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## **Decentralisation and Regional Cabinet Size: the Spanish Case (1979-2015)**

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## INTRODUCTION

A few days following an election, the size of the cabinet soon comes to the forefront. Politicians, journalists, and electoral pundits not only speculate about who will be in charge of the ministries, the gender composition or the presence of minorities, but also debate intensively about the number of ministerial posts. This is rapidly subjected to political scrutiny. For instance, an opposition party defined the 2015 Andalusian regional cabinet as a prime minister's 'fan club' since the new single-party cabinet was larger than the previous two-party coalition government (Torres 2015).

Although the number of ministries soon becomes a hot public debate, political science studies have devoted few efforts to understand it. While administration size and government formation processes have been widely scrutinised, cabinet size has attracted less attention. On an attempt to change this pattern, Indriðason and Bowler (2014) recently explored the determinants of executive size by analysing Western European countries between 1944 and 2015. They concluded that coalition governments, the size of the legislature and ideological cohesiveness among cabinet members are significant factors associated with larger national cabinets (see also Verzichelli 2008).

This article extends these recent insights and focuses on how multilevel dynamics shape regional cabinet size. Our goal is not simply to replicate previous analysis at the subnational arena: we argue that the multilevel structure of power brings about different theoretical expectations that can explain cross-regional variation in cabinet

size. More concretely, we focus our analysis on three factors. First, we study the effect of decentralisation on regional cabinet size and, more specifically, whether some forms of decentralisation lead to larger cabinets than others. Second, we test whether multilevel (in)congruence has a significant effect on the number of portfolios. While some approaches argue that administrations governed by the same party(ies) remove constraints to modify cabinets, others suggest that multilevel incongruence can lead to bigger cabinets as regional governments will have incentives to have more portfolios in order to signal distinctive policy preferences. Finally, we speculate that nationally-distinct regions will have larger cabinets as they will tend to ‘mirror’ some of the state functions by creating more ministerial posts.

Our hypotheses are tested with a new dataset built on the Spanish case. Since the establishment of its democratic constitution in 1978, Spain initiated a large and progressive process of decentralisation. Twelve out of seventeen Autonomous Communities (ACs) voted for the first time in a regional election in 1983, which led them to establish their first democratic regional cabinets. Differences across regions on their institutional capacity, the number and nature of competences they hold, the diverse government congruence situations and the existence of subnational identities turn Spain into a suitable case for analysis.

Results show that only welfare state competences have a significant positive influence on regional cabinet size, especially when region’s economic capacity is high. Acs tend to have larger cabinets at high values of welfare state competences and regional economic capacity. Findings also indicate that congruence seems to reduce regional cabinet size —although results are not conclusive. Finally, nationally-distinct regions tend to have larger cabinets.

The article is organised as follows. The next section reviews the literature on cabinet size variations. This section serves as a backdrop to focus on regional executives and develop the theoretical arguments for why regional cabinet size may change. The following section presents the data and, later, we discuss the statistical results. The article ends with a summary of the main findings and suggestions for future research.<sup>1</sup>

### WHY DOES THE SIZE OF THE CABINET CHANGE?

Although cabinet size goes back to Aristotle who highlighted the relevance of the number of people in charge of government, one of the first analytical explanations was provided in *Parkinson's Law, and Other Studies in Administration* (Parkinson 1957). Parkinson stated that cabinets begin at an 'optimal' size and then successively enlarge, first in order to overcome a problem of hidden information and, at a second stage, in order to appease the different factions of a party (Parkinson 1957, chap.4). Based on Parkinson's ideas, Klimek et al. (2009) analysed cross-national data from 197 worldwide cabinets, descriptively showing that cabinet sizes ranged from five (Liechtenstein and Monaco) to fifty-four (Sri Lanka) and that size was negatively correlated with indicators related to political stability or effectiveness.

Hitherto, the specialised literature has understood that the relevance of studying cabinet size stems from the consequences executive size has on different outcomes. The consistent finding among scholars is that the number of ministries is a good predictor of governments' budget or public deficits (Woo 2003). Similarly, based on the idea that divisions within political institutions lead to inefficiency in public

spending, Wehner (2010) highlighted that the number of ministers in coalition cabinets increases budget figures.

Besides the fiscal consequences, scholars have aimed to explain cabinet composition and structure. Although cabinet size is seldom taken as an outcome, the literature offers relevant insights to understand under what circumstances cabinets are larger or smaller. A relevant approach comes from the idea that political fragmentation leads to bigger governments. Previous research has shown that cabinets' composition (especially coalitions) are strongly linked to their parliamentary support (Laver and Shepsle 1996). This dependency is mainly based on Gamson's law: political parties are allocated portfolios proportional to their contribution to the legislative support,<sup>2</sup> with the size of the cabinet being an important factor during the bargaining process (Gamson 1961; Martin and Vanberg 2003). Similarly, Verzichelli (2008) showed that ministry allocation is more proportional when parties have similar bargaining power.

Another approach has pointed out that political calculations and different policy preferences among parties drive most of the cabinet reorganisations, which in turn tend to affect the size of the executive (Davis et al. 1999). Heppell (2011), for instance, details how intra and interparty politics shaped the size of Labour cabinets in the UK, since different factions of the party demanded representation in the cabinet. However, not only politics, but also policies, shape the size of cabinets, since parties in cabinet can use different ministerial portfolios to emphasise policy preferences in order to set their political agenda (Mortensen and Green-Pedersen 2015). Finally, administrative considerations play a significant role. Having more or less ministerial offices has been linked to the unsatisfactory performance of existing departments,

which triggers internal reorganisations and different ministerial arrangements (White and Dunleavy 2010).

Finally, the study of cabinet size recently took a significant step forward. Indriðason and Bowler (2014) attempted to understand why some countries have a larger or smaller cabinet by adopting a cross-country, over-time perspective, and analysing variation in national cabinet size in 17 Western European countries between 1944 and 2005. They found evidence that executives tend to grow over time and tend to be bigger under left-wing governments, when coalition partners are less ideologically diverse and under minority cabinets. Their conclusions echoed Verzichelli's (2008) previous findings, who highlighted the role of the number of parties, bargaining power, polarisation and the powers of the prime minister in explaining the size of the executive.

#### CABINET SIZE IN A MULTILEVEL PERSPECTIVE

Notwithstanding these recent significant contributions, previous literature has not yet studied why some regions have a larger or smaller executive. Hence, this article's main contention is that the dynamics set by a multilevel structure of government crucially shape the variation in regional cabinet size.

The relocation of authority downward from central states has modified the way institutions are designed. Parties' strategies change when there are different institutional layers (Thorlakson 2007) and both state and regional decision-making very often need to be implemented after negotiating, cooperating, coordinating or simply interacting with other governments; decentralisation changes the dynamics of

the political and the party system (Hooghe and Marks 2003; Balme *et al.* 1994; Alesina and Spolaore 1997; Wälti 2004).

Thus, a gap remains in our theoretical understanding about cross-regional variation in cabinet size. Given a multilevel set-up, there are three reasons that might explain why some regions have larger or smaller cabinets than others.

### *Decentralisation and region's economic capacity*

The first expectation has to do with territorial decentralisation. In decentralised states, subnational units have gained a considerable amount of self- or/and shared-rule (Marks *et al.* 2008) and they are even able to monitor, control or contribute to some policies granted by the central government (Tatham 2013). The point of departure is that regional cabinets will be larger with the number of competences transferred to the region. Thus, regional cabinets will have more incentives to have more ministers in order to effectively embrace all newly transferred areas of government.

Yet, decentralisation cannot be conceived as a one-dimensional concept, being instead an overarching concept that includes several dimensions (Marks *et al.* 2008). These different dimensions may affect cabinet size in a different way.

The first dimension of territorial decentralisation refers to the region's economic capacity. The region's ability to govern is directly linked to how big the regional budget is, which in itself depends on economic decentralisation. The second dimension of decentralisation refers to the policy domains in which regional governments are able to legislate. These two dimensions do not always go hand in hand. Regions can have the legal ability to legislate in several areas (education, health, infrastructures...), but at the same time have a limited economic capacity. For



instance, in 1997 the Spanish Conservative cabinet lead by José María Aznar agreed to transfer a greater percentage of taxes to the ACs without linking this transfer to a substantive increase in most ACs' competences. In turn, two years before, Felipe González's Socialist government decided to decentralise about 10 new –albeit different– competences to almost all ACs without increasing each region's economic capacity.

Substantively, the logic behind the effect of economic or political decentralisation on regional cabinet size can be different. Those regions with a higher economic capacity can build newer or greater institutional arrangements that can ultimately result in new ministerial posts. Having more resources may imply a more ambitious agenda or designing policies in areas otherwise left behind. On the other hand, political decentralisation may also give regions more room for institutional manoeuvre. It may provide the regional executive with political incentives to prioritise certain policy areas by creating new ministerial posts.

Finally, it is reasonable to argue that having more ministerial posts may be associated with more political competences when region's economic capacity is also high (interactive effect). This process is linked to an extensive debate in fiscal federalism on whether economic decentralisation facilitates or impedes the growth of the public sector. Scholars have shown that different conditions, such as government's ideology, the degree of region's jurisdictional capacity, or the constitutional or political constraints imposed to central governments (Rodden 2002; Baskaran 2011; Sorens 2014), modify the effect of economic decentralisation on the size of the public sector.

Drawing from these insights, it is plausible to expect that a higher economic capacity without a broad set of policy domains may not justify the creation of new

ministerial posts: regions will have incentives to improve existing policies rather than tackling areas for which they have no real competences. Conversely, regions with greater political power without more economic resources may be less likely to have more ministerial posts, since its creation would imply a large sum of indirect expenses (offices, personnel, etc.). Hence, the impact of political decentralisation on cabinet size is expected to be large when economic capacity is high —that is, regions can cover the costs of new ministerial posts, which cover new policy domains. Indeed, it is less costly for regional incumbent politicians to justify larger cabinets when the region has both more competences and a greater regional budget.

It is important to highlight that not only economic and political decentralisation are different dimensions, but also that the latter is not, in itself, a monolithic concept. Political decentralisation encompasses different policy domains. Indeed, Falcó-Gimeno (2014) showed that decentralisation can take different forms, from welfare state issues, environmental issues or basic state functions (see also Chaqués and Palau 2011).

Overall, there are some insights to expect that only certain types of political decentralisation may be associated with larger cabinets. For instance, Chaqués and Palau (2011) show that some Spanish regions have frequently legislated on issues related to welfare state policies (health, education, social issues...). This may indicate that these regions give higher priority to these areas, which can ultimately result in creating a ministerial post specific to them.

Following the previous theoretical reasoning, we expect the following:

H1a: The greater the region's economic capacity, the larger the regional cabinet size.

H1b: The greater the political decentralisation a region holds, the larger its cabinet size.

H1c: The effect of political decentralisation on regional cabinet size will be stronger in regions with a larger economic capacity.

### *Multilevel government congruence*

According to the endogenous decentralisation literature (Filippov et al. 2004), political parties at the regional level, and even regional branches of national parties, are influenced by decentralisation (Hopkin 2003). They tend to adopt discourses more directed towards the defence of regional interests (Thorlakson 2006) and are oftentimes engaged in a process of legislative bargaining over a region's level of self- or shared-rule (Riker 1964; Amat and Falcó-Gimeno 2014; Guinjoan and Rodon 2014). Also, multilevel politics influence parties' incentives to support (or not) government formation at the regional level, conditional on the decentralisation status and the parliamentary support of the cabinets (Deschouwer 2009; Falcó-Gimeno and Verge 2013).

The insights from the endogenous decentralisation literature can be translated to regional cabinet size. When governments are non-congruent across territorial levels, regional governments may have more incentives to increase the number of ministers in order to signal their political preferences and gain political or electoral advantage. For instance, in 2001 the Andalusian Socialist government created the Ministry of Work and Technological Development in order to signal that the regional government was investing more than the central cabinet (held by the conservatives) in employment policies and R&D. On a similar vein, Chaqués and Palau (2011)

conclude that, in a multilevel system like Spain, law agendas across levels of government are more similar when the same political party is governing at the national and regional levels, while being more diverse when parties are different.

This is not, however, the only theoretical expectation. Previous literature has argued that vertical congruence (the coincidence of the party composition of government across levels) can facilitate intergovernmental relationships and, as such, regional governments may be less constrained to organise their cabinets. Bolleyer and Bytzek (2009) documented how low congruence across levels of government complicates intergovernmental relations, which in itself is an obstacle for subnational cabinets to implement their policies. In addition, incongruence has been associated with stalemate in those policy areas which necessitate joint decision-making between the centre and the regions (Hough and Jeffery 2006). The quest for congruence has played an important role in shaping the Spanish regional agenda and it has influenced national parties in their strategies when deciding whether to support a regional government, especially when the central government was a minority one (Ştefuriuc 2009).

These two contradictory expectations are summarised as follows:

H2a: Regional cabinet size will be larger when the parties in regional and national governments are different.

H2b: Regional cabinet size will be larger when the same party, or parties, govern at both the regional and the national government.

*Nationally-distinct regions*

The third expectation considers the relationship between subnational communities and regional cabinet size. Culturally, peripheral groups are a magnet for regional authority and therefore predisposed to demand self-rule. Not surprisingly, demands for autonomy by regional units that have national traits (distinct language, culture, and tradition) are generally higher (Marks et al. 2008). In those countries where some regions have a significant (and territorially concentrated) portion of the population with a different identity, controversies over the most appropriate territorial model are a common feature of party competition. Many nationally-distinct peripheral governments seek to ‘mirror’ some of the state functions and areas of influence, even if they have not formally been granted with the competence to act upon it. For instance, in the 2015 Catalan cabinet a new portfolio for Foreign Relations was created despite that the competences for ACs to engage in international relations were quite limited.

Following this logic, we expect cabinet size to be greater in nationally-distinct regions, as compared to the other regional governments:

H3: In nationally-distinct regions cabinet size will be larger than in the other regions.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to study the effect of political multilevel dynamics on cabinet size we consider Spain to be a suitable case due to its political and historical characteristics.

The Spanish decentralisation process has been evolving since its inception, which is reflected in over-time and cross-regional differences. Also, the existence of different historical realities, regional party systems, and different timing for elections will allow us to test the hypotheses of political congruence and historically-distinct regions. All in all, the cross-regional diverse patterns of decentralisation and the characteristics detailed below make Spain a suitable case to test our hypotheses.

The Spanish Constitution was approved in 1978 but it was not until 1982–1983 that most of the regions passed a statute (or regional basic law) and conducted elections —except for the regional governments that complied with the ‘fast-track’ requirements plus Andalusia.<sup>3</sup> According to all regional statutes, the regional prime minister has the legal authority to designate the regional ministers, who in turn may or may not necessarily be members of the regional chamber (only the Prime Minister needs to have a seat in the parliament). In four ACs (Asturias, Canary Islands, C.Valenciana and Madrid) there was in a certain period a legal limit of 10 ministerial posts (C.Valenciana and Madrid) or 11 (Canary Islands and Asturias). Only the Canary Islands region still retains this legal requirement. There is no legal impediment in the remainder to create as many ministerial positions as they deem necessary. In addition, in some of the new regional statutes approved in the 2000’s, a 40% gender-quota in the cabinet was introduced.

The regions have had a fair amount of flexibility in order to design the region’s institutional and administrative structure, and have been legally able to change or adapt it according to their political preferences (Keating and Wilson 2009). Most ACs, however, have mimicked the central administrative structure despite having different levels of self-government.

Devolution in Spain can and does take different forms. The Spanish Constitution includes two types of competences, ones that are reserved exclusively for the central government (over the regulation of defence, foreign policy and trade, citizenship...) and others that can be transferred to the ACs. Regions can claim to exercise authority over a wide range of issues and may assume, therefore, competences in areas as diverse as public order, transport, environment protection, social assistance, health or education. However, decentralisation of competences is previously redefined and revised according to bilateral negotiations between the regional and the national government and, if a pact is reached, approved by *Reales Decretos de Traspasos* (Royal Transfer Decrees, hereafter RTDs). While the competences listed in regional statutes were gradually transferred, the distribution of political authority is flexible and negotiations can result in competence transfers that cover broad or narrow areas. In addition, the central government has the authority to halt decentralisation or even centralise power (Muro 2015). The Spanish territorial system is therefore open and malleable to political agreements. Ultimately, the bilateral nature of most of these transfers eventually allows the testing of how different levels and types of political decentralisation influence regional cabinet size.<sup>4</sup>

For the empirical analyses, we focus on the 17 Spanish ACs over the time period 1979 to 2015. We built a new dataset using data on regional cabinet size that was gathered from the yearbooks of the newspaper *El País* (1982–2011), the official gazettes of the ACs or from the official regional government web pages.<sup>5</sup> Cabinet size is defined as the number of ministers in the regional government, with or without a portfolio<sup>6</sup> and we have considered all regional cabinets since their first democratic election.<sup>7</sup> Our dataset includes two types of cabinets: on one hand, those cabinets formed after regional elections, even if the composition did not change compared to

the previous year's cabinet. On the other hand, we include any cabinet change during the legislative term, including cabinets emerging from changes in the partisan composition of the cabinet or, more frequently, reshuffles, since both can imply changes in cabinet size.<sup>8</sup> Following previous literature, we consider a reshuffle to be “any change in ministerial personnel or responsibilities that affects more than two officeholders and at least two portfolios” (Indriðason & Kam 2008, p.329).

Summary statistics for the dependent variables are summarised in

Finally, it is important to note that most of the ACs' first value is between 1982/1983 and the majority of regions display cabinet size values every two years. Although the maximum legislative period required by law is four years, we observe 122 reshuffles (43.4% of the observations), which on average take place in the second half of the parliamentary term.

and in Figure 1. They reflect an important variation of cabinet size, not only across the different ACs (11 ministers separate the smallest and the largest regional cabinets in Spain during the analysis period), but also within regions: in some cases, cabinet size in the final observed data is twice the size of the first observed value. Indeed, with few exceptions, regional cabinet size over time indicates a similar pattern across ACs. If we look at the cabinets from 1983, we can see for example that the Comunitat Valenciana and Aragón had a similar number of regional ministerial posts —eight and seven respectively. However, twenty-four years later, after the 2007 elections, both had experienced an increase in the number of ministerial posts: in the Comunitat Valenciana there were 14 ministers and 12 in Aragón. Meanwhile, in the same period, both Canary Islands and Extremadura have had (roughly) the same number of ministers (10) with just some minor variations.



Table 1: Cabinet size, summary statistics

|                            | N   | Mean  | Media<br>n | Sd   | Min | Max |
|----------------------------|-----|-------|------------|------|-----|-----|
| Post-electoral<br>cabinets | 159 | 10.86 | 11         | 2.09 | 6   | 17  |
| Reshuffles                 | 122 | 10.92 | 11         | 1.99 | 6   | 16  |
| <i>By region</i>           |     |       |            |      |     |     |
| Andalucía                  | 17  | 12.88 | 12         | 1.87 | 10  | 16  |
| Aragón                     | 19  | 10.16 | 10         | 1.61 | 7   | 13  |
| Asturias                   | 15  | 10.27 | 11         | 1.39 | 7   | 12  |
| Balearic<br>Islands        | 17  | 12.35 | 13         | 1.76 | 8   | 15  |
| Canary<br>Islands          | 20  | 10.85 | 11         | 0.74 | 9   | 12  |
| Cantabria                  | 15  | 8.73  | 9          | 1.62 | 6   | 11  |
| Castilla-La<br>Mancha      | 22  | 10.77 | 10         | 2.29 | 8   | 15  |
| Castilla-León              | 13  | 9.31  | 9          | 1.84 | 6   | 13  |
| Catalonia                  | 15  | 14.07 | 14         | 1.39 | 12  | 17  |
| Comunitat<br>Valenciana    | 16  | 10.75 | 10         | 1.69 | 9   | 14  |
| Extremadura                | 13  | 10.33 | 10         | 1.44 | 7   | 12  |
| Galicia                    | 16  | 11.87 | 12         | 1.71 | 9   | 15  |
| La Rioja                   | 10  | 9.10  | 9          | 1.20 | 7   | 11  |
| Madrid                     | 17  | 11.12 | 10.5       | 2.03 | 8   | 16  |
| Murcia                     | 22  | 9.64  | 9.5        | 1.39 | 7   | 13  |
| Navarra                    | 15  | 10.13 | 10         | 1.35 | 8   | 13  |
| Basque<br>country          | 16  | 12.12 | 11.5       | 1.75 | 9   | 15  |
| Total                      | 281 | 10.89 | 11         | 2.09 | 6   | 17  |

Figure 1: Size of regional cabinets by Autonomous Communities (1980-2015)



The number of ministers is therefore relatively low in the beginning of the period (on average, regional governments were composed of 10.4 ministers in the early eighties) and it stabilises around 13 in the late 2000s. Just ‘eyeballing’ the graphs, we can see a time-trend pattern that roughly complies with Parkinson’s Law and with the trend showed by Indriðason and Bowler (2014): cabinets grew in the eighties and the early nineties and stabilised during the late nineties and 2000s. However, a look at the descriptive evolution also shows a general reduction in cabinet size over the last period, which portrays a slightly inverted U-shaped relationship. However, the decrease in cabinet size in the last years, which co-occurs with the economic crisis, is neither general nor systematic: some of the ACs kept their cabinet size and, in some others, cabinet size increases after the downward trend.

Finally, it is important to note that most of the ACs’ first value is between 1982/1983 and the majority of regions display cabinet size values every two years. Although the maximum legislative period required by law is four years, we observe

122 reshuffles (43.4% of the observations), which on average take place in the second half of the parliamentary term.

As developed in the theoretical part, regional self-government generally encapsulates the dimensions of economic and political decentralisation. We measure the first dimension by employing the regional budget as an indicator of the region's fiscal capacity.<sup>9</sup> Regions have limited powers in designing and collecting their own taxes (Garcia-Milà and McGuire 2007) and most of their resources come from direct transfers from the central government. Thus, the regions' budget is a good proxy for tackling regions' economic capacity. The analyses include two different specifications: on the one hand, in order to control for differences in the first initial budget, we normalised the data so that each first regional budget is set to base 100. Since each regional government was set up, political and economic decentralisation has unfolded differently across regions, so the variable effectively measures the regional evolution in economic capacity. Since the distribution is right-skewed, we take the log of this variable—taking the log is also convenient for substantive reasons: the impact of the regional budget is likely to be larger at lower values than at the end of the distribution. On the other hand, we consider region's per capita budget by calculating the budget over population ratio for each year and AC.

In order to measure political decentralisation, we use Falcó-Gimeno's (2014) dataset, in which political decentralisation is measured by calculating the cumulative number of competences transferred from the central government to the regional arenas over 19 different policy areas. Transferred competences may imply the capacity to legislate over certain policy areas –capacity to legislate on certain domains, executive means and financial resources– while others only imply the devolution of material resources or administrative procedures. In order to better

specify the type of transfers, we follow Chaqués and Palau (2011) and classify the transfers in different policy areas: a) basic state transfers for justice, civil rights or public administration policies, due to a nature of material transfers, and b) welfare state transfers for education, health, environmental or social policies. This distinction is necessary in order to capture the different nature of the RTD, and the different effect they might have on regional cabinet size.<sup>10</sup>

The number of cumulative competences transferred varies both within and across regions and indicates how much political power each region formally has. Up until 2015, Catalonia was the region where the number of transfers had been the highest (189), whereas Navarre was the lowest (60). In the empirical models we take the log of these indicators. The effect of the number of competences is likely to be non-linear, due to the nature of transferred competences. The first policy transfers in new policy areas can easily foster the creation of new ministerial posts, while the effect of posterior transfers is marginally lower, as new competences are more likely to be assumed by existing departments.

Recall that the reason behind employing two different indicators on political decentralisation relies in the diverse nature of territorial decentralisation: while each region's budget tackles the degree of regional economic capacity, the other variables attempt to capture the different policy areas of political decentralisation. Qualitative evidence of the diverse effects of political decentralisation on cabinet size drive the distinction between welfare and basic state competences. Two examples will suffice: in 1997 the executive of Castilla-La Mancha had the Ministry of 'Culture and Education'. After the transfer of a substantive amount of competences on education (and, among them, the ability to manage 90.000 million *pesetas*), the executive government split the ministry into two new posts that separately focused on the areas

of Culture and Education. On the other hand, between 2000–2002 the Catalan executive received competences in Justice and Home Affairs (basic state functions) with a relatively low budget associated to it. This regional empowerment did not lead to new portfolios and, in fact, the regional executive decided to merge the Ministry of Justice with the Ministry of Home Affairs. The new administrative functions facilitated the coordination of public policies and, therefore, the regional executive considered that two separate ministries were no longer necessary.

Any region can be endowed with political or administrative powers and, at the same time, its economic capacity can remain unaltered. This different logic is confirmed by the low correlation between the region's budget and the cumulative transfers covering welfare state policies (0.12;  $p < 0.05$ ) or basic state functions (0.1;  $p > 0.1$ ). As developed in the theoretical part, we expect regional cabinets to be larger as either a function of the region's economic capacity (H1a), political decentralisation (H1b) or when both interact (H1c).

To test the effect of government congruence (H2) on regional cabinet size, we follow the categorisation made by Ștefuriuc (2009; 2013). Political congruence is defined as the presence of the same parties in both central and regional layers, which are supported by a majority of seats in parliament. Political incongruence occurs when the party(ies) are different in each level and both are majority cabinets. Partial congruence occurs when some of the parties are the same in both layers and any of the cabinets is a minority one, also if the ruling party in one layer supports the cabinet in the other layer of government. For instance, we would consider as partial congruence the Catalan cabinet from 1996–2000, since *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) – i.e. the ruling party in Catalonia – supported the formation of a *Popular Party* (PP) minority cabinet in the central government and the PP supported CiU in Catalonia.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, we introduce a dummy for Catalonia, the Basque Country, Galicia and Navarre, versus the rest. The Spanish 1978 Constitution recognised the existence of ‘cultural and national’ realities by implementing two ‘routes’ to accede autonomy, which allowed ‘historical nationalities’ – the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia – to assume the maximum level of competences granted to the regions at a much faster pace. In Spain, 55.1% of Catalans feel ‘only Catalan’ or ‘more Catalan than Spanish’, and a similar percentage is reported in the Basque Country (46.9%). Although in the Galician case the percentage is much lower (24.9%), the three are considered historical communities since their desire for regional autonomy dates back, at least, to the Spanish Second Republic (1931–1939). Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia followed a ‘fast-track’ process, while the rest engaged in a more-strict set of legal requirements. These historical nationally-distinct nations have designed policies to promote their own language, culture or traditions. For instance, in Catalonia, the Basque Country or Galicia the regional government soon built up a regional TV network that broadcasts in the region’s own language. Although Navarre was not strictly recognised as a historical nationality, it is usually included in the group of historical communities, since it has a larger degree of economic autonomy and also a distinct language and culture. Moreover, the percentage of the population identifying with Navarre (only or) rather than Spain was of 39.7% in 2015, even more than in Galicia.<sup>12</sup> Recall that, according to H3, we should expect nationally-distinct ACs to have larger cabinets than the rest.

Following Indriðason and Bowler’s article (2014) and Verzichelli (2008), we control for several significant factors associated with cross-country variations in cabinet size. In particular, we include: number of parties, ideology, majority status, being a reshuffle or not, population, and GDP growth.<sup>13</sup>

Table 2: Summary statistics of the main independent variables

|  | N   | Min   | Max       | Mean      | Sd        |
|--|-----|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Regional budget growth (log)                             | 281 | 3.9   | 16.5      | 8.7       | 2.7       |
| Regional budget per capita                               | 280 | .03   | 8720.13   | 1,947.17  | 1,669.88  |
| Cumulative number of welfare State competences (log)     | 281 | 0   | 7.5       | 5.7       | 1.4       |
| Cumulative number of competences on State capacity (log) | 281 | 0   | 6.1       | 3.9       | 1.4       |
| Number of parties in the cabinet                         | 281 | 1   | 4         | 1.4       | 0.7       |
| GDP growth (t-1)   | 276 | -5.6  | 17.5      | 3.5       | 3.7       |
| Years same PM  | 281 | 0   | 22        | 4.1       | 5.1       |
| Population   | 280 | 257,349   | 8,398,984 | 2,487,688 | 2,135,842 |
| Majority   |     | 66.5% are majority cabinets   |           |           |           |
| Leftist cabinets   |     | 43.42% are left-wing cabinets   |           |           |           |
| Mid-term cabinet   |     | 43.42% are mid-term cabinets  |           |           |           |
| Multilevel government congruence                         |     | 42.3% Full congruence: The same party(ies) govern(s) at the national and the regional level                         |           |           |           |
|  |     | 12.8% Partial congruence: Parliamentary support in the national and the regional level comes from different parties |           |           |           |
|  |     | 44.8% No congruence: A different party(ies) govern(s) at the national and the regional level                        |           |           |           |

## EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

The data we employ have a time-series-cross-section (TSCS) structure. As explained before, it consists of 17 ACs and the time-periods ranging between 1979 and 2015. The distribution of our dependent variables by region and over time displays an intra-class correlation coefficient of 0.40, meaning that 40% of the variance is due to differences across panels.

Given the type of data at hand, the methodology used here relies on conventional OLS regressions with year fixed-effects or a time-trend variable to control for

common temporal trends, since regional cabinets tend to grow over time (Indriðason and Bowler 2014). We also estimated other models as robustness. To account for autocorrelation in the data we first considered a model that included the lagged value of the number of cabinet posts among the regressors. We also ran a Panel-Corrected Standard Errors (PCSE) model in order to control for contemporaneous correlation across units and unit level heteroscedasticity. A final robustness test involves an extended dataset that includes one observation per AC and year since the first regional cabinet was formed (that is, 553 observations). Results, which can be found in the online appendix, are consistent across the different models.

Table 3 presents the main results. M1 displays a basic model (M1), with the main variables and controls. M2 includes the interactions of interest. M3 controls for population, while M4 includes a time-trend control. M5 and M6 replace the logged regional budget for a per capita budget variable as an indicator of regional economic capacity.

Table 3. Regression models

|                                     | M1    | M2       | M3      | M4       | M5 | M6 |
|-------------------------------------|-------|----------|---------|----------|----|----|
| Regional budget<br>(base 100 - log) | 0.070 | -1.150** | -0.882* | -1.410** |    |    |



|   | M1      | M2      | M3      | M4      | M5      | M6      |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|   | (0.048) | (0.374) | (0.353) | (0.332) |         |         |
| Regional budget<br>(per capita)                                 |         |         |         |         | -0.002* | -0.002* |
|   |         |         |         |         | (0.001) | (0.001) |
| Cumulative # of Welfare<br>State competences (log)              | 1.180** | 0.758+  | 0.378   | -0.206  | 0.905** | 0.153   |
|   | (0.321) | (0.422) | (0.401) | (0.343) | (0.344) | (0.255) |
| Cumulative # of Basic State<br>competences (log)                | 0.054   | 0.410   | 0.434   | 0.657+  | 0.100   | 0.197   |
|   | (0.187) | (0.392) | (0.368) | (0.369) | (0.220) | (0.209) |
| Welfare State Competences<br>x Budget (log)                     |         | 0.303*  | 0.219+  | 0.368** |         |         |
|   |         | (0.122) | (0.115) | (0.111) |         |         |
| Basic State Competences x<br>Budget (log)                       |         | -0.158  | -0.138  | -0.221* |         |         |
|   |         | (0.109) | (0.102) | (0.102) |         |         |
| Welfare State Competences<br>x Budget (per capita)              |         |         |         |         | 0.001+  | 0.001*  |
|   |         |         |         |         | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| Basic State Competences x<br>Budget (per capita)                |         |         |         |         | -0.000  | -0.000  |
|   |         |         |         |         | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| Multilevel govt. congruence<br>(no congruence ref.<br>category) |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Partial congruence  | -0.479  | -0.621  | -0.674  | -0.292  | -0.368  | 0.040   |
|   | (0.459) | (0.454) | (0.426) | (0.353) | (0.456) | (0.364) |
| Full congruence   | -0.033  | -0.073  | -0.108  | -0.362  | -0.038  | -0.293  |
|   | (0.246) | (0.244) | (0.229) | (0.229) | (0.250) | (0.236) |
| Nationally-distinct regions                                     | 1.220** | 1.159** | 1.048** | 1.409** | 1.392** | 1.262** |
|   | (0.295) | (0.290) | (0.273) | (0.269) | (0.308) | (0.295) |
| Years as Prime Minister   | 0.075** | 0.075** | 0.081** | 0.064** | 0.083** | 0.074** |
|   | (0.022) | (0.022) | (0.021) | (0.021) | (0.022) | (0.022) |
| Single-party majority   | -0.293  | -0.415  | -0.578* | -0.107  | -0.359  | 0.065   |

|                       | M1      | M2      | M3      | M4      | M5      | M6      |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| government            | (0.303) | (0.300) | (0.283) | (0.265) | (0.300) | (0.267) |
| Mid-term cabinet      | -0.194  | -0.110  | 0.034   | 0.315   | -0.148  | 0.267   |
|                       | (0.308) | (0.303) | (0.285) | (0.195) | (0.305) | (0.199) |
| # parties in cabinet  | 0.526** | 0.448*  | 0.542** | 0.296+  | 0.506** | 0.407*  |
|                       | (0.184) | (0.189) | (0.178) | (0.173) | (0.183) | (0.173) |
| GDP growth t-1        | 0.084   | 0.114*  | 0.096+  | 0.172** | 0.094+  | 0.189** |
|                       | (0.055) | (0.054) | (0.051) | (0.028) | (0.054) | (0.030) |
| Leftist cabinets      | 0.566*  | 0.616** | 0.336   | 0.715** | 0.496*  | 0.593** |
|                       | (0.237) | (0.233) | (0.223) | (0.217) | (0.238) | (0.223) |
| Population (std)      |         |         | 0.718** | 0.649** |         | 0.607** |
|                       |         |         | (0.126) | (0.129) |         | (0.115) |
| Time trend            |         |         |         | -0.053* |         | -0.061+ |
|                       |         |         |         | (0.026) |         | (0.036) |
| Constant              | 6.836** | 8.210** | 9.543** | 8.825** | 7.632** | 7.928** |
|                       | (1.342) | (1.393) | (1.326) | (0.841) | (1.374) | (0.776) |
| Year Fixed Effects    | Yes     | Yes     | Yes     | No      | Yes     | No      |
| <i>N</i>              | 276     | 276     | 276     | 276     | 276     | 276     |
| <i>ACs</i>            | 17      | 17      | 17      | 17      | 17      | 17      |
| <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> | 0.53    | 0.55    | 0.60    | 0.48    | 0.54    | 0.46    |

Standard errors in parentheses

+ p<0.1, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01

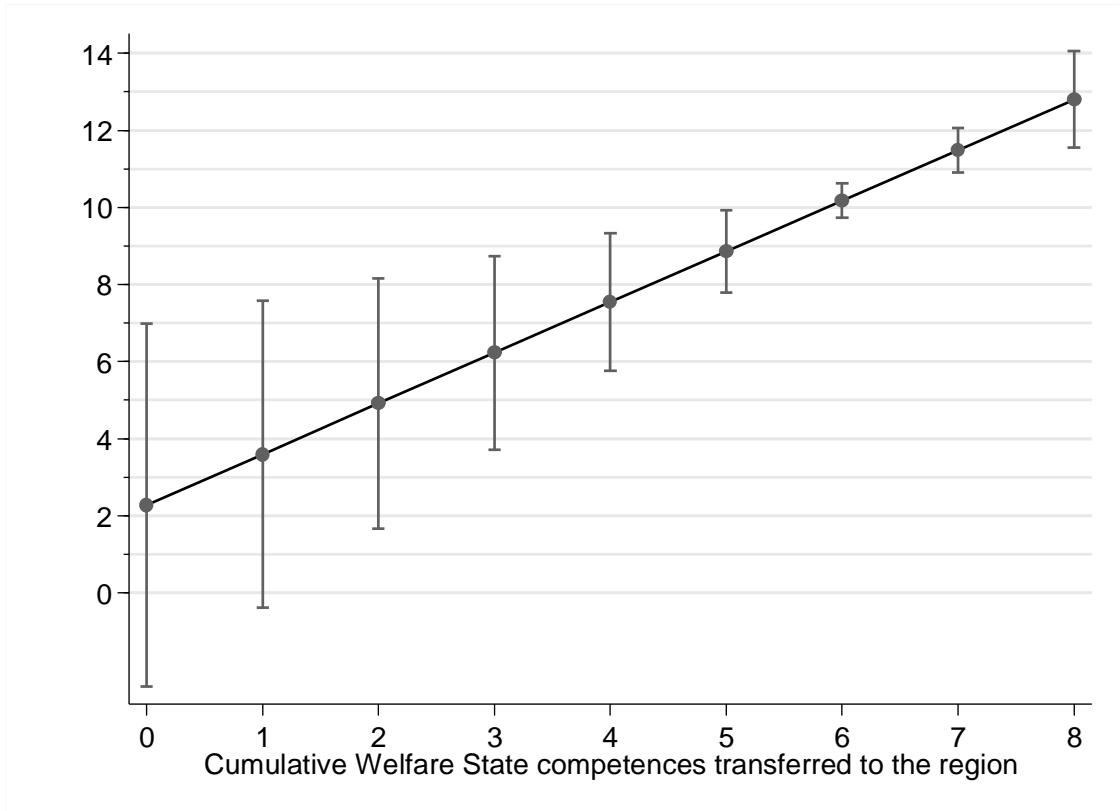
The first substantive finding is that the regional budget is not significant in M1. Thus, regions with a greater regional budget do not have larger cabinets. Regarding the effect of decentralisation, the estimates show that decentralisation of welfare state competences has a statistically significant positive effect on regional cabinet size. Interestingly, though, decentralisation in the form of basic state functions did not have the same significant effect. As developed in the theoretical part, this result not only indicates the appropriateness to consider different dimensions for decentralisation, it also shows that those regions that hold more welfare state competences tend to have a

greater regional executive (H1b). On the contrary, when the region has a larger economic capacity (H1a) or more basic state function competences, regional cabinet sizes do not vary.

Indeed, these results square with White and Dunleavy's (2010) idea that welfare state competences imply an extension of policy functions leading to demergers or new start-up ministries, while basic state functions just imply transfer (or even mergers) of functions across ministries since the increase of material resources is mainly administrative – i.e. more material resources allow ministries to tackle diverse issues without creating new portfolios. Therefore, basic State function competences do not lead to bigger cabinets.<sup>14</sup>

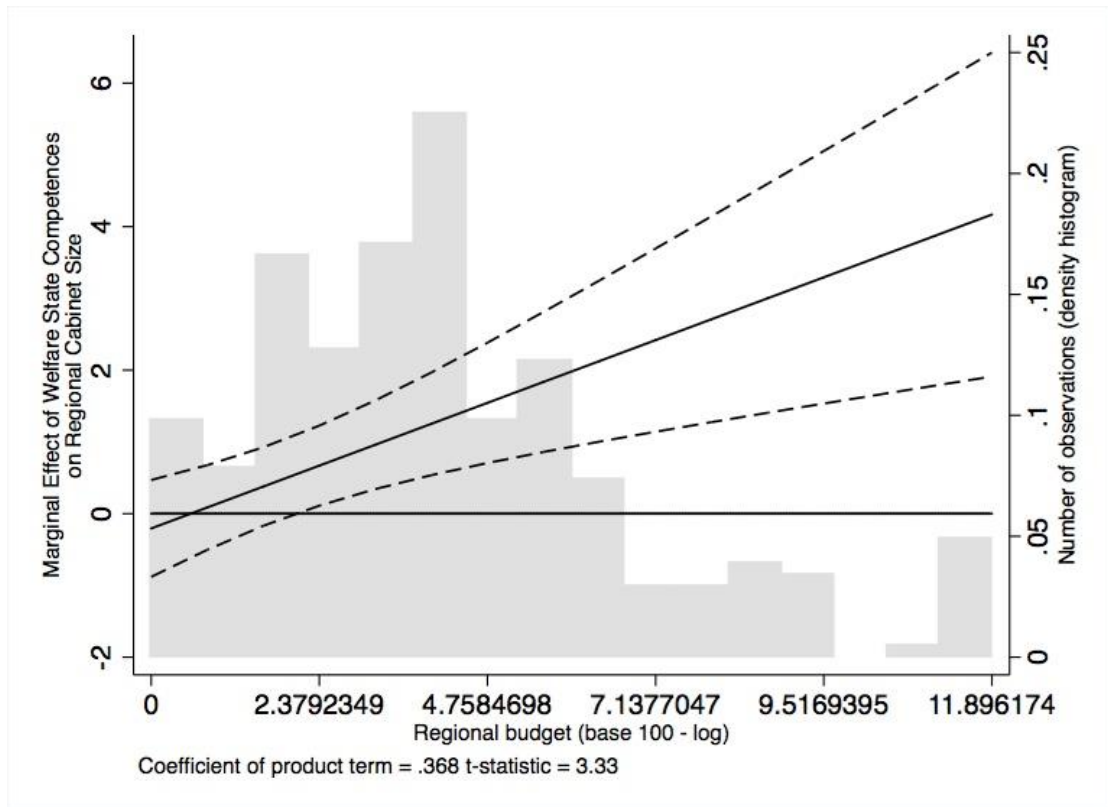
The substantive effect of cumulative welfare state competences granted to ACs (M4) is displayed in Figure 2, in which the effect of (the log of) the cumulative welfare state competences transferred to the region is plotted against predicted regional cabinet size, holding the rest of their variables at their means. As the figure shows, the effect is positive: for instance, regions in the first quartile have two ministers less than regions in the third quartile.

Figure 2: Predicted regional cabinet size as a function of the cumulative Welfare State competences transferred to the region



We also hypothesised that regional cabinets are larger when regions have both a high economic capacity and a large number of competences. Following this line of reasoning, M2-M6 include interactions between the region's budget (with the two different specifications) and the number of welfare state competences, on one hand, and the number of basic state function competences, on the other. The first interaction is always positive and significant, while the second mostly reports a non-significant effect. Figure 3 plots the marginal effects of the first interaction (M4). The graph provides evidence that the effect of welfare state competence transfers on cabinet size is greater as the regional economic capacity increases. Thus, when regions hold more welfare state competences and have a high economic manoeuvrability, regional cabinet size tends to be larger. Conversely, for low values of regional budget, having more welfare competences has a non-significant effect.

Figure 3: Marginal effect of cumulative Welfare State competences transferred to the region for different levels of regional budget



Next, we explore H2, which suggests that regional cabinet size is larger when both the regional and the central government are governed by different parties, providing incentives for the regional executive to increase the number of portfolios in their cabinets to signal distinct policy preferences (H2a); or when the same party governs both the regional and the central government, which facilitates intergovernmental relationships and institutional design (H2b).

Despite all coefficients being negative, in none of our models multilevel congruence reaches statistical significance. In addition, we also calculated the difference between the incumbent ideological position on the central and the regional level as a proxy for diverse policy priorities across government arenas<sup>15</sup>. Results, which can be found in the online appendix, are also negative and not significant. However, multilevel congruence in our region-year panel data regressions (Table E in

the online Appendix) is negative and statistically significant, suggesting that ACs ruled by a different party (or parties) than the national incumbent tend to be larger. Nevertheless, results are not conclusive and it is not possible to rule out the possibility that non-significance in Table 3 is due to the simultaneous occurrence of the mechanisms described in H2a and H2b.

Finally, the dummy that distinguishes nationally-distinct regions is significant and positive. This result indicates that nationally-distinct regions tend to have bigger cabinets than other regions. This finding goes in line with what we hypothesised in H3, which claimed that regions with national characteristics have a tendency to have larger regional cabinets.

To illustrate the effects, Figure 4 plots the predicted cabinet size of nationally-distinct regions versus the others, holding the other variables at their means (M4). Nationally-distinct regions tend to have, on average, two more ministerial posts than the rest. Some could argue that these differences might be due to larger differences between these two types of ACs in the early 1980s. In order to check that this is not the case, we performed T-tests dividing our sample into three different periods; the results (presented in Table 4) show that cabinets in nationally-distinct regions are always significantly larger, although differences decrease over time.

Figure 4: Predicted regional cabinet size in historical AC versus non-historical AC

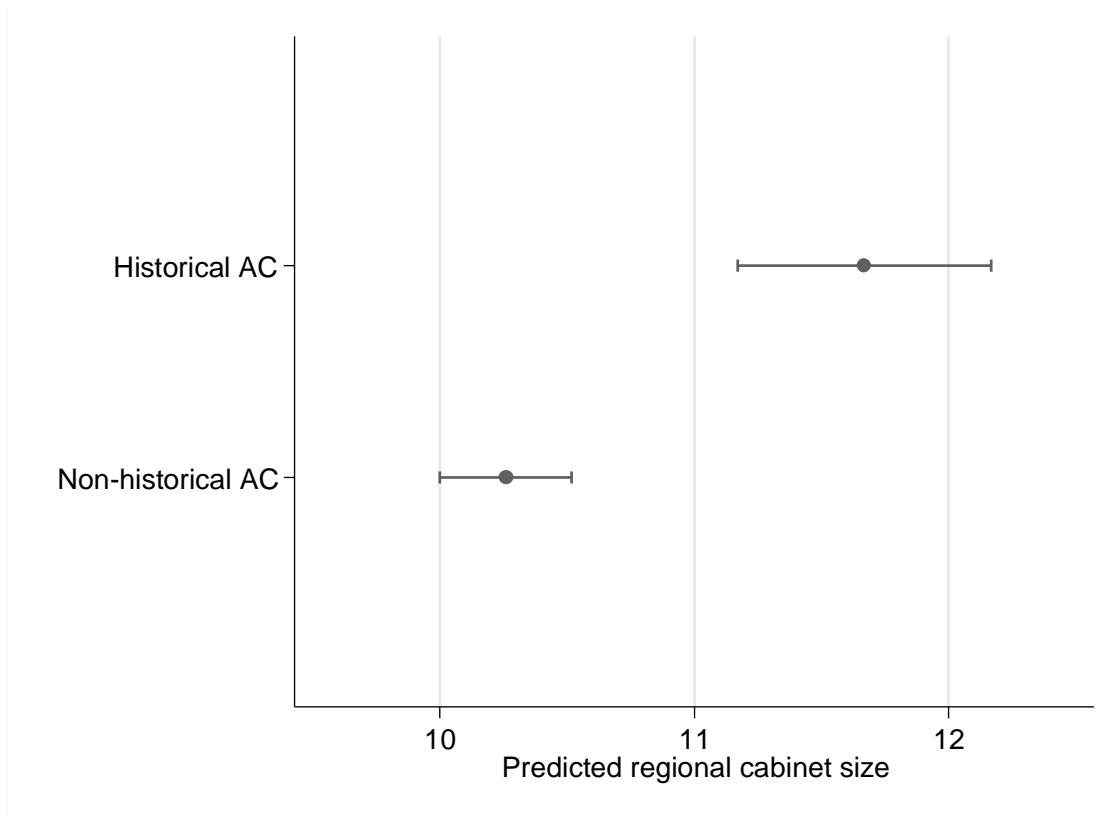


Table 4: Differences in cabinet size between historic and non-historic AC over time (T-tests)

|                       | <1990          | 1990-2000      | >2000        |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>Historical</b>     | 11.68          | 12.38          | 12.27        |
| <b>Non-historical</b> | 9.82           | 10             | 11.22        |
| <b>Difference</b>     | <b>1.85***</b> | <b>2.37***</b> | <b>1.05*</b> |

\*\*\* p<0.001 \*\*p<0.01 \*p>0.05

Finally, if we focus our attention on the control variables we observe the following: the number of years the regional prime minister holds office is a positive and significant predictor of regional cabinet size. Even controlling for time-trends, twelve extra years in office (three terms) is associated with larger cabinet size by almost one minister. In regions where the number of parties in the cabinet is larger, the cabinet size is also greater, a result that squares with Indriðason and Bowler's

findings (2014). Last but not least, having a leftist cabinet is associated with larger regional cabinets, by approximately one ministerial post.

Interestingly, compared to Verzichelli's (2008) findings that national executives tend to be smaller when the economy grows, in our models regional GDP growth is positive and statistically significant, which indicates that during good times central governments tend to shrink, while inflating the ministerial posts at the regional level. This finding reinforces the differential dynamics between regional and country cabinet structures.

As compared to Indriðason and Bowler's findings (2014), we do not find significant evidence that, at the regional level, the type of government (single-party government versus coalition) contributes to inflation of the number of ministers. Finally, reshuffles do not seem to be a tool for regional cabinets to enlarge.

## CONCLUSIONS

Most of the countries in the world have a certain degree of regional authority. Decentralisation is increasingly in vogue. Over recent decades, due to economic or democratic incentives, devolving the responsibilities of centralised governments to regional or local governments has been a local trend. By doing so, decentralisation has changed the institutional and the party system: both need to coexist in a much more complex system of governance.

Building on the complexity set-up by a multilevel territorial system and from the recent and stimulating findings of Verzichelli (2008) and Indriðason and Bowler (2014), we analysed the determinants of regional variation on cabinet size. We argue that there are compelling theoretical reasons to expect that some factors, linked to a



multilevel polity, could affect the size of the regional executive. In addition, these arguments are different in nature than what could affect national governments. Hence, we hypothesised that regional governments would be larger as a function of political and economic decentralisation, when there is (not) party congruence across national and regional executives and as a function of the existence of nationally-distinct regional groups.

Results have confirmed that decentralisation matters, especially in the form of political decentralisation. Regions with a greater economic capacity do not automatically have a larger cabinet size. Instead, regions that have more welfare state competences have a greater number of portfolios, while basic administrative competences do not have a significant effect on regional cabinet size. The fact that welfare state competences matter, as compared to basic administrative competences, may highlight that regions use these new attributions to increase their visibility. The multilevel structure of government makes it difficult for citizens to distinguish which administration is in charge of certain policy areas, thus regional cabinets may use their new political attributions to signal certain domains and attract citizen's attention. Most importantly, we also showed that the effect of welfare state competences on regional cabinet size is larger at high values of regional economic capacity. In other words, cabinet size is significantly larger when regions are granted with both welfare competences and a higher economic manoeuvrability.

Congruence/non-congruence between the national and the regional government received insufficient support. According to the literature, congruence can either facilitate coordination and therefore the creation of new portfolios or provide incentives for regional executives to signal policy preferences by creating new ministries. According to our analysis, congruence appears to reduce ACs cabinet size,

although results are only statistically significant in a region-year panel structure. Future research will have to dig deeper into this effect, by looking at a larger pool of countries and also testing whether (non-)congruence affects the design of specific policies, rather than the executive structure.

The empirical analysis has also concluded that nationally-distinct regions, like Catalonia or the Basque Country, tend to have a larger number of ministerial posts.

Overall, results indicate the need to contemplate multilevel dynamics of government in order to understand institutional arrangements in decentralised countries. Most importantly, these results may underpin a broader underlying institutional process: if multilevel dynamics affect regional cabinet size, which by nature has more constraints to grow or decrease, the effect is likely to be more intense for other institutions (public councils, bureaucratic officials, etc.). Future research will need to better disentangle these effects.

In their recent stimulating work, Indriðason and Bowler argued that ‘much of the literature on coalition formation assumes that the size of the cabinet is fixed but...cabinets do change in size’ (2014: 381). By using the Spanish case, this article has represented a first step to shed light on this process at the regional level. Future research can certainly extend it further and include more decentralised countries, which should take into account more regions with a different degree of territorial decentralisation, or more contextual situations. Similarly, future studies can try to delve deeper and analyse under which circumstances regions create cabinet posts to target a specific policy domain, even if the regional government does not have a specific legal competence over it or if it is vaguely defined.

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<sup>1</sup> The dataset and the replication materials are available at [LINK].

<sup>2</sup> Deviations from full proportionality have been the focus of recent research, see Bäck et al. (2011) or Falcó-Gimeno and Indriđason (2013).

<sup>3</sup> This was the case of Navarre (1979), the Basque Country and Catalonia (1980), Galicia (1981) and Andalusia (1982). The case of Andalusia is special, since the region was finally included in the fast-track path after a period of elite and popular mobilisation in favour of self-government.

<sup>4</sup> As compared to other decentralised states, Spanish ACs are characterised by a moderate level of regional self-government (behind federal states) and a very low level of shared-government. See RAI dataset (Marks et al. 2008).

<sup>5</sup> El País's yearbooks collect the composition of each regional cabinet on January 1 and, therefore, regional cabinets that lasted less than a natural year could not be covered. However, more than one reshuffle per year is not usual. We follow Falcó-Gimeno (2014) and data was double-checked using the database of the *Observatorio de Gobiernos de Coalición* ([http://www.ub.edu/OGC/index\\_es.htm](http://www.ub.edu/OGC/index_es.htm)).

<sup>6</sup> Ministers without a portfolio are highly uncommon and are only identified in the early years of regional governments.

<sup>7</sup> Although the ministers at the Spanish regional level are named as *consejeros* (councillors), we stick to 'ministers'.

<sup>8</sup> It is important to focus on reshuffles as these new cabinets can imply changes in cabinet size and by not including them we would be losing relevant units of data. We follow a similar approach than Verzhicelli (2008), who showed that reshuffles did not affect cabinet size in a different way than postelectoral cabinets. In our dataset, half of the cases (43.4%) correspond to reshuffled cabinets. Reshuffles are fairly distributed across regions (between 35-50% of each region's observations correspond to reshuffles), which does not lead to some regions having more influence than others because of the number of observations by region (robustness checks weighting for the number of cases across regions provide the same results).

<sup>9</sup> Region's budgets were gathered from a variety of sources, including original budget laws, official regional gazettes or regional newspapers. We converted budget figures to Euros and adjusted them to inflation. In Spain, economic decentralisation is very low although there is an exception for the Basque Country and Navarra, which are allowed to collect their own taxes and give a portion to the central government in order to pay for activities such as Defence or Foreign Affairs. In the rest of the ACs, all taxes are levied and collected by or for the central government.

<sup>10</sup> Data comes from the Spanish Ministry of Territorial Policy and is publicly available at the Ministry for Finances and Public Administration (<http://www.seap.minhap.gob.es>), accessed 28 October 2014. Chaqués and Palau (2011) also include another category of transfers, relative to environmental protection and territorial management planning. Due to the nature of the transfers, we have considered them as welfare state policies. Disentangling both, however, provides the same results. Finally, Falcó-Gimeno (2014) did not include all regions in his analysis. We complemented the dataset following the same coding approach. Table B in the online appendix shows the concrete coding for each topic.

<sup>11</sup> Alternatively, we also computed an additional measure of congruence, which tackles the ideological (dis)similarity across levels of government. Further details and results, which are robust, can be found in the online appendix.

<sup>12</sup> Sources: Political Opinion Barometer 746, April 2014. Catalan Statistics Institute (CEO, <http://ceo.gencat.cat/>). Post-election Survey of the Basque Elections (ref. 2964), October 2012. Centre for Sociological Research (CIS, [www.cis.es](http://www.cis.es)). Post-election Survey of the Galician Elections (ref. 2958), September 2012. Post-election Survey of the Navarre Elections (ref. 3097), June 2015. Centre for Sociological Research (CIS, [www.cis.es](http://www.cis.es)).

<sup>13</sup> Operationalisation detailed in the online appendix.

<sup>14</sup> One might think that decentralisation and congruence interact: with more powers, regions are more likely to act as they deem necessary and the central capacity to influence regional governments' decisions is lower. This interaction, however, is not statistically significant.

<sup>15</sup> See footnote 13.