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Address: Instituto Carlos III – Juan March de Ciencias Sociales  
Universidad Carlos III de Madrid  
Edificio 18  
c/ Madrid 135  
28903 Getafe (Madrid)  
SPAIN

Web: <http://www.uc3m.es/ic3jm>  
Email: [secretaria@march.uc3m.es](mailto:secretaria@march.uc3m.es)



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# **Should I stay or should I go? Losers' fate and the role of Spanish political parties in candidate renomination for regional executive office<sup>1</sup>**

Javier Astudillo

*Vice-director of the Department of Political and Social Sciences  
Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona)*

## **Abstract**

Under what conditions do oppositional politicians in Western parliamentary democracies repeat as candidates after losing their first election? Political leaders need to attain the highest executive offices to lead. But in most democracies this means that parties must previously select them as their candidates for those offices. Parties' intervention in candidate selection is thus a vital part of the game. However, this is still an understudied topic in Western parliamentary politics. A few studies have analyzed losers' fate, but they have exclusively focused on the US case where party machines have played for long a lesser role in leadership recruitment. This paper seeks therefore to make a contribution to the literature about the current role of party organizations for political leadership survival in party-centered parliamentary countries by studying the specific case of candidates for the presidency of the Spanish *Comunidades Autónomas*.

## **Key words**

Candidates, recruitment, political parties, losers, leadership.

## **Biographical note**

Javier Astudillo is Associate Professor and vice-director of the Department of Social and Political Sciences at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona), "Doctor-member" of the *Instituto Juan March de Estudios e Investigaciones* (Madrid), and Adjunct Faculty Member of the Department of Political Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (USA).

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## 1. Introduction

Under what conditions do oppositional politicians in Western parliamentary democracies repeat as candidates after losing their first election? In a time of “presidentialization” of politics and “cartelization” of parties, what “assets” do they need to control if they want to repeat the experience of throwing their hat into the electoral ring? Do party organizations still play any role, at least in the case of “New Democracies”, on their “durability” as nascent top leaders in front of electoral setbacks?

Political leaders need to attain the highest executive offices to lead. But in most democracies this means that parties must previously select them as their candidates for those offices. Parties' intervention in candidate selection is thus a vital part of the game. However, it seems that in current Western parliamentary democracies parties' specific role on the “durability” of political leaders has changed. Thus controlling the party extraparliamentary organization no longer protects political leaders from a bad electoral performance.

However there are reasons to believe that this is not the case in the so-called

that this is not the case in the so-called “New Democracies”. In these democracies being entrenched in their party apparatus still provides political leaders with a safety net in case of defeat. In any case, this is still an understudied topic in Western parliamentary politics. A few studies have analyzed losers' fate, but they have exclusively focused on the US case where party machines have played for long a lesser role in leadership recruitment (Taylor and Boatright 2005, Carsey, Berry and Forrest 2003, 2013). This paper seeks therefore to make a contribution to the literature about the current role of party organizations for political leadership survival in party-centered parliamentary countries, and how “New Democracies” present particularities.

In the next section we discuss the theoretical interest of studying what happens to those candidates for chief executive offices in parliamentary democracies who fail the first time they run. We focus especially on the potential consequences that both the “presidentialization” of politics and the “cartelization” of political parties have had on the traditional role party organizations

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<sup>2</sup> Referring to Jose Borrell's resignation as the Spanish socialist candidate for prime minister in 1999.

play in political leadership recruitment and survival, and why “New Democracies” may present some peculiarities. In section three we present our set of hypotheses to explain losers’ fate, as well as some methodological and measurement issues. In section four we present the basic descriptive information about losers’ fate in the Spanish regions (*Comunidades*

*Autónomas*), the “New Democracy” selected as case study. In section five we offer the results of our empirical analysis. The final section provides some preliminary implications of our findings on the current role of party organizations in Spain on the generalization of both the “presidentialization” and the “cartelization” thesis for Western parliamentary democracies.

## **2. The changing role of political parties in candidate recruitment and its consequences on the “durability” of political leaders in Western parliamentary democracies**

We know that in the US citizens that run for legislative office are mainly white, middle-aged men, highly educated, from a high socioeconomic status, have an intense political ambition, and show strong partisanship (Fowler 1996, Herrnson 1997, Lawless 2012). These are also common features among Western, parliamentary countries (Norris 1997, Hazan and Rahat 2010). And we know that this socio-demographic bias can be the result of two distinct processes: self-selection, or supply side factors, and gate-keepers’ preferences, or demand-side factors (Norris 1997).

We also know that we must be very careful in extrapolating how supply and demand-side factors interact in the US to other Western parliamentary countries, characterized by strong, mass-branch political organizations. In many “party-centered systems”<sup>3</sup> it may be

simply wrong to frame the process of an individual ending up as a party’s legislative candidate as a purely individual decision based on cost-benefit analysis pondered by the probability of winning. Referring to the Dutch case, Leijenaar and NieMöller (1997:125) suggested instead that “one more or less accidentally ends up in the next party function [i.e. ‘being candidate’]”.

However, it would be wrong, to think that US political parties play no role in candidate recruitment for legislatures. Even in this country, where candidates are mainly selected through primaries, political parties still play an important

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clusively to what citizens look at when making their vote decision: either the personal characteristics of the individuals who run, or the characteristics (ideological but not only) of the organization that has nominated them (Carey and Shugart 1995, Grofman 2005). Here we considered a broader role of parties in the electoral process, “from selecting candidates, to coordinating campaigns, to presenting a choice of parties on the ballot paper” (Dalton, Farrell and McAllister 2011:46).

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<sup>3</sup> Originally the concepts of “party-centered” and “candidate-centered” systems referred ex-

role in the nominating process. They do so by targeting specific individuals and providing them with different resources so that they can mount “their own” personal campaigns (Herrnson 1997, Mack 1998, Lawless 2012).

It is in the “how” parties play that role that makes the US quite distinct from many party-centered countries. In these countries the extraparliamentary party organization, or more precisely the “party central office” (Katz and Mair 1993), matters because they have stronger control over the (re)selection process than in North America. In these countries the selection of candidates by primaries was until recently the exception (Scarrow et al 2002). But it also matters because having a long record of voluntary working for the party organization, what is called “party service” in English, and “*Ochsentour*” in German, has traditionally been a requisite for being selected as a legislative candidate<sup>4</sup>. Through this process, potential elected officials are socialized into the party’s culture and practices (Dalton, Farrell and McAllister 2011:30), which guarantees their loyalty to the organization and reduces “the need to utilize the available disciplinary measures – perks, career advancement, party whip, votes of confidence – in order to keep its elected representatives in line” (Hazan and Rahat 2010:148).

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<sup>4</sup> In Germany, it has been calculated that it takes on average about 10.5 years for a candidate to progress from his first local *party* office to first entering the Bundestag (Wessels 1997:87), in the Netherlands it takes five to ten years of *party* activities (Leijenaar and Niemöller 1997:114).

In brief, not only do party central office in Western parliamentary countries have a tighter control over who will be their legislative candidates than in the US, but also candidates must be one of them, a *party creature*, to be nominated. Using Hazan and Rahat’s (2010) analytical framework, it is a question not only of the “selectorate” dimension, but also of the “candidacy” one. Outsiders, amateurs, people whose “party service” has been poor are simply not welcome... unless one runs for the chief executive office in the last decades (Dalton, Farrell and McAllister 2011). Both the “presidentialization” of politics and the “cartelization” of parties sustain the expectation that parties organizations’ role on executive candidate recruitment and its implications for leadership survival has changed.

Scholars have increasingly suggested that Western parliamentary democracies are experiencing a process of “presidentialization” (Poguntke and Webb 2005, Bäck et al 2009). Although the term is still somewhat ambiguous, there is a general consensus that it means that there is a concentration of power around *single* political leaders holding executive public office. This goes hand in hand with a concomitant loss of power and autonomy of *collective* actors such as cabinets, parliaments and political parties. “Presidentialization”, we are told, encompasses change in three distinct political arenas: the electorate, the party organization, and the executive of the state (Poguntke and Webb 2005), of which the first two are salient for our argument.

Most studies on this “presidentialization” have focused so far on leaders’ effects on voting behaviour and the emergence of prime ministerial “candidate-centred” election campaigns (Poguntke and Webb 2005, Johansson and Tallber 2008). But Webb, Poguntke and Kolodny (2011) have recently suggested that this process has also consequences on leaders’ positions within their party organizations. They are primarily interested in party leaders’ increased autonomy versus their parties to establish party strategy and policy, as well as to select candidates for elective office. But they also suggest that it has involved a change in (1) parties’ recruitment criteria of “political leaders”<sup>5</sup>, as well as in (2) their “durability” in front of electoral setbacks.

Insofar to parties’ recruitment criteria, in the traditional mass party, obtaining the highest party’s central office –the party chairman – was thus the last step of a politician’s successful “*Ochsen-tour*” career. In addition, these leaders were usually nominated as the party’s candidate for prime minister as the final “reward” for a whole life devoted to the organization, and thanks to a meticulous process of building a power base within the extraparliamentary organization (Ware 1996). Thus the party’s leader of the party’s central office tended also to be the leader of the so-called “party in public office” (Katz and Mair 2003)<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> We refer here specifically to the selection of party’s candidates for executive office, not the selection of the formal “party leader”, although in some parties both processes can go together.

<sup>6</sup> It is true that we have to make two qualifications. In some mass parties that had evolved

But the party risked nominating dull candidates for prime ministers, expert only in winning negotiations in smoke-filled rooms.

At a time when parties were willing to sacrifice winning elections for ideological purity, or people voted for ideological or party attachment reasons, this was not such a serious problem<sup>7</sup>. But since the emergence of, first, the catch-all, and, later, cartel type of parties, these can no longer afford these selection criteria at a time when winning office is their paramount goal and the personal qualities of executive candidates is what electors, or at least the swing voters, seem to value most in their vote decision (Garzia 2011).

Parties now seek to nominate candidates for chief executive office that, irrespective of their position within the internal party hierarchy or their record of party service and internal apprenticeship, they *believe* will give them the highest chances of improving election results. This means that “the principal criterion by which the prospective candidates are judged may prove to be electoral”, and, as a result, these candidates are expected to have a “limited party experience” and have “bypassed the usual party process to some extent” (Webb,

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from previous “cadre parties” the parliamentary wing had a much more important role in selecting “the party leader”. In others, in order to avoid a concentration of power in his hands if becoming prime minister, it was incompatible to hold at the same time both public and party offices.

<sup>7</sup> As a British voter declared in the 1950s: “*I would vote for a pig if my party put one up*” (Karvonen 2010:41).

Poguntke, and Kolodny 2011:10-13). Although these scholars do not suggest it explicitly, we can also expect that “being the party chairman” is no longer tantamount to “being the party’s candidate” for prime minister when elections are held<sup>8</sup>.

But this change in the “qualities” parties seek in their candidates for the highest executive office would also have deeper implications in the nature of politicians’ leadership. Among other consequences, these scholars maintain that the “durability” of the leaders chosen under these new criteria is more contingent upon their electoral fortune. According to them, “presidentialized party leaders (...) are less likely to survive electoral defeats than their precursors, who were safely entrenched in their parties” (p9), and “they may be dispensed with by the party, and replaced by an alternative with better electoral prospects” (p13).

Candidates that are selected mainly for electoral reasons and, by leading to the party to an electoral defeat, have shown these reasons being wrong, or at least no longer true, will probably face a coalition of both rank-and-file activists, disappointed by ideological concerns, or for having lost the prospect of enjoying the spoils of politics, and fellow colleagues who see an opportunity to obtain the next party nomination. In addition,

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<sup>8</sup> Germany is again a good example. In 1998 Gerhard Schroeder, and not the party chairman Oskar Lafontaine, was the SPD candidate for chancellor. In 2002 Edmund Stoiber, and not the party chairman Angela Merkel, was the CDU candidate for chancellor. For the 2013 elections, the SPD have not chosen their party chairman as candidate for chancellor.

tion, given that in parliamentary systems it is impossible to vote for a party’s candidate for executive office while voting for a different party for the legislative, executive candidates’ defeats are directly responsible for many legislative candidates’ failing to obtain or renew their seats. Internal rejection can come from all the “faces” of the political party: the party on the ground, the party’s central office and the party in public office. But if candidates are selected because of serving a lengthy apprenticeship in the party and counting on significant bases of support among internal party bosses, and therefore control the party apparatus where the results of the elections are evaluated, they are in a better position to control that evaluation as well as internal turmoil.

Still, Webb, Poguntke and Kolodny were making here an explicit over-time comparison about the chances of leaders’ survival after defeat. Can we transform it into a “cross-sectional” one? Should we expect that current candidates that still have a long record of party service and control the party extraparliamentary organization have higher chances of being renominated if they fail than the new “presidentialized” type of candidates?

The importance of being selected by the old rules was that those politicians who controlled the extraparliamentary organization, or at least who were “entrenched” in it, had the highest chances of being selected as candidates. But they survived electoral defeats because of that control, not because the selection



criteria parties used *per se*. In this sense, we could even think that if by any reason some present candidates, who are selected for their electoral appeal, have also worked their way up through the extraparliamentary organization – and become the chair of their party central office before getting their nomination<sup>9</sup> – the latter feature could also protect them from party’s deception with their electoral performance<sup>10</sup>. The real issue is, therefore, if controlling the extraparliamentary organization still provides candidates with a “safety net”. It is here that the concomitant transformation of the Western parties may play an important role on our expectations.

According to Katz and Mair (1995) some of the factors that have contributed to the “presidentialization of politics”, such as the “mediatization” of politics, the erosion of traditional socio-political cleavages, or the growing complexity and reach of the state, alongside a simultaneous decline of citizens’ involvement in party organizations and an easier parties’ accessibility to state resources, have set the stage for the emergence of the new “cartel party” type. They are mostly characterized by what they do, behaving as a “cartel” to reduce the risk of losing access to state resources. But this new electoral behavior has also consequences for their in-

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<sup>9</sup> Let’s remember that Webb, Poguntke and Kolodny argue that it is no longer necessary to have this partisan background, not that it is incompatible with being electorally attractive.

<sup>10</sup> Another issue is that candidates can be chair of the extraparliamentary organization without having a long record of party service and being entrenched within their parties. Later we explain how we solve this issue.

ternal organization (Katz and Mair 1995:17).

Given that states’ subsidies goes mainly to the “party in public office”, and that “the party on the ground” has a lesser role in campaigning, the “party central office” has lost the control of most of the resources necessary to winning office (Katz and Mair 2002). As a result, we could expect that nowadays controlling that party office, and being entrenched in their extraparliamentary organization, does not add any significant protection to candidates from electoral defeats. In other words, losers that are still the chairs of the party’s central office *are not* more likely to repeat than those who do not hold that extraparliamentary office.

Katz and Mair (1995:17) also consider that we can expect to find this “cartelization” of parties especially for mainstream political parties as well in those countries in which state support for parties and its “colonization” by them is more pronounced as well as in those political cultures marked by a tradition of inter-party cooperation. In this sense, Van Biezen (2000) has also questioned that the argument of the decline of party central office can be applied to the case of so-called “New Democracies”<sup>11</sup>. For her this extraparliamentary organization is still the most important power centre within parties. In these relatively recent

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<sup>11</sup> We refer to those countries democratized since the mid 70s. It is arguable to still consider “new” democracies, some of them are already 40 years old, but this is the term Van Biezen uses, and as we use her proposals, we keep this term.

democracies, because of weakly developed party loyalties and lack of party institutionalization, political leaders use the extraparliamentary organization to maintain the unity and discipline the party in public office when conflicts over party's policy or goal appear (Van Biezen 2000:411).

As a result, we could expect that in "New Democracies" controlling the party's central office *does* still add significant protection to candidates from electoral defeats. If this is so, Van Biezen's argument makes us expect that in these countries losers that are currently the chairs of the party's central office *are* more likely to repeat than those who do not hold that extraparliamentary office.

In sum, although the "cartelization" of parties further suggests that their extraparliamentary organization may have changed its role not only on the recruitment of candidates for executive office, as advanced by the "presidentialization" thesis, but on the protection they can provide their political leaders from electoral setbacks as well, parliamentary "New Democracies" may have avoided this final transformation.

As far as we know this hypothesis about the particularities of "New Democracies" on the role of the extraparliamentary party organization on political leadership "durability" in front of electoral setbacks has not been tested yet. In fact, of the three indicators that Van Biezen used, just two proved that the extraparliamentary organizations are

still the most important power centre within parties.

In order to test this hypothesis we are going to focus in this paper on those candidates for the premiership of the Spanish regional governments that did not win, referred here as "losers". We focus only on candidates who lose their elections because, as we can see, their fate is an excellent ground to assess the role political parties, and especially their extraparliamentary organizations, may still have in party-centered parliamentary systems for political leaders' survival, and the nature of their power<sup>12</sup>.

Moreover, if electoral defeats may affect differentially those candidates that are "entrenched in their parties" and those who are not, this is something we can study empirically. We can build a pool of "losers", some of them would have repeated as candidates while others not, and we can analyze if any of their political and partisan traits explain this variation. For example, in our database we found that around 56 per cent of losers only run once and 44 per cent were "repeaters", as well as 61 per cent were chair of the extraparliamentary organizations and 39 per cent were not at the moment of their first, and for many, only contest.

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<sup>12</sup> We do not mean that the political career of candidates for the premiership who are not re-nominated is permanently over. Many of them continue in politics in other public offices (William Hague in the UK or Joaquín Almunia in Spain are good examples).

In addition, inspired by the only two studies about losers' fate (Taylor and Boatright 2005, Carsey, Berry and Forrest 2013), we will study only "first-time losers", that is those who run for an elective office for their first time, and lost, which are normally, but not always, oppositional candidates<sup>13</sup>. This means that we focus on leadership survival at a critical moment of their top level political career, their initial stages. Moreover, the advantage of focusing exclusively on "first-time losers" is to control the fact that the previous number of times a candidate has run, either as incumbent or from the opposition, can influence the chances of repeating again.

Spain seems to be a good case study for the role of party organization on losers' survival. First of all, Spain is a "New Democracy", whose current parliamentary monarchy was established in its new constitution of 1978, after Franco's death in 1975. Secondly, the "presidentialisation" of politics, the trigger of these changes on parties' recruitment criteria and the durability of political leaders, is said to be present in this country since the reestablishment of democracy (Picarella 2009). The Spanish Constitution is said to have adopted for the national and regional levels of governments the so-called "Chancellorship" parliamentarism, and Spanish

prime ministers and regional premiers have mostly been powerful figures (Van Biezen and Hopkin 2005, Aja 1999). In addition, Spanish party system presents features typical of an intense cartelization of parties. In fact this country has been considered to be a "parties' state" whose core institutions of government have been colonized by parties, which are therefore supported more from above than below (Holliday 2002).

Notwithstanding all this, Van Biezen analysis also shows that if we look more in detail to particular aspects of the relationship between the party central office and the party in public office, mainly how the Spanish parties themselves define the relationship between these two faces, and the rules and practice of party financing, what we find is "the remarkably powerful status of the party central office and the particular strong position of the party executive" (Van Biezen, 2000:409). Therefore, Spain should be a good place to assess the role parties' extraparliamentarian organization may still have for political leaders' survival.

However, studying the national politics of just one country has an insurmountable hindrance: a very little number of cases. Given that, as we will see, we have to control for other factors, we have more explanatory variables than cases. Fortunately, one of the ways to increase the number of observations relevant to our theory is studying subnational units (King, Keohane and Verba 1994, 217). Obviously, studying regional politics has its own implications:

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<sup>13</sup> Some politicians are first time candidates for a specific public office while already incumbents (Gerald Ford in 1976 is a good example), but this is not the common pattern. In our study we found that around 7 percent of our first-time candidates for executive office already hold that office.

firstly, the role of regional elections as of a second-order type (Reif and Schmitt 1980), secondly, given that we are studying the role of party organization on the recruitment process, party's

vertical distribution of power can alter the process of re-nomination. Later we comment on how these characteristics may affect the chances of losers repeating again.

### **3. Variables and hypothesis: methodological and measurement issues**

#### **3.1. Our dependent variable: losers' running again or not**

As explained, our dependent variable is whether an opposition candidate for the premiership of the Spanish *Comunidades Autónomas* who "lost" his first contest repeats in the next regional elections as his party's candidate (coded 1), or not (coded 0)<sup>14</sup>.

But what does "losing an election" mean in a parliamentary regime? In other words, what candidates for executive office can be considered "losers" and which are "winners"? In a presidential system after the polls are closed and the votes have been counted, it is (almost) certain who will become the next president and, therefore, what candidate has won the elections. In parliamentary systems, after the polls close and votes are counted, if no party, or pre-electoral coalition of parties, has obtained an absolute majority of legisla-

tors, this is just the beginning of the game (Budge 1990). One can be the most voted candidate, with a plurality of MPs, and still be left in opposition.

So our first definition of a "winner" (and therefore a "loser") is that the candidate for executive office, irrespective of whether he is the candidate of the most voted party (or the party who obtained the highest number of legislators), becomes prime-minister in the first government formed after the elections. All candidates that do not become prime-ministers, or in our case regional premier, are "losers".

But another feature of parliamentary regimes, their collective nature, makes things a bit more complex. Let's think about this real example obtained from some Spanish regional elections. For the elections of 2003 in Cantabria, the regional branch of the Spanish socialists presented a new candidate, Lola Gorostiaga, for the regional premiership. The Socialist Party, except for a brief period at the beginning of the 90s, had never been in power in that region. After the 2003 elections, the PSOE ended, again, as the second most voted party. The most voted

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<sup>14</sup> For political correctness it is now common practice to use the feminine to refer to individual candidates. However, as we are studying "losers", we prefer to avoid this practice in order not to suggest this as a concern specifically for women.

party – the Spanish Conservatives (PP) – again, did not obtain an absolute majority. The previous government had been a coalition formed by the PP, which held the presidency, and a small party, the PRC (the Cantabrian regionalists), the third party of the region in number of votes and legislators. But after the elections, Gorostiaga proposed to the PRC the formation of a coalition, offering them the presidency of the regional government. The Cantabrian regionalists accepted her offer, and she became vice-premier of the next regional government. Can she be regarded as a “loser”? We doubt it. But according to our first definition she was.

In this Cantabrian case, the PSOE managed to enter the regional government. Should we then consider all candidates whose parties are not able to enter the government as “losers”? Let’s think, for a moment, about candidates of small parties who have no real option of becoming the next regional premier, and whose party has no previous legislators, but that manage to obtain a seat for themselves, and perhaps other colleagues. Will they be regarded as “losers” by their own party? The appraisal they usually receive makes us doubt it. So we could consider as “winners” all candidates for executive office whose party enters the first government formed after the election, or, if the party has never held legislative seats, managed to obtain (or retain) their seat. The “losers” will be all those who do not follow this definition.

Which definition of “loser” is better? If our first definition is perhaps too broad (because of the strict definition of who

is the winner), and we are considering as losers candidates who were actually regarded as winners by their own parties, our second definition is perhaps too narrow, and we are considering as winners candidates who were actually regarded as losers by their parties. As a result, we must decide whether we prefer to commit the error of including some winners within our losers’ pool (type I), or the error of excluding some of the losers from our pool (type II). We choose to take a cautious stance here and avoid the type-I error. The second definition gives us the highest probability of studying only losers, at the risk of excluding some of them, and at the cost of reducing the number of our cases<sup>15</sup>.

### **3.2. Our main independent variable: being “party chairman”**

Earlier we argued that if Katz and Mair’s thesis about the cartelization of political parties was right, we should not find that those candidates still “entrenched in their parties” have a higher probability of surviving an electoral defeat than those who are not, whether they were selected because of their previous party service or for being a potential electoral asset. On the other hand, Van Biezen argues that a specific feature of the cartelization, the decline of the party’s central office, does not apply in the case of “New Democracies”. Therefore, in the case of Spain we should find that those “entrenched can-

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<sup>15</sup> We have also checked if the results varied according to the definition used, they do not, but in the paper we only report results from our second definition.

didates” do have a higher probability of surviving.

As a proxy of being “entrenched in their parties” we study if the candidate is a “party leader” or not. It is true that this proxy can be problematic. In some parties it may just be a traditional formality to select previously as chair of that extraparliamentary office their next candidate for the chief executive office, even if they have just arrived in politics as well as in the party. We cannot say that these candidates, even though being the party leaders, are “entrenched in their parties”. We are going to see later, however, that this is not the case of the Spanish regional governments. Still, we are studying “party leaders”, but who is a “party leader”?

This term is ill-defined in the current party literature. Many scholars simply give no definition. Therefore we have decided to focus on “formal party leaders” (meaning that party leaders must hold an office within the party structure). In addition, in countries like Spain, the office they hold is the highest within the party’s “central office” extraparliamentary organization (Katz and Mair 1993), or more precisely the chair of a “top-level body in charge of day-to-day political and organizational leadership” (Poguntke 1998:164). Finally, in order to mitigate possible endogeneity problems, such as candidates’ continuation as party chairmen depends on their first contest electoral results, we study if candidates hold this internal party office only at the moment of running for their first time.

*Hypothesis: losers are more likely to repeat if they are party chairmen than not at the time of their first contest.*

### **3.3. Other explanatory variables**

In our explanation of why electoral defeats may affect the chances of political leaders of being renominated as candidates we have hold so far two assumptions that are debatable: (1) that losers themselves will wish to run again, and that (2) they will have to defeat other possible aspirants. We have thus studied and classified other possible factors that may explain losers’ repetition according to this, and we should control for their impact. But we must always keep in mind that some of them may refer to both aspects. For example, a bad electoral performance can affect politicians’ self-esteem, and at the same encourage the emergence of internal rivals.

#### **3.3.1. Will losers want to repeat their experience of running?**

So far we have assumed that candidates who lose their elections do seek to repeat again in the next contest, but we know this assumption is debatable even for incumbents, so they won in their last contest (Fisher and Herrick 2002, Wolak 2007). So, following what is common practice in the study of incumbents’ retirement and the groundbreaking studies about losers’ renomination, we have controlled, first, for personal characteristics highlighted by the so-called “psychological” tradition about candidate recruitment such as “political

ambition” (Fowler 1996; Herrnson 1997, Taylor and Boatright 2005)<sup>16</sup>.

### Political ambition and office holding experience

Politics is a dirty business, the brother of the famous Roman statesman Marcus T. Cicero reminded him when he was competing for the consulship of the Roman Republic<sup>17</sup>. It is dirty and burdensome. As a result running a campaign requires a high level of commitment, and candidates must have a strong desire for the potential benefits they obtain if they win to compensate for these costs (Fowler 1996:432). Given that, those who possess a high degree of ambition will be more willing to repeat their contestation experience.

Studying individuals’ political ambition is not easy. But, given that usually getting to the highest office means politicians have passed through “minor offices”, the literature suggests that political ambition and office holding experience are linked (Taylor and Boatright, 2005:602). As a result we use as proxy of political ambition the number of years between candidates holding their first elective office (at any level) and their first contest for the executive public office. Our concrete expectation is:

*Hypothesis: losers are more likely to repeat the higher the number of years they have held in elective office (at any*

*level) at the time of their first contest for executive office.*

But psychological factors are not the only ones that can explain politicians’ own decision to run or not to run again. In their personal cost-benefit analysis they can also gauge their chances of winning depending on how the political and economic context, at the time of the next elections, affects those chances (Wolak 2007, Taylor and Boatright 2005).

### Public perception of the national government

Now, because we are studying regional, second order elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980), voters may use these elections to have a mid-term say on the performance of the *national* government. Therefore our *regional* losers’ chances of winning the next elections will be affected by citizens’ positive (negative) perception of the *national* incumbents (Carsey and Wright 1998). Our concrete hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis: the higher the national prime ministerial approval at the time of the next elections, the higher the probability of a loser belonging to a party in national government running again, and the lower the probability of a loser that belongs to a party that is not in national government doing so.*

### The performance of the regional economy

There is substantial debate on how the economy affects electoral results. The

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<sup>16</sup> Following common practice we have also controlled for losers’ age.

<sup>17</sup> Quintus T. Cicero, ‘Commentariolum Petitionis’ (‘Little handbook on electioneering’).

economic voting model suggests that governments are punished (rewarded) for bad (good) economic conditions at election time. However, the fact that we are dealing with a multilevel context may again alter significantly on whether the economic voting model still holds.

First, the “clarity of responsibility amendment” points out that when the characteristics of the domestic political context make it difficult for citizens to apportion responsibility for economic or policy decision to particular actors, the connection between vote and the economic performance may be highly reduced. The presence of multilevel governance may be one of these features (Anderson 2006).

Second, assuming that the public still holds politicians accountable for economic results, we should specify the level of “economic performance” that citizens will look at (regional or national levels), and which politicians are held accountable (the national or the regional ones). Anderson’s answers to these two issues are, first, that the public will take into account the economic results at the regional level, and, second, will hold regional politicians accountable for those results, either because they are credited as directly responsible for them, or because they are used again as a way to show (dis)approval “of the performance of the national government in a subnational election” (Anderson 2006:451). This means that losers that belong to the party or parties in national government will be encouraged to run again by a strong regional economy, and those

whose party is in opposition at the national level will be discouraged from doing so. We test this assertion using as a proxy the evolution of regional unemployment rate, given by the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística*, between losers’ first elections and the next ones.

*Hypothesis: the higher the increase of the regional unemployment level, the lower the probability of a loser belonging to a party in the national government running again, and the higher the probability of a loser belonging to a party that is not in national government doing so.*

#### Opportunity windows: the type of regional cabinet

Another context factor that may also affect losers’ desire to run again is a specific peculiarity of our type of democratic regime. One of the central differences between parliamentary and presidential regimes is that prime ministers and governments can be changed without a vote being casted (Lijphart 2012, Cheibub and Przeworski 1999). This means that, depending on the type of government formed after an election, losers can become winners, *before* new elections are called. If a defeat is not necessarily seen as definitive this can in turn influence their willingness to continue in politics and, finally, run again. To make it simple we distinguish here between single-party majority cabinets and other situations:

*Hypothesis: losers are more likely to repeat when no single party has an ab-*



*solute majority after their first election than when it does.*

### **3.3.2. If they want it, will it be difficult to get the nomination again?**

So far we have also been assuming that, irrespective of a loser's desire to repeat or not, obtaining the next nomination will be a highly contested issue. That is why being party chairman puts a candidate in a better position to defeat other aspirants to the party's nomination. However, the groundbreaking studies by Taylor and Boatright (2005) and Carsey, Berry and Forrest (2013) about a loser's fate give at least two reasons why this assumption may be in some cases unrealistic: (1) a poor electoral perspective for a given party may mean nobody wants to be its next candidate, and the party painfully seeks for what has been called a "sacrificial lamb", or (2) parties are so satisfied with the electoral results obtained under their "losers" that nobody dares to challenge their re-nomination if they decide to run again.

#### Losers' share level

Some competing parties may have a very small chance of "winning the elections" (Taylor and Boatright 2005). In these situations the problem is not to choose between aspirants, but to find anyone who would accept to run. However, Carsey et al (2013:13) suggest that "a party is likely to look at the loser in the previous race as a potential sacrificial lamb". Equally, when the losing party gets very good results these scholars also expect losers to run again be-

cause the party has a good chance of winning the next elections without replacing its candidate. It is at intermediate levels when the prospect the loser has a challenger for the next nomination increases. As a result, these scholars argue, and their data confirm it, that we should not expect a linear relationship, but a "U-shape" curve, between a party's probability of winning and the probability of a loser running again.

These authors and others (Taylor and Boatright 2005) consider that "the single best measure of a potential challenger's perceived probability of winning office if he were to compete is the *losing party's vote share* in the previous election" (Ibid, 2013:7). The adaptation of Carsey, Berry and Forrest to the Spanish context generates this hypothesis<sup>18</sup>:

*Hypothesis: As a losing party's vote share increases from zero, the probability that the party will re-nominate the losing candidate for the next elections decreases until reaching a vote share in the middle point between zero and 0.50; as a losing party's vote share increases from this point, the probability of the losing candidate being re-nominated increases.*

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<sup>18</sup> In fact, their argument is more complex than this since they study three situations: (a) a party presents no candidate, (b) a party presents the previous loser, (c) a party presents a new candidate. Given that we do not have the first situation, we simplify their analysis in a loser running again or not.

### Electoral evolution under the loser

In the previous hypothesis the probability of winning the next elections was a party's probability, independent of the actual candidate they nominate. But, at the same time, parties can consider that their defeated candidates have also their own probability to win, or at least to improve the party's electoral results, if they are renominated. A party can consider that it has good chances of winning the next election, but not with its previous candidate. Or that these chances depend on that candidate. Again, the issue is how parties gauge the impact of their candidates in their results, how they know if they are good or bad for them. Following anecdotic evidence of post elections party reactions as well as inspired by the study by Andrews and Jackman (2008), we suggest that they look at their "electoral evolution". That is, we compare a party's results with its losers, in time ' $t$ ', with previous results, in ' $t_{-1}$ ',<sup>19</sup> under a different candidate (remember that we are studying only first-time losers). In addition, we do not look at absolute but relative increases. A five-point percentage increase can have quite a different meaning when the previous vote share was seven points that when it was 40<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Probably it would be better to compare the results in ' $t$ ' with the results forecasted by the pre-electoral surveys, but this option is not feasible.

<sup>20</sup> Here we do not find here any reason to believe there will be a "U-shape" relation between electoral evolution and the probability of a loser running again. When a party has suffered a drastic reduction in its vote share, most party members will probably think that anyone but the loser should be their next candidate.

*Hypothesis: losers are more likely to repeat the more positive in relative terms the electoral evolution of the party is under their candidacy.*

### **3.3. Degree of regional autonomy and temporal dimension**

Finally we cannot forget that we are studying regional politics. This level of government can have its own peculiarities that we should take into account (Jeffery 2008). For example, some of our parties have a multi-level structure with different degrees of "self-rule" for their regional branches. In some parties, the regional organization can be highly autonomous on selecting its candidates for regional premier. In others they may have to accept the "suggestions" received from their national colleagues.

This variable is important to be included in our model because it could explain the association between being party leader and losers' repetition. When regional party branches' self-rule is low, regional losers' fate is decided by their national leaders. And perhaps they select their favorite "henchmen" in the regions, first as chairmen of the party branch, and later, when elections are called, as "candidates" for the regional premierships. As a result, if national leaders want them to repeat, in spite of losing, they will do so, not because they hold that party office, but because of their connection with the national party leaders.

Given that there is no equivalent to a "Regional Authority Index" (Hooghe, Marks and Schakel 2010) for political

parties, we have used as proxies, first, the regional institutional score for the “self-rule” dimension at the time of a candidate’s first election, under the assumption that there is a connection between the degree of “self-rule” of political institutions and that of the regional branches of state-wide parties<sup>21</sup>. We have also included in the analysis whether the state-wide party of the regional candidate was in office at the national level. Being in the national government is usually presented as a factor that weakens regional branches of state-wide parties and strengthens national leaders (Fabre 2008).

Every party has its own “particularities” that may potentially affect losers’ chances of repetition. In consequence, we have built four dummy variables (PSOE, PP, IU, and non-state wide parties), and left the PSOE as the reference category. As an analysis of party statutes show, in the two main Spanish state-wide parties, the PSOE and the PP, the national headquarters have, at least formally, the final say in nominating a candidate<sup>22</sup>. This body, acting above the regional level, does not exist in the case of non-state wide parties, or it has a much smaller influence in the case of the leftist *Izquierda Unida*. In addition, controlling for the effect of IU is rele-

vant not only because of its higher degree of internal self-rule, but because of other particularities such as its small size, its higher concern for “programmatic purity” over “office” (reflected in its rejection of the offers to enter into several regional governments), a higher use of internal members referenda to decide strategic issues, etc.

Finally we have also introduced a two-period dummy variable to control for the consolidation of the new regional institutions created after the return of democracy in Spain as well as party regional branches. The first period is from the first regional elections hold from the beginning of the 1980s to the end of 1993. In 1993, regional governments were at least 10 years old and the last “Autonomic Pacts” to speed up the decentralization process, signed by the PSOE and the PP, started to be implemented. The second period is from the beginning of 1994 until the last regional elections. Given the limited number of cases, it was not advisable to introduce more time periods.

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<sup>21</sup> For non-state wide parties we have assigned them the highest score possible.

<sup>22</sup> It may seem surprising that we have not included a variable referring how candidates are formally selected. The reason is simple: there is almost no variation. The normal way for candidates to be selected is by the executive bodies of the parties at any given *Comunidad Autónoma*. The use of primaries has been so far almost irrelevant.

## 4. Descriptive data

We have studied all the main state-wide parties (PSOE, AP-PP, PCE-IU), and those regional parties that have had a constant parliamentary representation since its foundation<sup>23</sup>. We have analyzed all the regional elections for each of the 17 Spanish regions (*Comunidades Autónomas*) from the early 1980s up to 2012. That means that we have 504 candidates, but only 276 different individuals because many of them run more than once (on average a person

has run as a candidate 1.8 times). In order to build our dataset we have used the information from a variety of sources: party and public websites, review of the Spanish press (mainly *El País*, *El Mundo*, *La Vanguardia*, and *ABC*), parties' internal documents, and scholarly books.

In order to have a better idea of these individuals, we present their main features at the time of their first contest<sup>24</sup>.

**Table 1: Main characteristics of candidates who run for their first time**

Men (%)		90.6	(N: 276)
Age (mean of years)		44.9	(N: 265)
Years affiliated to their party (mean of years)	14.9		(N: 209)
Years holding a public office (mean of years)	9.2		(N: 272)
Already party chairman (%)		60.5	(N: 276)
Already party chairman by parties (%):			
PP		58.7	(N: 75)
PSOE		54.5	(N: 77)
IU		68.1	(N: 91)
PANE		57.6	(N: 33)
First-timers already in power (%)		8.7	(N: 276) <sup>24</sup>
Candidate party at National government (%)	23.9		(N: 276)
Candidate selected by primaries (%)		4.3	(N: 276)
First time, oppositional losers, first definition (%)		84.9	(N: 252)
First time, oppositional losers, second definition (%)	76.2		(N: 252)

<sup>23</sup> It is also important to clarify what we have done with the “Arenas’ syndrome”. The first time Javier Arenas run as the PP candidate for the premiership of Andalusia was in 1994. He lost, but run again two years later, and lost again. In 2008 he was again the conservative candidate. He lost again, and run again in 2012 (and lost again). We have only studied the first time Arenas lost in 1994, because we only selected losers that were “first-timers”. In any case, there are no more than 10 candidates that repeated in non-consecutive elections.

<sup>24</sup> And 6.9% were already regional premier they first time they run.

Our executive candidates are not atypical. Like legislative candidates, they are middle-aged men, had been affiliated to their parties for around 15 years and had a public office experience of around 10 years. They are not newcomers, neither to politics nor to the parties that nominated them. Most of them were party chairmen, but in every party a substantial amount of them were not<sup>25</sup>. Most of them were not in power, and only around a quarter belonged to a party who was at the national government when the elections took place.

And, of course, most of them lost in their first race.

The first column of Table 2 shows the mean vote share of their political parties. The second column shows the proportion of opposition first time losers each party has had, and the third column shows the proportion of these losers that belong to a given political party. We must retain that almost 42 per cent of our losers belong to a single party, *Izquierda Unida*.

**Table 2: Electoral characteristics of their parties and percentage of losers (Second definition only)**

	Mean electoral results	Losers (%) <sup>1</sup>	Losers (%) <sup>2</sup>
PP	29.3	69.0	25.3
PSOE	31.6	73.0	25.3
IU	6.1	87.9	40.4
NSWP	17.0	63.0	9.1

<sup>1</sup> Percentage of candidates of every party that fails. <sup>2</sup> Party affiliation of losers.

As we drop the losers of the last elections in every *Comunidad Autónoma* since we do not know if they will repeat or not, we have 173 cases according to our second definition. How many of them did repeat? Table 3 shows that in Spain more than 40 per cent of our losers had at least a second chance. We are

ers had at least a second chance. We are not studying a rare event<sup>26</sup>. In addition, Table 4 shows that among the three national parties, the party of affiliation of more than 90 per cent of our losers, there are no significant differences<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> It is also important to take into account again that our candidates who were party chairmen were not newcomers when they arrived at the top of the regional organization. On average, they had been previously affiliated for 12 years. And  $\frac{3}{4}$  of them had been affiliated for more than 5 years, around half of them more than 10 years, and  $\frac{1}{3}$  for more than 15 years (data not shown).

<sup>26</sup> A cursory view of national politics shows that this is not a specific regional pattern. Just three against seven losers belonging to the state-wide parties did not repeat.

<sup>27</sup> The difference between state-wide and non-state wide parties is not statistically significant.

**Table 3: Percentage of repeaters and quitters**

Repeat	43.4	(N: 75)
Did not repeat	56.6	(N: 98)
Total	100	(N: 173)

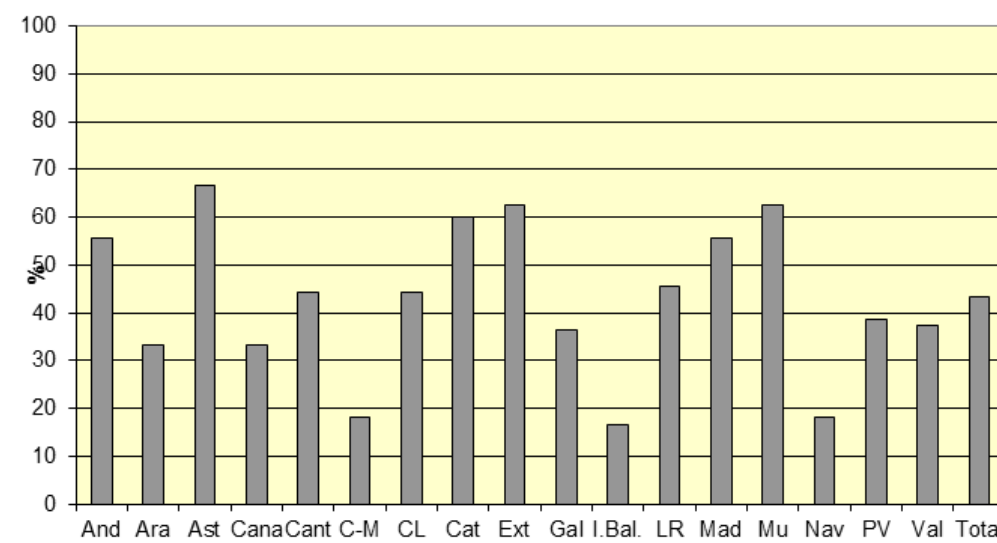
**Table 4: Percentage of repeaters by political party**

			Total
	Not repeat	Repeat	
PP	28 58.3%	20 41.7%	48 100.0%
PSOE	22 55.0%	18 45.0%	40 100.0%
IU	43 61.4%	27 38.6%	70 100.0%
NSW P	5 33.3%	10 66.7%	15 100.0%
Total	98 56.6%	75 43.4%	173 100.0%

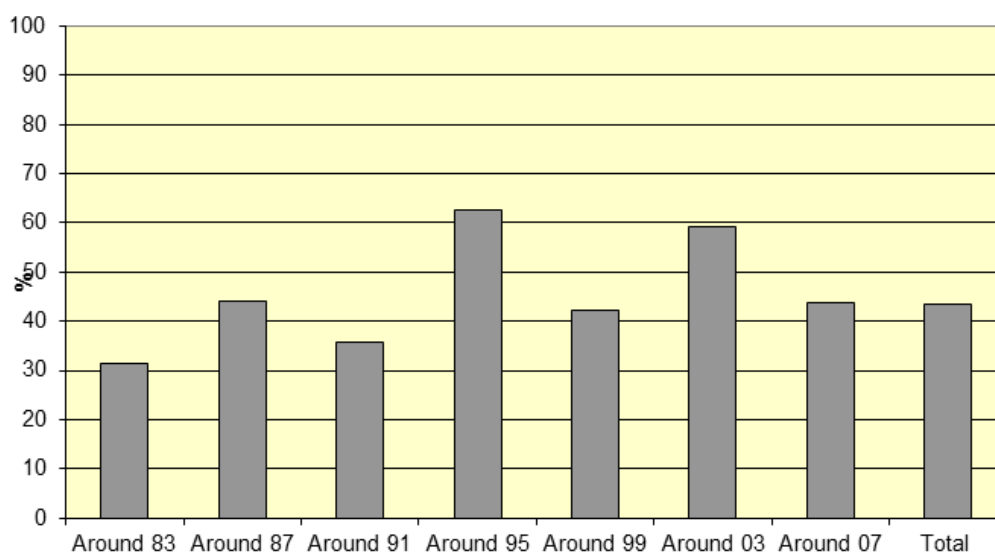
However, Graph 1 does show a variation across CAs. Some seem to be harsher than others with their losers. This is something we have to take into

account. Finally, with regards to a temporal dimension (Graph 2), there is no significant pattern either.

**Graph 1: Percentage of losers that repeats across CAs**



**Graph 2: Percentage of losers that repeat s across time**



## 5. Empirical analysis

To test the hypothesized relations, given that our dependent variable is binary (a loser repeats or doesn't) we conducted a logit model. Now, the residuals for all losers within a *Comunidad Autónoma* are likely to be correlated with each other, and the variance of the residuals is likely not to be constant across CAs (Carsey and Wright 1998). To correct this we have used robust estimates of the standard errors, clustering by CA (Primo, Jacobsmeier and Milyo 2007). This is a standard procedure, and it is used by the two unique studies about losers' fate (Taylor and Boatright 2005, and Carsey, Berry and Forrest 2013).

Our relatively small number of cases does not allow us include all our varia-

bles in one single model. Thus, we have developed three models. In the first model we want to know whether the effect of being party chairman (the main variable we are interested in) on the likelihood of repeating as candidate is altered by any given party, vertical power relations, or the time period. In the second model we have now included those variables related to the issue if a loser will want to run again (because of age, ambition, or a favorable political and economic context). Model 3 controls now for the issue of how difficult may be being re-nominated. In this model we have also tried to test the hypothesis about the "U-shape" relationship between the past electoral share of a loser's party and the probability of repeating.

**Table 6: Factors explaining loser's running again**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	1.104 (1.62)	4.224 (2.80)	-3.779 (1.941)
Party-chairman	1.509 (.26)***	1.268 (.358)***	1.616 (.380)***
Age	-	-.045 (.029)	-
Office holding experience	-	-.007 (.035)	-
Unemployment increase	-	.005 (.040)	-
Unemp. *Party at nat. Gov.	-	-.133 (.072)	-
Valoration national PM	-	.015 (.329)	-
Val PM*Party at national gov.	-	-.435 (.315)	-
Type of regional gov.	-	-.078 (.452)	-
Share	-	-	.074 (.066)
Share <sup>2</sup>	-	-	-.000 (.001)
Relative electoral evolution	-	-	.010 (.004)**
Party at national gov.	-.036 (.48)	2.185 (1.404)	-.183 (.543)
Degree of 'self-rule'	-.281 (.14)**	-.333 (.202)	-.039 (.178)
PP-dummy	.045 (.47)	-.503 (.698)	.192 (.521)
IU-dummy	-.507 (.54)	-.665 (.716)	.635 (.780)
NSWP-dummy	1.248 (.66)	1.170 (1.064)	1.78 (.878)**
Period	.834 (.35)**	.846 (.787)	.882 (.446)**
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.13	.15	.18
N	170	156	164

Robust standard errors in parenthesis, \*\*\*p < .01, \*\*p < .05



The first substantive finding is that no matter the model we use being the chairman of the extraparliamentary organization has a positive effect on the likelihood of repeating in the following election. In our first model we can see this effect does not seem to be the product of a specific political party, especially not the effect of the party that has a clear overrepresentation of losers. The vertical distribution of power or the temporal dimension does not alter this relationship either. It also seems that losers are more prone to repeat in our second time period, when the regional democratic institutions were already around 10 years old.

Our second model shows this happens no matter the age of the candidate, his number of years in elected public offices, if the economic and political context is more or less favorable to running again, as well as the type of regional cabinet.

Our third model again shows the salience of being party chair. This model also shows other interesting findings: first, the relative evolution of the party under the loser's first contest does seem to have an effect on his chances of repeating: the higher the electoral vote increases (in relative terms), the higher the loser's chances of repeating. This seems to suggest that under certain circumstances losers do not have to fight to get their renomination. If they lose, but the party is happy with them, they repeat at least a second time. Still this variable does not eliminate the effect of being party chair. But, there is no "U"

relationship. Spain may be loser-friendly, but their losers do not accept being "sacrificial lambs"<sup>28</sup>. Finally, losers that belong to non-state wide parties have a higher likelihood of repeating than losers that belong to PSOE, our state-wide party taken as reference group. This seems to suggest that having a level of national party leaders above our losers does affect their likelihood of repeating, and in a negative sense. It also seems that the time period again matters.

We are now on better grounds to conclude that the suggestion posited by Van Biezen was still right. Being party chairman does affect the likelihood of a first-time loser repeating as a candidate, but also improves electoral results.

In order to have a more substantive idea of what this means we have calculated the predicted probabilities of being party chairman and not being so, holding the rest of the variable of our second model at their means. In the first case the probability is 54.8 per cent, in the second case a mere 19.4 per cent. This means that the probability increases by 35.4 percentage points when a loser is party chairman in comparison with a loser who is not, a remarkable increase by any standard.

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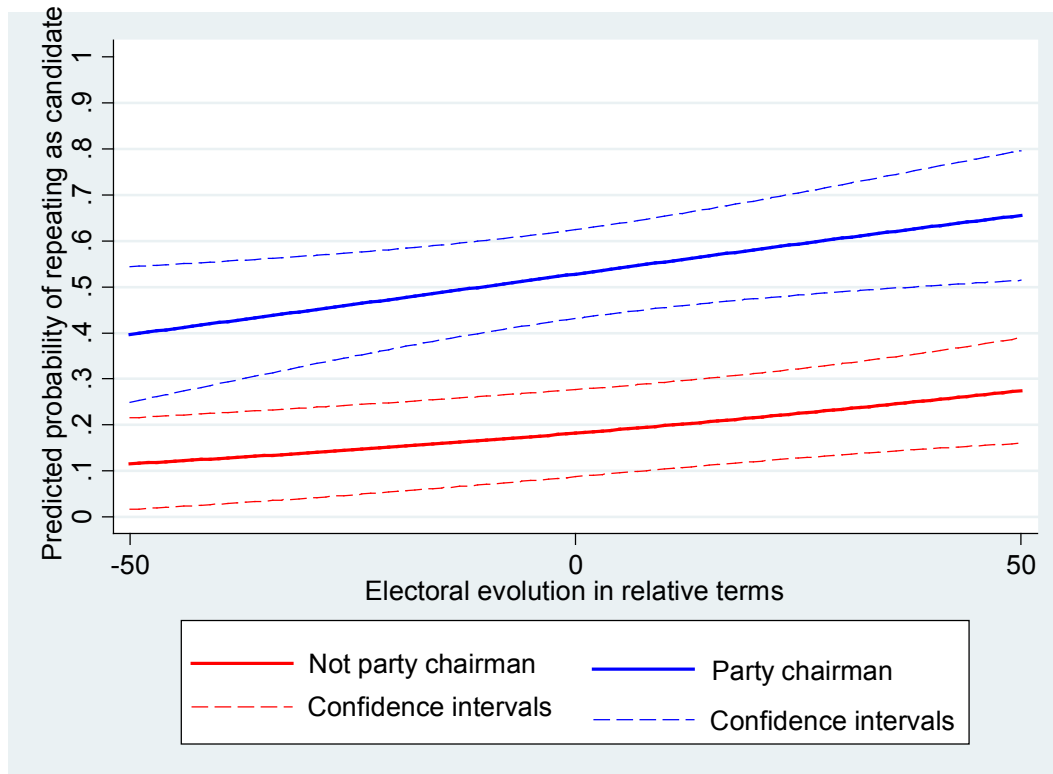
<sup>28</sup> We have also tested if there was an interactive effect between being party chair and the past electoral share on losers' repetition. Perhaps party chairmen were more prone to repeat than those who do not hold that party office the smaller the size of the party because the former are then more likely to accept the 'sacrificial-lamb' role. It does not seem so (results not shown).

We can also compare the effect of this variable with the relative evolution of party results, a continuous variable, by comparing their increases in predicted probabilities when both variables change from  $\frac{1}{2}$  standard deviation below base to  $\frac{1}{2}$  standard deviation above. In the first case the increase is of 18 percentage points, in the second case of 12 points, a little lower.

Finally Graph 3 gives a clearer idea of how important controlling the party machine is on the likelihood of losers run-

ning again. We compare the effect of improving in relative terms the party results obtained by the losers when they are party chair with the same effect when they do not hold that party office. In both situations, this likelihood increases. But we should remark that the chances of repeating of a loser who is not party chair and improves party results by 50 per cent are *lower* than the chances of a loser who is party chair but reduces party results by 50 per cent. Being party chair clearly protects candidates from their electoral performance.

**Graph 3: Losers' predicted probabilities of renomination**



## 6. Conclusion: extraparliamentary party organization still matters

In this paper we have tried to assess if, at least in the case of “New Democracies”, party extraparliamentary organizations do still have a role on the “durability” of nascent top political leaders in front of electoral setbacks.

We have seen that it is debatable that they may still have this role. In parliamentary democracies the extraparliamentary organizations of the mass parties used to have a primordial role in the selection of their executive candidates, both in the “selectorate” and in the “candidacy” dimensions. But one of the consequences of the presidentialization of politics would have consisted in a reduction of that role in the selection criteria, since electoral appeal – and not party service – is what main parties look for.

This would have led in turn to an increase of top political leaders’ “autonomy” from their own parties, but at the same time a loss of “durability” in front of electoral setbacks since their power is based on a good electoral performance, not on internal power deals. If they deliver extra votes and seats, they can be extremely powerful political figures. But if they fail to do so, or their fortune changes, they will be replaced by their parties without mercy. Still we could expect that current political leaders still selected according to the old criteria, and in control of the extraparliamentary organization, would be more “durable”.

The thesis of the cartelization of political parties would suggest, however, that the transformation of this party’s role on top political careers goes even further. This loss of durability would affect not only those political leaders selected according to the new criteria, as just said, but those still entrenched in their parties. Controlling the extraparliamentary organization does no longer add a significant protection, since this party’s “face” has currently lost most of its salience and power within political parties.

Still Van Biezen has qualified the validity of this argument in the case of “New Democracies”. She argues that in these cases, the extraparliamentary organization still is the most important power centre within the otherwise cartelized political parties. If this is the case, we have suggested that the over-time comparison can be transformed into a cross-sectional one. Those executive candidates that still control their party machines will be more likely to survive, and therefore being renominated as candidates, if they lose their first electoral contest.

Using the regional elections in Spain as case study we have tried to test empirically if this was the case. The data clearly shows that Van Biezen’s thesis was right. Opposition losers who are still party chairmen have a probability of running again around 35 percentage points higher than their fellow losers

who are not. It is true that, *ceteris paribus*, “improving” electoral results also helps losers’ chances of running again. But this does not eliminate the salience of being party chair. A loser who manages to increase its party share by 50 per cent but who does not hold that office has still less chances of repeating than a loser who controls the extraparliamentary organization but who leads to lose 50 per cent of its share.

We have also tried to analyze if this effect was a “mirage”. So far, we think it is not. It is not the effect of a given political party, nor the effect of a given *Comunidad Autónoma*. We have also questioned if being party chairman and

candidate is just the product of the national party leaders’ desire. We admit we do not have good indicators of how autonomous the regional branches of state-wide parties are. And it seems that those candidates who belong to non-state wide parties are more prone to repeat than the candidates of the PSOE.

We thus conclude that in Spain, as an example of a “New Democracy”, the presidentialization of politics and the cartelization of political parties have not involved a loss of salience of the extra-parliamentary. Controlling this party face is still an asset for an incipient top political career.

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