Changing Political Boundaries: Evidence from a Party Ban

Jose Maycas Sardi

Supervisor: Andreu Arenas*

Abstract

In this study we analyze whether party bans ignite ideological polarization by exacerbating pre-existing differences. We use the 2003 ban on Batasuna, a leftist Basque political platform, as case study. In the 2005 Basque regional elections EHAK-PCTV contested in its name, which enabled the outlawed party to avoid the ban. We aim to analyze these effects in the shortterm, one election period later. Using a continuous treatment in a Difference-in-Difference strategy, we are able to show that municipalities react differently given their differences in baseline support to Batasuna (measured by pre-ban vote shares in regional elections), rather than by differences in the loss of institutional representation (proxied by the pre-ban share of Batasuna councilors). The latter case holds in extreme circumstances, those in which the city mayor was from Batasuna, as the material loss of the ban is more salient. We find that the banned party increased its vote share in those places where its baseline support, redefining group boundaries. We argue that the ban reinforced the ethnic identity political cleavage accentuating the inter-group political conflict.

Keywords- Polarization, ethnic politics, identity voting, party bans

JEL classification: D02, D72, D74, J15

*University of Barcelona and IEB, Barcelona, Spain; and reu. arenas@ub.edu

This corresponds to the Final Thesis in the MSc in Economics at the Universitat de Barcelona. I am very thankful to Andreu, who has been an incredible suprvisor and who has been very close to me during all the process. I would also like to thank Joan Calzada and Pilar Sorribas for their help provided during these two years. Finally, to all my colleagues, especially Lander and Pablo.

1 Introduction

Liberal democracies face challenges whenever platforms with antidemocratic behaviors emerge. Although pluralism and free speech are central pillars of the democratic values, the raise of antidemocratic behaviors within political actors can erode its main principles. Thus, some States have come with the solution of banning political platforms, considered by the established elites as too extreme, under the claim of protecting the system (Bourne, 2018). Banning extreme positions is in line with the democratic and tolerance paradox developed by Popper (1944), in which the denial of antidemocratic behaviors and intolerance of intolerant positions are needed to preserve a tolerant and democratic society.

This study does not pursue to answer the question whether a political party should be banned or not. However, it wants to address its electoral consequences. Even though a democracy may ban to avoid the arrival of extremist positions within its population, a party ban may exacerbate such behaviors given the democratic contradiction of outlawing and the perception of ideological repression by the State, which may ignite further hard-liner positions.

Hence, the 2003 ban on Batasuna¹ will be used as case study, which ruled the party out of contesting the Basque local elections in such year. However, in the 2005 Basque regional elections, the **EHAK-PCTV** contested in the name of Batasuna. This event has been analyzed in Arenas (2016) and Arenas (2021), to obtain the share of expressive voters and analyze the long-term electoral impact of the ban in local elections, respectively. Even so, in this case, we aim to analyze whether the banned party gained support after the ban in the following regional elections, just two years later. But mainly we want to know whether this resulted in polarization by answering the following questions: **Do bans exacerbate preexisting differences? Do bans lead to more extreme positions within each bloc? Is the effect driven by the institutional representation loss or by the pre-ban baseline support?**

¹Batasuna was a leftist independentist party from the Spanish region of the Basque Country and the political wing of the terrorist group ETA.

When it comes to party bans, the State, through its judicial body, may make use of them to avoid democratic value erosion or the emergence of antidemocratic attitudes within the society. It can also be used in weaker democracies when transitioning from (or to) autocratic regimes to reinforce the ruling party (Miller, 2021).

In established democracies the use of party bans is related to the impossibility of maintaining order protection when a party's means or ends are considered illegal. For instance, Canu (1997) shows that, in the nineties, Germany opted for the outlaw strategy when the neo-Nazi platform NPD emerged, meanwhile France did not attempt any ban on the extreme right party FN. She argues that the Germans built their democracy around the strategy of protecting the nation from extremist platforms, to prevent social disorder, while the French gave more importance to the right of free speech. Moreover, the fact of having a past authoritarian regime within the last century makes the use of party bans more frequent and its acceptance among the society more likely.

Generally, when a State opts for a party ban, it wants to isolate intolerant attitudes. When a party outlaw takes place, different consequences within the population can be expected. One of them is the radicalization of the persecuted party and a growing militancy around it (Minkenberg, 2006). Alternatively, a party ban can reinforce mainstream positions (Bale, 2007). This is in line with the use of party bans as a signal to radical believes. Status-quo is maintained by raising a social cost towards the intolerant behavior (through the change in social norms).

According to Minkenberg (2006), in most cases, violence is used as legal rationale to repress and delegitimize extremist movements and political platforms. Basedau and Moroff (2011) study party bans in the context of inter-communal conflict across ethnicities in Africa. When political competition is identity-based, it is likely to expect in- and out-group identity reinforcement. However, they show no evidence of party bans as a deterrent to violence in Sub-Saharan countries.

Even though the State's political body pusues outlawing, the legitimization of the ban falls upon the court sentence. The extremist platform will most likely emphasize the fact of being used as target by the established elites, which may result in a greater support as a backlash response. Van Spanje and De Vreese (2015) study the prosecution by hate speech of the Dutch Member of Parliament *Geert Wilders* from PVV, a far right party. They show how the likelihood of voting for such party increased in the short run and, after the non-convicting court ruling, it did so in the long run.

But, as we said, persecuting extreme and antidemocratic positions is also used as a signal to the society, which indirectly aims to lift an entry barrier towards extremist positions. This could be also achieved through political cooperation among mainstream parties, the so called *Cordon Sanitaire*, which intends to exclude the extreme ones. The former legitimizes the latter when cooperating in Parliament. For instance, when left aside, anti-immigration parties lose support among a very specific subset of voters, the instrumental voters, who in the long-run switch to other parties (Van Spanje and Van der Brug, 2009). Additionally, when this strategy is used as means of delegitimizing radical behaviors, what is expected is a change in the social norms. These are a good predictor of political behavior. A change in the social norms, due to the marginalization or banning on extreme positions would likely raise a social cost of exhibiting such behaviors publicly, resulting in a preference falsification (Valentim, 2022). Nevertheless, this behavioral change may not be a consequence of a change in preferences (Dinas *et al.*, 2022). Hence, the establishment and mainstream parties' positions are pivotal in determining the social costs of displaying radical believes.

However, when delegitimizing political actors, polarization can be fueled, as it may open a breach in the ideological spectrum and increase the rejection and intolerance of opposite ideas. The persecution of political parties will generate a narrative among these excluded groups which will foster polarization. Moreover, in order to generate political animosity, not only is important what the other bloc thinks about yours, in this case the established elites, but what you think they believe about you (Wilson *et al.*, 2020).

When such animosity between parties takes place, one is more likely to accept and tolerate policies that fall within one's ideological spectrum even though these are extreme policies (Axelrod *et al.*, 2021). On the other hand, when a single party and position is ostracized, a

moderate majority can be reinforced.

In a polarized society, when the political outcomes are zero-sum games the role of the media is crucial. When the media is biased and excludes different views, echo chambers are likely to appear. Furthermore, there is evidence that sorting into a specific information source can exacerbate prior believes (Martin and Yurukoglu, 2017). What is more, voters may reinforce their initial positions even when exposed to the same information, as a kind of cherry-picking (Baysan, 2021). So when delegitimizing a party, through a *Cordon Sanitaire* or a party ban, media plays a focal role in fueling either the support or the rejection of this action.

This specific case study is analyzing the polarization coming from a party ban in a context of identity politics. In the Basque Country there are two main identity groups: a Basque identity (which we will define it as ingroup) and a Spanish identity (outgroup). In the Basque Country, language is a deterministic element of the identity group (Tejerina, 1999), as it has been the cornerstone in the process of the Basque identity building community. Franco's dictatorship persecuted any nationalism or identity away from a Spanish national-Catholicism, so during the Spanish democratic transition there was a profound division towards the Basque language and identity across political parties. As a consequence, the language and parties' identity positions have been a political cleavage in the Basque society and its social cohesion. We have based the definition of cleavage as a political conflict based on socio-structural and collective identity characteristics of a given society (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967).

For decades, the Basque identity has been intergenerationally transmitted at the home place. According to Bisin and Verdier (2001), parents take into account several things when shaping their children's identity. On the one hand, parents may want to socialize their children in another culture if they perceive this will have gains in their children's future welfare, i.e. raising your daughter in a language different from yours if this will boost her future welfare. On the other hand, parents are myopic, in a such a way that they measure these welfare gains through their filter. So there is a kind of paternalistic altruism going on. This reconciles with the political institutions as the culture and the political decision processes are linked in the society. If we define a society in which there are mainly two identity groups: a majority and a minority group, the weight of each in the society will impact political preferences, outcomes and policies. In this sense, children socialization in any culture is the breeding ground of future political outcomes. The Basque identity is the majority group in the Basque Country, however they represent an ethnic minority among the Spanish society. Hence, they have had greater incentives to invest in intergenerational cultural transmission to make bigger the size of their group and foster ingroup political representation (Bisin and Verdier, 2000).

In this sense, identity and political preferences are very well connected in this context. The Basque identity group, generally, has preferences on greater autonomy, if not full independence from the Spanish State. Meanwhile, the Spanish identity group has political preferences that go from regional autonomy to full State centralization. Ansolabehere and Puy (2016) study the identity voting in the Basque Country. They indicate the existence of ingroup effects toward parties that share identity, being this the main political cleavage in the Basque regional elections. A centrist voter will shift towards a party that shares the same identity values, rather than to a party closer to her ideological preference but away from her identity. Thus, the ideological competition dimension folds on the cultural competition axis (Rovny and Polk, 2019).

This study, therefore, will analyze the ban on a political platform with a strong identity position in a context in which this is a cleavage issue. Thus, the outlaw may also have had consequences on a subset of voters away from this platform but who belong to the same identity group. Furthermore, as we will see later, the 2003 court decision came from an Organic Law² passed by the Spanish central government in 2002, which made the Basque Parliament to be against it.³ In this study we analyze the effects and disentangle the possible mechanism: Is this effect coming from places with high material losses (where there was a high institutional representation of the party) or from those places where the was a high

²The Spanish Tribunal Supremo (TS) executed the law "Ley Orgánica 06/2002" in 2003.

³The main Basque nationalist parties were against it, see La voz de Galicia, May 17, 2002.

baseline party support (independently of the prior institutional representation)? This would let us know whether the effect is driven by the inability of being institutionally represented or by a backlash response taking into account previous ideology.

Knowing the polarization consequences of a party ban is needed in a time in which extreme right parties have emerged in Western Europe and so has the debate along their ban.⁴ Moreover, some of these platforms glimpse the possibility of legally chasing parties once in power.⁵

The remainder of this paper goes as follows. Section 2 contains the framework of this case study. In section 3 we present the data, while in section 4 the identification strategy. Section 5 contains the main results. Finally, in section 6 we discuss the implications and conclusions.

2 Framework

2.1 ETA, Batasuna and the 2003 party ban

The radical Basque nationalism, based on the ideas of *Sabino Arana*, considers the Spanish State an invader and pursues a nation-state of its own, ethnically dominated by Basques (*euskaldunes*) (De La Granja Sainz, 2006).

During Franco's dictatorship, in 1959, a youth branch from **PNV** (Basque Nationalist Party) created ETA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*) as an intellectual clandestine organization with the objective of bringing back a militant and combative nationalism. Five years later, exploiting the labor union movement, it turned into a socialist organization,⁶ with belligerent violent means, becoming in the seventies a terrorist group (González, 2011).

During the democratic transition there was a breach within the terrorist organization

⁴Italy has an ongoing debate around outlawing post-fascist movements, see El País, October 15, 2021.

⁵Vox, an extreme right Spanish party, stated the possibility of banning independentist platforms, see La Vanguardia, September 13, 2020.

⁶ETA looked up to national liberation movements from different colonized countries as Algeria and Vietnam.

which divided it into ETAm (radical violence) and ETApm (pursuing political representation). The latter founded **EE** (*Euzkadiko Ezkerra*), a political party that contested the 1977 Spanish general elections. Given the organizational dispute between both groups, ETAm decided to lift up a new leftist coalition of parties founded in 1978, **HB** (*Herri Batasuna*).⁷ **HB** benefited from the terrorist group 's social capital, mobilization, popularity and money which enabled them to surpass **EE** in the 1979 Spanish general elections (Soldevilla, 2010). In 1997 a judge commanded the incarceration of the **HB** party leadership due to close links with the terrorist group, which made the party to rebrand itself around **EH** (*Euskal Herritarrok*).

In 2002 the Spanish government passed in congress Ley Orgánica 06/2002 which explicitly targets those parties that infringe the democratic freedom, justifies racism and xenophobia or politically support terrorist activities.⁸ In March 2003 the Spanish Supreme Court (*Tribunal Supremo*) banned **HB** and **EH**. This opened a new gap between the nationalist and the federal parties in the Basque Parliament.⁹ Arenas (2016) studies the immediate impact of the ban in the local elections of 2003. He is able to obtain the share of expressive voters (those for whom the vote is an end rather than a mean), which is quite high, around two-thirds of Batasuna's electoral base. This is in line with the identity politics context of the Basque Country, in which voters are inelastic with respect to changes in the electoral framework.

In this paper we will refer to **HB** and **EH** as Batasuna, for simplicity, as it is commonly known. Batasuna contested, ever since its foundation, the Spanish general elections and the Basque regional and local elections. Figure 1 depicts the distribution of the share of votes to Batasuna across municipalities in the last two regional and local elections prior to the ban. In the local elections there is a greater variety of parties in each municipality. Small municipalities are mainly dominated by *ad hoc* local platforms. From both maps we can distinguish a greater substitution from smaller municipalities (in population terms) towards

⁷HB constituted the coalition of ESB, ANV, HASI and LAIA, parties that were losing political strength within the left nationalism, known as *La mesa de Alsasua*.

 $^{^{8}}$ see BOE-A-2002-12756.

⁹see El País, September 10, 2003.

Batasuna in the regional elections. Table A2 contains the summary statistics of Batasuna's vote share in the Basque regional elections (1990-2005).





2.2 Basque elections

The Basque Country has 252 municipalities¹⁰ distributed along three provinces: Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa. Regional elections have taken place from 1980 onwards, generally every four years.¹¹ The elections follow a D'Hont formula, in which 3% is the threshold to obtain a seat in the Parliament. The Basque Parliament has 75 seats, 25 per province. This is a multiparty¹² system which sorts parties into two categories: regional and federal. The former are those parties which have only regional presence, while the latter are those which have presence all along Spain. Moreover, among the regional parties we can sort again in terms of nationalist positions. The main parties that have been contesting the elections in

 $^{^{10}}$ As in 2022. During the last decades it has increased the number of municipalities as many have splitted from bigger units.

¹¹This is the sequence of Basque regional elections until 2005: 1980, 1984, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2001, 2005.

¹²Table A1 contains the description of each party.

the nationalist bloc are: **EAJ-PNV**, **Batasuna**, **EA**¹³ and **Aralar**. These parties represent the entire ideological spectrum, left to right, within the nationalist bloc. On the other hand, among the federal bloc:¹⁴ **PSEE-PSOE** and **PP**.¹⁵

2.3 2005 regional elections

The 2005 elections were the first regional elections after the ban. **EHAK-PCTV** offered the platform to Batasuna to represent the left-nationalism (*izquierda abertzale*).¹⁶ Moreover, Aralar contested its first regional elections to capture swing voters from the Batusana electoral base. Table 1 presents the 2005 regional elections results in which **EAJ-PNV/EA** was the winner.

	Number of votes	Number of seats	+/- Seat
EAJ-PNV/EA	468,117	29	-4
PSE-EE	274,546	18	+5
PP	210,614	15	-4
EHAK-PCTV (Batasuna)	150,644	9	+2
EB-B	65,023	3	0
Aralar	28,180	1	+1
Turnout	1,223,634 (68%)		

Table 1: 2005 Regional Election results

Notes: (+/-) Seat refers to the seat gain/loss with respect to the 2001 regional elections. EHAK-PCTV +2 seat gain compares the result with that of EH in 2001.

 $^{13}\mathrm{In}$ the 2001 and 2005 elections it formed a coalition with EAJ-PNV.

 14 Izquierda Unida-Ezker Batua also has presence all along Spain, but it has camouflaged among the

nationalist parties due to their liberal positions with respect to the Basque identity.

 $^{15}\mathrm{Contested}$ their first election as Popular Party in 1990.

 $^{16}\mathrm{In}$ 2008 EHAK-PCTV was outlawed for its links with Batasuna.

3 Data

We have compiled data from *Minesterio del Interior del Gobierno de España* which contains information from all Spanish electoral contests. The administrative unit we will be working with is at municipality level.

We are interested in the Basque regional elections. For each municipality and election we have information about the census, turnout, votes per platform and null and blank votes. We have built a panel data set covering 1990 to 2005 regional elections. We have set the first elections in our dataset in 1990 for several reasons. Firstly, these are the first elections in which the Popular Party contested. Moreover, the municipality distribution has changed in the last decades. Avoiding the eighties decade leaves us with less municipality variation. Even so we have excluded six municipalities that do not follow a complete series between 1990 and 2005 so that we can have a balanced panel.¹⁷ We consider it better in order to reduce noise from individual heterogeneity. That leaves us with 245 municipalities with electoral information from 1990 to 2005.

We have defined the main outcome variables as vote shares. We are interested in knowing whether there was a change in the support to Batasuna after the ban, so we have defined the share of votes for the party. Furthermore, we are interested in the effect on the support to the different blocs. Was there an inter-bloc conflict after the ban? Hence, we have grouped EAJ-PNV, Batasuna, EA and Aralar into the **nationalist bloc** and PSEE-PSOE and PP inside the **federal bloc**.¹⁸ We have computed the vote share for each group. Also, we want to know whether there was polarization as a result from the ban. We have defined Batasuna and PP as the most extreme parties across the ideological spectrum, based on self-reported

¹⁷We have dropped those municipalities which do not have a complete series. In the last decades there has been a municipality reorganization in the Basque Country resulting in the fragmentation of some municipalities: El País, March 5, 2012. See the Appendix for further information on these dropped municipalities.

¹⁸Izquierda Unida-Ezker Batua is not sorted within the federal bloc as we aim to analyze those parties with strong positions against a self-determination Basque independence process. Within this federal bloc there are different preferences of decentralization levels for Spanish regions, however we will consider them as non-Basque nationalists.

voter score in the CIS survey of 2001 (Albertos, 2002).¹⁹ So we have computed the share of Batasuna within the nationalist bloc and the share of PP within the federal bloc to see the dynamics of the extreme parties within each bloc. Finally, we have aggregated Batasuna and PP as extreme parties and EAJ-PNV, PSEE-PSOE, EA and Aralar as moderate. We have calculated the vote share for both groups. We have also defined the turnout and the share of blank and null votes. Table A3 shows the summary statistics for each variable and election.

4 Identification strategy

From here onwards we will refer to the party ban as the *treatment*. In this case all units are exposed to the treatment, as Batasuna was banned everywhere. However, we can think that municipalities are not exposed in the same way. In the extensive margin they are all equally affected, but not in the intensive margin. Municipalities differ on the level of support to the party and on the institutional representation of Batasuna in the city council. We want to know whether there is an effect on those municipalities losing the party's institutional representation. Those places in which Batasuna had a greater number of city councilors are more affected than those in which the institutional representation is small or non-existent. Thus, there is an heterogeneity in the treatment intensity. In Arenas (2021) the treatment varies in the extensive margin, as in 2007 \mathbf{ANV}^{20} was able to contest the elections in a subset of municipalities. He finds that in those municipalities where the party was exposed to a longer ban the electoral loss was greater.

However, in this case study, we will use a Difference-in-Difference with a continuous treatment strategy. We will proxy its intensity by the average share of councilors from Batasuna

¹⁹In the nationalist axis (1-10, 1 being minimum nationalism and 10 maximum) respondents allocate, on average, 3.14 points to PP (the least score within the federal bloc) and 8.8 to Batasuna (the highest score within the nationalist bloc.). In the ideological axis (1-10, 1 being extreme left and 10 extreme right) respondents report an average score of 8.27 to PP and 2.27 to Batasuna (the most exteme cases again).

 $^{^{20}}$ A platform which emerged to represent Batasuna. In a subset of municipalities, the *Tribunal Supremo* was able to show links with ETA and banned the party.

each municipality had in the 1995 and 1999 local elections, the last two elections prior to the ban. In Spain the total number of councilors at stake depends on the municipality's population. In the Basque Country it goes from 3 to 29 councilors. So, we use the number of councilors from Batasuna and divide it over the total number of councilors in each municipality. Figure 2 depicts the differences in treatment intensity by unit of analysis. We use this proxy for two reasons: first, we think that local elections ' dynamics differ from that of regional elections, in the sense that the former are more related with meeting daily and locally immediate needs, that is why there are more *ad hoc* local platforms, while the latter are more ideological in which voters express their ideological and nationalist preferences. Nevertheless, we expect a high correlation between the share of city councilors and the share of votes in regional elections, we will comment more on this later. Figure A1 shows a bivariate map capturing both intensities. Secondly, we want to capture the effect driven by institutional representation. We suspect that institutional representation permeates in the way voters would react to the party ban as they would be losing the ability of being represented. The main assumption is that these municipalities react differently just by having a different level of institutional representation.

We define the following TWFE equation to conduct the analysis:

$$Y_{mt} = \alpha_m + \delta_t + \theta_{tp} + \gamma \left(P_t \times Trends_{mt}^{\text{pre-ban}} \right) + \beta \left(P_t \times BatasunaCouncilors_m^{\text{pre-ban}} \right) + \epsilon_{mt} \quad (1)$$

Y stands for the outcome variable, for each municipality m and election year t, while BatasunaCouncilors stands for the average share of the party's councilors obtained in the 1995 and 1999 local elections. P_t refers to the 2005 election, the first regional election after the 2003 ban. Hence, the coefficient β from the interaction will be the one we are interested in. We control for municipality and election fixed effects (α_m and δ_t), by province-byelection fixed effects (θ_{tp}) and by municipality-specific trends allowing the post-ban dummy to change depending on the year-to-year changes in support for Batasuna throughout the pre-ban period. Throughout the analysis, we cluster the standard errors at the municipality level. Figure 2: Treatment intensity



Share of Batasuna councilors between 1995 and 1999

But this is not a standard Difference-in-Difference with a discrete treatment, in which we obtain the Average Treatment on the Treated (ATT). In such a case the main identifying assumption is the parallel trends assumption. Also, we need no anticipation. In our case, we want electoral outcomes to follow the same trend across units.²¹ In addition, we expect no anticipation effects, this would mean that, forecasting the party ban, some municipalities changed its level of support to Batasuna in prior elections, which is very unlikely given the timing of *Ley Orgánica 06/2002*. Still, under a continuous treatment we need more identifying assumptions.

Callaway *et al.* (2021) disentangle the Difference-in-Difference with continuous treatment. In this setting we have different groups that are exposed to a different *dosage* of the treatment. The authors define the Average Causal Response on the Treated (ACRT) as the group-specific marginal response to a marginal change in the dosage. Hence, this is group and dosage specific. In our case, this would mean that a given municipality with,

²¹Although we control for municipality-specific trends.

for instance, 80% of Batasuna councilors has a specific response to a marginal change of these, whereas a municipality with 20% of *abertzale* councilors has another specific ACRT. A dosage d among the treated group i reports the $ATT_{d|i}$.

We need an extra identifying assumption: homogeneous marginal returns across groups at a given dosage. In other words, groups with different treatment intensities would respond evenly had they been treated with the same dosage. In this sense, the differences in ATT across groups would report the ACRT. This means that changes in the vote share for municipalities with a low share of Batasuna councilors are a good counterfactual for municipalities with a high share of councilors had they had the same treatment intensity (Lindo *et al.*, 2020).

Notice that this is a strong assumption, and we can think that in our case this is very specific. It can be argued that those high intensity municipalities may have reacted more vehemently had they had a lower treatment intensity than their counterparts. If this is the case, the estimated ATT would be the ACRT with a selection bias coming from the heterogeneity in gains.

4.1 Mechanism

Is the effect coming from the loss in institutional representation or from the level of pre-ban support to the party? Even though the ban affected the party's institutional representation and municipalities may be responding differently given this fact, there is also the possibility that constituencies are simply reacting differently because they had a greater baseline support to the party in the regional elections. As we said, in regional elections ideology carries much more weight than in local elections. Therefore, the effect may be coming from the citizens' inability to express their ideology through the platform. Moreover, we expected the share of councilors to be correlated with the support to the party in regional elections. Hence, we define the following equation:

$$Y_{mt} = \alpha_m + \delta_t + \theta_{tp} + \gamma \left(P_t \times Trends_{mt}^{\text{pre-ban}} \right) + \beta \left(P_t \times BatasunaCouncilors_m^{\text{pre-ban}} \right) + \lambda \left(P_t \times Bat_m^{\text{pre-ban}} \right) + \epsilon_{mt} \left(P_t \times Bat_m^{\text{pre-ban}} \right) + \delta \left(P_t \times Bat_m^{\text{pre-ban}$$

In this equation *Bat* is a demeaned variable which captures the average level of support to Batasuna in the last two regional elections prior to the ban, 1998 and 2001, in each municipality.²² Thus, we will capture the effect of having a pre-ban support above the average. In this way we will know the mechanism at play.

4.2 Binary treatment

We then change the treatment to a discrete binary variable. We define those municipalities which had a Batasuna city mayor from 1999 to 2003. Therefore, we specify the following equation:

$$Y_{mt} = \alpha_m + \delta_t + \theta_{tp} + \gamma \left(P_t \times Trends_{mt}^{\text{pre-ban}} \right) + \beta \left(P_t \times BatasunaMayor_m^{\text{pre-ban}} \right) + \epsilon_{mt} \quad (3)$$

This would be a standard Difference-in-Difference in which the main identifying assumption is parallel trends across treated and untreated units. Similarly, we disentangle the mechanism of the effect by analyzing where it is coming from:

$$Y_{mt} = \alpha_m + \delta_t + \theta_{tp} + \gamma \left(P_t \times Trends_{mt}^{\text{pre-ban}} \right) + \beta \left(P_t \times BatasunaMayor_m^{\text{pre-ban}} \right) + \lambda \left(P_t \times Bat_m^{\text{pre-ban}} \right) + \epsilon_{mt}$$

$$\tag{4}$$

5 Results

Table 2 contains the results from Equation (1). In this case we are interested in knowing if there is an effect given the institutional representation loss. After 2003 the constituencies lost a party which enabled them to materialize their ideology and preferences. If so, there is an heterogeneity given the different levels of intensity, proxied by the share of councilors, i.e. those municipalities with a bigger share of Batasuna councilors would be more affected and, hence, we might expect a different response than in their counterparts.²³

 $^{^{22}}$ Figure A2 maps the distribution of the demeaned variable. Note that the interval has the following range: [-.12, .74] being a value of 0 a municipality with an average support to Batasuna.

 $^{^{23}}$ We have weighted observations by its population. We see results from Table A4 without population weights. This points that there is an effect coming from bigger municipalities, so that when we do not

We see that the effect of the ban in a municipality where Batasuna had 10% of the councilors, compared to one with no instutional representation, corresponds to an average increase of 0.42 percentage points (pp) in support for the party in regional elections. It also leads to an average increase in the nationalist bloc of 0.38pp and a decrease in the federal bloc support of 0.28pp. Interestingly we see how the share of votes within each bloc concentrates towards the extremes. In the case of Batasuna, the nationalist bloc becomes larger while the party increases its vote share, which suggests a shift towards **EHAK-PCTV**. However, the federal bloc loses support while PP increases its vote share within the bloc (although at 10% significance level). This does not necessarily mean a shift towards PP, but a greater vote concentration towards the party within the federal bloc. It might be the case that all PP voters held their position and, as the size of the bloc is decreasing (maybe partially explained by the decrease in turnout), this mechanically results in a greater vote share within the bloc. This, thus, resulted in a reinforcement of the extreme positions compared to those more centered in the ideological axis, moderate.

But are these municipalities reacting differently given the institutional representation of Batasuna at the city council or is this response associated to their greater baseline support in previous regional elections? If the latter case is true, the former treatment may be absorbing all the effect. Hence, we perform Equation (2).

weight observations the effect vanishes. Moreover, Table A5 reports the analysis without controlling for pre-trends, which suggest that there are factors of the trend affecting the results which are taken care when adjusting for all the variation in the pre-treatment period. We also perform some sensitivity analysis in Tables A6 and A7, excluding the big cities Bilbao, Donostia and Vitoria-Gasteiz and the municipalities with a population lower than the 50th percentile, respectively.

	Batasuna	Nationalist	BwN	Federal	PPwF	Moderate	Extreme	Turnout	Blank	Null
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Treat \times Post	0.0423***	0.0389***	0.0418^{**}	-0.0289***	0.113^{*}	-0.0499***	0.0481***	-0.0466***	0.00170	-0.00191
	(0.0149)	(0.0114)	(0.0170)	(0.00918)	(0.0653)	(0.0174)	(0.0165)	(0.0127)	(0.00162)	(0.00202)
Election FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	~
Municipality FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
$Election \times Province FE$	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Municipality specific trends	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Population weights	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
R-squared	0.983	0.992	0.974	0.982	0.936	0.950	0.923	0.529	0.899	0.560
within R-squared	0.003	0.0027	0.001	0.008	0.936	0.002	0.001	0.001	0.004	0.004
Observations	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225
Mean of Y	0.146	0.536	0.265	0.358	0.459	0.579	0.314	0.682	0.0109	0.00464

Table 2: Share of Batasuna councilors as treatment intensity

Standard errors clustered by municipality. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.

Notes: Data is from the regional elections. $Treat \times Post$ stands for the post-ban treatment intensity on the share of pre-ban Batasuna Councilors. Dependent variables are the share of votes: Col.(1) for Batasuna, Col.(2) for the nationalist bloc, Col.(3) for Batasuna within the nationalist bloc, Col.(4) for the federeal bloc, Col.(5) for PP within the Federal bloc, Col.(6) for the moderate bloc, Col.(7) for the extreme bloc, while Col.(8-10) for turnout, blank and null, respectively. All regression include election, municipality and election by province fixed effects. We control by municipality-specific trends by allowing the post-ban dummy to change depending on the year-to-year changes in support for Batasuna throughout the pre-ban period. We weight observations by population.

As we see in Table 3 that is in fact what is happening. The interaction $Bat \times Post$ is absorbing the previous effect, which suggests that the ban increased pre-existent differences across municipalities, but this happens because those constituencies where Batasuna had a wider support are responding differently to the ban, independently of the councilor representation loss. In fact, the effect on the support to **EHAK-PCTV** is bigger in magnitude, but loses precision. The same happens to the nationalist bloc. Moreover, we see that the additional effects vanish, but still, there is a vote concentration towards the extreme party within the nationalist bloc, which suggest ingroup bloc polarization.²⁴

²⁴In Tables A8 and A9 we use as treatment just the pre-ban Batasuna support. Moreover, we introduce sociodemographic controls. Results are robust, in magnitude and precision. In this sense, we improve the power of the within-R-square. Although, our objective was to show the relevance of the treatment, not to explain all factors in the outcome.

	Batasuna	Nationalist	BwN	Federal	PPwF	Moderate	Extreme	Turnout	Blank	Null
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Treat \times Post	-0.000117	0.0138	-0.00145	-0.0178	0.128	-0.0152	-0.00642	-0.0662***	0.00510^{***}	-0.000430
	(0.0180)	(0.0159)	(0.0195)	(0.0129)	(0.100)	(0.0210)	(0.0190)	(0.0172)	(0.00195)	(0.00209)
Bat \times Post	0.0929**	0.0728**	0.0895^{*}	-0.0278	-0.0538	-0.0439	0.114***	0.0551	-0.00873**	-0.00155
	(0.0411)	(0.0328)	(0.0457)	(0.0274)	(0.147)	(0.0485)	(0.0431)	(0.0346)	(0.00402)	(0.00504)
Election FE	\checkmark	\checkmark								
Municipality FE	\checkmark	\checkmark								
$Election \times Province FE$	\checkmark	\checkmark								
Municipality specific trends	\checkmark	\checkmark								
Population weights	\checkmark	\checkmark								
R-squared	0.976	0.989	0.968	0.966	0.933	0.931	0.870	0.495	0.861	0.539
within R-squared	0.006	0.004	0.002	0.001	0.002	0.001	0.002	0.001	0.0006	0.001
Observations	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225
Mean of Y	0.146	0.536	0.265	0.358	0.459	0.579	0.314	0.682	0.0109	0.00464

Table 3: Controlling for previous Batasuna support

Standard errors clustered by municipality. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.

Notes: Data is from the regional elections. $Treat \times Post$ stands for the post-ban treatment intensity on the share of pre-ban Batasuna Councilors. $Bat \times Post$ stands for the post-ban intensity of pre-ban support to Batasuna, where Bat is a demeaned variable capturing the level of support to the party in the last two regional elections prior to the ban in each municipality. Dependent variables are the share of votes: Col.(1) for Batasuna, Col.(2) for the nationalist bloc, Col.(3) for Batasuna within the nationalist bloc, Col.(4) for the federeal bloc, Col.(5) for PP within the Federal bloc, Col.(6) for the moderate bloc, Col.(7) for the extreme bloc, while Col.(8-10) for turnout, blank and null, respectively. All regression include election, municipality and election by province fixed effects. We control by municipality-specific trends by allowing the post-ban dummy to change depending on the year-to-year changes in support for Batasuna throughout the pre-ban period. We weight observations by population.

5.1 Heterogeneous results

Where are the effects coming from? We want to know if there is an heterogeneity depending on the pre-ban level of nationalism. Therefore, we have defined Nat as a demeaned variable which captures the average level of support to nationalist platforms in the last two regional elections prior to the ban, in each municipality, measuring the vote share for the nationalist bloc.²⁵

$$Y_{mt} = \alpha_m + \delta_t + \theta_{tp} + \gamma \left(P_t \times Trends_{mt}^{\text{pre-ban}} \right) + \beta (P_t \times Bat_m^{\text{pre-ban}}) + \rho \left(P_t \times Nat_{mt}^{\text{pre-ban}} \right) + \lambda \left(P_t \times Bat_m^{\text{pre-ban}} \times Nat_m^{\text{pre-ban}} \right) + \epsilon_{mt}$$
(5)

We see that results suggest that the effects are coming from those places in which Batasuna had a strong electoral base but the nationalism level was milder. The triple interaction

 $^{^{25}}$ The variable has an interval with a range [-.27, .47] which means that a value 0 stands for a municipality with an average level of nationalist support.

reports a negative effect and a displacement from the nationalist bloc towards the federal bloc. Results may seem counterintuitive but may be explained by the increase in turnout. This can be happening if a subset of voters were affected in the extensive margin (joined the electoral contest) and concentrated the share of votes into the federal bloc in these municipalities.

	Batasuna	Nationalist	BwN	Federal	PPwF	Moderate	Extreme	Turnout	Blank	Null
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Bat \times Post	0.173***	0.201***	0.171^{***}	-0.139^{***}	0.276^{**}	-0.0536	0.130^{**}	-0.107***	-0.00348	-0.0116*
	(0.0411)	(0.0315)	(0.0551)	(0.0309)	(0.131)	(0.0627)	(0.0632)	(0.0359)	(0.00497)	(0.00595)
Bat \times Post \times Nat	-0.259***	-0.348***	-0.268**	0.285***	-0.506	-0.0156	-0.0903	0.233**	0.00331	0.0291**
	(0.0928)	(0.0917)	(0.136)	(0.0892)	(0.354)	(0.144)	(0.148)	(0.0991)	(0.0104)	(0.0121)
Election FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Municipality FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
${\rm Election}{\times}{\rm Province}~{\rm FE}$	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Municipality specific trends	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Population weights	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
R-squared	0.983	0.992	0.974	0.982	0.936	0.950	0.923	0.976	0.900	0.563
within R-squared	0.009	0.009	0.005	0.002	0.003	0.004	0.003	0.002	0.001	0.001
Observations	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225
Mean of Y	0.146	0.536	0.265	0.358	0.459	0.579	0.314	0.682	0.0109	0.00464

Table 4: Heterogeneous results

Standard errors clustered by municipality. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.

Notes: Data is from the regional elections. $Bat \times Post$ stands for the post-ban intensity of pre-ban support to Batasuna, where Bat is a demeaned variable capturing the level of support to the party in the last two regional elections prior to the ban in each municipality. $Bat \times Post \times Nat$ measures the effect on those municipalities with a nationalism level above the average. Dependent variables are the share of votes: Col.(1) for Batasuna, Col.(2) for the nationalist bloc, Col.(3) for Batasuna within the nationalist bloc, Col.(4) for the federeal bloc, Col.(5) for PP within the Federal bloc, Col.(6) for the moderate bloc, Col.(7) for the extreme bloc, while Col.(8-10) for turnout, blank and null, respectively. All regression include election, municipality and election by province fixed effects. We control by municipality-specific trends by allowing the post-ban dummy to change depending on the year-to-year changes in support for Batasuna throughout the pre-ban period. We weight observations by population.

5.2 Binary treatment

In this case we compute the analysis measuring the effect on those municipalities which had a Batasuna mayor between 1999 and 2003. Notice that it is a subset of 42 municipalities, Figure A3 describes the geographic distribution of these. Following Equation (3) and (4) we see that results point to a similar behavior as before. However, when controlling for party's pre-ban support level (Table 6), results do not perish completely for the post-ban Batasuna support, in magnitude, they experience an average increase of 0.95 pp.

	Batasuna	Nationalist	BwN	Federal	PPwF	Moderate	Extreme	Turnout	Blank	Null
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Treat \times Post	0.0108***	0.00547**	0.0117**	-0.00404	0.0236**	-0.00727	0.0129**	-0.00458	-0.000212	-0.0000976
	(0.00360)	(0.00253)	(0.00503)	(0.00247)	(0.0110)	(0.00618)	(0.00498)	(0.00341)	(0.000333)	(0.000469)
Election FE	\checkmark									
Municipality FE	\checkmark									
$Election \times Province FE$	\checkmark									
Municipality specific trends	\checkmark									
Population weights	\checkmark									
R-squared	0.976	0.989	0.968	0.966	0.933	0.931	0.870	0.495	0.861	0.539
within R-squared	0.004	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.001	0.003	0.0008	0.0001	0.0001
Observations	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225
Mean of Y	0.146	0.536	0.265	0.358	0.459	0.579	0.314	0.682	0.0109	0.00464

Ta	ble 5	5: T	reatment	as	Batasuna	city	mayor	between	$1999 \cdot$	-200)3
							• /				

Standard errors clustered by municipality. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.

	Batasuna	Nationalist	BwN	Federal	PPwF	Moderate	Extreme	Turnout	Blank	Null
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Treat \times Post	0.00955^{**}	0.00391	0.00995^{*}	-0.00304	0.0205^{*}	-0.00629	0.0132***	-0.00275	0.0000554	0.000148
	(0.00370)	(0.00256)	(0.00519)	(0.00248)	(0.0115)	(0.00568)	(0.00454)	(0.00339)	(0.000334)	(0.000435)
Bat \times Post	0.0138	-0.0517	-0.000116	0.0121	-0.107	-0.116**	0.0932**	0.0855***	0.00754^{*}	0.0100**
	(0.0308)	(0.0330)	(0.0489)	(0.0351)	(0.0841)	(0.0454)	(0.0404)	(0.0290)	(0.00435)	(0.00484)
Election FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Municipality FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
$Election \times Province FE$	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Municipality specific trends	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Population weights	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
R-squared	0.976	0.989	0.968	0.966	0.933	0.931	0.870	0.495	0.861	0.539
within R-squared	0.005	0.003	0.002	0.001	0.002	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.0009	0.001
Observations	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225
Mean of Y	0.146	0.536	0.265	0.358	0.459	0.579	0.314	0.682	0.0109	0.00464

Table 6: Treatment as Batasuna city mayor between 1999-2003

Standard errors clustered by municipality. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.

Notes: Data is from the regional elections. $Treat \times Post$ stands for the post-ban municipalities that had a Batasuna mayor in 1999-2003. stands for the post-ban intensity of support to Batasuna, where Bat is a demeaned variable capturing the level of support to the party in the last two regional elections prior to the ban in each municipality. Dependent variables are the share of votes: Col.(1) for Batasuna, Col.(2) for the nationalist bloc, Col.(3) for Batasuna within the nationalist bloc, Col.(4) for the federeal bloc, Col.(5) for PP within the Federal bloc, Col.(6) for the moderate bloc, Col.(7) for the extreme bloc, while Col.(8-10) for turnout, blank and null, respectively. All regression include election, municipality and election by province fixed effects. We control by municipality-specific trends by allowing the post-ban dummy to change depending on the year-to-year changes in support for Batasuna throughout the pre-ban period. We weight observations by population.

In this case the institutional representation effect has an impact on the banned party,

which makes sense as the shock is very extreme, i.e. mayor representation loss. Although the effect is not very precisely estimated.

6 Conclusion

In this study we wanted to analyze if the 2003 ban on Batasuna affected the reinforcement in the party's support and if it ignited polarization in the short-term. This is due to the fact that in the 2005 regional elections, the *abertzale* platform avoided being outlawed as **EHAK-PCTV** contested the elections in its name, which we use as framework of analysis. We suspected that these effects were heterogeneous across municipalities and that it severely affected those in which the material effects of the ban were more prominent. We aimed to know if the pre-existent differences in these municipalities were enlarged as a consequence of the ban.

In the first instance, we defined a Difference-in-Difference strategy with a continuous treatment having as main identifying assumption, apart from the standard Difference-in-Difference ones, homogeneous treatment gains across groups at a specific intensity, in our case the average share of city councilors from Batasuna for the last two pre-ban elections. We obtained that those municipalities in which the representation loss was more salient the banned party gained support. Moreover, given the inter-group political cleavage defined in the Basque Country in terms of identity, the nationalist bloc gained support, being Batasuna reinforced within it, while the federal bloc lost it. The PP, the most extremist party within the federal bloc (Albertos, 2002), concentrated a higher share of votes inside the group. This, thus, resulted in an extreme party reinforcement.

However, we pointed the possible noisiness captured by the coefficient. Maybe these municipalities were reacting differently because they had a greater baseline support in previous regional elections, which correlates with the share of Batasuna councilors in local elections. Nevertheless, there is no perfect overlap between local and regional support, as in the former there seems to be some substitution towards local platforms. When taking into account this possible mechanism, previous results vanish and are captured by the pre-ban intensity of support to the party. In this sense, results are explained due to the differences in baseline support rather than by the loss in institutional representation. Voters reacted due to the impossibility of manifesting their ideology and preferences through the platform, not by the inability of being represented in the city council. Only in the most extreme case, in which the institutional representation is the city mayor, results hold.

Once taken into account the mechanism, we see that when measuring the differences in the effects by previous party support, results are robust. In Table A8 we use just this treatment intensity as main regressor, while in Table A9 we add sociodemographic controls. Results hold in magnitude and precision.

The reasoning behind it may be an intergroup party conflict. In June 2002 the Spanish Parliament passed the *Ley Orgánica 06/2002* which explicitly targeted antidemocratic parties and, implicitly, Batasuna. After that, the Spanish Council of Ministers asked the Supreme Court the ban on Batasuna. Basque voters from municipalities with a higher preban support may have perceived the law as an outgroup party (away from Basque identity) going against an ingroup party (Basque identity), reinforced by the complaints to the ban in the Basque Parliament by nationalist parties. Thus, we can say that there was a shock over the social cleavage *ethnic identity*. The appearance of a new cleavage or the reinforcement of a particular one, can result in polarization (Hobolt and Rodon, 2020). Notice that it is interesting how there was a reconfiguration of group sizes (Table A8) and redefinition of its boundaries. In these places voters mobilized towards the nationalist bloc, suggesting intergroup transfers, and Batasuna also gained support within the nationalist bloc, suggesting intra-group transfers. The political identity conflict may have become more salient (Rovny, 2013).

We computed an heterogeneity analysis to conclude that in those places were Batasuna had a wider support and nationalist platforms did so, results change. The federal bloc gained size, while the nationalist bloc lost it. We point the increase in turnout as main driver. This could have affected in the extensive margin those voters who did not contest in previous elections and that leaned towards the federal bloc, in this subset of municipalities. This triggers a new polarization focal point. Hence, previous obtained effects seem to be coming from those constituencies in which Batasuna had a wide pre-ban support but overall nationalism was milder.

Our results point that, in a context in which identity is a political cleavage, a party ban enlarged previous differences and ignited further polarization by the reinforcement of the outlawed platform and the ingroup party bloc (nationalist) in those places with a higher baseline support. In the current context, in which extreme right parties with a xenophobic speech arise in Western Europe, a debate has been centered around party bans. These parties have opened a new cleavage given the denationalization process in Western democracies (Kriesi *et al.*, 2006). This is sometimes defined as winners and losers of the globalization process in which the blame is casted on the integration policies and multiculturalism, igniting nativist positions. Hence, knowing the consequences of a party ban in the support to the targeted platform and polarization across the ideological spectrum is needed.

References

ALBERTOS, J. F. (2002). Votar en dos dimensiones: el precio del nacionalismo y la ideología en el comportamiento electoral vasco, 1993-2001. Revista Española de Ciencia Política, pp. 153–181.

ANSOLABEHERE, S. and PUY, M. S. (2016). Identity voting. Public Choice, 169 (1), 77–95.

- ARENAS, A. (2016). Sticky votes. Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, 132, Part A, 12 – 25.
- (2021). Party bans: deterrence or backlash? evidence from the basque country. Quarterly Journal of Political Science, 16 (3), 325–358.
- AXELROD, R., DAYMUDE, J. J. and FORREST, S. (2021). Preventing extreme polarization of political attitudes. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, **118** (50).
- BALE, T. (2007). Are bans on political parties bound to turn out badly? a comparative investigation of three 'intolerant'democracies: Turkey, spain, and belgium. *Comparative European Politics*, 5 (2), 141–157.

- BASEDAU, M. and MOROFF, A. (2011). Parties in chains: Do ethnic party bans in africa promote peace? *Party Politics*, **17** (2), 205–222.
- BAYSAN, C. (2021). Persistent polarizing effects of persuasion: Experimental evidence from turkey. Tech. rep., Working paper.
- BISIN, A. and VERDIER, T. (2000). "beyond the melting pot": cultural transmission, marriage, and the evolution of ethnic and religious traits. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, **115** (3), 955–988.
- and (2001). The economics of cultural transmission and the dynamics of preferences. Journal of Economic theory, 97 (2), 298–319.
- BOURNE, A. K. H. (2018). Democratic dilemmas: Why democracies ban political parties. Routledge.
- CALLAWAY, B., GOODMAN-BACON, A. and SANT'ANNA, P. H. (2021). Difference-indifferences with a continuous treatment. arXiv preprint arXiv:2107.02637.
- CANU, I. (1997). The protection of democracy in germany and france. *Opladen: Leske und Budrich*.
- DE LA GRANJA SAINZ, J. L. (2006). El culto a sabino arana: la doble resurrección y el origen histórico del aberri eguna en la il república. *Historia y política: Ideas, procesos y movimientos sociales*, (15), 65–116.
- DINAS, E., MARTÍNEZ, S. and VALENTIM, V. (2022). Social norm change, political symbols, and expression of stigmatized preferences. *Conditionally accepted, The Journal of Politics*.
- GONZÁLEZ, V. M. J. (2011). Eta. origen e ideología. Ab Initio: Revista digital para estudiantes de Historia, 2 (3), 143.
- HOBOLT, S. B. and RODON, T. (2020). Cross-cutting issues and electoral choice. eu issue voting in the aftermath of the brexit referendum. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27 (2), 227–245.
- KRIESI, H., GRANDE, E., LACHAT, R., DOLEZAL, M., BORNSCHIER, S. and FREY, T. (2006). Globalization and the transformation of the national political space: Six european countries compared. *European Journal of Political Research*, 45 (6), 921–956.

- LINDO, J. M., MYERS, C. K., SCHLOSSER, A. and CUNNINGHAM, S. (2020). How far is too far? new evidence on abortion clinic closures, access, and abortions. *Journal of Human resources*, **55** (4), 1137–1160.
- LIPSET and ROKKAN (1967). Cleavage structures, party systems, and voter alignments: an introduction. New York: The Free Press.
- MARTIN, G. J. and YURUKOGLU, A. (2017). Bias in cable news: Persuasion and polarization. *American Economic Review*, **107** (9), 2565–99.
- MILLER, M. K. (2021). Don't call it a comeback: autocratic ruling parties after democratization. British Journal of Political Science, 51 (2), 559–583.
- MINKENBERG, M. (2006). Repression and reaction: militant democracy and the radical right in germany and france. *Patterns of Prejudice*, **40** (1), 25–44.
- POPPER, K. (1944). The poverty of historicism, ii. a criticism of historicist methods. *Economica*, **11** (43), 119–137.
- ROVNY, J. (2013). Where do radical right parties stand? position blurring in multidimensional competition. *European Political Science Review*, **5** (1), 1–26.
- and POLK, J. (2019). New wine in old bottles: Explaining the dimensional structure of european party systems. *Party Politics*, **25** (1), 12–24.
- SOLDEVILLA, G. F. (2010). El compañero ausente y los aprendices de brujo: orígenes de herri batasuna (1974-1980). *Revista de estudios políticos*, (148), 71–103.
- TEJERINA, B. (1999). El poder de los símbolos: Identidad colectiva y movimiento etnolingüístico en el país vasco. *Reis*, pp. 75–105.
- VALENTIM, V. (2022). Social norms and preference falsification in a democracy. Available at SSRN.
- VAN SPANJE, J. and DE VREESE, C. (2015). The good, the bad and the voter: The impact of hate speech prosecution of a politician on electoral support for his party. *Party Politics*, 21 (1), 115–130.
- and VAN DER BRUG, W. (2009). Being intolerant of the intolerant. the exclusion of

western european anti-immigration parties and its consequences for party choice. Acta Politica, 44 (4), 353–384.

WILSON, A. E., PARKER, V. A. and FEINBERG, M. (2020). Polarization in the contemporary political and media landscape. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, **34**, 223–228.

A Appendix

Excluded municipalities in order to have a balanced panel data: Gaztelu (part of Leaburu until 1995), Zierbena (part of Abanto until 1995), Alonsotegi (part of Barakaldo until 1991), Arratzu (Part of Gernika-Luno until 1993), Ajangiz (part of Gernika-Luno until 1991) and Ziortza-Bolibar (part of Markina-Xemein until 2005). These are municipalities with an average population of 800 inhabitants approximately.

In Albitzur and Gaintza (Gipuzkoa) in 1999 local elections did not occur as no platform contested. Mayors from the previous electoral period held an interim position, see El País, July 7, 1999. We have extrapolated the same share of Batasuna councilors as that of 1995 (0) in these two municipalities.

Acronym	Party	Translation	Nationalist position	Ideological position
EAJ-PNV	Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea-Partido Nacionalista Vasco	Basque Nationalist Party	Nationalist	Right
EA	Eusko Alkartasuna	Basque Solidarity	Nationalist	Center-left
HB	Herri Batasuna	People's Unity	Nationalist	Left
EH	Euskal Herritarrok	Basque people	Nationalist	Left
EHAK-PCTV	Euskal Herrialdeetako Alderdi Komunista-Partido Comunista de las Tierras Vascas	Basque Homeland Comunist Party	Nationalist	Left
Aralar	Aralar	Aralar	Nationalist	Left
IU-EB	Izquierda Unida-Ezker Batua	Left United	non-Nationalist (Self-determination)	Left
PSEE-PSOE	Partido Socialista de Euskadi-Euskadiko Ezkerra	Socialist Party	non-Nationalist	Left
PP	Partido Popular	Popular Party	non-Nationalist	Right

Table A1: Political parties

Table A2: Batasuna vote share summary statistics

	1990 Regional Election	1994 Regional Election	1998 Regional Election	2001 Regional Election	2005 Regional Election
Municipalities	245	245	245	245	245
Mean	0.178	0.157	0.173	0.098	0.120
P50	0.153	0.126	0.125	.063	0.076
Standard Deviation	.070	.079	.087	.064	.074
Min.	0.011	0	0.007	0	0
Max.	.783	.881	.895	.861	.888

Notes: Observations are weighted by population. The variable is defined as the share of votes.

	Municipalities	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min.	Max.
1990					
Nationalist	245	.565	.139	.277	1
Batasuna within Nationalist	245	.314	.079	.028	.783
Federal	245	.284	.096	0	.531
PP within Federal	242	.296	.149	0	1
Moderate	245	.592	.061	.216	.815
Extreme	245	.262	.054	.10	.783
1994					
Nationalist	245	.544	.153	.256	1
Batasuna within Nationalist	245	.284	.087	0	.896
Federal	245	.313	.101	0	.531
PP within Federal	239	.456	.137	0	1
Moderate	245	.559	.078	.101	.852
Extreme	245	.302	.062	.091	.881
1998					
Nationalist	245	.530	.156	.244	.991
Batasuna within Nationalist	245	.321	.088	.026	.909
Federal	245	.374	.125	0	.659
PP within Federal	245	.537	.114	0	1
Moderate	245	.533	.070	.089	.770
Extreme	245	.375	.059	.186	.895
2001					
Nationalist	245	.518	.156	.240	1
Batasuna within Nationalist	245	.182	.069	0	.885
Federal	245	.408	.141	0	.722
PP within Federal	245	.563	.091	0	1
Moderate	245	.599	.065	.112	.850
Extreme	245	.330	.056	.133	.873
2005					
Nationalist	245	.522	.158	.264	.988
Batasuna within Nationalist	245	.223	.077	0	.90
Federal	245	.402	.145	0	.652
PP within Federal	245	.428	.099	0	1
Moderate	245	.607	.062	.083	.80
Extreme	245	.296	.056	.136	.888

Table A3: Variables summary statistics

Notes: Observations are weighted by population. The variable are defined as the share of votes.

	Batasuna	Nationalist	BwN	Federal	PPwF	Moderate	Extreme	Turnout	Blank	Null
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Treat \times Post	0.00376	0.00231	-0.000529	-0.00206	0.170	-0.0227*	0.00815	-0.0383**	0.00519***	-0.00185
	(0.0172)	(0.0106)	(0.0172)	(0.00779)	(0.124)	(0.0135)	(0.0165)	(0.0162)	(0.00181)	(0.00200)
Election FE	\checkmark									
Municipality FE	\checkmark									
$Election \times Province FE$	\checkmark									
Municipality specific trends	\checkmark									
Population weights										
R-squared	0.973	0.980	0.958	0.965	0.753	0.913	0.898	0.423	0.550	0.421
Observations	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225
Mean of Y	0.223	0.739	0.287	0.191	0.530	0.605	0.323	0.734	0.00778	0.00499

Table A4: No population weights

Standard errors clustered by municipality. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.

	Batasuna	Nationalist	BwN	Federal	PPwF	Moderate	Extreme	Turnout	Blank	Null
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Treat \times Post	0.00558	0.0951***	0.0490***	-0.198***	0.0260	-0.142***	-0.0352*	-0.0358***	0.00684***	-0.00295
	(0.0132)	(0.0183)	(0.0188)	(0.0221)	(0.0412)	(0.0205)	(0.0180)	(0.0109)	(0.00140)	(0.00184)
Election FE	\checkmark	√	\checkmark	~						
Municipality FE	\checkmark									
$Election \times Province FE$	\checkmark									
Municipality specific trends										
Population weights	\checkmark									
R-squared	0.980	0.990	0.968	0.977	0.929	0.936	0.917	0.504	0.891	0.539
Observations	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225
Mean of Y	0.146	0.536	0.265	0.358	0.459	0.579	0.314	0.682	0.0109	0.00464

Table A5: No Municipality specific trends

Standard errors clustered by municipality. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.

Notes: Data is from the regional elections. $Treat \times Post$ stands for the post-ban treatment intensity on the share of pre-ban Batasuna Councilors. Dependent variables are the share of votes: Col.(1) for Batasuna, Col.(2) for the nationalist bloc, Col.(3) for Batasuna within the nationalist bloc, Col.(4) for the federeal bloc, Col.(5) for PP within the Federal bloc, Col.(6) for the moderate bloc, Col.(7) for the extreme bloc, while Col.(8-10) for turnout, blank and null, respectively. All regression include election, municipality and election by province fixed effects.

	Batasuna	Nationalist	BwN	Federal	PPwF	Moderate	Extreme	Turnout	Blank	Null
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Treat \times Post	0.0394***	0.0323***	0.0402**	-0.0242***	0.109	-0.0505***	0.0465^{***}	-0.0466***	0.00195	-0.00115
	(0.0150)	(0.0113)	(0.0170)	(0.00925)	(0.0678)	(0.0172)	(0.0165)	(0.0127)	(0.00163)	(0.00185)
Election FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark						
Municipality FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark						
$Election \times Province FE$	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark						
Municipality specific trends	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark						
Population weights	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark						
R-squared	0.979	0.991	0.969	0.982	0.929	0.925	0.910	0.531	0.858	0.579
Observations	1210	1210	1210	1210	1210	1210	1210	1210	1210	1210
Mean of Y	0.168	0.587	0.280	0.319	0.421	0.604	0.302	0.682	0.0100	0.00467

Table A6: Sensitivity analysis 1

Standard errors clustered by municipality. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01. Sample excludes Vitoria-Gasteiz, Donostia and Bilbao, the three biggest cities of each province.

Table A7: Sensitivity analysis 2

	Batasuna	Nationalist	BwN	Federal	PPwF	Moderate	Extreme	Turnout	Blank	Null
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Treat \times Post	0.105***	0.101***	0.101***	-0.0708***	0.146^{***}	-0.0845^{***}	0.107^{***}	-0.0366*	-0.000675	-0.00455
	(0.0167)	(0.0170)	(0.0256)	(0.0147)	(0.0521)	(0.0286)	(0.0234)	(0.0195)	(0.00270)	(0.00394)
Election FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Municipality FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
${\rm Election}{\times}{\rm Province}~{\rm FE}$	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Municipality specific trends	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Population weights	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
R-squared	0.985	0.993	0.978	0.983	0.960	0.957	0.931	0.638	0.924	0.624
Observations	617	617	617	617	617	617	617	617	617	617
Mean of Y	0.144	0.527	0.265	0.364	0.453	0.578	0.314	0.680	0.0111	0.00463

Standard errors clustered by municipality. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01. Sample excludes municipalities with a population lower than P50 (Percentile-50).



Figure A1: Bivariate map: councilor intensity and baseline support

Notes: Notice that the Councilor intensity refers to the average of the share of Batasuna city councilors each municipality had after the 1995 and 1999 local elections. Moreover, Baseline support captures the demeaned average share of votes to Batasuna each municipality had in the 1998 and 2001 regional elections. Municipalities in dark grey are the ones excluded for the analysis.

Figure A2: Demeaned variable



Baseline support to Batasuna

Figure A3: Municipality location



	Batasuna	Nationalist	BwN	Federal	PPwF	Moderate	Extreme	Turnout	Blank	Null
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Bat \times Post	0.0928***	0.0908***	0.0877^{**}	-0.0510^{**}	0.113	-0.0637^{*}	0.105***	-0.0310	-0.00209	-0.00211
	(0.0311)	(0.0247)	(0.0366)	(0.0213)	(0.105)	(0.0363)	(0.0338)	(0.0256)	(0.00335)	(0.00427)
Election FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	~
Municipality FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
${\rm Election} {\times} {\rm Province}~{\rm FE}$	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Municipality specific trends	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Population weights	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
R-squared	0.983	0.992	0.974	0.982	0.936	0.950	0.923	0.976	0.899	0.560
within R-squared	0.006	0.004	0.002	0.002	0.001	0.001	0.002	0.0005	0.0001	0.0002
Observations	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225
Mean of Y	0.146	0.536	0.265	0.358	0.459	0.579	0.314	0.682	0.0109	0.00464

Table A8: Baseline support as treatment intensity

Standard errors clustered by municipality. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.

	Batasuna	Nationalist	BwN	Federal	PPwF	Moderate	Extreme	Turnout	Blank	Null
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
$Bat \times Post$	0.0924***	0.0791***	0.0825**	-0.0521**	0.0923	-0.0677*	0.0976**	-0.0236	-0.00119	-0.00109
	(0.0344)	(0.0260)	(0.0400)	(0.0242)	(0.111)	(0.0398)	(0.0397)	(0.0264)	(0.00359)	(0.00432)
Election FE	\checkmark									
Municipality FE	\checkmark									
$Election \times Province FE$	\checkmark									
Municipality specific trends	\checkmark									
Population weights	\checkmark									
Sociodemographic controls	\checkmark									
R-squared	0.989	0.998	0.989	0.997	0.958	0.979	0.966	0.989	0.930	0.698
within R-squared	0.098	0.107	0.066	0.052	0.049	0.065	0.076	0.059	0.035	0.094
Observations	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225	1225
Mean of Y	0.146	0.536	0.265	0.358	0.459	0.579	0.314	0.682	0.0109	0.00464

Table A9: Baseline support as treatment intensity with controls

Standard errors clustered by municipality. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.

Notes: Data is from the regional elections. $Bat \times Post$ stands for the post-ban intensity of support to Batasuna, where Bat is a demeaned variable capturing the level of support to the party in the last two regional elections prior to the ban in each municipality. Dependent variables are the share of votes: Col.(1) for Batasuna, Col.(2) for the nationalist bloc, Col.(3) for Batasuna within the nationalist bloc, Col.(4) for the federeal bloc, Col.(5) for PP within the Federal bloc, Col.(6) for the moderate bloc, Col.(7) for the extreme bloc, while Col.(8-10) for turnout, blank and null, respectively. All regression include election, municipality and election by province fixed effects. We control by municipality-specific trends by allowing the post-ban dummy to change depending on the year-to-year changes in support for Batasuna throughout the pre-ban period. We weight observations by population. We control for sociodemographic variables: share of population by education level (no studies, primary, secondary and tertiary), share of Basque speakers, share of immigrants, unemployment rate and GDP per capita.

	Batasuna	Nationalist	BwN	Federal	PPwF	Moderate	Extreme	Turnout	Blank	Null
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Bat \times Post	0.0893***	0.0808***	0.0865^{**}	-0.0438**	0.103	-0.0646*	0.104***	-0.0201	-0.00187	-0.000820
	(0.0310)	(0.0241)	(0.0365)	(0.0210)	(0.108)	(0.0361)	(0.0337)	(0.0253)	(0.00337)	(0.00410)
Election FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Municipality FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
$Election \times Province FE$	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Municipality specific trends	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Population weights	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Sociodemographic controls	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
R-squared	0.979	0.991	0.969	0.982	0.929	0.926	0.911	0.969	0.858	0.579
Observations	1210	1210	1210	1210	1210	1210	1210	1210	1210	1210
Mean of Y	0.168	0.587	0.280	0.319	0.421	0.604	0.302	0.688	0.0100	0.00467

Table A10: Sensitivity analysis 3

Standard errors clustered by municipality. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01. Sample excludes Vitoria-Gasteiz, Donostia and Bilbao, the three biggest cities of each province.

	Batasuna	Nationalist	BwN	Federal	PPwF	Moderate	Extreme	Turnout	Blank	Null
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Bat \times Post	0.170***	0.137^{***}	0.167^{***}	-0.0738**	0.194^{**}	-0.0777	0.168^{***}	-0.0589*	-0.00279	-0.00433
	(0.0307)	(0.0341)	(0.0462)	(0.0300)	(0.0908)	(0.0470)	(0.0423)	(0.0311)	(0.00495)	(0.00589)
Election FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Municipality FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
$Election \times Province FE$	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Municipality specific trends	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Population weights	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Sociodemographic controls	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
R-squared	0.985	0.993	0.978	0.983	0.960	0.958	0.931	0.980	0.924	0.626
Observations	617	617	617	617	617	617	617	617	617	617
Mean of Y	0.144	0.527	0.265	0.364	0.453	0.578	0.314	0.680	0.0111	0.00463

Table A11: Sensitivity analysis 4

Standard errors clustered by municipality. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01. Sample excludes municipalities with a population lower than P50 (Percentile-50). Notes: Data is from the regional elections. Bat × Post stands for the post-ban intensity of support to Batasuna, where Bat is a demeaned variable capturing the level of support to the party in the last two regional elections prior to the ban in each municipality. Dependent variables are the share of votes: Col.(1) for Batasuna, Col.(2) for the nationalist bloc, Col.(3) for Batasuna within the nationalist bloc, Col.(4) for the federeal bloc, Col.(5) for PP within the Federal bloc, Col.(6) for the moderate bloc, Col.(7) for the extreme bloc, while Col.(8-10) for turnout, blank and null, respectively. All regression include election and municipality fixed effects. We control by municipality-specific trends by allowing the post-ban dummy to change depending on the year-to-year changes in support for Batasuna throughout the pre-ban period. We weight observations by population.