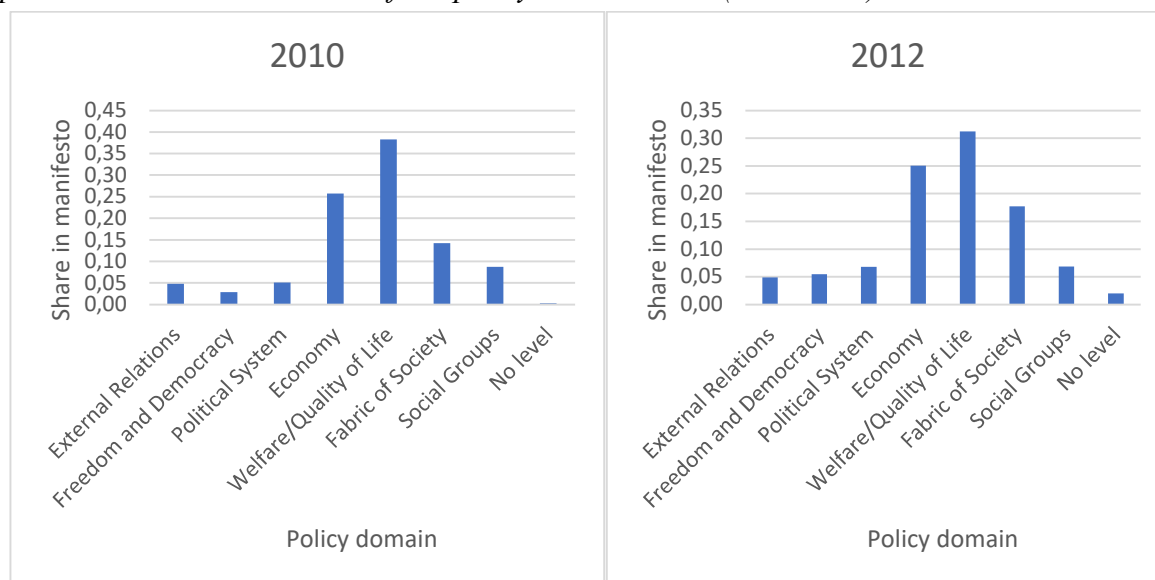
Graph 5.3.5. Accumulated share of the territorial domain, *ERC* (2010,2012)



Source: calculations based on *Regional manifesto Project*

In the same manner as the *CiU*, the *ERC* manifestos contained an overwhelming majority of quasi-sentences related to the regional level (graph 5.3.5.). The quasi-sentences with demands for more regional authority increased from 6 per cent in 2010 to 16 per cent in 2012 of the total manifesto content. The main component of the regional level appeals was the neutral reference to the regional level. This data signals the same shift of regional demands as the *CiU* manifestos.

Graph 5.3.6. Accumulated share of the policy domain, ERC (2010,2012)



Source: calculations based on Regional manifesto project

In contrast to the *CiU*, the 'Welfare/Quality of Life' category was more salient than the 'Economy' (graph 5.3.6.). The difference is explained by two factors. Firstly, the left-wing position of the party causes to stress more on the welfare rather than the economy. Secondly, it is an attempt to outplay the economic failures with the attention to another dimension. The *ERC* cannot avoid competing on the economic dimension but it can shift it towards more social policy.

The sub-categories changed their saliency in the manifestos. The manifesto 2010 relied on 'Equality (positive)', 'Welfare state expansion', and 'technology and infrastructure'. The 2012 manifesto included in the top-3 the most salient sub-categories the 'National way of life: positive'. This fact signals the clear radicalization of demands and the rising attention to territorial politics.

Table 5.3.3. Position, saliency, and blurring of territorial and economic domains, ERC (2011, 2016)

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Manifesto 2010</i>	<i>Manifesto 2012</i>
Territorial saliency	0,14	0,23
Economic saliency	0,08	0,06
Coefficient of saliency	0,55	0,25
Left position	0,05	0,05
Right position	0,03	0,01
Center position	0	0
Periphery position	0,14	0,23
Economic position	-2,12% (left)	-3,19% (left)
Territorial position	13,63% (periphery)	23,01% (periphery)
Territorial blurring coefficient	1 (clear periphery position)	1 (clear periphery position)
Economic blurring coefficient	0,28 (blurring)	0,55 (clear left position)

Source: calculations based on Regional Manifesto project data

The radicalization of the territorial domain becomes evident by comparing the coefficients of saliency (table 5.3.3.). The territorial saliency increased in comparison to the economic one from 2010 to 2012. However, the proportion between the economic and territorial domains falls in the range of two-dimensional saliency. Similar to the *CiU*, the *ERC* manifestos maintained a clear pro-periphery position with an absence of center references.

The economic domain underwent important transformations. The 2010 manifesto analysis demonstrates the blurring position of the *ERC* on the secondary dimension. However, the 2012 electoral program shows a clear left position. Coefficient of blurring raised from 0.28 to 0.55 and

passed the threshold of 0.5. Combining with the saliency analysis, this research suggests that in 2012 the *ERC* used a two-dimensional strategy. This strategic choice brought success to the *ERC*. The *ERC* fought on the territorial dimension with the *CiU*. On the economic dimension, the *ERC* competed mainly with the *PSC*. In other words, the two-dimensional strategy is the cause and the effect of the electoral competition to capitalize on independence support among the population.

The 2010 electoral program manifested a subsuming strategy on the *ERC* in the same manner as the *CiU*. For example, the *ERC* claimed 'the competencies concerning the introduction of customs products on the market' to resolve the economic problems of Catalan customers (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, 2012: 39).

To sum up, the *ERC* changed the subsuming strategy to two-dimensional taking into consideration the unsatisfactory results of the 2010 elections. The rising support for secession returned the lost credibility of the *ERC* as the staunch independence supporters. The *ERC* became a partner coalition member for the *CiU* and managed to include the bid for a referendum into the coalition agreement. The territorial domain became the main electoral weapon for the party despite the necessity to compete over the economy with the *PSC* and the *CiU*.

Comparing regionalist parties' strategies in Catalonia and Scotland

The independence process in Catalonia and Scotland brought to the forefront the role of regionalist parties. The media analysis shows that the party leaders were the main agents of promoting independence claims in the public discourse. On the one hand, regionalist parties contribute to the independence process by setting the agenda. On the other hand, they capitalize on the rising independence sentiments and try to win votes at the regional elections.

The electoral success of regionalist parties with independentist agenda opens the question of political strategies used for gaining the electorate. The SNP had a clear pro-independence stance in 2011 and 2016. The *ERC* used pro-independence arguments in their electoral programs in 2010 and 2012. The *CiU* changed its territorial position from autonomist to independentist in 2012.

The first common feature of all considered parties in this period is the dominance of the regional domain vis-à-vis local, national, and international dimensions. The overwhelming majority of quasi-sentences relate to the neutral demand for regional authority. However, the demands for more authority increased in the Catalan case and remained high in the SNP manifestos. The analysis shows the move towards expansion of territorial demands. In the Catalan case, this is the consequence of the political process as pro-independence mobilization became evident.

The second common feature is the prominence of two policy categories: 'Welfare/ Quality of Life' and 'Economy'. Many studies suggest that these categories play a crucial role in the ideological positioning of the parties (Däubler, & Benoit, 2021; Alonso, Cabeza & Gomez, 2015). The regionalist parties strive to be a mainstream party in their region (Field & Hamann, 2015). The center-right *CiU* put more attention on the economy rather than welfare. The left-wing parties like SNP and *ERC* make the welfare category more salient than the economic one.

The third common feature is that the territorial domain has more saliency over the economic dimension. All considered cases suggest that the economic dimension is secondary for regionalist parties. This observation confirms the studies of Massetti and Schakel (2015), Elias et al. (2015), Alonso, Cabeza, and Gomes (2015). Regionalist parties have a clear pro-periphery position on the territorial domain and are most likely to blur on the secondary issue. The only exception from the economic blurring was the case of the *ERC* in 2012. They had a clear left economic position and employed the two-dimensional strategy in the regional elections.

The subsuming strategy was used by the SNP (2011), *ERC* (2010), and *CiU* (2010,2012). Two of the cases (SNP 2011 and *CiU* 2010) should be considered as successful. This strategy led to the loss of seats for *ERC* (2010) and *CiU* (2012). The SNP (2016) used a blurring strategy and also decreased their seat share in the Scottish Parliament.

The *CiU* was the only case of stable strategic choice. However, they changed the framing of territorial demands. The *CiU* subsumed the economic dimension into autonomist territorial

demands in 2010. On the contrary, the economic domain was subsumed into independentist demands in 2012. The outcomes of the regional elections in 2012 led to the move from a minority to a coalition government with the *ERC*.

The *ERC* failed to succeed with the subsuming strategy in 2010 but the switch towards the two-dimensional one returned the party to the governmental coalition. A key importance was played by the credibility issue. The *ERC* lost its credibility after the unsuccessful *tripartit* rule. On the economic dimension, they were blamed for the inability to deal with the economic crisis as all the left parties. On the territorial dimension, they 'betrayed' their pro-independence stance and showed that they can trade it in favor of a coalition with the mainstream left parties.

However, the *CiU* minority government also claimed that the center-right reforms of the economic issues were effective in tackling economic crisis. The sudden September 2012 switch from autonomy to independence did not bring additional credibility to the party. The *CiU* did not change the strategy being sure that the existing one works well. The *ERC* used this window of opportunity and accelerated both the critique of the economic policy of the *CiU* and pro-independence demands. The active part of the *ERC* in *La Diada* returned them credibility as the independence supporter.

The results showed that the two-dimensional strategy of the *ERC* worked. The *ERC* demonstrated the capability of working in both primary and secondary dimensions. As the result, the *CiU* had to make a coalition with the *ERC* and fully accept their territorial demands for a referendum.

The SNP shift from subsuming to a blurring strategy is conditioned by the referendum results. The subsuming strategy in 2011 proved the historical success of the SNP to form the majority government. The SNP made an extensive case for independence during this campaign. The referendum debates were also dominated mainly by economic debates. However, the defeat led to the lost credibility of the economic issue. The SNP strategy could not follow the subsuming of the

economic issue because it turned them into defeat at the referendum. The two-dimensional strategy was not the case for the center-left party trying to be the mainstream in the region.

The strategic choices in Catalonia and Scotland are influenced by the regional parties' competition structure. The SNP had no equal regionalist competitor. The Scottish Greens were not an equal counterpart to the SNP. They were on the same pro-independence side and on the left the in the economic dimension. But the Scottish Greens could only make an external or small partner support for the SNP independence bid. This fact means that the SNP competed mainly with state-wide parties at the regional level. It made it easier to employ the anti-center rhetoric in their electoral programs. The rivalry with the state-wide parties benefited the dominant position of the SNP at the regional level.

The Catalan parties had to play both against the state-wide parties and each other. They had to win the possibility to become the 'champions of the regional interests' (Barrio & Rodriguez-Teruel, 2017). This context made easier the strategic choice of the *ERC* in favor of the two-dimensional strategy.

The period of rising independence sentiments coincided with a decrease for the electoral fortunes of left national parties. The *PSOE* in Spain and the Labor party in the UK lost the National elections and lost their seats in Catalan and Scottish Parliaments. One reason was the unsatisfactory management of the economic crisis, while another reason lies in the territorial domain.

The *PSOE/PSC* proposed the federalist reform and framed their territorial position as a 'third way' between secession and centralization. The Spanish authorities showed their reluctance towards any kind of constitutional changes. The national level in Spain was dominated by the PP from 2011. Consequently, it is possible to see radicalization and political division. The Catalan society showed growing support for independence. The Spanish political landscape was controlled by the conservatives. Playing the middle in the situation of such a division seemed like losing credibility on both sides.

The Labor party also had the devolution option for Scotland during the referendum debates. The Better Together camp could not be considered united in its political ideologies. The Tory and Labor parties shared the anti-independence platform but stayed far from each other on other issues. Tory was the party to allow the referendum and they received more credits for victory at the Scotland independence referendum. These credits were capitalized in the National Elections 2015. Additionally, the Labor party lost its credibility in Scotland, so almost all seats from Scotland went to the SNP in the same elections.

The SNP proposed to Labor to join efforts in counterbalancing the Tories at the national elections in 2015. However, the Labor party drastically refused this possibility. The territorial issue was the case in point. The Labor party did not find a possibility to trade its territorial position for an economic one. The territorial disparities impeded the cooperation between parties.

This strategic choice differs from the *ERC*. The *ERC* in 2000-2010 traded their territorial preferences to enter a left-wing coalition. The Labor party refused the same move. The reason was in the context. In 2000-2010 the possibility to gain real independence remained low. The support for this option in society remained below 20 percent. The *ERC* could safely ease their demands in such circumstances. The Labor party played in the situation of the prominence of independence in society. The territorial issue trade could be very costly. Evidently, the electoral weight of the parties played an important role. Unlike the *ERC*, the Labor party is a national party and could theoretically consider the SNP as a junior partner. However, it is unlikely to accept the compromise with the regionalist party for the national party at the national level. The *ERC* joined a left-wing coalition as a junior partner of national *PSC/PSOE* at the regional level.

The political situation of center-right and right-wing parties in the national Parliament and pro-secession regionalist parties in the regional government added fuel to the center-periphery tensions. Left-wing parties are more traditionally sensitive to austerity politics, unlike right-wing parties. Leftist parties have a more compromised approach with regionalist parties. In the Catalan case, the evidence for it is *tripartit* and the *PSC* support to get Mas elected in 2010. Austerity

politics was the main issue in Catalonia in 2011 and the fiscal pact mainly was the response to it. *PSOE* and *Labor* would adopt less austerity.

To sum up, the 'right-wing' turn is observed at the national level. Both the Spanish and the UK Parliaments were dominated by right-wing parties with strong anti-independence positions. At the same time, the regional level signaled the 'independentist turn' where regionalist parties with pro-independence agenda controlled the majority at the regional Parliaments. The most used strategy was the subsuming one with 50 percent of success. The two-dimensional strategy was used only once but led to a considerable increase in the seats. The blurring strategy of the SNP led to the decrease of the seats in light of economic argument failure.

failure.

Conclusion

This chapter aims to compare Catalan and Scottish cases to get insights into the process of rising independence sentiments. Substantive growth of secessionism is experienced in both regions according to the public support for this option and the electoral strength of pro-independence parties.

This chapter analyses several important components of regionalism and secessionism: the process, message flows, frames, and political parties' strategies. All these variables contribute to the understanding of the process of such changes.

Table 5.0.1. Summary of results

Factor	Similarities	Differences	
		Catalonia	Scotland
Arguments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow the resonant political events Media plays a pro-region bias on arguments which are salient at the current moment 'Demands for decentralization' and 'democratic principle' as the most frequent Low role of 'national sovereignty' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political/institutional arguments as a strategy to radicalize the discourse ('all or nothing') 'Future of independent economy' – rich region, no need to spend time overcoming fear of losing central state finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More equal distribution of frequency among the macroarguments More attention to the economic arguments in the context of referendum debates Political/institutional arguments as a 'bargain chip' 'Future of independent economy' – recipient of state subsidies, heart of the 'battle for mind' in the referendum debates
Frames	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problem-solving framing correlates with the independence sentiments rise Confirms the idea of the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No constant trend, the peak of problem-solving in 2012 More grassroots mobilization, framing independence as the 'will of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stable dominance of problem-solving framing vis-à-vis the diagnosis Legitimacy and economic arguments were bridged

	<p>to create a persuasive narrative and construct the attractiveness of the idea of independence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party leaders as the main agents of framing • Changes are the byproducts of political process • Shift from economic to legitimacy arguments as a result of state oppression 	<p>people' served as a legitimization strategy for the independence bid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prominent role of civil society organizations • Legitimacy arguments dominate as the discourse framed as a 'legitimacy conflict with the state' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More important role of prognostic framing • Independence process as a clear 'top-down, 'will of people' as a vote for the SNP
Media Bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant pro-region bias 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominantly anti-center rhetoric • 'Democratic principle' with pro-region bias (constant struggle to legalize referendum) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More balanced between anti-center rhetoric and regionally positive messages in the referendum debates • After the referendum, the switch in favor of anti-center rhetoric • 'Democratic principle' with two-sided coverage (in the context of legalized referendum)
Parties' strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominance of regional domain in the program • 'Welfare/Quality of Life' and 'Economy' category dominated the policy domain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>CiU</i> used subsuming strategy in both regional elections • <i>ERC</i> subsuming strategy in 2010 and two-dimensional in 2012 due to 'double pressure' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNP shifted from subsuming strategy to blurring due to the referendum defeat • Dominant regionalist party

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Territorial domain is more salient than the economic one • Clear pro-periphery position • Subsuming strategy as the most used • Strategic choices influenced by the competition structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong competition between regionalist parties 	
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The analysis of the process is carried out through the process tracing. This process is influenced by many components, but the process itself is also an independent actor of changes. The major political issues contributed to the changes in framing independence sentiments, the saliency of arguments, and opportunities to set up a particular message. At the same time, this process was influenced by framing opportunity structures, media reflections, and presentations of major political events.

The Catalan process includes the active involvement and influence of grassroots movements. Civil society organizations played an important role in the popular mobilization for independence by organizing manifestations and public events. The Scottish independence process was dominated by political forces with a small participation of civil society organizations. However, the public support for independence grew with a similar trend both in Catalonia and Scotland.

The process influences the saliency of arguments. The results suggest that there are no more important or less important messages. Depending on the reality, economic, legitimacy, or political arguments could be more salient or less frequent. Indeed, the power of media lies in the way how exactly the media present these arguments in the coverage of events.

One way of presenting these arguments is the message flows. Regional media reflects the changes in the political landscape with communication in favor of the regionalist point of view.

The pro-region bias in regional media consists of anti-center rhetoric and regionally supportive messages. Among the three types of communication, Catalan and Scottish media preferred the pro-region bias.

Another way of presenting these arguments is framing. Framing creates opportunity structures for mobilizing the population. The dominance of problem-solving frames coincided with the more rapid growth of independence sentiments. However, the causal link between problem-solving frames and popular mobilization is not confirmed. Scotland had constant dominance of problem-solving frames vis-à-vis diagnosis, but the involvement in political demonstrations was less than in Catalonia. Catalonia had huge popular events in 2014 when the diagnosis framing dominated. Indeed, a correlation exists between rising independence sentiments and problem-solving framing.

The main agents of framing are regional politicians. Their speeches and contributions dominate the center-periphery discourse in the media. This observation is true for the 'top-down' process in Scotland and the more mixed and nuanced process in Catalonia.

Central state politics toward the demands for independence influenced the way of framing. The opposition of the state contributes to the frame transformations and frame bridging. The Catalan process was framed as a legitimacy conflict with the state. This framing appeals to international law principles. The failure of the 'Scottish-like referendum' in 2014 changed problem-solving into diagnosis framing. The framing in Scotland also transformed into the legitimacy conflict after 2014.

Regionalist parties capitalized on pro-independence mobilization. With pro-independence programs, they succeeded to enter the government either alone (minority government of the SNP) or in a coalition (*CiU-ERC* coalition in 2012). All regionalist parties in Scotland and Catalonia considered the territorial domain as the primary one. The economic dimension played a secondary role in their electoral programs. This research confirms that the regionalist parties use a variety of strategies. The most popular choice is the subsuming strategy of the economic domain into territorial. This observation adds value to Alonso, Cabeza, and Gomez (2015) argument of two-

dimensional strategic behavior. Factors that influence strategic choices are the competition structure, the state-wide party pressure, the history of previous strategic choices, and independence process changes.

This chapter brings us concise answers to the research questions stated in the theoretical chapter. The simultaneous interaction among the considered components defines the internal logic of the independence process and popular support for independentists in the considered cases.

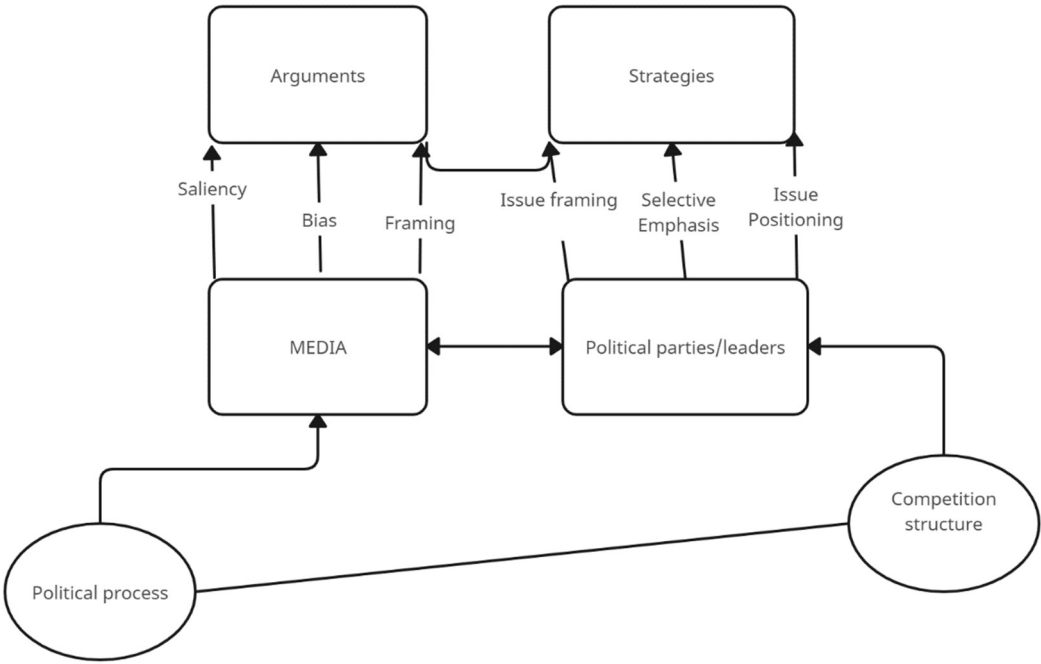
How does the media communicate regionalist arguments to the audience? Firstly, the strong pro-region bias is the main feature of media coverage. Despite being ‘unionists’, the content analysis suggests that pro-region messages dominate the center-periphery discourse and confirms E1. Secondly, the political process as an exogenous factor establishes the saliency of arguments. The results disagree with all the theoretical literature which stresses one particular argument to justify independence. In fact, all arguments contribute to the process and are used in the center-periphery discourse. The major political events and exogenous factors influence the saliency of arguments. The power of media is to give meaning to these events and present them in a pro-region way. The process causes the saliency of arguments and confirms E2.

How does the media convey independence claims? Firstly, it is a byproduct of the political process. The frame alignment process reacts to changes in material circumstances. Secondly, the framing process may influence reality by giving particular meaning to the major political events and by framing them as political opportunities or as having transformative power. Thirdly, the problem-solving framing correlates with the increase in public support for independence. In that sense, the E1 is fully confirmed in the Scottish case, and partially confirmed in the Catalan case.

How do regionalist parties strategize their secessionist programs? Regionalist parties avoid the use of a one-dimensional strategy but put more attention to the territorial domain rather than the economic one. They use subsuming strategy to get support for their secessionist programs if they feel to be the main regionalist party. The two-dimensional strategy is the response to the double pressure from the main regionalist party with independentist agenda and the state-wide

parties with anti-independence slogans. The blurring strategy is the consequence of strategic changes in light of losing the pro-independence economic argument. The political competition structure contributes to the strategic choices of political parties. The context of the main competition with state-wide parties gives the possibility for more extensive use of the anti-center rhetoric. The competition between influential regionalist parties to dominate the secessionist electorate requires to employ extensively the economic dimension in the fight for votes. That is why the E4 is not confirmed because regionalist parties may use the variety of strategies, not only subsuming, and this strategic choices mainly depend on the competition structure.

Graph 5.0.1. Center-periphery discourse



Graph 5.0.1 summarizes the connections between arguments, frames, and media bias, and the factors that influence them. The results of the frame analysis are consistent with the novel FraTerr dataset (Elias et al., 2021) in several aspects. Firstly, both analyses confirm that cultural factors play a marginal role in framing independence demands. This is due to the diversity of the electorate resulting from high levels of international migration, especially in Catalonia, as authors point out (Ibid). Secondly, both analyses confirm the use of both 'grievances' (diagnosis) and 'better future'

(future-oriented) frames, with the latter being the preferred option. For instance, in the Catalan case, over half of the political and two-thirds of socio-economic frames were used in this manner (Ibid: 457). Thirdly, both the media frame analysis and the FraTerr analysis of regionalist parties' framing confirm the dominance of political over socio-economic framing (Elias et al., 2021). While this is not consistent with the results obtained using the RMP approach, which suggests that the welfare/quality of life and economy policy domains are more important, it is understandable because the RMP approach focuses on issue saliency and positioning, while FraTerr concentrates on issue framing. Additionally, the issue framing of regionalist parties in FraTerr and media in my analysis demonstrate similar trends. Finally, Griffiths and Martinez (2021) suggest that both Catalonia and Scotland have low scores of grievances, but the coding scheme's conceptualization is unable to capture non-grievance-based arguments.

Conclusion

The center-periphery cleavage still receives major attention in national politics in Catalonia and Scotland. Flanders secessionism is topical for Belgium. The Basque Country independentist demands return to Spanish politics. Outside the EU, the issue of secessionism spilled over from intrastate to interstate conflicts.

In a wider historical context, a sudden change in independence sentiments characterized the period between 2010 and 2016. In the post-Franco era, a minority of the population shared Catalan secessionism. The Pujol administration promoted the idea of extending regional authority. The Basque independence movement dominated the secessionist agenda in Spain.

The idea of independence in post-devolution Scotland held little attraction. Only in 2007 did the SNP start to take concrete actions for independence. The popular support for independence in Scotland started to increase in 2012, with Catalan secessionism having become attractive in 2010. All in all, my study examines the period of drastic growth of independence sentiments, considered a sudden change from the historical perspective.

The rise of secessionist demands in Catalonia and Scotland occurred in a period of relative economic and political instability. My thesis analyses the role of media in the process of raising pro-independence sentiments. Catalan and Scottish societies had a high level of latent secessionism and some visible nationalism aspirations. The combination of established regional nationalism and economic crisis created a window of opportunity for secessionism. On the one hand, there were many voters inclined to pro-regional positions; and, on the other hand, voters suffering from the crisis developed attitudes against the status quo. The combination of the two elements created conditions which could lead many to consider and support options they did not support before. In other words, changes in the external circumstances created an opportunity for changing voters' preferences. A pro-independence political offer preceded the crisis but the saliency of independence depended on external conditions which open the opportunity structure.

The period of rising independence sentiments functions as a process that includes major political events, interactions between political leaders, strategies of political parties, and civil society contributions to the agenda. The media highlights the process and communicates it to the target audience. The use of the term ‘process’ has a political connotation. The Spanish literature considers the Catalan political leaders *procesistas*, meaning that the Catalan leaders support the idea of independence and try to get political and electoral gains from it.

The SNP strategy also fits into the *procesistas* notion after 2014. They missed the opportunity to win the independence referendum. However, they demanded a second indyref (i.e., independent referendum) due to the Brexit referendum's unsatisfactory results. In both cases, the independentist demands allowed the regional political forces to remain in power during the crisis period. The regional elections of 2020 in Catalonia and Scotland confirmed that staying in the radical center-periphery position made regionalist parties electorally successful in these regions.

The study of the independence process highlights the role of the media, a facilitator of public opinion and the main source of political information. Media contribute as much to the process as political leaders and political events. Media can give the floor to one politician and deny access to another. The media decides which meaning to attributed to the event or political action. Media gives saliency to one issue and considers others less important. More than 10,000 instances of center-periphery discourse in the media demonstrate that regional media reported on this cleavage daily throughout the five-year period under study.

How does the media communicate regionalist arguments to the audience? Referring to the term ‘regionalist,’ my research examines the wider context of center-periphery discourse. Regionalist arguments include everything related to the pro-regional bias. It may include demands for more power and critics of the central state. However, it does not necessarily mean independence demands. In contrast to the pro-regional bias, the media can deliver pro-center or two-sided message flows. In turn, the pro-region bias consists of anti-center rhetoric and regionally positive

messages. The latter means message flows favoring the politics of the region or discussing the successes of the regional authority.

First, the strong pro-region bias characterizes media coverage of center-periphery cleavage. Both the Catalan and Scottish cases demonstrate that in all years of the study, pro-region message flows dominate the discourse, vis-à-vis pro-center or two-sided flows. This finding questions the declared objectivity of the considered media sources. Moreover, it contributes to the idea that the way of reporting is more important than the exact message. In other words, biased communication rather than the saliency of any particular argument establishes the independent agenda. Media can report political, legal, or economic reasons to justify the center-periphery cleavage, but the coverage remains pro-regionally biased.

Secondly, theoretical literature provides several explanations for the independence sentiments. My study suggests that all arguments contribute to the independence agenda, and there is no dominant argument. In this case, the media follow the unfolding of political events. Media give saliency to the issues on the agenda at the current moment. Several confirmations of this notion are present. First, the media coverage intensifies around major political events. The number of instances in September 2014 in Scotland was many times higher than any other September of the study period. The autumn period in Catalonia always includes more center-periphery-related articles than any other period of the year. Second, the Constitutional Court ruling dominated headlines in 2010 in Catalonia. Starting in 2011, this argument was no longer salient. The presence of economic arguments in Scotland decreased soon after the independence referendum.

However, two arguments received slightly more attention than others in both cases: one defending ‘democratic principle’ and one featuring ‘demands for decentralization.’ The virtue of the independence process explains the saliency of both. The ‘democratic principle’ mainly refers to the independence referendum. For both Catalonia and Scotland, the issue of the referendum remained the main political demand. Catalonia entered into a legal conflict with Spain to conduct the referenda. Scotland proclaimed the referendum a ‘once in a lifetime opportunity.’ This

referendum framed independence debates. ‘Demands for decentralization’ include political desires for more powers, the main battlefield of independence advocates and autonomists.

Third, the pro-region bias consists of anti-center rhetoric and regionally favorable messages. The balance between them depends on the level of state opposition. The Catalan pro-region bias stands on the anti-center rhetoric. The opposition of the state became evident at the beginning of the process. The Constitutional Court ruling was the proclamation of the state’s inability to facilitate the dialogue with Catalonia. The Scottish case demonstrates the balance between these two types in the context of the referendum. The State proclaimed its opposition to independence but allowed holding a referendum, considered a democratic act of state. As soon as the ‘Yes’ camp failed in the referendum and the state authorities declared the impossibility of the second ‘indyref,’ the pro-region bias changed in favor of anti-center rhetoric.

How does the media convey independence claims? Speaking about secessionism, my research refers to the framing of independentist arguments. The argument justifying the necessity of independence can appear in three ways. It can be diagnostic, prognostic, or motivational. Both prognostic and motivational framing refer to the future, and together, they form the analytical category of the ‘problem-solving’ frame. Additionally, an argument’s framing may undergo frame-alignment processes, to better fit the independentist agenda.

Political events and exogenous changes in the reality of the process condition the fit of the independentist agenda. For example, the Better Together camp used the ‘EU membership’ argument to justify the impossibility of an independent Scotland remaining in the EU. In the context of the Brexit referendum, the advocates of independence framed EU membership because Brexit forced Scotland to leave the EU.

Catalan’s case suggests the transformation of many frames to better fit the independentist agenda. The ‘demands for decentralization’ contained the fiscal pact as the main contributing argument. Initially, it was framed as the way to resolve economic problems and the alternative to

independence. But in 2012, the failure of the fiscal pact started to function as a synonym for the impossibility of having a dialogue with Spain and the necessity of going its ‘own way.’

The use of diagnostic and problem-solving framing depended on several factors. First, the diagnostic frames were employed to defend the independence argument. The rise of diagnostic framing in 2014 in Catalonia after the failure to legalize the independence referendum confirmed this idea. The Scottish case confirms it by framing all the analysis of the actual economic situation that underpins the ‘prospects of future independent economy’ in 2014. The currency union was the main issue to discuss because the SNP promised the sterling zone in case of independence. However, Osborne doubted it. As a consequence, the ‘Yes’ camp framed the feasibility of the currency option diagnostically because it had to defend its stance.

The offensive strategy uses problem-solving framing, which refers to the future and tries to build a persuasive narrative. It promises future benefits and considers independence as the way to resolve current economic, legal, and political problems. The problem-solving framing dominated the entire period in Scotland. The ‘Yes’ camp chose strategically to build the persuasive narrative of independence and contrast it with the ‘Project of Fear’ of the Better Together Camp. The Catalan case suggests the same logic of using problem-solving framing. In 2012 and 2013, the Catalan political elites, openly declaring the path toward independence, confirmed the highest frequency of this framing.

The overall independence process in Catalonia was framed as a conflict with the Spanish state over legitimacy. Catalan politicians usually referred to the popular support for the idea of independence, mass mobilization of the Catalan society in favor of separation, and the democratic nature of independentism in Catalonia. The Scottish independence process had two periods for which the independence referendum in 2014 served as the watershed. Initially, it was framed as the battle for Scotland’s economic future, and later, in the same manner, as the Catalan process. In sum, the shift from economy to legitimacy framing of independence occurred at some point in both cases, as the consequence of the state level of opposition to independence demands.

In light of this framing strategy, my study suggests that the primordialist arguments that national sovereignty include national culture and national identity served as an instrumental tool. The primordialist characteristics were slow to change, with limited ability to contribute to the justification of independence. However, they could be instrumental in the light of big, culturally related events. In Scotland, the extensive framing of the “national sovereignty” argument during the Commonwealth games in August 2014 confirmed the idea. Moreover, some public speeches used it as a preface to the main arguments.

The media analysis suggests that the main agents of influence in the independence process were the political parties and their leaders. Political elites communicated most of the arguments in the regional media. In Scotland, the most cited persons were Salmond (up to 2014) and Sturgeon (up to 2016). Mas’s speeches and reports on his actions dominated the Catalan media. Combined with the electoral successes of regionalist parties, this led to the necessity of examining their electoral strategies.

How do regionalist parties strategize their secessionist programs? Saliency, position, selective emphasis, and issue framing are at the party’s disposal for making strategic choices. These instruments compose four main strategies: one-dimensional (saliency of one dimension), two-dimensional (saliency of both dimensions and clear positions on them), subsuming (one dimension framed in key terms of another dimension), and blurring (saliency of one dimension and blurred position on another). As my analysis shows, regionalist parties used a variety of strategies to gain votes. The SNP used a subsuming strategy in 2011 and a blurring strategy in 2016. The *CiU* used subsuming strategy in both the 2010 and 2012 regional elections. The *ERC* employed the subsuming strategy in 2010 and the two-dimensional in 2012.

The clear secessionist demands are visible in the SNP electoral program (2011), the *ERC* electoral programs (2010, 2012), and the *CiU* program (2012). The *CiU* 2010 electoral programs were mostly autonomist, and the 2016 SNP program referred to independence not as the main electoral target but rather as the potential option in case of serious material changes.

The subsuming strategy is the one the regionalist parties use most. The most successful example is the SNP electoral program of 2011, where the party got an absolute majority of seats and made the economic case for independence. However, after the independence referendum, the same economic case lost its attractiveness because the Better Together camp was considered the winner of this argument. It led to both the general shift in strategy from subsuming to blurring and softer territorial demands, from independence to extension of devolution powers.

The saliency and positioning components of regionalist parties' strategies remained mostly unchanged in the study period. All regionalist parties gave the territorial dimension more saliency than the economic one and maintained their economic positioning. The only change occurred with the *ER*, which changed the blurring economic stance in 2010 to a clear left-wing position in 2012.

Different factors led to the changes in strategic choices. For Scotland, the issues were, first, that the SNP was the dominant party in the region, virtually without regionalist opponents. Its electoral strength allowed the party to concentrate on the contest with the nationwide parties. The anti-Tory and anti-center rhetoric was evident in both electoral programs. The SNP positioned itself as the alternative to central state politics, and independence served as the justification for the stand-off against the central state.

The second issue was that the defeat of the independence referendum in 2014 forced the SNP to rethink its strategy. They could not continue subsuming the economy because that case was discredited. The two-dimensional strategy would require the SNP to take a clear position in the economic domain. The SNP positioning itself as the mainstream leading party in Scotland would have required radicalizing its economic demands. The SNP decided to maintain the blurred position, to be closer to the center of the economic scale.

The Catalan case is different from the Scottish one. First, the independence territorial demands were the contested domain between two strong regionalist parties. The SNP absorbed the territorial domain in its exclusive battle against the central state. The *ERC* and the *CiU* had to compete against each other to champion the independentist agenda. Moreover, both parties had to

react to the successful mobilization in favor of independence, among the population. The *CiU* shifted its territorial demands from autonomist to independentist, as a consequence of the fiscal pact proposal failure and the *La Diada* popular mobilization.

The *CiU* radicalized its territorial demands but kept the saliency and positioning in its electoral program, maintaining the subsuming strategy. This happened because the *CiU* stayed confident, repeating and even improving on the successful 2010 elections. Mas was the initiator of early elections and asked for an absolute majority. However, a large number of independence votes went to the *ERC*.

The *ERC* shifted from subsuming to a two-dimensional strategy. The 2010 elections demonstrated *ERC*'s loss of credibility as the regionalist party. The tripartite participation undermined both the left economic and territorial positioning of the party. The economic problems and the overall decline of left-wing parties at the beginning of the 2010s discredited the left-wing position. In the eyes of the *ERC* supporters, this party 'betrayed' independence claims in favor of the left-wing coalition, discrediting the territorial position. In other words, it traded its territorial stance for an economic one.

That is why the *ERC* had to improve in both territorial and economic domains. The clear left positioning led to distancing from the *PSC*. The saliency of independence demands allowed them to restore credibility as the main promoter of independence. This strategic choice was especially successful in light of popular mobilization. All of these led to the two-dimensional strategy.

Finally, I summarize the main contributions of my thesis and the ways future research might complement my findings. My research contributes to the studies of secessionism by highlighting the role of media in this process. Media played the focal role in agenda-setting for independentism and in the communication of the secessionist argument to the audience. This research contributes to clarifying the role of 'transformative political events' (Basta, 2018). My argument is that political events impact the independence process, but the media reinforce this impact. Political events influence party strategies, the saliency of arguments their framing. However, these events

have limited impact on public opinion as the cases of Brexit and the Catalonia nonbinding referendum demonstrated. To illustrate, the opinion polls in Catalonia and Scotland did not track any significant changes in people's attitudes on independence. Moreover, after 2014 and 2016 in Catalonia and Scotland respectively it was a short decline in independence support (see graphs 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). My research connects the exogenous importance of the political process with its representation in public discourse. Media play on arguments that are salient at the current moment, due to their importance for the political process, e.g., elections or referenda. However, this importance is attributed, thanks to framing and media bias.

My research contributes to the framing literature by considering the role of diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing in the independence discourse. It is analytically useful to consider 'problem-solving' as the combination of prognostic and motivational framing. The problem-solving framing is a more attractive 'offense' strategy because it creates a narrative of the future. Moreover, the research finds a correlation between the dominance of problem-solving framing and increases in independence sentiments. However, this research cannot argue for a casual link between these phenomena; nevertheless, it confirms the potential of problem-solving framing to create resonance in the discourse.

Importantly, the framing literature mostly analyzes the influence of framing on political reality. My research states that the way framing occurs also depends on exogenous factors. First, frame bridging and frame transformations occur when the political process requires them. Initially, the material circumstances change, then, the nature of argument framing.

My research contributes to the political communication literature. It highlights the biased coverage of political events as the main feature of communication in center-periphery discourse at times of growing independence sentiments. It confirms the extent of pro-region bias vis-à-vis the other two types of message flows. This observation confirms Zaller's (1996) notion of the role of one-sided message flows in attitude formation.

My research adds value to the literature on regionalist parties, by confirming trends highlighted in previous studies (Massetti and Schakel, 2015; Alonso et al., 2015). It also contributes to check empirically, through in-depth case studies, the conceptual differentiation between (and the relative operationalization of) subsuming and blurring strategies. It also confirms Elias' (2019) suggestion of political structure influence on strategic decisions of regionalist parties. Moreover, the previous experience at elections and major political events influences the strategic changes of regionalist parties.

My research locates some questions for future research. First, highlighting the role of framing in the process of political mobilization will be an important contribution to the social movement literature. Catalonia and Scotland experienced similar trends in growing independence sentiments but different mobilization dynamics. Strong citizen mobilization characterized the Catalan case; the Scottish case is described as 'boring secessionism.'

My analysis suggests that future-oriented framing contributes to this process. That is especially evident in the 2012 case of Catalan mobilization where the problem-solving framing dominated the discourse. However, the social organization's structure played the key role. Catalonia conducted a series of 'small referenda' in 2009–2010 that played the role of a 'feedback mechanism' in evaluating the attractiveness of the 'independence idea.' Also, it created incentives for political participation. Importantly, the civil society organizations in Catalonia (e.g., *ANC*, *Omnium cultural*) played the key role in organizing public demonstrations, including *La Diada*. The Scottish case suggests the same level of problem-solving framing but a smaller role for the social movement's organizations. The SNP privatized the pro-independence agenda; the Catalan independence movement was a mix of street politics and party competition.

Another contribution to the difference that mobilization may play is the content of pro-region bias. The Catalan pro-independence bias heavily relied on the anti-center rhetoric; the Scottish pro-independence bias intentionally tried to avoid negative messages. As soon as the context

changed after the 2014 referendum, the shift toward more anti-center rhetoric and more active political mobilization became visible.

My research poses the question of the connection between problem-solving framing and rising independence sentiments. My analysis demonstrates that a correlation exists between these variables. Moreover, Beckert (2013) suggests the influence of an ‘imagined future’ on shifting attitudes. McDonnell et al. (2017) claim the resonant power of problem-solving framing to influence public opinion. My research did not find clear evidence for these considerations, but future studies should clarify this correlation.

Finally, research on the role of media in democratic processes of secession could be expanded in several ways. First, future research on the topic should include Internet media, such as Twitter and Facebook. Contemporary societies undergo changes in favor of digitalization in the media sphere. In any case, the inclusion of social media would require additional resources to conduct the analysis.

Second, a cross-case mutual influence analysis could be added to the comparative approach. Both Catalan and Scottish media made references to each other’s independence processes. Arguably, the failure of the ‘Yes’ camp in the Scottish referendum disappointed the Catalan pro-independence movement. However, the cross-case references occupy a marginal position in the overall media discourse—the reason I decided to put more research attention on within-case studies. In any case, additional examination of the cross-case influence would contribute to our understanding of secessionism.

The EU’s institutionalized democratic context limits the generalizability of findings. The pro-region bias does not imply direct propaganda. In the studied cases, the media are not state-controlled and operate in a competitive democratic environment. The party competition is democratic, with a high degree of transparency. In other words, the limitations on freedom of speech and democracy may influence this process. In any case, Basques, Flanders, and other types

of institutionalized EU secessionism can serve as control cases, and my approach should work to predict the evolution of the independence process in these cases.

To sum up, my research suggests that secessionism is an attitude that media coverage influences. The political communication scholars could be better equipped to explain the sudden changes and influences. For example, national identity and cultural arguments played an instrumental role in the discourse to justify the necessity of independence, but structural factors of national identity or culture have a limited capacity to provoke sudden changes in attitudes toward independence.

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Appendix

Examples of message flows and frames from Catalan and Scottish regional newspapers

Unit	Example in Original language	Translation/Explanation	Source
Democratic principle pro-center	SNP should now accept that No must mean No for a generation		The Herald, 20.09.2014, p. 18
pro-region	‘No hay nada, ni un solo artículo’ de la Carta Magna que impida a Catalunya celebrar la consulta. ‘No se puede dejar de escuchar lo que dice el pueblo’	‘There is nothing, not a single article’ of the Magna Carta prevents Catalonia from holding the consultation. ‘You can't stop listening to what the people are saying.’	<i>El Periodico</i> , 16.10.2013, p. 5
two-sided	This is it: a day of political history, the biggest Scottish vote in living memory, and a referendum that will reshape our country, and, regardless of the result, stand as an extraordinary example of democracy-in-action conducted in a well-organised, fair and inclusive way.		The Herald, 18.09.2014, p. 18
diagnosis	‘El PSOE cree que no es el momento de seguir actuando a través de los tribunales. Es el momento de la política, tenemos un problema político y las únicas soluciones que podrán dar salida a este problema político serán políticas.’	‘The <i>PSOE</i> believes that this is not the time to continue acting through the courts. It is the moment of politics; we have a political problem, and the only solutions that can solve this political problem will be political.’	<i>La Vanguardia</i> , 12.11.2014, p.13
prognostic	Salmond bows out with a vow Yes vote will come. And that is the change which will carry us forward – forward to independence. He warned that if they failed to keep their promises, Scots would demand a second independence referendum.		The Herald, 15.11.2014, P. 8
motivational	Un mensaje dirigido a la ciudadanía desde la galería gótica del Palau de la Generalitat que detrás de la metáfora jardinera escondía	A message addressed to the public from the Gothic gallery of the <i>Palau de la Generalitat</i> uses the garden metaphor to hide a call for	<i>La Vanguardia</i> , 24.04.2013, p.13

	una llamada a la unidad en defensa del derecho a decidir. Y Catalunya, en este jardín, ‘tiene un gran potencial, ahora retenido en parte por falta de instrumentos, y es por esto que planteamos ejercer nuestro derecho a decidir, porque queremos que nos dejen cuidar de nuestra rosa, sin más tutelas que las que nosotros escogamos’	unity in defence of the right to decide. And Catalonia, in this garden, ‘has great potential, now partially retained due to a lack of instruments, and that is why we propose to exercise our right to decide, because we want them to let us take care of our rose, with no more tutelage than what we choose.’	
<i>National sovereignty pro-center</i>	And Scotland's success in these games – and an array of gold medals – is being hailed as proof that we are truly Better Together and that being part of Britain brings out the best in us. This is the break that the No campaign had been praying for.		The Herald, 12.08.2012, ‘Identity crisis’.
<i>pro-region</i>	We in Scotland have for many years seen our language, customs, music under constant attack by the Westminster Parliament and media.		The Courier, 07.03.2012
<i>two-sided</i>	En cuanto al futuro, que unos celebran y otros temen, sólo una cosa está clara: los sentimientos que fundan el tiempo que ahora comienza serán positivos o negativos según como sean usados políticamente. Pero no es fácil confiar en la grandeza del futuro, de un futuro tan complicado, si hemos llegado a su puerta por caminos tan lamentables.	As for the future, which some celebrate and others fear, only one thing is clear: the feelings that found the time that now begins will be positive or negative depending on how they are used politically. But it is not easy to trust in the greatness of the future, of such a complicated future, if we have arrived at its doorstep by such unfortunate paths.	<i>La Vanguardia</i> , 27.09.2012 p.12
<i>diagnosis</i>	Independence was rejected because the SNP failed to put national identity at the heart of their campaign.		The Herald, 04.11.2014, p. 1
<i>prognostic</i>	I am an enthusiastic supporter of independence as I feel it offers an opportunity to forge a society based on good, old-fashioned, traditional Scottish values of		The Herald, 16.06.2012, ‘SNP backing of Lena Wilson goes against the

	justice, fairness and an innate sense of morality.		ethos of independence'
<i>motivational</i>	'La construcción nacional del país no es un trabajo para impacientes'. 'Me siento en paz conmigo mismo. Si algo te cuesta mucho y tienes que dedicarle grandes esfuerzos'.	'The nation-building of the country is not a job for the impatient.' 'I feel at peace with myself. If something costs you a lot, you have to dedicate great efforts to it.'	<i>El Periodico</i> , 28.12.2010, p.2
<i>Democratic support pro-center</i>	I am indeed one of the clear majority of Scottish voters who unambiguously voted No to Scottish independence.		The Herald, 21.10.2014, p.12
<i>pro-region</i>	But next year will definitely be a very special occasion and the best present I could possibly have is that Scotland votes 'Yes'... People of my age are definitely starting to pay attention to the referendum.		The Courier, 09.09.2013, P. 14
<i>two-sided</i>	En un abanico de multirrespuestas, el 71% de los consultados señala la situación económica y la salida de la crisis, mientras que el 47% votaría con el objetivo de 'castigar a los partidos con casos de corrupción'. Y sólo el 34% alude a la independencia de Catalunya como principal motivación de su voto	In a range of multi-choice responses, 71% indicated the economic situation and the way out of the crisis, while 47% would vote with the objective of 'punishing parties with corruption cases.' And only 34% refer to the independence of Catalonia as the primary motivation for their vote.	<i>La Vanguardia</i> , 07.12.2014, p. 19
<i>diagnosis</i>	Corbyn reached out to Yes voters, saying: 'I understand your anger.'	<i>The whole article is dedicated to lecture on understanding independence sentiments in Scotland</i>	The Sunday Herald, 09.10.2016, p.5
<i>prognostic</i>	El President de Societat Civil advierte que nada podrá impedir a Catalunya independizarse si la mayoría de sus ciudadanos así lo quieren.	The President of the <i>Societat Civil</i> warns that nothing will prevent Catalonia from gaining independence if the majority of its citizens support it.	<i>La Vanguardia</i> , 07.10.2014, p. 19
<i>motivational</i>	La Diada de la Independencia. La presidenta de la ANC, Carme Forcadell, reclamó a los diputados que escuchen 'la voz del pueblo' e inicien de	<i>La Diada</i> of Independence. The president of the ANC, Carme Forcadell, called on the MPs to listen to 'the voice of the people' and immediately begin the path to independence.	<i>El Periodico</i> , 12.09.2012, p. 4

	inmediato el camino hacia la independencia.		
Central state economic policy pro-center	In camp two, the state of the country's finances appears bleak: the Scottish Government spent 14.8 billion more in 2015-2016 than it raised in taxes, and the country's deficit is more than twice that of the UK.		The Courier, 31.08.2016, p. 22
pro-region	ERC: 'Hasta ahora usted se ha revelado como un gran cocodrilo político, con una boca enorme para hacer discursos y unas orejas pequeñas para no escuchar', le espetó a Zapatero para acusarle de no querer pactar las medidas anticrisis con el resto de grupos.	The <i>ERC</i> : 'Until now you have revealed yourself as a great political crocodile, with a huge mouth to make speeches and small ears so as not to listen', he snapped at Zapatero to accuse him of not wanting to agree to the anticrisis measures with the rest of groups.	<i>El Periodico</i> , 18.02.2010, p. 5
two-sided	For many years, Westminster and Holyrood governments worked successfully to reduce child poverty, accepting that that noble aim would cost money. It would be a tragedy if the improvements they achieved were now lost.		The Herald, 02.07.2014, 'Blight of poverty has a truly baleful influence.'
diagnosis	La Generalitat no rehúye el choque, aunque lo circunscribe al ámbito competencial. La 'ofensiva recentralizadora' que entiende que practica el Gobierno español le ha llevado a responder con una batería de actuaciones jurídicas y políticas en defensa del autogobierno de Catalunya.	<i>The Generalitat</i> does not deny the clash, although it circumscribes it to the sphere of competence. The Spanish Government is practising the 'recentralising offensiveness' that has led <i>the Generalitat</i> to respond with a battery of legal and political actions in defence of the self-government of Catalonia.	<i>La Vanguardia</i> , 09.05.2012, p.13
prognostic	When Scots realise the effects of a No vote in 2014 will include the privatisation of the Scottish NHS, many more will vote Yes.		The Herald, 26.08.2013, NHS privatisation inevitable in the event of a No vote

<i>motivational</i>	Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said: "In the week of the Edinburgh Agreement, we could not have a clearer example of why Scotland needs the full powers of independence. Scotland is suffering under the UK Government's do-nothing economic policy."		The Courier, 18.10.2012, Scotland posts another rise in unemployment
<i>Economic crisis pro-center</i>	Esta crisis Catalunya saldrá con el resto de España y de Europa, o no saldrá	This crisis Catalonia will come out with the rest of Spain and Europe, or it will not come out	<i>La Vanguardia</i> , 17.09.2012, p.11
<i>pro-region</i>	The UK national debt is already about £1.2 trillion, 80% of annual GDP, and in the next two years will probably reach £1.5trn, representing 100% of GDP.		The Herald, 23.05.2013 Salmond asking voters to take the biggest financial risk of their lives
<i>two-sided</i>	Sir Tom said the consequence of 'ageing demographics, low business birth rate and unemployment growth will beat us down into a Third World nation in no time at all.'		The Herald, 09.06.2012 Warning Scotland could become Third World state
<i>diagnosis</i>	Cambia el año, pero no el espíritu. Hoy estamos en el mismo punto donde nos encontrábamos ayer, en medio de una de las mayores crisis de nuestra historia.	The year changes, but the spirit is not. Today we are at the same point where we were yesterday, in the middle of one of the greatest crises in our history.	<i>El Periodico</i> , 06.01.2011, p. 7
<i>prognostic</i>	Así titula el prestigioso Financial Times una entrevista al presidente de ERC, Oriol Junqueras, en la que advierte de problemas en la economía española si Rajoy no permite la consulta.	There is the title of the prestigious Financial Times, an interview with the president of ERC, Oriol Junqueras. He warns of problems in the Spanish economy if Rajoy does not allow the consultation.	<i>La Vanguardia</i> , 30.08.2014, p. 15
<i>motivational</i>	'Esta es una Diada especial. No se debe dar ni un paso atrás ante la situación de agravio económico y nacional de Catalunya'	'This is a special <i>Diada</i> . Not a single step should be taken back from the situation of economic and national injury in Catalonia'	<i>La Vanguardia</i> , 12.09.2011, p.13
<i>Prospects of future</i>	En lo económico, las consecuencias supondrían la	Economically, the consequences would mean	<i>La Vanguardia</i> ,

<i>independent economy pro-center</i>	pérdida parcial del mercado español, separado por fronteras y aranceles; una disminución importante de las exportaciones catalanas al mercado de la Unión Europea...	the partial loss of the Spanish market, separated by borders and tariffs, a significant decrease in Catalan exports to the European Union market...	10.11.2014, p. 31
<i>pro-region</i>	We believe the economic gains of independence and the reindustrialisation of the Scottish economy will deliver trade, investment and supply chain benefits for both Scotland and the rest of the UK...		The Courier, 13.08.2013, p. 17
<i>two-sided</i>	Mr Salmond is right in one regard. We are "potentially" one of the most energy-rich patches on the planet. If any of these technologies should happen to pan-out, and if no one else does the fusion trick, and all other things being equal, we're quids in. Reality is trickier.		The Herald, 25.04.2012, It's become a dirty fight over Scotland's clean energy future
<i>diagnosis</i>	Las previsiones optimistas del president Mas, son más bien corroboradas por la mayoría de analistas, pero es dudoso que se creen puestos netos de trabajo. En fin, que algún día la economía volverá a arrancar, y si no es este año será el próximo. El problema es que depende más de Europa y de la economía global que de nosotros.	Most analysts rather corroborate the optimistic forecasts of President Mas, but it is doubtful that net jobs will be created. Anyway, one day the economy will start again, and if it is not this year, it will be next. The problem is that it depends more on Europe and the global economy than on us.	<i>El Periodico</i> , 03.01.2014, p. 7
<i>prognostic</i>	A YES vote could see a sharp fall in the average house price in Scotland in the short-term.		The Herald, 16.09.2014, p. 7
<i>motivational</i>	We need the powers to boost our competitive position, support greater innovation and investments, ... and become a wealthier, fairer country.		The Courier, 22.05.2013, p. 14
<i>Demands for decentralisation pro-center</i>	Rivera: 'Defendemos un estado autonómico descentralizado, que respete la pluralidad'	Rivera: 'We defend a decentralized autonomous state, which respects plurality'	<i>La Vanguardia</i> 31.03.2013, p. 20

<i>pro-region</i>	‘Queremos llegar a la posteridad una Catalunya libre, justa e independiente’. El texto califica a España de Estado que ha perdido su viabilidad como proyecto compatible con Catalunya	‘We want to achieve a free, fair and independent Catalonia.’ The text qualifies Spain as a state that has lost its viability as a project shared with Catalonia.	<i>El Periodico</i> , 25.03.2012, p. 22
<i>two-sided</i>	They said whatever the outcome of the referendum on Scottish independence, an increasing amount of power will lie in Edinburgh after the vote. Relations between the nations of the UK and the Scottish, Westminster and European Parliaments will be more intertwined.		The Herald, 08.09.2014, p. 22
<i>diagnosis</i>	In either case, the SNP would surely insist on the highest possible price short of independence: a fully federal UK.		The Sunday Herald, 12.10.2014, p. 5
<i>prognostic</i>	Although the SNP is itself a tender-minded democratic party, after independence, its purpose having been fulfilled, other tough-minded parties of the left or right might try to take control, and a stable upper chamber would prevent such an eventuality and ensure we remain a healthy, democratic kingdom.		The Courier, 16.08.2012 August 16: Depressing most august seat of learning feels it can trample on all and sundry
<i>motivational</i>	Sólo cuando volvamos a ser fuertes podremos exigir el respeto de todos. Y si no llega, será el momento de decidir: o más España, porque el autogobierno es ineficiente, o la independencia, porque el Estado español nos ahoga	Only when we are strong again can we demand everyone's respect. And if it does not arrive, it will be time to decide: or more Spain, because self-government is inefficient, or independence, because the Spanish State suffocates us.	<i>La Vanguardia</i> , 13.01.2012, p. 17
<i>Failure to negotiate autonomy deal Pro-center</i>	‘No vamos a retirar el recurso, ni vamos a renovar el tribunal, ya que este, como ha dicho también el propio presidente Zapatero, tiene toda la legitimidad para hacerlo’	We are not going to withdraw the appeal, nor are we going to renew the court, since this, as President Zapatero has also said, has all the legitimacy to do so."	<i>La Vanguardia</i> , 07.05.2010, p.14

pro-region	‘El fallo del Constitucional es una agresión que afecta a la dignidad del país’	‘The Constitutional ruling is an aggression that affects the dignity of the country’	<i>El Periodico</i> , 03.07.2010 p. 16
two-sided	The fiscal framework fallout does no credit to either side	<i>The article discusses the implications of Smith Commission recommendations on the Scotland Bill</i>	The Courier, 12.02.2016, p. 11
diagnosis	La celebración de la Diada quedó enmarcada ayer por la proximidad de la sentencia del Tribunal Constitucional sobre el Estatut, la cercanía de las elecciones autonómicas, las incógnitas de futuro del tripartit y la variopinta segmentación del voto soberanista	The celebration of <i>la Diada</i> was framed yesterday by the proximity of the ruling of the Constitutional Court on the Statute, the proximity of the regional elections, the puzzle of the future of the tripartite and the various segmentation of the sovereigntist vote.	<i>El Periodico</i> , 12.09.2010, p. 8
prognostic	El líder de Unió alerta que la marcha pro Estatut puede acabar en ‘aquellarre independentista’. ‘Mientras el problema de Catalunya no se entienda como un problema también para el conjunto de España no podremos resolver la situación’.	Union leader warns that pro-Statute march may end in ‘independence coven’. ‘As long as the problem of Catalonia is not understood as a problem also for the whole of Spain, we will not be able to solve the situation.’	<i>La Vanguardia</i> , 05.07.2010, p. 16
motivational	The SNP even circulated two Herald front pages to underline the point: one from 1979 screamed ‘No vote will not kill devolution, pledges Thatcher’ while the other, from a couple of days ago, carried the similar message: ‘Cameron promises more powers if Scots vote No’. ‘Let's not let history repeat itself,’ warned a party blurb, ‘the only way for Scotland to control Scotland's future is with a Yes vote.’		The Herald, 19.05.2014 Nationalists determined to rewrite inconvenient history
EU membership pro-center	Mr Cameron said: ‘If Scotland votes for separation, it leaves the European Union automatically. It then has to join the queue to get back into the EU, and there can be		The Herald, 30.08.2014, Warning from Cameron: Yes vote will send you to the back of the

	no guarantee that that will be a swift or easy process.'		queue for the EU
<i>pro-region</i>	'Europa no puede perder a Catalunya, porque si no el sur se descuelga y el continente se rompe', recalcó ayer en este sentido, de manera que 'si Catalunya se pierde, Europa sale perdiendo'	'Europe cannot lose Catalonia, because if it happens, the south will hang down and the continent will break,' he stressed yesterday in this regard, so that 'if Catalonia is lost, Europe will lose out.	<i>La Vanguardia</i> , 07.05.2014, p. 14
<i>two-sided</i>	A very claims the Yes and No camps both mislead. He writes: "I realised some time ago that the EU is used in the Scottish debate in a misleading way, with 'unionists' presenting the EU as a major handicap to independence, and 'independentists' adopting a simplistic approach to the EU.		The Herald, 23.03.2014
<i>diagnosis</i>	¿Catalunya expulsada de la UE? Lo importante sería seguir participando en el espacio económico europeo, y España no podría evitarlo	Is Catalonia forced to be expelled from the EU? The important thing would be to continue participating in the European Economic Area, and Spain could not avoid it	<i>El Periodico</i> , 09.12.2013, p. 7
<i>prognostic</i>	Despite unionist scaremongering, all the evidence points to the fact that an independent Scotland will remain an integral part of the European Union and will not have to re-apply for EU membership.		The Courier, 15.09.2012, September 15: EU negotiations need to start soon
<i>motivational</i>	However, I think that the referendum is likely to ensure that Scotland will realise that the only way to protect our interest within the EU is to be an independent country.		The Herald, 30.10.2014, p.14