THE PERFORMANCE OF THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES' ELECTORAL SYSTEMS: THE PREDOMINANCE OF THE IMPERFECT TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

With the basic features of the Spanish voting system having now been in place for 20 years and generalized at regional level for the last 15, the system may be said to be institutionalized. In a politically decentralized state, any study of the way the voting system works must necessarily draw on its generic influence on the working of the political system and, more specifically, on electoral behaviour, representation, the party system and governability. This paper aims to contribute to explaining the terms of the debate on the Spanish voting system by providing a better understanding of the electoral effects and political consequences of the voting systems in Spain's 17 Autonomous Communities. More specifically, it tackles the following aspects: basic and differential features of the regional election systems, the sizes and coefficients of representation of the respective parliaments, the inequality and lack of proportion of the vote in relation to the size of the districts, minimum voting barriers and inclusion thresholds, a comparison of the main indicators of disproportion and, finally, the formats of the various regional party systems and the ensuing models of governability.

The basic characteristics of the Spanish electoral system are twenty years old now, and their generalization at the level of the Autonomous Communities is about fifteen years old; their institutionalization can now be affirmed. The study of the performance of an electoral system must necessarily refer to its generic influence on the functioning of the political system. This incidence is related to its chief function of producing

representation through the conversion of votes into seats. On one hand, the system has regulating effects on electoral competence, from the point of view of the psychology of the voters, as well as from the orientation of the strategies of the political elite; but on the other hand, it has more or less mechanical shaping effects on the party system, which must produce governability. In the case of a democracy that is just beginning, or, more concretely, in the case of the institutionalization of its autonomous format of decentralization, a basic importance in the institutional development can be attributed to the electoral system.

The Constitution of 1978 has implanted a decentralized model of the form of the State, which we have called the State of the Autonomies and which has meant the creation of 17 regional Parliaments with their respective governments since 1980. The regulation of political competence and the production of representation in such a large number of political arenas has generated the coexistence of different electoral systems in each of the Autonomous Communities, even producing different party systems in some of them, due to the relevance acquired by the nationalist or regionalist cleavage. This regulation of competence and production of representation has also given rise to what has been called «Españas electorales» (Vallès, 1987 and 1991) to reflect the heterogeneity of the new electoral and party lineups founded on different territorial bases.

In the sections that follow, I will try to contribute to the clarification of the terms of the debate on the Spanish electoral system, based on a better knowledge of the electoral effects and the political consequences of the electoral systems of the Autonomous Communities. In the first place, a panoramic vision of the prevailing regulations will allow me to characterize the basic and differential features of each of the 17 electoral systems. In the second section, I will compare the autonomous Parliaments' sizes and coefficients of representation. In the third place, I will evaluate vote inequality and disproportionality in relation with the district systems, which have shown themselves to be one of the most critical factors of the Spanish electoral system as a whole. In the fourth epigraph, I will evaluate the application of the minimum vote barriers and the resulting inclusion thresholds. In the fifth section I will do a comparative study of the principal indicators of the lack of proportionality between votes and seats. And, finally, the sixth and last section will be dedicated to the characterization of the formats of the different party systems and the resulting models of governability.

1. ELECTORAL SYSTEMS IN THE STATUTES AND IN THE ELECTORAL LAWS OF THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES

The Autonomous Communities regulate, in one way or another, the electoral system by which they designate the components of their respective legislative assemblies. Although the ambiguities and the constitutional reservations about competence in the subject of the regulation of the electoral process (Fernández, 1981) have been pointed out, the fact is that all the Communities have made legislation in this matter. The criteria have oscillated between a mimetic eagerness with respect to the system implanted by the *Congreso de Diputados* and the desire to generalize a relatively homogeneous system after the autonomic pacts between UCD and PSOE (Vallès, 1988; Groppi, 1991). These tendencies crystallized with such intensity in the autonomic judicial texts that an urgent reform of the LOREG in March 1991, which homogenized the summons to regional elections, forced the simultaneous modification of the Statutes of Autonomy of Asturias, Cantabria, Castile-La Mancha, the Valencian Community, Extremadura, Madrid, and Murcia.

The majority of the Autonomous Communities, following the legislative technique initiated by the Constitution, includes in the articles of their respective Statutes of Autonomy, as can be seen in Table 1, an important part of the electoral system's elements, therefore making them more resistant to ulterior reform. In the table I have gathered only the references which appear in the articles, excluding the analysis of transitory dispositions. The first basic difference rests on the convocation of elections and on the duration of the parliamentary mandate, with or without the possibility of an anticipated dissolution. In this way, Andalusia, Catalonia, Galicia, and the Basque Country differ from the others, not only because they have their own parliamentary rhythm, but also because they have at their disposal the presidential power to dissolve their Parliaments and to call for early elections. On the contrary, the rest of the slow-track Autonomous Communities[1] have been obliged to synchronize and homogenize their rhythms of convoking and holding elections, making them coincide every four years, since 1983, with the local elections on the last Sunday of the month of May, whether or not any crises or majority changes occur during the legislature (Revenga, 1988).

This first difference, together with the greater specificity of their party systems, especially in Catalonia and the Basque Country, gives greater political relevance to the autonomic elections of the first group with respect to those others with the common regime. On one hand, this is due to the key role that the majority

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[1] As this analysis is about to be published, the reform of some Statutes of Autonomy is being initiated. The Senate has already approved (December 4, 1996) the reforms of the Statutes of Autonomy of the Canary Islands and of Aragon which, besides recognizing the qualifying adjective of «nationality», confer the capacity to dissolve their Parliaments and to convoke new elections on the president of the autonomous executive power. This can serve as a reference for the reform of the other Statutes of Art. 143.

TABLE 1

Elements of the Electoral System Contained in the Statutes of Autonomy

Community	Legislative Reference	Parliament Size	Vote-counting Formula	District Delimitation	District Magnitude	Minimum Threshold	Parliamentary Denomination	Early Dissolution
Andalusia	L.O. 6/1981, Dec. 30 (BOJA 12, 6-2-82)	90/110 Art. 26.1	Id. Congr. Dip. Art. 28.2	Provincial Art. 28.2	Maximum Art. 28.1	—	Parliament of Andalusia	Yes
Aragon	L.O. 8/1982, Aug. 10 (BOE 195, 16-8-82)	60/75 Art. 19	Proportional Art. 18.3	Provincial Art. 18.4	Maximum Art. 19	—	Cours of Aragon	No
Asturias	L.O. 7/1981, Dec. 30 (BOE 9, 11-1-82)	35/45 Art. 25.2	Proportional Art. 25.1	—	—	—	General Board of the Principality of Asturias	No
Balearic Islands	L.O. 22/1983, Feb. 28 (BOE 51, 1-3-83)	—	Proportional Art. 20.1	Territorialities Art. 20.1	—	—	Parliament of the Balearic Islands	No
Canary Islands	L.O. 10/1982, Aug. 10 (BOE 195, 16-8-82)	50/70 Art. 8.3	Proportional Art. 8.2	Insular Art. 8.4	Fixed Trans. 1	3R/20D Art. 8.2	Canarian Parliament	No
Cantabria	L.O. 8/1981, Dec. 30 (BOE 9, 11-1-82)	35/45 Art. 10.4	Proportional Art. 10.1	Single Art. 10.2	—	—	Regional Assembly of Cantabria	No
Castile and Leon	L.O. 4/1983, Feb. 25 (BOE 52, 2-3-83)	—	Proportional Art. 10.1	Provincial Art. 10.2	3+1/45.000 Art. 10.2	—	Cours of Castile and Leon	No
Castile-La Mancha	L.O. 9/1982, Aug. 10 (BOE 195, 16-8-82)	40/50 Art. 10.1	Proportional Art. 10.2	Provincial Art. 10.2	—		Cours of Castile-La Mancha	No
Catalonia	L.O. 4/1979, Dec. 18 (BOE 306, 22-12-79)	135 Trans. 4	Proportional Art. 31.1	Provinciales Trans. 4.a	Max. and Min. 1/40,000 1/50,000 Trans. 4	—	Parliament of Catalonia	Yes

SOURCE: Prepared by Author.

TABLE 1 (continued)

Elements of the Electoral System Contained in the Statutes of Autonomy

Community	Legislative Reference	Parliament Size	Vote-counting Formula	District Delimitation	District Magnitude	Minimum Threshold	Parliamentary Denomination	Early Dissolution
Valencian Community	L.O. 5/1982, Jul. 1 (BOE 164, 10-7-82)	75/100 Art. 12.1	Proportional Art. 12.1	District Art. 12.1	Max. and Min. 20+ Dem. Prop. Art. 13	5R Art. 12.2	Valencian Cours	No
Extremadura	L.O. 1/1983, Feb. 25 (BOE 49, 26-2-83)	65 Max. Art. 22.1	Proportional Art. 22.1	Provincial Art. 22.2	Min. + Dem. Art. 22.2	—	Assembly of Extremadura	No
Galicia	L.O. 1/1981, Apr. 6 (BOE 101, 28-4-81)	60/80 Art. 11.5	Proportional Art. 11.2	Provincial Art. 11.4	—	—	Parliament of Galicia	Yes
Madrid	L.O. 3/1983, Feb. 25 (BOE 51, 1-3-83)	1/50.000 Art. 10.2	Proportional Art. 11.3	Single Art. 11.1	—	5D/R Art. 11.4	Assembly of Madrid	No
Murcia	L.O. 4/1982, June 9 (BOE 146, 19-6-82)	35/45 Art. 24.2	Proportional Art. 24.1	—	—	—	Regional Assembly of Murcia	No
Navarre	L.O. 13/1982, Aug. 10 (BOE 195, 16-8-82)	40/60 Art. 15.2	Proportional Art. 15.2	—	—	—	Parliament or Cours of Navarre	No
Basque Country	L.O. 3/1979, Dec. 18 (BOE 306, 22-12-79)	—	Proportional Art. 26.3	Provincial Art. 26.2	Equal Art. 26.1	—	Basque Parliament	Yes
Rioja	L.O. 3/1982, June 9 (BOE 146, 19-6-82)	32/40 Art. 18.1	Proportional Art. 18.3	Single Art. 18.2	—	—	General Council of Rioja	No

SOURCE: Prepared by Author.

Basque and Catalonian nationalist parties have acquired in the governability of the State; and on the other hand, it is due to Galicia and Andalusia being, respectively, the electoral granaries of the two majority parties upon the alternation of which this governability rests. At the same time, the strategic use of this kind of self-regulation of the rhythm of convocation can have a much greater incidence in the legislative elections which are close in time to the national political system (Caciagli and Corbetta, 1987), as we have been able to verify in recent years. From another point of view, the homogenization and simultaneous character of the municipal elections and the regional elections of the common-regime Autonomies, at the same time as they rationalize the electoral process, contribute to reduce the political value of its results, turning them into second-order elections. In this sense, the hypothesis of Vallès (1987) about the interest of the large national parties in acting with an advantage in this type of election, trying to limit the importance which the regional parties could acquire, becomes relevant; this is a strategy for which they have encountered allies in the principal nationalist parties of the historical Communities who are interested, in turn, in clearly differentiating their political status of self-government.

All of the Statutes make a generic reference to the formula for counting votes which is simply proportional, with no more specifications, except for Andalusia, which identifies its formula with the one presently used in the *Congreso de Diputados*. The majority, with the exceptions of the Balearic Islands, Castile and Leon, and the Basque Country, quantify the limits of their parliamentary size. In the same way, almost all define the delimitation criterion of their districts or electoral constituencies, excluding Asturias, the Balearic Islands, the Valencian Community, Murcia, and Navarre. Some Communities go further and include in their Statutes some criteria for the calculation of the magnitudes of their districts (the Canary Islands, Castile and Leon, Catalonia, the Valencian Community, Extremadura, and the Basque Country) or their minimum and/or maximum limits (Andalusia and Aragon), in a more or less concrete way. Finally, only the Canary Islands, the Valencian Community, and Madrid regulate the minimum of votes for a party to be included in the allocation of seats, through their respective Statutes of Autonomy. I said earlier that I am excluding from this analysis the remaining elements of the electoral system which are included in the transitory dispositions, precisely because of their transitory character, even though many of them foreshadowed the definitive electoral system, having been later consecrated in their respective electoral laws.

Beginning with the Basque Country in 1983 and with Catalonia being the only exception, all of the Autonomous Communities promulgated their electoral laws between 1985 (Galicia) and 1991 (Rioja). In these electoral laws they include a specific title, completing the institutionalization of all the elements of their respective electoral systems, as is systematized and shown in Table 2. Catalonia (in 1984) and the Canary Islands (in 1987) alone refer only to their respective Statutes and to the adjustment of the general electoral norms contained in the R.D. 20/1977, of March 18, in the first case, and in the

TABLE 2

Elements of the Electoral System Developed by the Electoral Laws of the Autonomous Communities

Community	Legislative Reference	Parliament Size	Vote-counting Formula	District Delimitation	District Magnitude	Minimum Threshold
Andalusia	L. 1/1986, Jan. 2 BOJA 3, 14-1-86 (Tit. IV)	109 Art. 17.1	D'Hondt Art. 18.1.b-e	Statute	8 + Dem. Art. 17.2 and 3	3 D Art. 18.1.a
Aragon	L. 2/1987, Feb. 16 BOA 19, 18-2-87 (Tit. IV)	67 Art. 13.1	D'Hondt Art. 14.b-e	Statute	13 + Dem. Art. 13.2 and 3	3 D Art. 14.a
Asturias	L. 14/1986, Dec. 26 BOPA 9, 13-1-87 (Tit. III)	45 Art. 12	D'Hondt Art. 13.b-e	District Art. 10	2 + Dem. Art. 12	3 D Art. 13.a
Balearic Islands	L. 8/1986, Nov. 26 BOE 30, 4-2-87 (Tit. IV)	59 Art. 12.1	Art. 163 1 LOREG Art. 12.3	Insular Art. 12.1	Fixed Art. 12.2	5 D Art. 12.4
Canary Islands	L. 3/1987, Apr. 3 BOCA 41, 4-4-87	(60) Statute	LOREG	Statute	Statute	Statute
Cantabria	L. 5/1987, Mar. 27 BOC 86, 10-4-87 (Tit. III)	39 Art. 17.1	Art. 163.1 LOREG Art. 17.2	Statute	—	5 D/R Art. 17.3
Castile and Leon	L. 3/1987, Mar. 30 BOCL 40, 1-4-87 (Tit. IV)	Statute	D'Hondt Art. 20.b-e	Statute	Statute	3 D Art. 20.a
Castile-La Mancha	L. 5/1986, Dec. 23 DOCM 1, 5-1-87 (Tit. III)	47 Art. 16.1	D'Hondt Art. 17.b-d	Statute	5 + Dem. Art. 16.2 and 3	3 D Art. 17.a
Catalonia*	L. 5/1984, Mar. 5 DOGC 414, 7-3-84	Statute	R.D. 20/1977 Mar. 18	Statute	Statute	3 D R.D. 20/1977, Mar. 18

TABLE 2 (continued)

Elements of the Electoral System Developed by the Electoral Laws of the Autonomous Communities

Community	Legislative Reference	Parliament Size	Vote-counting Formula	District Delimitation	District Magnitude	Minimum Threshold
Valencian Community	L. 1/1987, Mar. 31 DOGV 561, 6-4-87 (Tit. II)	89 Art. 11.1	D'Hondt Art. 12.b-e	Provincial Art. 10	20 + D'Hondt and dem. Art. 11.3	Statute
Extremadura	L. 2/1987, Mar. 16 BOE 3, 16-3-87 (Tit. III)	65 Art. 18.1	D'Hondt Art. 19.1.b-e	Statute	20 + Dem. Art. 18.2 and 3	5 D/ Cand. Reg and SR Art. 19.1.a
Galicia**	L. 8/1985, Aug. 13 DOG 156, 16-8-85 (Tit. II)	65 Art. 9.1	D'Hondt Art. 10.b-e	Statute	10 + Dem. Art. 9.2 and 3	5 D (3 D) Art. 10.a
Madrid	L. 11/1986, Dec. 16 BOE 41, 17-2-87 (Cap. VII)	Statute	Art. 163.1 LOREG Art. 18.3	Statute	—	Statute
Murcia	L. 2/1987, Feb. 24 BORM 59, 12-3-87 (Tit. III)	45 Art. 14.1	D'Hondt Art. 15.b-e	District Art. 13	5 + Dem. Art. 14.2 and 3	5 R Art. 15.a
Navarre	L.F. 16/1986, Nov. 17 BOE 17, 20-1-87 (Tit. V)	50 Art. 1	Art. 163.1 LOREG Art. 10.2	Single Art. 9	—	3 D/R Art. 10.1
Basque Country***	L. 5/1990, June 15 BOPV 134, 6-7-90 (Tit. II)	75 Art. 10	D'Hondt Art. 12.1.b-f	Statute	25 Art. 10	5 D Art. 11.1
Rioja	L. 3/1991, Mar. 21 BOE 74, 27-3-91 (Tit. III)	33 Art. 19	D'Hondt Art. 20.b-e	Statute	—	5 D/R Art. 20.a

* Catalonia does not really have an Electoral Law; in a single article it remits us to the Transitory Disposition 4 of the Statute and to the R.D. 20/1977, Mar. 18.

** Reformed by L. 15/1992, Dec. 30(BOE 46, 23-2-93).

*** The Basque Country was the first to dictate an Electoral Law: L. 28/1983, Nov 25 (BOPV 182, 10-12-83).

SOURCE: Prepared by Author.

LOREG, in the second. In this way, except for Castile and Leon, which had already done so in its Statute, all the rest of the Autonomous Communities specify the exact number of parliamentary members. Although the textual form may vary, the homogeneity and unanimity are total in the adoption of the proportional formula for counting the votes with the highest average, following the D'Hondt variant, which is in force for the legislative and local elections. The Communities which had not done this in their Statutes (Asturias, the Balearic Islands, the Valencian Community, Murcia, and Navarre), determine the criteria of delimitation of their electoral constituencies in their electoral laws. The same thing happens with the eleven communities which had not quantified the magnitude of their districts in their Statutes; they do so afterwards in the respective electoral laws. Finally, except for the Canary Islands, the Valencian Community, and Madrid, which had already stated their minimum levels of votes, the remaining fourteen do so in their electoral laws or they refer the matter to the general norms, as in the case of Catalonia.

2. THE SIZE AND THE REPRESENTATION COEFFICIENT OF THE AUTONOMOUS PARLIAMENTS

The *size* of the legislative assemblies is the first building block of representation, basically because, depending on whether it is high or low, it is affected by the probabilistic character of its statistical representativity. Because of this, what most frequently happens is that, if a high numerical minimum is not reached, it conditions the basic proportionality of the system of representation. The second component of representation has a qualitative character and is defined by the number of potential electors that, on the average, each member of Parliament can represent; this is how the *electoral coefficient* quantifies it when the electoral census is divided by the total of representatives. The hypothesis is that a low coefficient can add the quality of a potentially greater closeness between each member and his citizens to the probabilistic conditions of statistical representativity of a large size, while a larger ratio can worsen such conditions.

Table 3 shows the calculation of these parameters for all of the Autonomous Communities according to their respective census sizes. If we take as a reference point the electoral censuses of each of them in the last autonomous election which took place between 1993 (Galicia) and 1996 (Andalusia), this already gives us an idea of the great oscillation which exists among the demographic weights of the different Communities, which means that the largest (Andalusia) is 25 times larger, demographically, than the smallest (Rioja). All in all, the 17 Autonomous Communities produce a representative tapestry of 1,180 regional members, with an average electoral coefficient of one member for every 26,872 voters or, in physical terms, one member for every 428 square kilometers which, basically, defines a high representative coverage, added to the 350 members and more than 250 senators of the Spanish Parliament.

TABLE 3

Demographic and Parliamentary Sizes of the Autonomous Communities, 1993-1996

	Electoral Census	Seats	Electoral Coefficient*
Andalusia (96)	5,511,207	109	50,561
Aragon	983,616	67	14,681
Asturias	944,949	45	20,999
Balearic Islands	591,231	59	10,021
Canary Islands	1,231,900	60	20,532
Cantabria	435,752	39	11,173
Castile and Leon	2,080,227	84	24,765
Castile-La Mancha	1,352,958	47	28,786
Catalonia (95)	5,029,727	135	37,257
Valencian Community	3,093,574	89	34,759
Extremadura	836,007	65	12,862
Galicia (93)	2,293,169	75	30,575
Madrid	4,081,929	103	39,630
Murcia	837,180	45	18,604
Navarre	437,776	50	8,755
Basque Country (94)	1,749,250	75	23,323
Rioja	218,519	33	6,622
TOTAL	31,708,971	1,180	26,872

* Number of voters per seat, calculated by dividing the electoral census by the total of seats.

SOURCE: Electoral Council and Author's preparation.

The parliamentary *size* has a range that goes from the minimum in Rioja, with 33 members, to the maximum in Catalonia, with 135 seats, which, in any case, reduces the earlier multiplier effect from 25 times to 4 times. Keeping in mind that the average size is some 69 members per assembly, we can classify the Autonomous Communities in three types according to whether the size is high (more than 100 seats), moderate (from 50 to 90) and low (below 50). Therefore, in the first type we have Catalonia, Andalusia, and Madrid, which are the ones that have a higher demographic volume. Catalonia, in spite of its smaller territorial extension and demographic weight, surpasses Andalusia by a fourth of its parliamentary size and, while Catalonia has one member for each 236 square kilometers, Andalusia has one for every 800 square kilometers, with Madrid having one for every 77 square kilometers, which is the minimum for all of Spain, due to its being a single-province community and to its degree of urban concentration. In the second type we have the Valencian Community, Castile and Leon, Galicia, the Basque Country, Aragon, Extremadura, the Canary Islands, and the Balearic Islands; their territorial coverage oscillates between the minimum of the Balearic Islands (85 square kilometers per member) and the

maximum of Castile and Leon (1,121 square kilometers per member), with no single-province regions in this group. The third type includes the remaining six (Castile-La Mancha, Navarre, Asturias, Murcia, Cantabria, and Rioja), all of them under 50 members and all of them single-province communities, with the already-mentioned exception of Madrid. It is this group whose territorial coverage covers a larger spectrum, oscillating between the minimum of Cantabria (136 square kilometers per member) and the maximum of all of Spain, held by Castile-La Mancha (1,686 square kilometers per member).

The spectrum of the *electoral coefficients* of the different Autonomous Communities correlates almost perfectly with their respective positions in demographic ranking, oscillating between the minimum of Rioja (a single-province Community which is demographically and territorially the smallest, together with Cantabria), with 6,622 voters per member, and the maximum of Andalusia (the Community which includes the greatest number of electoral constituencies and with the greatest demographic and physical size), with 50,561 voters per member. This reduces the multiplier census effect from 25 to 7.6. If we take the average for the whole group of Autonomous Communities, which is 26,872 voters per member, into account, we can classify them in two groups: the first one, which is above this average, is formed by (in this order) Andalusia, Madrid, Catalonia, the Valencian Community, Galicia, and Castile-La Mancha; the second, which is below this average, is made up of the other eleven (Castile and Leon, the Basque Country, Asturias, the Canary Islands, Murcia, Aragon, Extremadura, Cantabria, the Balearic Islands, Navarre, and Rioja).

It is a well-known fact that the political decision about parliamentary sizes is not directed, either necessarily or principally, by technical criteria of representativity, or proportionality, and not even by one single criterion; instead, different reasons influence it, among which budget and functional reasons often weigh more than demographic or territorial ones. Even so, and in spite of the fragmentation of the system, the whole, as can be seen, turns out to be highly coherent and pretty rational, taking into consideration the possibility of raising the parliamentary sizes of some of the Autonomous Communities slightly, Communities such as Andalusia, Asturias, the Canary Islands, or Castile-La Mancha.

3. ELECTORAL DISTRICTS: INEQUALITY AND DISPROPORTIONALITY

The delimitation and the size of the electoral districts is a key factor in the evaluation of the political effects and in the study of the performance of the electoral systems, as Duverger (1965), Rae (1971), Sartori (1984 and 1986), Lijphart (1990), and Nohlen (1981*a* and 1991), among others, have proposed. The way in which those who study this subject (Vallès, 1982; Nohlen, 1983; Montero, Llera, and Torcal, 1992) coincide in identifying the magnitude of the districts as the principal source of inequality and disproportionality in the Spanish electoral system, is also well known.

In accordance with the Spanish electoral structure, all of the electoral constituencies or districts are plurinominal; this is also valid at the autonomous level, with the only exception being the Island of Formentera, as we saw in the first section. Following the general pattern, as can be seen in Table 4, the province is again the basic criterion of delimitation for the electoral districts. In this way, we can classify the Autonomous Communities in four types: the first and largest is that of the multi-provincial communities, which reproduce, on the autonomic level, the system of provincial districts of the general legislative level (Andalusia, Aragon, Galicia, Castile and Leon, Castile-La Mancha, Catalonia, the Valencian Community, Extremadura, and the Basque Country); the second type, also numerous, is that of the single-province communities, with a single or regional district (Cantabria, Madrid, Navarre, and Rioja, to which we will now have to add Ceuta and Melilla); the third type corresponds to the island communities (the Balearic and Canary Islands), which make each and every island an electoral district; and the fourth type is that of the two single-province communities (Asturias and Murcia), which segment their regions in three and five zonal or regional districts, respectively.

TABLE 4

Delimitation, Magnitude of the Districts, and Inequality of Votes in the Autonomous Communities, 1993-1996

	Districts (1)	Magnitude (2)	Inequality (3)	Evolution (4)
Andalusia (96)	P (8)	11/19	2.14	=
Aragon	P (3)	16/33	2.89	+
Asturias	Z (3)	5/33	1.58	=
Balearic Islands	I (4)	1/33	3.91	=
Canary Islands	I (7)	3/15	17.48	−
Cantabria	S	39	—	
Castile and Leon	P (9)	5/15	1.45	−
Castile-La Mancha	P (5)	7/11	1.87	=
Catalonia (95)	P (4)	15/85	2.31	=
Valencian Community	P (3)	22/37	2.47	−
Extremadura	P (2)	30/35	1.24	=
Galicia (93)	P (4)	15/24	1.84	+
Madrid	S	103	—	
Murcia	Z (5)	3/21	1.64	=
Navarre	S	50	—	
Basque Country (94)	P (3)	25	4.2	=
Rioja	S	33	—	

(1) P = provincial; Z = zonal; I = insular; S = single.
(2) Difference between the numbers of seats in the smallest and largest districts.
(3) Ratio of the electoral coefficients of the largest and smallest districts.
(4) Evolution of the ratio of inequality in relation to the 1989-1992 period.

SOURCE: Prepared by Author.

Nevertheless, the most important aspect of the district system is not so much its delimitation, more or less politically justified, as the calculation and assignation of the districts' magnitude, which is the true cause of the distorsions of the equality and of the disproportionality of the vote. If we exclude the four single-district Autonomous Communities which, automatically, annul this effect, we can classify the rest in three groups according to their criteria of calculation. The first group of six (Asturias, Castile and Leon,, Castile-La Mancha, Extremadura, Galicia, and Murcia) assigns a minimum number of members to each district and distributes the rest according to criteria of pure proportionality (the greatest remainder) in terms of the *de facto* population, with the exception of Castile and Leon, which applies a ratio of 1 for every 45,000 inhabitants for the remaining members. The second group of three (Andalusia, Aragon, and the Valencian Community), apart from doing basically the same thing as the previous group, puts a maximum limit upon the disproportionality between the provinces, with the peculiar case of the Valencian Community, which applies the D'Hondt formula for the demographic distribution of the remaining seats. We will characterize the third group, formed by Catalonia, the Basque Country, and the island Communities, as special. The island Communities assign a fixed and direct number to each island with no more detailed explanation. The Basque Country, based on historical statutory reasons, attributes a fixed and equal number of seats to each province, and Catalonia would represent a variation on the second group, as it puts minimum limits (for Girona, Lerida, and Tarragona) and maximum limits (for Barcelona), sharing out the rest of the seats according to differential ratios for the first group (1 for each 40,000) and for the second (1 for each 50,000).

As can be observed, in its fundamental aspects, the national pattern of combining territorial and demographic criteria, limiting the differential effect of the demographic criteria, is followed here too. Similarly, the basis for the calculation to apply the common demographic criterion is the *de facto* population, just as at the general legislative level, rather than the electoral census; this means that the census of inhabitants (or, in the immediate future, the population register) has a greater electoral incidence than the electoral census does. This mechanism generally distorts the equality of the vote, due to the fact that it tends to doubly favor the most demographically depressed districts (because of their different age-structure): on one hand, because of the territorial assignation of seats, but also because the criterion of the *de facto* population benefits those districts that have fewer voters for every 100 inhabitants. This is even truer if we keep in mind that, due to our peculiar demographic dynamics, which affect the different urban or rural zones differentially, the electoral census has increased by 38 per cent, while the *de facto* population has only increased by 12 per cent.

The first quantifiable effect of the district magnitude is, therefore, the *inequality of votes* of the citizens according to where they vote. The comparison of the electoral coefficients of the larger and smaller districts of each Community, and the calculation of the corresponding ratio of inequality, permit us to observe how the vote of a Canary Island citizen from the island of El Hierro is worth 17.5 times that

of another citizen from the Great Canary Island; the vote of a citizen of Alava is worth four times that of someone from Vizcaya, almost the same as the vote of a citizen from the Balearic island of Formentera, in relation to another elector from Mallorca; the vote of a person from Teruel is worth three times that of a person from Zaragoza; and so on, to the minimum of 1.2 for Extremadura. Evolution, besides, has aggravated this effect in Aragon and Galicia, even if it has reduced it slightly in the Canary Islands, Castile-La Mancha, and the Valencian Community.

TABLE 5

Types of Districts of the Autonomous Communities According to Magnitude, 1993-1996

	I (1 seat)	II (3-6 seats)	III (7/8 seats)	IV (+9 seats)	Proport. Threshold (1)	Bipolar District (2)
Andalusia (96)	—	—	—	8	100	—
Aragon	—	—	—	3	100	—
Asturias	—	1	1	1	73	2/3
Balearic Islands	1(3)	—	—	3	98	—
Canary Islands	—	2	3	2	50	1/7
Cantabria	—	—	—	1	100	—
Castile and Leon	—	2	3	4	61	5/9
Castile-La Mancha	—	—	2	3	68	4/5
Catalonia (95)	—	—	—	4	100	—
Valencian Community	—	—	—	3	100	—
Extremadura	—	—	—	2	100	—
Galicia (93)	—	—	—	4	100	—
Madrid	—	—	—	1	100	—
Murcia	—	2	1	2	69	2/5
Navarre	—	—	—	1	100	—
Basque Country (94)	—	—	—	3	100	—
Rioja	—	—	—	1	100	—

(1) Percentage of seats with the least disproportionality.
(2) Number of districts where only the two principal parties are represented divided by the total of districts.
(3) Single-nomination district of Formentera.

SOURCE: Prepared by Author.

The second known effect is the impact of the magnitude of the districts on the *proportionality*. In Table 5, we show the known classification of the districts according to their magnitude. Obviously, the average of 6.7 members per territorial district, which situates Spain among the lowest averages in Europe (Gallagher, 1991: 44), is widely surpassed, meaning that the disproportional impact of this factor at the autonomic level is much more

limited than at the general level. If we keep in mind that the optimum proportionality (or minimum disproportionality) can only be obtained in districts with 9 or more seats, the disproportional impact of the low magnitude of the districts could affect, in differing degrees, 50 per cent of the seats in the Canary Islands, 39 per cent in Castile and Leon, 32 per cent in Castile-La Mancha, 31 per cent in Murcia, 27 per cent in Asturias, and 2 per cent in the Balearic Islands, in accordance with what we have called thresholds of proportionality. Altogether, this means 105 seats, or 9 per cent of the nearly 1,200 autonomic seats. On the other hand, if we exclude the exceptional case of Formentera, it is in these very same Communities where the disproportional impact of the low size of the districts produces clear two-party impacts in almost all of them: in 2 (Occidental and Oriental) of the 3 districts of Asturias, in 5 (Avila, Palencia, Segovia, Soria, and Zamora) of the 9 districts of Castile and Leon, in 2 (Northwest and the Plains) of the 5 districts of Murcia, in 4 districts (all of the provinces except Albacete) of the 5 of Castile-La Mancha, and in 1 (La Gomera) of the 7 districts of the Canary Islands.

While the disproportional impact of the size of the districts is lower in comparison with the general Spanish system, this does not happen with the inequality of the vote, as we have seen, nor with the *territorial or demographic base* of the seats, as can be verified in Table 6. If the distribution of seats according to territory means 29 per cent of the total as opposed to 71 per cent of the seats according to demography for the Spanish legislative elections, in the autonomic elections of the eleven Communities which are neither single districts nor islands, the percentage of seats according to territory doubles (52 per cent), widely surpassing those seats according to demography (42 per cent) with all its limitations. In this way, we can classify these Communities in three groups: the first formed by those Communities that significantly surpass this average (the Basque Country, the Valencian Community, and Extremadura); a second group which is right around the average, a little above (Andalusia) or a little below (Aragon, Murcia, and Galicia); and a third group made up by those Communities in which the proportion of seats shared out according to a demographic basis is larger (Asturias, Catalonia, and Castile and Leon).

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TABLE 6

Distribution of Territorially or Demographically Based Seats in the Autonomous Communities, 1993-1996*

	(1) Territorially Based Seats (%)	(2) Demographically Based Seats (%)	Total Seats
Andalusia (96)	59 (8)	41	109
Aragon	58 (13)	42	67
Asturias	13 (2)	87	87
Castile and Leon	32 (3)	68	84
Castile-La Mancha	53 (5)	47	47
Catalonia (95)**	13 (6)	87	135
Valencian Community	67 (20)	33	89
Extremadura	62 (20)	38	65
Galicia (93)	53 (10)	47	75
Murcia	56 (5)	44	45
Basque Country (94)	100 (25)	0	75
TOTAL	58	42	836

*   The Autonomous Communities with single districts (Cantabria, Madrid, Navarre, Rioja) have been excluded. Similarly, the island Communities are not used, as their laws assign a fixed number to each island.

**   Catalonia assigns a minimum number of 13 seats for Girona, Tarragona, and Lerida, and then applies the demographic criterion in a differential way for these provinces (1 member for every 40,000 inhabitants) and for Barcelona (1 member for every 50,000 inhabitants).

(1)   Proportion of seats assigned according to territorial criteria. In parentheses, the minimum number of seats for each territorial division or district.

(2)   Remaining proportion of seats assigned according to demographic criteria.

SOURCE: Prepared by Author.

4.   MINIMUM CUT-OFF POINTS FOR VOTES AND INCLUSION THRESHOLDS

An additional element of the limitation of political pluralism and, therefore, of the electoral system's productivity of representation, is the establishment of minimum cut-off points for votes to accede to the distribution of seats; even if this has turned out to be unnecessary at the national level of legislative elections due to the disproportional impact of other components of the electoral system, it does matter at the autonomic level. The variety of cut-offs among the Autonomous Communities is evident, observing Table 7. From this table, and according to this criterion, four types or groups of Autonomous Communities can be defined in the following way: the first group is the majority group of seven communities (Andalusia, Aragon, Asturias, Castile and Leon, Castile-La Mancha, Catalonia, and

Navarre), which follows the national 3 per cent pattern at the district or electoral constituency level; another six communities (the Balearic Islands, Cantabria, Galicia, Rioja, Madrid, and the Basque Country) form the second group, which raises this proportion to 5 per cent in each district; the third group is made up of Murcia and the Valencian Community, which raise the bar even higher because they apply this same 5 per cent to the group of regions; and finally, in the fourth group, there are the unique cases of the Canary Islands[2], which alternatively applies a 3 per cent at the regional level or a 20 per cent at the district level, and Extremadura, which applies, indistinctly, a 5 per cent at the district or regional level, as long as candidacies have been presented in the two provinces, in the second case.

TABLE 7

Minimum Cut-off Points for Votes, Candidacies, and Votes Without Representation, and Inclusion Threshold in the Autonomous Communities, 1993-1996

	Cut-off	Number of Candidacies Without Repres. (1)	Percent. of Votes Without Repres. (2)	Inclusion Threshold (3)	Last Party (4)
Andalusia (96)	3 D	7/11	0.87	6.69 (6.9)	PA (CA)
Aragon	3 D	4/9	0.71	4.86 (5.6)	CHA (Z)
Asturias	3 D	6/10	3.37	3.18 (3.5)	PAS (Ce)
Balearic Islands	5 D	—/7	—	0.32 (49.4)	AIPF (Fo)
Canary Islands	3 R/20 D	11/16	8.66	0.26 (43.2)	AHI (Hi)
Cantabria	5 R/D	4/9	1.88	7.36	IU
Castile and Leon	3 D	16/20	4.09	2.55 (12.8)	UPL (LE)
Castile-La Mancha	3 D	10/13	1.35	7.6 (10.3)	IU (AB)
Catalonia (95)	3 D	9/14	0.91	9.7 (6.4)	IC (T)
Valencian Community	5 R	10/14	3.61	7.01 (4.4)	UV (CS)
Extremadura	5 D	2/6	1.34	3.81 (5.9)	EU (CC)
Galicia (93)	5 D*	9/12	4.92	18.7 (3.9)	BNG (C)
Madrid	5 R/D	13/16	3.02	16	IU
Murcia	5 R	6/9	2.32	12.48 (11.5)	IU (Ca)
Navarre	3 R/D	4/10	4.15	4.57	EA
Basque Country (94)	5 D	1/8	0.14	2.68 (18.5)	UA (AI)
Rioja	5 R/D	1/5	0.83	6.7	PR

(1)   Percentage at district (D) or regional (R) level.
(2)   Number of candidacies excluded divided by the total of candidacies presented.
(3)   Percentage of votes obtained by the party with the fewest seats. In parentheses, the lowest percentage that gives a right to a seat in one of the districts.
(4)   Party with the fewest seats. In parentheses, the district in which this party obtains the seat with the lowest proportion of votes.
*   Galicia raised the cut-off from 3% to 5% by an electoral reform before the last elections in 1993.

SOURCE: Prepared by Author.

[2] The already-cited reform of the Statutes of the Canary Islands revises the raising of the minimum cut-off points, elevating them to 6 per cent at the regional level, and to 30 per cent for each island, in any case insuring representation to the most-voted list of each island.

As has already been seen at the national level, the combined disproportional effects of the district system and the vote-counting formula are so strong that they have made the application of minimum cut-off points unnecessary, with the exception of the case of CDS in the legislative elections of 1993; nevertheless, at the regional level, the greater level of competition opens the electoral expectations of many locally-originated options, raising the number of candidacies which of many locally-originated options, raising the number of candidacies which compete and enabling the cut-offs to play their real role. As a matter of fact, as can be seen, in the last period, the average number of candidacies per Autonomous Community is 12, oscillating between the minimum of 5 in Rioja and the maximum of 20 in Castile and Leon. If we leave out the cases of the Balearic Islands, the Basque Country, and Rioja, in which none or hardly any of the candidacies presented are excluded, in the rest of the communities, either the majority of those who concur are left without representation (Castile and Leon, Madrid, the Valencian Community, the Canary Islands, Galicia, Catalonia, Andalusia, Murcia, and Asturias), or a smaller number are left without representation (Aragon, Cantabria, Navarre, and Extremadura). Nevertheless, the proportion of votes which goes unrepresented is much lower, not surpassing, on the average, 2.5 per cent, and oscillating between 0 per cent in the Balearic Islands or 0.14 per cent in the Basque Country, and 8.66 per cent in the Canary Islands. The most outstanding cases are those of IUC, with 5.1 per cent of the votes in the Canary Islands (7.68 per cent on the Island of Gomera), and EU, with 3.11 per cent in Galicia (3.88 per cent in Pontevedra and 3.7 per cent in La Coruña), these being the only Communities where the third party on the national level (IU) does not obtain representation.

The application of the cut-off points, all in all, has turned out to be quite exceptional in the Autonomous Communities. If we keep the last regional elections in mind, the cut-offs would have been applied in only two cases: to exclude UPV, with 4.25 per cent of the votes in Castellón (2.73 per cent at the regional level) and to exclude BATZARRE in Navarre, with 2.19 per cent of the votes (as had already occurred with EE in the previous legislature). Except for the four Communities with candidacies represented in only one district (the Balearic Islands, the Canary Islands, Castile and Leon, and the Basque Country), the average percentage of inclusion of the party with the fewest seats in the electoral constituency in which it obtains the seat with the least proportion of votes is 7.16 per cent, oscillating between a minimum of 3.5 per cent for PAS in the Central district of Asturias and a maximum of 16 per cent for IU in Madrid. The exceptions to this are the cases of AIPF (with 49.4 per cent of the votes on the Island of Formentera), AHI (with 43.2 per cent of the votes on the Island of El Hierro), UPL (with 12.8 per cent in Leon), and UA (with 18.5 per cent in Alava), which define the minimums, nevertheless, at the level of their respective Autonomous Communities.

In spite of the party pluralism of the Autonomous Communities and of the larger size of their districts, the disproportional effects of the system, the growing tendency towards the concentration of votes in the two principal

options, and the well-known «psychological» effects (Shugart, 1985; Blais and Carty, 1991) which manifest themselves in the idea of the «useful vote» (Gunther, 1989), have produced this raising of the inclusion levels, which is one of the selective and structural objectives of our electoral system.

5. DISPROPORTIONALITY BETWEEN VOTES AND SEATS

A common element of all of the Autonomous Communities which makes all types of electoral competition homogeneous in Spain, except for the majority system of the Senate, is the formula for vote-counting which is the D'Hondt variant of the proportional formulas with the highest average; as has already been sufficiently studied, it contributes by itself to generate disproportionality (Lijphart, 1986; Taagepera and Laakso, 1980). Nevertheless, the true corrector effect of this formula has more to do with the size of the electoral constituency, as Lijphart (1987: 178 s.), Gallagher (1991: 48), and Nohlen (1991: 312), among others, have demonstrated.

The study of such effects in the case of Spain reaches the clear conclusion that the Spanish electoral system manifests the highest dosis of disproportionality of all the countries with proportional systems, standing very near countries such as France and the United Kingdom with majority systems (Lijphart, 1985: 12 and 1987: 178 s.; Gallagher, 1991: 46; Montero, 1992; Montero, Llera, and Torcal, 1992).

After our previous study, we must suppose that such disproportional effects must reduce themselves perceptibly in the area of the Autonomous Communities, due precisely to the greater magnitude of their electoral constituencies. In Table 8 I show the final totals of losses and gains of the parties with parliamentary representation in all of the Autonomous Communities in the last period of 1993-1996, comparing their percentages of votes and seats, from which one can clearly deduce that the disproportional effects of the system are reduced by half on the autonomic level. The general pattern of the two large parties in each district benefitting from this situation is fulfilled here, although they are not always the first two parties of each Community, due to the combined effect of a differential implantation and the magnitude of the districts, as well as the punishment of the small and middle-sized parties with a more or less homogeneous distribution of their electoral supports. The Communities which present exceptions to this rule are Cantabria, Madrid, Navarre, and the Basque Country. In the rest, the first party obtains an average gain of about 4 points, which is less than half of that gathered by the first party (UCD, PSOE, and PP) in all of the legislative elections in Spain (9.3); the second party gets about 2 points, half that of the first party, reducing, equally, the average difference between votes and seats for the second party (PSOE and PP) in Spain between 1977 and 1996 (4.1); finally, the third party has an average loss of 1.6 per cent, which also reduces by half the punishment of the third Spanish parties (AP, PCE/IU, UCD, and CDS) in all of the legislative elections counted at an average of 3.5 per cent.

It can be seen, besides, how, in those Communities in which critical district magnitudes exist, the average disproportionality increases perceptibly (the two Castiles, Murcia, Asturias, and the Balearic Islands). The fragmentation and the magnitude of Cantabria and Navarre share the gains almost equally, as happens in Madrid due to the great magnitude of its single district, while, in the Basque Country, besides the fragmentation, the great distorting effect is caused by the localist impact of UA and the equality of the magnitude among the districts, which reward or punish the differential implantation.

TABLE 8

Disproportionality of Votes/Seats of the Autonomous Communities' Parliamentary Parties, 1993-1996*

	PP	PSOE	IU	NN/RR. 1	NN/RR. 2	NN/RR. 3
Andalusia (96)	+2.9	+4.1	-2	-2.7 (PA)	—	—
Aragon	+2.4	+2.4	-2.2	+0.5 (PAR)	-1.9 (CHA)	—
Asturias	+5	+4.2	-3.4	-1.2 (PAS)	—	—
Balearic Islands	+6.2	+3	-1.6	-2 (PSM)	-2.3 (UM)	+1.0 (Ot)
Canary Islands	-1	+4	—	+4.2 (CC)	+2 (PCN)	+1.7 (AHI)
Cantabria	+0.5	+0.9	+0.6	+1.4 (UPCA)	+0.4 (PRC)	
Castile and Leon	+7.7	+2.4	-3.6	-0.5 (UPL)	—	—
Castile-La Mancha	+2.7	+5.3	-5.6	—	—	—
Catalonia (95)	-0.1	+0.2	-1.7	+3 (CiU)	+0.5 (ERC)	—
Valencian Community	+4.1	+2.1	-0.5	-1 (UV)	—	—
Extremadura	+2.5	+4.1	-1.6	-1.8 (EU)	—	—
Galicia (93)	+4.8	+1.5	—	-1.7 (BNG)	—	—
Madrid	+1.1	+1.3	+1	—	—	—
Murcia	+5.6	+1.3	-3.5	—	—	—
Navarre	—	+1.1	+0.6	+2.6 (UPN)	+1.4 (CDN)	+0.8 (HB)
Basque Country (94)	+0.8	-0.8	-1	-0.3 (PNV)	-1 (HB)	+4.3 (UA)
Rioja	+2.6	+1.9	-1.2	-0.7 (PR)	—	—

* Differences between the percentages of votes and seats. In the Balearic Islands, besides, the island candidacies of EV (in Ibiza) and AIPF (in Formentera) are benefitted. In Navarre, EA suffers also, with a difference of -0.6. In the Basque Country, on the contrary, EA is benefitted by 0.9 per cent.

SOURCE: Prepared by Author.

Another way of evaluating the limitations to the proportionality of the Autonomous Communities' electoral systems is by recurring, on one hand, to synthetic indicators of proportionality, and, on the other hand, to the comparison of these same indicators with the corresponding indicators on the national or international level. In Table 9, I show three of these synthetic indicators of disproportionality applied to the parliamentary area. In the first

place, there is the *index of* (parliamentary) *fragmentation* of Rae (1971), which, for the present set of autonomic Parliaments gives a moderate average of 0.64, not far from the 0.61 average which comes from the *Congreso de Diputados* between 1977 and 1996 (between the minimum of 0.57 in 1982 and the maximum of 0.64 in 1989), but with a range that oscillates between the 0.52 minimum of Castile-La Mancha and the 0.82 maximum of the Basque Country. This permits us to classify the Autonomous Communities in three nearly equal groups, in the following way: the first being the six least fragmented communities, formed by Castile-La Mancha, Castile and Leon, Murcia, Extremadura, Galicia, and Rioja, all of them below 0.64, with three or four parliamentary parties and with absolute or broad majorities; the intermediate group, whose fragmentation is between 0.6 and 0.7, formed by Madrid, Andalusia, Asturias, the Valencian Community, and the Balearic Islands, with more fragile majorities, a larger number of parties, or important third parties; and the third group being the most fragmented Communities, with indices above 0.7, formed by the Basque Country, Navarre, Cantabria, Catalonia, Aragon, and the Canary Islands, characterized by a greater pluralism of parties and the absence of solid majorities.

Lijphart's *index of disproportionality* (1987: 178 s.), which improves the previous index by neutralizing the distorting effect of the small parties, reaches an average of 4.9 for the group of Autonomous Communities, much lower that the 6.7 which comes out for all the elections to the *Congreso de Diputados*; this again gives us an idea of how the disproportionality decreases at the autonomic level to situate itself at the minimum threshold of the national systems with the same vote-counting formula, according to Lijphart's estimation (1988). Nevertheless, this index continues to be very far above the 2.4 per cent average calculated by Lijphart (1987: 174 s.) for the countries with proportional systems. A three-group typology comes, again, from the comparison of the different Communities, as follows: the first group consists of the six least disproportional Communities, with an index below 4 (Madrid, Cantabria, Catalonia, Rioja, Navarre, and the Valencian Community); a second group of six with a middling disproportionality, between 4 and 6, formed by Galicia, the Basque Country, Aragon, Extremadura, Murcia, and Andalusia; and finally, the most disproportional group, which places itself above the threshold of 6, higher than that estimated by Lijphart for the D'Hondt formula systems, and which is headed by the Balearic Islands with 11, followed by Castile and Leon, Asturias, Castile-La Mancha, and the Canary Islands, in which the effect of the lesser magnitude of the electoral districts makes itself felt strongly.

Finally, the *index of the number of parties* (Laakso and Taagepera, 1979; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989) in its electoral and parliamentary versions, permits the comparison of how many parties compete electorally and how many exist in Parliament, keeping in mind in both cases their relative sizes and giving, as a result, greater information about the most approximate measure of the disproportionality of the group as a whole. The averages of the effective

TABLE 9

Parliamentary Fragmentation, Effective Number of Parties,
and Index of Disproportionality in Autonomous Elections, 1993-1996*

	Pf Parliamentary Fragment. (1)	D Index of Disproportion- ality (2)	ENp Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties (3)	ENep Effective Number of Electoral Parties (3)	Difference ENep-ENp (4)
Andalusia (96)	0.62	5.6 (+)	2.6	2.9	0.3
Aragon	0.71	4.7 (+)	3.4 (+)	3.7	0.3
Asturias	0.62 (–)	6.9 (+)	2.6	3	0.4
Balearic Islands	0.65	11.0 (+)	2.9	4.8	1.9
Canary Islands	0.70 (–)	6.4 (+)	3.3 (–)	3.7	0.4
Cantabria	0.76	1.9 (–)	4.2 (+)	4.3	0.1
Castile and Leon	0.53 (–)	7.1 (+)	2.1	2.7	0.6
Castile-La Mancha	0.52 (–)	6.8 (+)	2.1	2.4	0.3
Catalonia (95)	0.71	2.7 (–)	3.4	3.7	0.3
Valencian Community ..	0.63 (–)	3.8 (–)	2.7	3.2	0.5
Extremadura	0.58	5.0 (+)	2.4	2.8	0.4
Galicia (93)	0.59 (–)	4.0 (–)	2.4	2.8	0.4
Madrid	0.60 (–)	1.7 (–)	2.5	2.9	0.4
Murcia	0.54 (–)	5.2 (–)	2.2	3.3	1.1
Navarre	0.76	3.5 (–)	4.2 (+)	5	0.8
Basque Country(94)	0.82	4.5 (+)	5.6	5.6	0
Rioja	0.59	3.2 (–)	2.4	2.6	0.2

*   (±) indicates the evolution of the various indices with respect to the previous period 1981-1992.
(1)   Rae's (1971) index of Parliamentary fragmentation.
(2)   Lijphart's (1987) disproportionality index.
(3)   Index of effective number of Parliamentary parties (ENp) or Electoral Parties (ENep).
(4)   The difference between ENep and ENp.

SOURCE: Prepared by Author.

number of electoral and parliamentary parties of 3.5 and 3, respectively, for the group of the Autonomous Communities differ slightly from the average obtained for the *Congreso de Diputados*, although they do not change our position in the ranking among the countries as estimated by Montero (1992). The significant change is the drastic reduction of differences between the electoral and parliamentary areas, which goes from 1.21 in the legislative area, the highest in Europe, to 0.5, below the European average. Taking these differences, which the measurement of the reductive effect of the electoral system gives us, as a reference, we can classify the communities in two general groups, according to whether they are above or below this average, as follows: the group with the greatest disproportion is formed by the Balearic Islands,

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Murcia, Navarre, and Castile and Leon, while the group with the least disproportion is headed by the Basque Country, followed by Cantabria, Rioja, Catalonia, Aragon, Andalusia, Castile-La Mancha, the Canary Islands, Asturias, Madrid, Galicia, Extremadura, and the Valencian Community.

6.   THE PARTY SYSTEM AND ITS FORMAT

When the Spanish electoral system was designed in 1977, the objective was to guarantee the absolute majority of seats for UCD starting from 37 per cent of the votes, favoring for this the rural and traditional zones as opposed to the urban and industrial zones, with an adequate district system; besides, the idea was to strengthen the principal political options, reducing as far as possible the initial electoral fragmentation, without excluding the principal nationalist parties of Euskadi and Catalonia. As a result, the political performance obtained through the electoral system has been the formation of a party system which, guaranteeing a moderate pluralism, has facilitated the alternative production of stable governments and has not excluded the politically relevant forces (AP/CP, PCE/IU, PNV, and CiU, above all).

After almost twenty years, the system remains intact and institutionalized, producing clear majority effects for the principal parties, which combine with the maintenance of the representation of the nationalist and some regionalist parties, more and more politically relevant, to the point of producing «manufactured» absolute majorities (Rae, 1977; Blais and Carty, 1987) between 1982 and 1989.

In its fundamental aspects, this system has a very similar political performance at the autonomic level. A quick look at Table 10, which shows the parliamentary party systems of the 17 Autonomous Communities, enables us to perceive the parallelism with the national dynamics, even if only because in 14 of them, the principal actors on the political scene are the two protagonists in the national arena. In the remaining three (Catalonia, Euskadi, and the Canary Islands) this protagonism is shared with the moderate nationalist parties, which play a relevant role in the governability of the State. The third national party (IU) is in the second line, present in all of the Communities, except for the Canary Islands and Galicia. Finally, in almost all of them (except for Madrid, Murcia, and Castile-La Mancha), there is room for 22 other nationalist, regionalist, or simply territorial parties.

TABLE 10

Distribution of Seats in the Autonomic Parliaments, 1993-1996

	PP	PSOE	IU		NN/RR.	Total
Andalusia (96)	40	52	13	4	(PA)	109
Aragon (1)	27	19	5	16	(PAR, CHA)	67
Asturias	21	17	6	1	(PAS)	45
Balearic Islands	30	16	3	10	(PSM, UM, EU, AIPF)	59
Canary Islands (2)	18	16	—	26	(CC, PCN, AHI)	60
Cantabria (3)	13	10	3	13	(UPCA, PRC)	39
Castile and Leon	50	27	5	2	(UPL)	84
Castile-La Mancha	22	24	1	—		47
Catalonia (95) (4)	17	34	11	73	(CiU, ERC)	135
Valencian Community	42	32	10	5	(UV)	89
Extremadura	27	31	6	1	(EU)	65
Galicia (93)	43	19	—	13	(BNG)	75
Madrid	54	32	17	—		103
Murcia	26	15	4	—		45
Navarre (5)	—	11	5	34	(UPN, CDN, HB, EA)	50
Basque Country (94) (6) .	11	12	6	46	(PNV, HB, EA, UA)	75
Rioja	17	12	2	2	(PR)	33

SOURCE: Prepared by Author.

(1) PAR is the third party, with 14 seats.
(2) CC is the first party, with 21 seats; PCN, 4; AHI, 1.
(3) UPCA, ex-President Hormaechea's party, is the third party, with 7 seats.
(4) CiU is the first party, with 60 seats.
(5) UPN is the first party, with 17 seats; CDN, the ex-President Alli's party, is the third, with 10 seats; HB has 5, and EA, 2.
(6) PNV is the first party with 22 seats; HB, 11; EA, 8, and UA, 5.

This biploar structure of electoral competition can be seen in Table 11. The PP and PSOE fill the first positions in 13 Communities, adding up between them 58 per cent of the votes in Cantabria and 90 per cent in Castile-La Mancha, and having increased the concentration of votes in 9 of the Communities in the last period. In the Canary Islands, PP accompanies CC in second place, while in the other three (Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Navarre), PSOE accompanies CiU, PNV and UPN, respectively, even if it is with a much lower level of concentration of votes (and decreasing, in general), which oscillates between the minimum of 46 per cent in the Basque Country and the maximum of 66 per cent in Catalonia. Finally, another piece of data worth keeping in mind is the *index of competitivity*, which can be found out by calculating the distance between the percentages of votes of the first and the second parties (this gives an average of 13 per cent for the whole group of Autonomous Communities, higher than this same parameter at the national legislative level, and it oscillates between 1 per cent for Castile-La Mancha and 29 per cent for Galicia); this index comes out to be generally increasing (9), especially in the Communities where PP (and UPN) wins.

TABLE 11

Structure of Electoral Competition in the Autonomous Communities, 1993-1996

Two Main Parties	Autonomous Communities	% of Votes First Two Parties	Evolution Electoral Concentr. (1)	Winning Party (% of advantage over second party)	Evolution of Advant. (1)
PP-PSOE					
a) PP	Aragon*	63	=	PP (+12)	–
	Asturias*	76	+	PP (+8)	–
	Balearic Islands	69	–	PP (+21)	+
	Cantabria	58	+	PP (+7)	+
	Castile and Leon	82	+	PP (+23)	+
	Valencian Community*	77	+	PP (+9)	–
	Galicia (93)	76	=	PP (+29)	+
	Madrid	81	+	PP (+21)	+
	Murcia*	84	+	PP (+21)	+
	Rioja*	83	=	PP (+15)	+
b) PSOE	Andalusia (96)	78	+	PSOE (+10)	–
	Castile-La Mancha	90	+	PSOE (+1)	–
	Extremadura	83	+	PSOE (+4)	–
CC-PP	Canary Islands*	64	+	CC (+2)	–
CiU-PSC	Catalonia (95)	66	–	CiU (+16)	–
UPN-PSOE	Navarre	52	–	UPN (+10)	+
PNV-PSOE	Basque Country (94)	46	–	PNV (+12)	+

(1) Evolution in relation to the 1989-1992 period.
* Communities in which a change of majority has occurred in the last electoral process.
SOURCE: Prepared by Author.

The dynamics and the degree of concentration of votes in the two principal parties are an important effect that our electoral system has on the structure of electoral competition and on the party system. The first fact that is worth considering is that the *average concentration of votes* in all the autonomic elections (71.7 per cent) is slightly higher than that observed in all of the legislative elections (69.8 per cent). In Table 12, we can study this phenomenon for each of the Autonomous Communities in all of the autonomic elections and in the legislative elections that have taken place in the last decade. As can be seen, the general tendency has inverted itself; while in the last autonomic elections the average concentration was 72 per cent, in spite of having maintained a slight upward tendency, in the 1996 legislative elections, it surpassed 76 per cent, following a rising tendency which has been sustained since 1977. This difference has occurred, more or less intensely, in almost all of the Autonomous Communities, with the exceptions of Castile-La Mancha, Catalonia, Madrid, and the Basque Country. As I already pointed out earlier in relation to the last

TABLE 12

Concentration of Votes in the Autonomous Communities in Autonomic and General Elections, 1980-1996*

	Autonomic Average 1980-1996		General Average 1986-1996	
Andalusia	73.7	(+)	79.1	(+)
Aragon	64.2	(−)	74.7	(+)
Asturias	73.7	(+)	76.1	(+)
Balearic Islands	69.9	(−)	78.4	(+)
Canary Islands	60.5	(+)	62.7	(+)
Cantabria	64.2	(−)	81.0	(+)
Castile and Leon	79.0	(+)	82.2	(+)
Castile-La Mancha	87.4	(+)	86.6	(+)
Catalonia	70.5	(−)	68.9	
Valencian Community	74.4	(+)	78.1	(+)
Extremadura	80.9	(+)	85.5	(+)
Galicia	71.8	(+)	78.9	(+)
Madrid	79.1	(+)	76.5	(+)
Murcia	81.6	(+)	84.4	(+)
Navarre	55.7	(−)	66.6	(+)
Basque Country	49.3	(−)	48.4	
Rioja	82.3	(+)	83.8	(+)

* The Spanish average concentration in all legislative elections is 69.83% and the range goes from 63.76% minimum in 1977 to 76.33% maximum in 1996.

(±) Signs indicate an average tendency to increase or to diminish the concentration of votes in the period.

SOURCE: Prepared by Author.

autonomic elections, the range of this parameter for the group of Communities since 1980 goes from the minimum average concentration of the Basque Country (49.3 per cent) to the maximum of Castile-La Mancha (87.4 per cent). The Communities can be classified in three groups: the first, having the maximum concentration, over 79 per cent, is formed by Castile-La Mancha, Rioja, Murcia, Extremadura, Madrid, and Castile and Leon; the second, with an average concentration which varies between 65 and 75 per cent, is made up by the Valencian Community, Andalusia, Asturias, Galicia, Catalonia, and the Balearic Islands; and the third group, with its average concentration below 65 per cent, is formed by the remaining five Communities (Aragon, Cantabria, the Canary Islands, Navarre, and the Basque Country) which are, at the same time, the most fragmented and plural Communities.

As I already indicated, the principal effect of an electoral system appears in relation with the formats acquired by the parliamentary party systems, which are what, in the end, produce the government. As can be seen in Table 13, the

TABLE 13

Format of the Autonomous Communities' Parliamentary Party Systems, 1993-1996

	Number of Parliament. Parties	First Party (1)		Concent. of Seats, 1.ª and 2.ⁿᵈ (2)	Number National and Regional Parties (3)		Composition of Government (4)
Andalusia (96)	4	PSOE	(54)	90	1	(3)	PSOE-PA
Aragon	5	PP	(40)	69	2	(24)	PP-PAR
Asturias	4	PP	(47)	84	1	(2)	PP*
Balearic Islands	7	PP	(51)	78	4	(17)	PP
Canary Islands	5	CC	(35)	66	3	(43)	CC-PP
Cantabria	5	PP	(33)	59	2	(33)	PP-PRC
Castile and Leon	4	PP	(60)	92	1	(2)	PP
Castile-La Mancha	3	PSOE	(51)	98	—		PSOE
Catalonia (95)	5	CiU	(44)	70	2	(54)	CiU*
Valencian Community	4	PP	(47)	83	1	(6)	PP-UV
Extremadura	4	PSOE	(48)	89	1	(2)	PSOE*
Galicia (93)	3	PP	(57)	83	1	(17)	PP
Madrid	3	PP	(52)	83	—		PP
Murcia	3	PP	(58)	91	—		PP
Navarre*	6	UPN	(34)	56	4	(68)	UPN*
Basque Country (94)	7	PNV	(29)	45	4	(61)	PNV-PSE/EE-EA
Rioja	4	PP	(52)	88	1	(6)	PP

(1) First Parliamentary paty (and percentage of seats).
(2) Percentage of seats accumulated by the two largest parties.
(3) Number of nationalist and regionalist parties (and percentage of seats).
(4) Composition of the autonomic governments: ( ) monochrome governments with an absolute majority; (−) coalitions; (*) monochrome governments in minority.
* Navarre was governed by the PSN-CDN-EA coalition, with Parliamentary support from IU, until the summer of 1996.

SOURCE: Prepared by Author.

resulting autonomic map includes an important variety of regional party systems or subsystems. Its most generalized effect has meant the formation of a majority tendency which oscillates between an imperfect two-party system (Duverger, 1974: 239 ss.; Balli, 1966) in eleven Communities and a moderate pluralism (Sartori, 1980: 219 ss.) in four more. We can define five types of Parliamentary party subsystems, in the following way. The first type, an imperfect two-party system with three parties, or «two and a half parties», as C. J. Friedrich (1946: 414) first said of Germany, is composed of the three parties of the state systems in Castile-La Mancha, Madrid, and Murcia, on one hand, and of the two largest national parties and another nationalist party

(BNG) in Galicia, on the other hand, all of them with an absolute majority monochrome government (except for the case of Castile-La Mancha, where the absolute majority is the PSOE, in all of the other cases it is the PP). The second type, also an imperfect two-party system, even if there are four or more parties involved, is made up of the three national parties, plus one or more minority parties with a regionalist character, in Andalusia, Asturias, the Balearic Islands, Castile and Leon, the Valencian Community, Extremadura, and Rioja; three of them (Castile and Leon and Rioja) with absolute majority monochrome PP governments, another two with PSOE-PA (Andalusia) and PP-UV (Valencian Community) coalition governments, and the other two with a PP minority monochrome government (Asturias) and a PSOE minority monochrome government (Extremadura). The third type is a moderate five-party pluralism, also composed of three national parties plus two minority parties with a regionalist character, with a PP and PAR coalition government (Aragon) or a PP and PRC coalition government (Cantabria). The fourth type, also a moderate five-party pluralism, is defined by the Canary Islands and Catalonia, with the presence of the three national parties, but headed by a nationalist party, to which another minority party is added, and with either a CC-PP coalition government (the Canary Islands) or a monochrome minority CiU government (Catalonia). And finally, the fifth type is an extreme and polarized pluralism (Sartori, 1980: 165 ss.) of 6 and 7 parties, respectively, in Navarre and the Basque Country; here we have the three national parties, plus the three Basque nationalist parties, to which the UA from Alava must be added in the Basque Country, headed by the regionalist UPN (PP) in Navarre and the nationalist PNV in the Basque Country, with a minority monochrome UPN government in Navarre (after the break-up of the PSOE-CDN-EA coalition in 1996) and a PNV-PSE-EA coalition in the Basque Country.

CONCLUSIONS

The first matter that can be affirmed is the clear institutionalization of the electoral systems in the Autonomous Communities, which reinforces the deep roots of the Spanish electoral system as a whole, precisely because of the continuity and the mimicry of the basic features at both political levels. In spite of the harmonizing tendency and of the majority homogeneity of its functioning, the heterogeneity of its effects in some Autonomous Communities has to do, above all, with the special territorial characteristics and with the political life of these Communities.

In general, just like for the whole of Spain, the Autonomous Communities' electoral systems have also had concentrated effects on the party systems, although they have been slightly more attentuated, contributing to reduce parliamentary fragmentation and to facilite the formation of governments based on homogeneous majorities. Even so, the autonomic

systems appreciably reduce the accused disproportionality of the Spanish system.

In view of the homogeneity of the vote-counting formula and of the scarce incidence of the minimum thresholds, the district system continues to be, here too, the principal critical factor of the inequality of the votes and of the structural disproportionality of the system, as well as being the differential element among the Communities. As proof of this, the following exercise, which consists of successively neutralizing the effects of the district systems and the vote-counting formula, is enough. In the first place, we simulate single districts for the 13 Communities which are not single-district Communities, with the result being a 4 per cent average exchange of seats, especially at the expense of the majority parties and which, besides, since the vote thresholds are not applied, will permit the access of parties in the Valencian Community (UPV, with 2 seats) and in Galicia (EU, with 2 seats). In the second place, if we keep the distorting effect of the districts equally neutralized and we change, at the same time, the form of counting the votes to a pure proportional system with the greatest remainder, the average additional exchange of seats in the 17 Communities due to this factor would not surpass 2 per cent, which would, nevertheless, permit the access to seat distribution of a dozen new parties in Asturias (CAS-CDS), the Canary Islands (CGC and CDS-UC), Castile and Leon (TC-PNC, SI, AIAV, and PB), Madrid (LV-GU and LVA), Navarre (Batzarre and NA), and Catalonia (AEC). This double combination would have the effect on the party system and governability of weakening the goverment majority in Aragon, the Canary Islands and the Valencian Community; it would complicate governability in Asturias, Extremadura, Navarre, and Catalonia; it would leave the PP in the minority in the Balearic Islands and the PSOE in the minority in Castile-La Mancha; and it would cause no significant changes in the remaining eight Communities.

The normative continuity of the autonomic electoral systems with respect to the national system, and its relative interterritorial homogeneity have nevertheless not prevented the production of a considerable variety of party systems, even if there is a clear and growing predominance of the imperfect two-party format in eleven Communities, and, to a lesser degree, of moderate pluralism in four others, which coexist with the exceptions of the extreme or polarized pluralism of the Basque Country and Navarre. However, the greater pluralism of the autonomic party systems, facilitated by their electoral systems and without significantly reducing either their bipolarization or their governability, has had at least two positive effects. The first is that it gives new local political actors access to the parliamentary scene; the second, and more important, is that it rehearses coalition formulas of government in a greater and greater number of Communities.

That is why the voices of reform or of greater formal harmonization of the autonomic electoral systems, which we have been hearing lately, have little to do with the institutionalization and the performance achieved by these systems.

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