Party goals and regional coalition governments:
Explaining Spanish state-wide parties' strategies

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Abstract

In compounded polities, political parties need to coordinate their electoral and governing strategies across the central and the regional tiers of government. The coalition game is also more complex, especially for the state-wide parties (SWPs) which alternate in government at the central level, as their need for cohesiveness across party levels is higher and the quest for vertical congruence across institutional levels is more pressing. This paper aims to gauge when SWPs will prefer to craft regional coalition cabinets rather than governing alone or staying in opposition providing or not support to the governing party(ies). We show that multi-level dynamics matter for SWPs' regional government formation strategies, particularly their minority/majority status at the central level substantially affects how they behave at the regional level.

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Introduction[*]

The bulk of literature on coalitions has traditionally focused on national governments. So far, very few studies have shifted their attention to the regional level (Bäck, 2004; Colomer and Martínez, 1995; Downs, 1998; Reniu, 2005; Ştefuriuc, 2007, 2009; Rodríguez Teruel et al., 2008). Pragmatically, the regional level provides researchers the opportunity to examine coalition formation within a single country while counting with a relatively large number of cases. Regional-level approaches also allow controlling for a range of systemic factors identified by the literature (Laver, 1989).

Notwithstanding, the study of coalitions at the regional level is interesting per se. Political decentralization has been one of the most notable worldwide trends in recent decades, especially since the 1990s (Hopkin, 2009; Swenden and Maddens 2009). In compounded polities, party competition at different levels has implications for party organisation and party strategies (Roller and van Houten 2003; Deschouwer 2003; Detterbeck and Hepburn, 2010) and political parties need to coordinate their action across layers of government, basically between the central and the regional arenas (Hopkin, 2003). In addition, the coalition game presents particular characteristics in multi-level settings. Firstly, operating simultaneously in different party systems, deals might be reached with diverse partners from a different negotiating position due to potentially dissimilar electoral results or seats weight in the respective legislative institution (Ştefuriuc, 2009: 94). Secondly, political parties might simultaneously pursue different goals at different levels (Downs, 1998). The study of coalitions in multi-level contexts also allows distinguishing party goals according to their territorial pervasiveness (Reniu, 2011: 119), namely state-wide and non-state-wide parties (SWPs and NSWPs henceforth, respectively). SWPs compete in all districts in all elections whereas NSWPs contest regional and/or national elections in one or few regions. So, the coalition game is potentially more complex for the former, especially for the largest SWPs, which are in fact governing parties at the central level, as their need for cohesiveness across party levels is higher and the quest for vertical congruence across institutional levels is more pressing. In these contexts, coalitions have been defined as "nested games" given that governing strategies at the central and regional levels are, in fact, interconnected (Ştefuriuc, 2007).

This paper builds on this emerging sub-field of research on coalitions by examining Spanish SWPs' governing strategies at the regional level from the early 1980s to 2011, comprising both the first and the most recent regional elections. The Spanish case is intriguing for various reasons. On the one hand, regional governments hold significant power and have their own representative institutions. Spanish regions, the so-called autonomous communities (*comunidades autónomas*), whose governing resources and political visibility have expanded as decentralization advanced, have become key arenas for determining and implementing policy (Heller, 2002; Swenden and Maddens, 2009). On the other hand, the co-existence of the centre-periphery cleavage in a few regions but not in the rest has generated significant heterogeneity among the seventeen regional party systems with significant consequences for government formation. For example, departing from central-level patterns in Spain (Reniu, 2011), in minority situations, minority cabinets are very rare at the regional level and SWPs often need NSWPs to step in regional cabinets. Last, even if regional elections have been classified as second-order elections (Reiff and Schmitt, 1980; Jeffrey and Hough, 2003), dissimilarity of electoral outcomes and potential (vertical) incongruence of government composition across levels adds intricacy to policy making (Hamman and Mershon, 2008).

The paper primarily concentrates on the main Spanish SWPs, namely the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, PSOE) and the Popular Party (*Partido Popular*, PP). Given that the third largest SWP has no governing potential at the central level and its participation in regional coalition governments has been uncommon and quite recent, United Left (*Izquierda Unida*, IU) has been excluded from the empirical analysis.

Authors using a longitudinal perspective of regional government formation have focused on explaining the propensity of regional minority governments to form (Hamann and Mershon, 2008), and on congruence across the central and the regional levels (Ştefuriuc, 2007, 2009). In contrast to previous research, we seek to gauge when SWPs will prefer to craft a coalition cabinet rather than governing in a minority situation or staying in opposition providing or not support to the governing party(ies).

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The second section briefly introduces Spanish regional governments and SWPs' participation in them. The third section specifies our hypotheses and the fourth describes the data and measurement. The fifth section discusses the empirical findings in the light of our hypotheses. The last

section concludes and reflects on the potential refinements to the analysis to be introduced for further research.

SWPs and regional governments in Spain

As Detterbeck and Hepburn (2010: 124) remind us, "parties are struggling as much with the implications of state structural change resulting from multi-level governance in their internal organisation, as they are externally in their responses to new divisions of state powers". State decentralisation processes impact on the most relevant dimensions of party organisation, namely distributional conflicts over resources, the definition of platforms, and electoral and governing strategies (Downs, 1998; Chhibber and Kollman, 2004). As Ştefuriuc (2007: 45) argues "[the territorialisation of electoral competition] (…) requires parties to adapt to a dual logic, as the governing and opposition experiences might overlap in time across levels, and so might the governing-alone and the governing-in-coalition experiences".

Despite regions do not hold a collective veto power within Spain's political setting and have a minor institutionalised position in the policy-making process at the central level, horizontal mechanisms among regional governments and intergovernmental bodies have expanded over time, so SWPs might seek regional office as a means to coordinate the design and implementation of policies while in central government, or as a means to coordinate opposition strategies to the central government otherwise.

Higher competition at the regional level between the main SWPs has gone hand in hand, particularly in the last three elections, with increased regional power (see the regional authority index created by Hoogue et al., 2010). Thirteen Spanish regions have seen a strong increase in the combined vote share of SWPs and the mean vote share for all regions is currently over 80 per cent (cf. Wilson, 2010). Graph 1 shows the evolution of the regional power hold by the PSOE and the PP. As it can be seen, PSOE's predominance was overturn by the PP in 1995. From 1999 until 2011 regional power became much equilibrated between the main SWPs, with the PSOE taking the lead from 2003 until 2011. Yet, in 2011 regional power leaned again towards the PP. The conservatives currently participate in eleven regional cabinets whereas the PSOE does so in just four – two single-party governments and two coalitions in which the Socialists are actually the junior partner and do not hold the premiership.

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Throughout the 1980-2011 period, in several regions both SWPs have been dependent on the support they can grasp from NSWPs or quite unusually from another minor SWP, such as the Centre for Democratic Union (*Centro Democrático y Social*) in the late 1980s and the left-wing United Left (IU). Indeed, during the whole period under study SWP-SWP coalitions have only taken place three times, one in Castile Leon (1989-1991) between the PP and the CDS, and twice in Asturias between the PSOE and the IU (2003-2007 and 2008-2011).

Graph 1. SWPs' presence in regional governments, 1980-2011 (numbers)
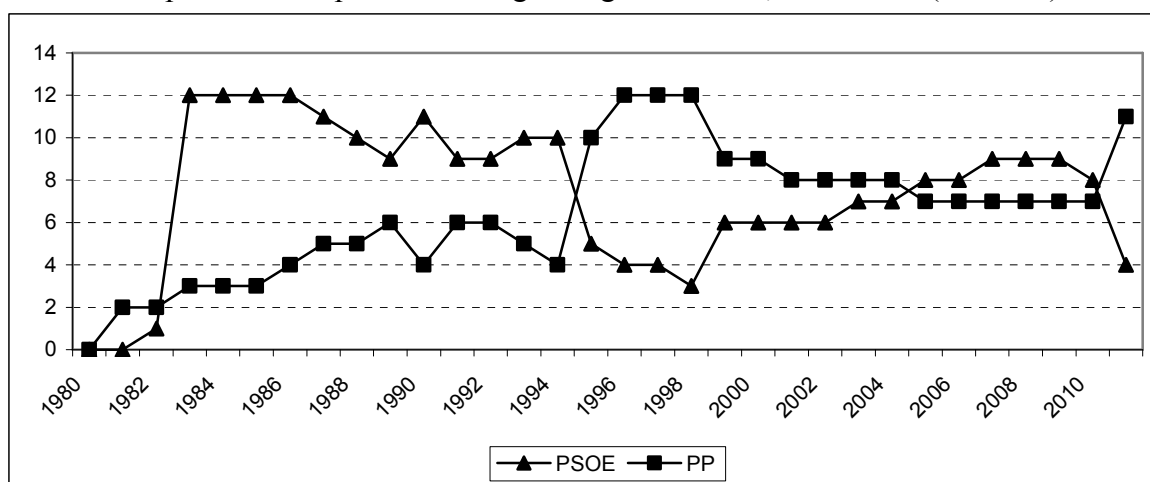
Source: Own elaboration.

As it can be seen in Table 1, from 1980 up to July 2011, 36% of all regional governments have been coalition governments with either a minority or majority status. In 49 out of 67 occasions a SWP was included in the coalition formula. Generally, regional coalition governments have been composed of a SWP and one or more NSWPs (generally one). These governing coalitions very often reciprocate support at the central level, with the NSWP providing parliamentary support to the SWP in the Spanish parliament (see Ştefuriuc, 2009 and Barrio et al., 2010).

Table 1. SWPs in regional governments, 1980-2011

Type of government	SWPs in government		No SWPs in government	TOTAL
	PSOE	PP		
Single-party	53 (67%)	56 (72%)	9 (33%)	118 (64%)
Coalition	26 (33%)	23 (28%)	17 (67%)	67 (36%)
TOTAL	79 (100%)	78 (100%)	26 (100%)	184 (100%)

Source: own elaboration, based on Stefuriuc (2007) and updated by the authors.
Note: Both single-party and coalition governments do not distinguish here majority or minority status.

It is interesting to note that, although SWPs tend to prefer single-party governments (of their own), only half the occasions in which a real dilemma existed (minority situations) they chose to – or were able to – govern alone, the other occasions SWPs forming a coalition with (mainly) NSWPs, especially the PSOE (see Rodríguez Teruel et al. 2008: 18). This is probably due to the fact that the PSOE is closer to the median and/or core position, as Graph 2 shows with data on parties' location in the two main dimensions of political competition, according to Spanish voters in 2010.

Graph 2. Party position in the two main dimensions of political competition
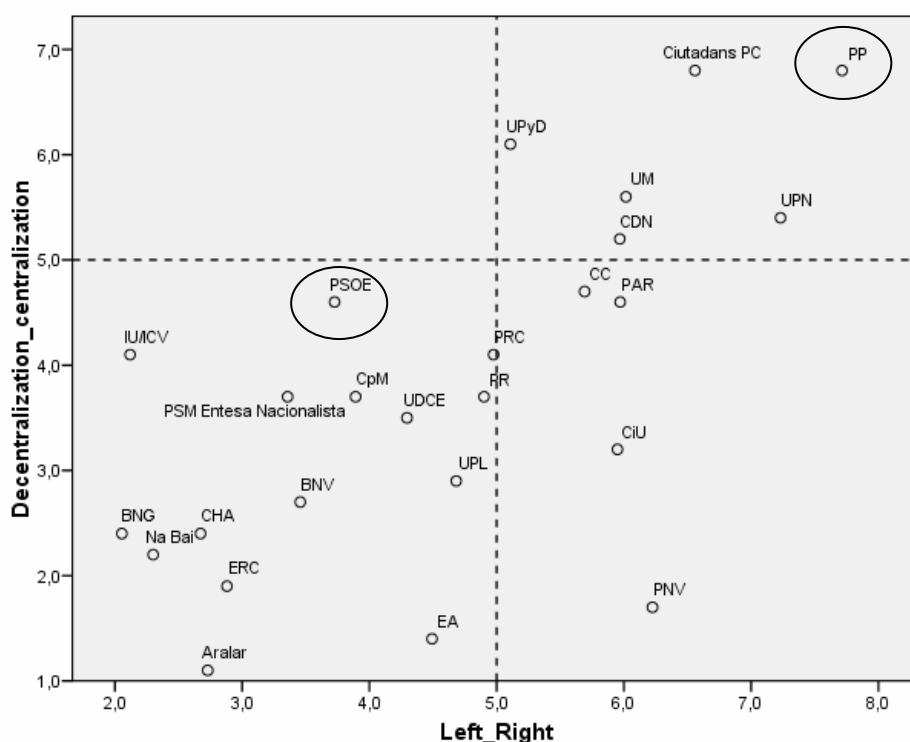
Source: Own elaboration based on CIS study number 2829 (2010).
Ideology: 0 (left) – 10 (right); decentralization: 0 (decentralization) – 10 (centralization).

SWP's strategies to regional government formation

In this paper our interest lies in examining when will SWPs choose to strike coalition deals with other allies, either forming a coalition government or supporting the investiture of another party's (NSWPs) PM from the opposition. Thus, our main dependent variable is the governing strategy chosen by SWPs: single-party, coalition, supporting party, and opposition (see next section for wider definition of the categories). In particular, we are interested in the central-regional linkages which work

as determinants for government formation in the Spanish regions, one of the most decentralised countries in Western Europe.

> In unitary systems, coalition formation can be a complex game, yet the determinants of coalition formation at the national level belong mostly to the same level of party action. […] On the contrary, decentralized systems come by default with a need to coordinate party action across levels of governance […]. In such settings, political parties operate simultaneously in different party systems, hold different weights therein and need to strike deals with possibly different partners at different levels. All this adds to the complexity of the coalition game (Ştefuriuc, 2009: 93-4).

Literature on coalitions' vertical congruence (i.e. the situation in which the party composition of a regional government coincides with that of the central government) claims that it is in the interest of SWPs to step into congruent coalitions so as to smooth intergovernmental relations and bring them into the internal party arena to ensure that regional governments have a fluid relationship with the central executive. The higher the number of regional coalitions led by or integrated with the governing party's regional branches, the more intergovernmental relations between the centre and the territorial units resemble relations within political parties thus avoiding (or reducing) inter-party conflict (cf. Ştefuriuc, 2009: 94). According to Colomer and Martínez (1995), several parties can agree on simultaneously exchange their votes in a set of parliaments and, acting rationally in their own self-interest, they can reach coalitional agreements that are apparently paradoxical. As Ştefuriuc (2009) puts it, since SWPs play the two-level game, a larger set of payoffs is opened for them: "the losses at one level can be compensated with benefits at the other".

It is widely agreed that political parties value office, policy and votes, although different parties might assign a different priority to each of these goals (Strom, 1990a) and some situations may entail trade-offs between them (Müller and Strom 1999). We assume that (at least) the largest SWPs, especially those obtaining enough seats to produce single-party cabinets at the central level, are office-maximizers and will always seize any opportunity to govern the central institutions. We also assume that government survival at the central level will be the main goal of a governing SWP. When its position is weak enough to depend on the votes of other parties to gain the investiture, make policies, and/or survive until next election, then the party's strategies for government formation at the regional level will be subject to its central level needs,

engaging in a pattern of vote-exchange across levels. SWPs' goals in regional office will then be instrumental. Hence, our first general hypothesis is the following:

> Hypothesis 1: *The situation of a SWP at the central level will affect its government formation strategies at the regional level.*

As said, up to date only single-party governments have reached central office in Spain. However, majority and minority governments have alternated in cabinet. In fact, since 1982 to 2011, the proportion of single-party minority governments has been 50 per cent. These types of governments have relied on the support of other parties in the legislature, and stable agreements with parliamentary supporting parties amount to camouflaged or informal governing coalitions (Strom, 1990b). Following the idea of inter-dependence across levels, we expect SWPs' strategies at the regional level to be especially conditioned by the central level when they are in a single-party minority government. Therefore, we posit our second hypothesis:

> Hypothesis 2: *A minority situation at the central level will make SWPs more likely to pursue 'coalition' and 'supporting' strategies as opposed to 'single-party' and 'opposition' ones at the regional level.*

Although the above hypotheses may apply to SWPs' general strategies at the regional level, the asymmetrical elements of the Spanish political system lead us to think that strong differences across regions will exist. Apart from asymmetry in their levels of fiscal autonomy and differences in their constitutional tracks to autonomy (fast-track versus slow-track regions), regions do also diverge in terms of the strength of their NSWPs. Besides the larger SWPs, the PSOE, the PP, and the smaller IU, four NSWPs have traditionally been well represented in the Congress of Deputies (*Congreso*): the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV, from the Basque Country), Convergence and Union (CiU, from Catalonia), and Canary Coalition (CC, from Canary Islands) and, more recently, Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC, from Catalonia). These parties are occasionally pivotal for the formation of a parliamentary majority at the central level (see Barrio et al., 2010). Other NSWPs, although pretty strong in their

respective regional parliaments,[1] are small and infrequently represented in the Spanish *Congreso*. Given these regional differences regarding the potential influence of NSWPs at the central level, we qualify the second hypothesis and state our third one:

> Hypothesis 3: *A minority situation at the central level will make SWPs more likely to pursue 'coalition' and 'supporting' strategies as opposed to 'single-party' and 'opposition' ones at the regional level, especially in the influential regions.*[2]

Hence, we take the general claim from the literature on multi-level coalition congruence that parties' strategies at both levels are interdependent, but argue that SWPs will not be especially interested in congruence *per se* but simply engage in a vote-exchange pattern across levels to ensure the survival of the central government when they are in a minority situation there.[3]

Data and Methods

The universe of our empirical analysis is Spanish regional governments, from 1980 to 2011. However, departing from conventional wisdom in comparative research of national governments, we consider only those cabinets formed immediately after new elections. A notable proportion of new cabinet formations during the term (inter-election formations) in Spanish regional executives are due to rather unclear changes in the party affiliation or parliamentary group membership of concrete legislators. As a consequence, the strength balance between parties in parliament does also change and, thus, new majorities might sustain new governments. These changes in legislators' affiliation/membership are quite difficult to identify but they might crucially modify the bargaining strength of each party. Hence, we have decided to exclude these cabinets from the analyses and keep post-election formations only. Applying these criteria the number of cabinets in our database adds up to 138.

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[1] In fact, they frequently participate in coalitions in their regions, such as the PAR (Aragon), CDN (Navarre), EA (Basque Country), and PRC (Cantabria), among others (see Reniu, 2005 and Rodríguez Teruel et al., 2010).
[2] See next section to see which regions fall into this category.
[3] It is important to note that it is beyond the scope of this paper to adopt an integral approach to government formation in Spanish regional governments. There is certainly a greater number of variables at play to understand what types of government finally form. However, in this paper we are just interested in providing evidence for the interdependence of SWPs' government formation strategies across levels.

More specifically, we are interested in evaluating SWPs' strategic choices for each regional government formation. Therefore, for each government two observations are created: one for the PSOE and one for the PP, as both parties might be deciding what strategy to pursue and even negotiating simultaneously with the same potential partners in order to obtain their support for a single-party cabinet, for forming a coalition, or for engaging in a vote exchange across institutional levels. Methodologically this choice allows us expanding the number of observations, which then mount to 275, 138 for the PSOE and 137 for the PP.[4]

Following Hamann and Mershon (2008: 118), we define parties as "recognizable teams". If a group of politicians, even if they formally belong to separate parties, contest elections under the same label we treat them as one party. This applies to the Catalan nationalist NSWP federation Convergence and Union (*Convergència i Unió*, CiU) as well as the electoral coalitions the PP integrated in during the 1980s and early 1990s (such as *Coalición Popular* or *Coalición Democrática*). Different parties are also considered as one organisation if they regularly constitute a single parliamentary group. This is the case of the Party of the Catalan Socialists (*Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya*) PSC which substitutes organisationally for the PSOE in Catalonia and of the Navarrese People's Union (*Unión del Pueblo Navarro*, UPN); where it does so for the PP in Navarre (see Verge and Barberà, 2009). Although formally independent parties, for the purposes of the empirical analysis the PSC and the UPN are considered part of the PSOE and the PP organisations, respectively, given that they do not compete against each other and they do not form separate parliamentary groups.[5]

All throughout the paper we will understand SWPs' regional coalition strategies as coming from the central party leadership. Given that multi-level electoral politics introduces centrifugal pressures on SWPs (see Hough and Jeffrey, 2006), we can imagine a situation in which a regional branch strikes a coalition deal while the central party opposes it. Nonetheless, in the Spanish case, the two main SWPs remain significantly vertically integrated parties (Fabre, 2011; Thorlakson, 2009, 2011), and the central level clearly prevails when it comes to governing strategies. Whereas political decentralisation has clearly shaped parties' electoral and governing strategies and they all organise according to the structure of the state, their internal decentralisation has

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[4] This difference is due to the fact that the PP did not obtain parliamentary representation in the Catalan elections of 1980.

[5] As an exception to this general rule, the UPN and the PP are considered as different parties in the Navarrese regional elections of 1983, 1987, and 2011, since both parties run then in separate lists.

remained quite modest. To our knowledge, in the past twenty years, there have been very few cases in which the central party has de-authorised the coalition agreement reached by a regional party branch, which means that regional governing strategies are either decided at the central level or consensually agreed between party levels.[6]

Dependent variable

Our main dependent variable is SWPs' governing strategy at the regional level. We have created a nominal variable with four categories, namely single-party, coalition, supporting party and opposition – see description in Table 2.

Table 2. SWPs' governing strategy at the regional level

Single-party	Coalition	Supporting	Opposition
It includes no other partner.	It includes the SWP and other partners (mainly NSWPs but eventually another SWP), either in a minority or majority situation.	It supports the investiture of another party's regional PM, irrespective of casting a positive vote or abstaining.	It votes against the investiture of another party's regional PM.

A couple of caveats are in order here. First, for those situations in which a party obtains the majority of seats in parliament it is intuitively easy to guess that 'single-party' or 'opposition' will be the predominant if not unique courses of action. Nonetheless, it is still possible for majority parties to build oversized coalitions or to receive the support of other SWPs in the investiture vote. Hence, we have decided to run the analyses on two different samples: one with all post-election formations, and another one where we exclude those scenarios where one party obtained more than 50 per cent of the seats. Second, the supporting-party role is defined as the SWP voting or abstaining in the investiture of the regional government.[7] Although one might consider that this role entails more than casting a vote in this single occasion, empirical evidence shows that there are very few cases of stable parliamentary collaboration of a SWP (either the PP or the PSOE) towards regional governments not integrated by them.

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[6] In 2007 PSOE's regional branch in Navarre was about to close a coalition pact with several NSWPs when negotiations were abruptly called off by the party central leadership (see Fabre 2008). Regarding IU, although we do not examine this party here, after the 2011 regional elections the Extremadura regional branch contravened the central party instructions to support the investiture of the PSOE candidate and supported instead (through abstention) the investiture of the PP candidate.

[7] We have also considered as an 'opposition' strategy those abstentions cast in regional parliaments where it is not possible to openly vote against the investiture of a candidate, then abstention being equivalent to a negative vote.

Independent variables

As stated in the hypotheses, our main purpose is to identify to what extent multi-level dynamics matter for SWPs' strategies in regional government formations. More concretely, we want to know whether the situation of the SWP at the central level (namely, in the Spanish parliament and, subsequently, in the Spanish government) affects the course of action the party decides to take in the different autonomous communities at the time to form a (post-election) government. Hence, our main independent variables refer to the situation of the SWP at the central level.

- *Central Government (IN/OUT - MAJ/MIN)*: These are a series of dummies coding whether the party rules the central government (*IN*) or is in opposition (*OUT*), and whether the governing party commands a majority of seats in the Spanish parliament on its own (*MAJ*) or not (*MIN*). The reference category in the analyses including these dummies is *Central Government (OUT - MIN)*.

- *Central Government (IN - MAJ/MIN) – NON-/INFL. REG.*: In the second set of analyses we directly address the importance of the strength/weakness of the party in the central government. That is why we have produced the dummy of being in a majority (*MAJ*) versus being in a minority (*MIN*) cabinet, and combined it with the type of region in which the formation negotiation takes place. The regions have been classified as potentially influential (*INFL. REG*) for central government formations or non-influential (*NON-INFL. REG*). As explained in the previous section, the former include the Basque Country, Catalonia, and the Canary Islands.[8] We expect the influence of SWPs' majority/minority situation in the Spanish executive on the regional government formation strategies to be very different depending on the particular region we study. This is essentially why we combine both elements in these dummies.

- *Regional Government (Majority Seats)*: This is basically a control dichotomous variable that takes the value '1' when the party has the majority of seats in the regional parliament and '0' otherwise. Obviously, this variable is automatically dropped from the analyses where the reduced sample is used.

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[8] Including Galicia in this group does not significantly change the results of the analyses.

- *PP*: This dummy identifies the SWP party in the analyses ('1' for PP and '0' for PSOE). Hence, the specified statistical models are party fixed-effect regressions.

Given the categorical nature of our dependent variable, we run multinomial logistic regressions where the strategy 'opposition' is specified as the reference category. Since we have two observations for each post-election government formation and the strategies of both the PSOE and the PP are likely to be closely linked, we have specified government clustered standard errors. It is also worth mentioning that, as the reader will see in the next section, the empirical results are displayed in two different tables. In the first one we consider the general situation of the SWP in the Spanish parliament, whereas in the second one we concentrate on the minority situation of the central government combined with the type of region mentioned above.

Results and Discussion

Tables 3 and 4 offer the estimates of the effect of multi-level variables on the governmental formation strategies of the two largest Spanish SWPs. The samples in both tables are in turn split between (i) all post-election formation situations (models 1 and 2), and (ii) those in which no single party obtained the majority of seats (models 3 and 4). We understand that the latter are those formation scenarios that have more substantive interest; as they do not allow for the formation of a single-party government automatically, all parties have therefore a real opportunity to *choose* their strategy (i.e. our dependent variable). On the contrary, when a single party reaches 50 per cent of seats in a regional parliament, the formation game does not entail any problematic bargaining, as the latter can always stand on its own in office not depending on the support of any other party. Nonetheless, we also run the analyses considering the majority scenarios since, potentially, an oversized coalition can also form and the other parties might choose to support the investiture of the government instead of opposing it. We expect the control *Regional Government (Majority Seats)* to explain most of the variance in the multinomial logistic regression and to highly determine the dependent variable choice 'single-party'.

In Table 3 we can see that the status of the PSOE and the PP at the central government has a significant yet modest impact on their governmental strategies or

possibilities at the regional level. In model (1) we can see that holding the central government makes the PSOE and the PP more likely to form single-party regional cabinets. However, when we only consider minority situations at the regional level, the effect of being the ruling party in the central executive vanishes (model 3). This finding might suggest that the central and regional governmental status of SWPs tend to go hand in hand: those years in which the party is strong enough to form a single-party government at the central level are precisely those years in which the party tends to be powerful in the regions as well (to form single-party majority governments there).

The evidence offered by models (2) and (4) seem to reinforce this idea. When we consider not only whether the SWP holds the central office or not, but also if it is a majority or a minority government, a similar pattern emerges. When either the PP or the PSOE lead the central government with a majority of seats in parliament, they also tend to be able to form a government on their own at the regional level, both considering all regional formation situations or only those that entail a real bargaining (i.e. minority ones). Interestingly, this relationship does not emerge when the party holds the government in Madrid but it needs to close deals with other parties as it does not control the majority of seats in the *Congreso de los Diputados*.

The evidence provided in Table 3 verifies that when a SWP is strong at the central level it also tends to be so at the regional level but it tells us little about how do PSOE's and PP's positions at the central level determine the strategies they choose at the regional level. In particular, we are especially interested in evaluating whether a weak position in the central government makes the SWPs behave differently vis-à-vis the other parties when the time to form a regional government arrives. This is what Table 4 directly addresses.

As stated above, we expect that the necessity to obtain the support of other parties when being in a minority situation at the central level (both for investiture and for the passage of bills) will incline SWPs to pursue a more cooperative strategy at the regional level. That is, when participating in the regional government, we expect the SWP in the minority central government to be more likely to invite other parties in the regional executive through a coalition. When in opposition, we expect the SWP to be more likely to support the investiture of a NSWP in the regional government rather than opting for an outright opposing strategy.

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Table 3. SWPs' cross-level strategies to regional governments

| | All Formation Situations | | | | | | Only Minority Formation Situations | | | | | |
| | Model (1) | | | Model (2) | | | Model (3) | | | Model (4) | | |
	Single-Party	Coalition	Supporting	Single-Party	Coalition	Supporting	Single-Party	Coalition	Supporting	Single-Party	Coalition	Supporting
Central Government (IN)	0.858**	-0.116	-0.186				0.761	-0.212	0.032			
	(0.406)	(0.564)	(0.672)				(0.464)	(0.671)	(0.814)			
Central Government (OUT - MAJ)				0.283	0.016	-0.277				0.620	0.346	-1.290
				(0.765)	(0.537)	(0.738)				(0.796)	(0.580)	(1.165)
Central Government (IN - MIN)				0.379	0.065	0.265				0.765	0.414	0.442
				(0.792)	(0.673)	(0.816)				(0.887)	(0.816)	(0.902)
Central Government (IN - MAJ)				1.487**	-0.392	-14.655***				1.298**	-0.632	-15.208***
				(0.629)	(0.714)	(0.677)				(0.651)	(0.812)	(0.773)
Regional Government (Majority Seats)	19.578***	0.078	0.026	19.376***	0.132	0.163						
	(0.322)	(0.174)	(0.330)	(0.431)	(0.238)	(0.395)						
PP	-0.042	-0.371	0.644	-0.099	-0.361	0.714	-0.404	-0.734	-0.032	-0.410	-0.749	-0.021
	(0.412)	(0.567)	(0.665)	(0.440)	(0.572)	(0.690)	(0.469)	(0.667)	(0.812)	(0.476)	(0.675)	(0.842)
Constant	-2.235***	-1.202**	-2.764***	-2.362***	-1.217**	-2.675***	-1.356***	-0.323	-2.103***	-1.692***	-0.491	-1.688*
	(0.301)	(0.490)	(0.654)	(0.570)	(0.540)	(0.848)	(0.324)	(0.584)	(0.814)	(0.604)	(0.640)	(0.910)
Observations	275	275	275	275	275	275	141	141	141	141	141	141
Pseudo-R^2	0.333	0.333	0.333	0.350	0.350	0.350	0.020	0.020	0.020	0.062	0.062	0.062

Clustered Standard Errors in Parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

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Table 4 shows that being a minority central government slightly increases the likelihood of offering support to the investiture of another party at the regional level – only when considering minority formation situations (model 3). The magnitude of this effect is rather limited though. We have previously posited that the type of region should be taken into account: the effect should be particularly strong in those regions having NSWPs which are able to influence politics at the central level. That is, the PSOE or the PP, when in minority in the central executive, will be especially interested to buy the support of those parties which can help them pass policies and, therefore, grant the survival of the central minority government.

As said, the regions in which these parties exist have been typically the Basque Country, Catalonia, and the Canary Islands. Models 2 and 4 show that, in these autonomous communities, SWPs' strategy when not commanding a majority at the central level strongly varies. While in the other regions (NON-INFL. REG.) the situation of the SWP in the central government does not seem to matter for its regional government formation strategy, in the influential regions (INFL. REG.) it does play a role. A SWP in minority at the central level seems to opt for more inter-party cooperation by inviting other parties in a regional coalition government (models 2 and 4) or by supporting NSWP's investiture from outside government (model 4).

One could argue that this pattern is entirely due to the fact that these regions have a different party system with more fragmentation, making single-party governments less likely and thus automatically increasing the probability that SWPs participate in a coalition or support a minority government from the opposition. Although that might be partially true, the situation in the central government does also have an important influence as suggested by the comparison between the coefficients of Central Government *(IN - MAJ) – INFL. REG.* and *(IN - MIN) – INFL. REG.*: the coefficients of the latter for the choices 'coalition' and 'supporting' are systematically higher than the former. Within influential regions, holding a minority central government makes SWPs more prone to close regional coalition deals, either in the form of a multi-party cabinet or supporting another NSWP's regional PM investiture from the opposition benches.

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Table 4. Minority SWPs' central governments and influential regions

| | All Formation Situations | | | | | | Only Minority Formation Situations | | | | | |
| | Model (1) | | | Model (2) | | | Model (3) | | | Model (4) | | |
	Single-Party	Coalition	Supporting	Single-Party	Coalition	Supporting	Single-Party	Coalition	Supporting	Single-Party	Coalition	Supporting
Central Government (IN - MIN)	-0.527 (0.582)	0.198 (0.476)	0.764 (0.640)				-0.153 (0.625)	0.548 (0.547)	1.369* (0.740)			
Central Government (IN - MAJ) – REG. (1)				-1.840* (1.011)	0.039 (0.464)	2.262*** (0.862)				-2.474** (1.007)	-0.600 (0.465)	0.905 (0.972)
Central Government (IN - MIN) – REG. (0)				-0.905 (0.647)	-0.134 (0.557)	0.635 (1.305)				-0.512 (0.719)	0.232 (0.665)	0.772 (1.313)
Central Government (IN - MIN) – REG. (1)				-0.166 (1.146)	1.423* (0.767)	3.804*** (1.182)				-0.988 (1.146)	0.585 (0.773)	2.791** (1.154)
Regional Government (Majority Seats)	19.605*** (0.321)	0.076 (0.195)	-0.000 (0.396)	19.555*** (0.370)	0.170 (0.224)	0.993* (0.586)						
PP	-0.612 (0.540)	-0.249 (0.487)	1.013 (0.638)	-0.669 (0.560)	-0.257 (0.484)	1.057 (0.673)	-0.816 (0.590)	-0.484 (0.551)	0.374 (0.743)	-0.897 (0.634)	-0.511 (0.555)	0.411 (0.752)
Constant	-1.382*** (0.341)	-1.368*** (0.339)	-3.280*** (0.601)	-1.110*** (0.348)	-1.374*** (0.368)	-4.431*** (1.047)	-0.711** (0.360)	-0.679* (0.366)	-2.739*** (0.694)	-0.225 (0.368)	-0.471 (0.394)	-3.207*** (1.021)
Observations	275	275	275	275	275	275	141	141	141	141	141	141
Pseudo-R²	0.332	0.332	0.332	0.371	0.371	0.371	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.072	0.072	0.072

Clustered Standard Errors in Parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

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Concluding remarks

In Western Europe, the regional tier of government has acquired an increased authority and visibility in the past decades. Besides introducing new implications for party organisation, government formation in multi-level polities requires parties to coordinate their governing action across levels. This need is especially pressing for SWPs whose governing and opposition experiences overlap in time across levels (cf. Ştefuriuc, 2007: 45). Therefore, the analysis of the central-regional linkages of government formation requires further investigation.

Our paper has engaged in this emerging field of research concentrating on SWPs' governing strategies at the regional level with a view to disentangle under what conditions SWPs will prefer to craft regional coalition cabinets rather than governing alone or staying in opposition providing or not support to the governing party(ies). The empirical analysis of regional government formation in Spain for the entire democratic period (1980-2011) allows us to safely conclude that multi-level dynamics do matter to understand SWPs' government formation strategies at the regional level.

The status of a SWP at the central level substantially affects how it will behave at the regional level. We have shown that being in the central government (and in particular when holding a majority of seats) makes the SWP more likely to form a single-party on its own at the regional level. Yet, this only suggested a sort of a timing correlation between the electoral strength of the party at both levels. Alternatively, we have also found that having a weak position in the central government (i.e. minority status) causes the SWP to pursue more cooperative formation strategies at the regional level, but only in those regions whose party system includes NSWPs which are potentially influential at the central level. Put it differently, the need for the support of other parties in the *Congreso* significantly conditions the SWP's strategy in those regions where potentially supporting parties at the central level exist, whereas in the other regions SWPs seem to act rather independently of their status in Madrid.

Departing from this first draft, there are numerous avenues for future research we are interested in pursuing, especially since regional coalitions remain clearly under studied. On the one hand, we plan to more carefully distinguish the potential similarities and dissimilarities at the regional level between the PSOE and the PP and to take into account how their respective strategies might have evolved as electoral competition between them became closer.

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On the other hand, as our objects of study are dynamic (both regional institutional powers and party systems are yet evolving), we are also interested in tracing what changes (if any) have SWPs' strategies experienced through time. For one thing, the larger and the more substantive shared-competences are the more vertical congruence matters. Besides, although the implementation of the policy agenda of central-level minority governments might be smoother the higher the vertical congruence among the central and the regional governments is, both issues of legitimacy and effectiveness (e.g. in the form of fewer conflicts of competences) might make majority central governments dependent on regional support too. Due to its numerous access points, the regional arena constitutes an important tribune for state-wide opposition as a means to confront the governing SWP's policies, so the latter might also try to protect itself from this type of opposition by seeking control of as many regional cabinets as possible.

Finally, future versions of the paper could also consider the inclusion of other control variables related to the degree of electoral competition at both the central and regional levels between the PP and the PSOE, as well as between these parties and the main NSWP in each region, variables measuring whether SWPs occupy the core or median position in the different regional party systems, or variables capturing the regional institutional setting.

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