**Government & Opposition**

**Public Agendas and Policy Agendas in Three Western European Countries: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis**

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**Online supplementary material – Appendix**

*Calibration*

Table A1 *Decentralization, decision-making potential, citizens’ trust in government, elections and policy responsiveness: Italy, Spain and the UK in a comparative perspective (2003–2012)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Case* | *Decentralization*  *RAI* | *Decision-making*  *GDPI* | *Citizens’ trust in government*  *(Variation previous semester)* | *Elections*  *Yes/No* | *Correspondence of priorities*  *Index (0-100) =* |
| Italy2005a | 27.3 | 0.35 | +6.42% | 0 | 31.48 |
| Italy2005b | 27.3 | 0.35 | +9.87% | 0 | 22.17 |
| Italy2006a | 27.3 | 0.35 | +8.23% | 1 | 24.08 |
| Italy2006b | 27.3 | 0.24 | -16.29% | 1 | 17.65 |
| Italy2007a | 27.3 | 0.24 | +30.74% | 0 | 29.05 |
| Italy2007b | 27.3 | 0.24 | -37.43% | 0 | 27.59 |
| Italy2008a | 27.3 | 0.24 | -34.42% | 1 | 45.88 |
| Italy2008b | 27.3 | 0.48 | +68.10% | 1 | 18.66 |
| Italy2009a | 27.3 | 0.48 | -1.78% | 0 | 35.48 |
| Italy2009b | 27.3 | 0.48 | +2.52% | 0 | 35.93 |
| Italy2010a | 27.3 | 0.48 | -6.38% | 0 | 34.3 |
| Italy2010b | 27.3 | 0.48 | -5.51% | 0 | 16.75 |
| Italy2011a | 27.3 | 0.48 | +5.04% | 0 | 18.82 |
| Italy2011b | 27.3 | 0.48 | -50.62% | 0 | 19.07 |
| Italy2012a | 27.3 | 0.28 | -4.53% | 0 | 28.14 |
| Italy2012b | 27.3 | 0.28 | +43.81% | 0 | 31.6 |
| Spain2004a | 33.6 | 0.53 | +21.86% | 1 | 51.7 |
| Spain2004b | 33.6 | 0.53 | -1.79% | 1 | 48.87 |
| Spain2005a | 33.6 | 0.53 | -22.36% | 0 | 30.8 |
| Spain2005b | 33.6 | 0.53 | +6.48% | 0 | 41.88 |
| Spain2006a | 33.6 | 0.53 | +4.55% | 0 | 43.16 |
| Spain2006b | 33.6 | 0.53 | -9.20% | 0 | 38.51 |
| Spain2007a | 33.6 | 0.53 | +29.37% | 0 | 43.67 |
| Spain2007b | 33.6 | 0.53 | -5.50% | 0 | 42.95 |
| Spain2008a | 33.6 | 0.53 | +12.41% | 1 | 42.91 |
| Spain2008b | 33.6 | 0.38 | -19.93% | 1 | 36.91 |
| Spain2009a | 33.6 | 0.38 | -21.70% | 0 | 23.8 |
| Spain2009b | 33.6 | 0.38 | -44.98% | 0 | 12.51 |
| Spain2010a | 33.6 | 0.38 | +5.68% | 0 | 14.52 |
| Spain2010b | 33.6 | 0.38 | +4.58% | 0 | 22.04 |
| Spain2011a | 33.6 | 0.38 | +14.10% | 0 | 16.03 |
| Spain2011b | 33.6 | 0.38 | -33.06% | 1 | 12.34 |
| Spain2012a | 33.6 | 0.6 | -16.33% | 1 | 13.92 |
| Spain2012b | 33.6 | 0.6 | -15.50% | 0 | 17.64 |
| UK2004a | 10.7 | 0.62 | +36.42% | 0 | 33.41 |
| UK2004b | 10.7 | 0.62 | +26.04% | 0 | 34.77 |
| UK2005a | 10.7 | 0.62 | +4.42% | 1 | 37.93 |
| UK2005b | 10.7 | 0.62 | -1.04% | 1 | 59.29 |
| UK2006a | 10.7 | 0.62 | -10.21% | 0 | 27.29 |
| UK2006b | 10.7 | 0.62 | -19.05% | 0 | 31.48 |
| UK2007a | 10.7 | 0.62 | +40.06% | 0 | 41.26 |
| UK2007b | 11.2 | 0.62 | -10.83% | 0 | 33.2 |
| UK2008a | 11.2 | 0.62 | -20.70% | 0 | 30.94 |
| UK2008b | 11.2 | 0.62 | +22.46% | 0 | 35.18 |
| UK2009a | 11.2 | 0.62 | -26.23% | 0 | 27.27 |
| UK2009b | 11.2 | 0.62 | -12.04% | 0 | 22.86 |
| UK2010a | 11.2 | 0.62 | +37.58% | 1 | 17.98 |
| UK2010b | 11.2 | 0.49 | +7.12% | 1 | 35.08 |
| UK2011a | 11.2 | 0.49 | +13.50% | 0 | 47.92 |
| UK2011b | 11.2 | 0.49 | -32.60% | 0 | 28.53 |
| UK2012a | 11.2 | 0.49 | -3.31% | 0 | 16.07 |
| UK2012b | 11.2 | 0.49 | +20.33% | 0 | 21.26 |
| *Minimum* | *10.7 (UK)* | *0.24 (many cases)* | *-50.62% (Italy2011b)* | */* | *12.34 (Spain2011b)* |
| *Maximum* | *33.6 (Spa)* | *0.62 (many cases)* | *+68.1% (Italy2008b)* | */* | *59.29 (UK2005b)* |
| *Mean* | *23.8* | *0.48 (many cases)* | *-0.07%* | */* | *30.24* |
| *St. Deviation* | *9.77* | *0.12* | *23.96* | */* | *10.96* |

Sources:

* Decentralization: Regional Authority Index (RAI) (Hooghe *et al*. 2010)
* Decision-making potential: Government Decision-making Potential Index (GDPI) (Pritoni 2015)
* Variations (%) in citizens’ trust in government: Eurobarometer (2003–2012)
* Elections: home-made elaboration
* Correspondence of priorities: home-made elaboration on the basis of both Eurobarometer and Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) data

As for the concept of ‘decision-making capacity’, I make use of the recent ‘Government Decision-Making Potential Index’ (GDPI) proposed by Pritoni (2015). This index – which varies between 0 (government with the lowest decision-making potential) and 1 (government with the highest decision-making potential) – results from the combination of alternation in office, agenda-setting powers, and government ideological cohesion.

Building on this work, I decided to locate full membership at 0.62, which is the value characterizing all British single party governments that do not replace a cabinet with an opposite ideological stance. This choice is easily justifiable: indeed, in the literature on parliamentary governments, all British cabinets that are formed by only one party are generally considered as being very strong, regardless of the fact they are the result of alternation in government or not (Lijphart 2012). As for full non-membership, I located the threshold at 0.24: this is the value characterising the second Prodi cabinet in Italy, which is unanimously considered as being a very weak government in recent Italian history (Donovan and Onofri 2007). Finally, the point of maximum ambiguity is located at 0.43, which is halfway both between the two abovementioned thresholds (0.24 and 0.62), as well as between the fourth Berlusconi cabinet in Italy (0.48), which is generally considered a rather strong government (Baldini and Cento Bull 2009), and the second Zapatero cabinet in Spain (0.38), which, on the contrary, bumped into some difficulties when called to ‘dominate’ the policymaking process (Rojo 2010). Even though QCA scholars strongly recommend to recur to ‘theoretical’ rather than empirical or even ‘arithmetical’ considerations in locating thresholds for calibration (Schneider and Wagemann 2010, 403), theoretical reasons pushing to a particular value simply do not exist; nevertheless, I do believe that my choices can be considered as rather reasonable.

For ‘decentralization’, I make use of the well-known ‘Regional Autonomy Index’ (RAI) recently proposed by Hooghe and colleagues (Hooghe et al. 2010). The threshold for full-membership has been located at 25: in this way, a clearly decentralized country like Spain (with a value of 33.6 in 2010) is fully in, as are other very decentralized countries, such as Australia (25.4 in 2010), Belgium (33.1), Canada (26.0), Germany (37.0) and the United States (29.6). Conversely, I choose the value of 5 as a threshold for full non-membership: in this way a centralized country like the United Kingdom (with a value of 11.2 in 2010) is properly located close to full non-membership, which characterizes very centralized countries like – for example – Ireland (3.0 in 2010) and Portugal (3.8). Finally, the threshold for the point of maximum ambiguity is 15: in this way it is possible to distinguish between a country – like the Netherlands (with a value of 17.5 in 2010) – that is more decentralized than centralized according to the literature (Lijphart 2012), on the one hand, and a country like Italy, before the creation of Regions in 1970 (10.3 in 1969 and 17.1 in 1970), which was undoubtedly more centralized than decentralized, on the other.

However, the calibration of both decision-making capacity and decentralization can be considered quite ‘easy’, building on previous research. The same does not hold true for citizens’ trust in government and, to a lesser extent, for the outcome (i.e. correspondence between the priorities of public opinion and government legislation): in these cases, in fact, no previous conceptualizations exist and I have had to proceed without any help.

In more detail, where ‘citizens’ trust in government’ is concerned, thresholds have been chosen asymmetrically. The art of governing is difficult, demanding and, very often, implies consensus losses (Debus *et al*. 2014): it is well known that – especially in recent years – parties in government have undergone huge electoral decline. On this basis, I located full membership at the +10% value, full non-membership at the -20%, and the point of maximum ambiguity at the -5% value.

Finally, as previously said, the concept of ‘correspondence of priorities’ has been operationalized through the application of the statistical formula presented in section 4 () to the relationship between citizens’ priorities and government legislation. With regard to this, scholars analysing elections and electoral systems who generally make use of that same formula (also known, in electoral studies, as the ‘Gallagher Index’) usually consider values that are higher than 15–20 as identifying ‘highly disproportional elections’. However, I believe that for policymakers it is much more difficult to proportionally represent the priorities of citizens in their legislation than for electoral systems to transform votes into seats, especially when very brief periods of time (i.e. semesters) are taken into account: thus, I decided to pinpoint the point of maximum ambiguity – which represents the most important choice in calibration – at the value of 33.33. Full membership has been located at the value of 20, whereas full non-membership has been located at the value of 50. Unfortunately, clear theoretical reasons that suggest those thresholds precisely do not exist, nor can they be found in previous research. Yet, in this way, twenty-eight cases show the outcome (namely, they are semesters in which governments paid a remarkable amount of attention to citizens’ priorities in legislating), whereas twenty-four further cases do not: the distribution of cases is therefore very much balanced between cases with the outcome and cases without it. The opposite situation, i.e. a highly skewed distribution, would have been very problematic for the reliability of the empirical results of the QCA (Thomann and Maggetti 2017). Table A2 presents all fuzzy values for all cases on all causal conditions and the outcome:

Table A2 *Calibration of sets (conditions and the outcome) and fuzzy values of the cases*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Case* | *Federalism* | *Decision-making* | *Citizens’ trust in government* | *Elections* | *Policy responsiveness* |
| Italy2005a | **0.98** | 0.22 | **0.84** | 0 | **0.60** |
| Italy2005b | **0.98** | 0.22 | **0.89** | 0 | **0.92** |
| Italy2006a | **0.98** | 0.22 | **0.87** | **1** | **0.89** |
| Italy2006b | **0.98** | 0.05 | 0.18 | **1** | **0.97** |
| Italy2007a | **0.98** | 0.05 | **0.99** | 0 | 0.47 |
| Italy2007b | **0.98** | 0.05 | 0.01 | 0 | **0.78** |
| Italy2008a | **0.98** | 0.05 | 0.01 | **1** | 0.09 |
| Italy2008b | **0.98** | **0.69** | **1** | **1** | **0.96** |
| Italy2009a | **0.98** | **0.69** | **0.67** | 0 | **0.75** |
| Italy2009b | **0.98** | **0.69** | **0.77** | 0 | **0.73** |
| Italy2010a | **0.98** | **0.69** | **0.53** | 0 | **0.88** |
| Italy2010b | **0.98** | **0.69** | **0.56** | 0 | **0.98** |
| Italy2011a | **0.98** | **0.69** | **0.82** | 0 | **0.96** |
| Italy2011b | **0.98** | **0.69** | 0 | 0 | **0.96** |
| Italy2012a | **0.98** | 0.09 | **0.59** | 0 | **0.51** |
| Italy2012b | **0.98** | 0.09 | **1** | 0 | **0.6** |
| Spain2004a | **1** | **0.83** | **0.97** | **1** | 0.04 |
| Spain2004b | **1** | **0.83** | **0.66** | **1** | 0.06 |
| Spain2005a | **1** | **0.83** | 0.07 | 0 | 0.10 |
| Spain2005b | **1** | **0.83** | **0.84** | 0 | 0.18 |
| Spain2006a | **1** | **0.83** | **0.81** | 0 | 0.15 |
| Spain2006b | **1** | **0.83** | 0.43 | 0 | 0.28 |
| Spain2007a | **1** | **0.83** | **0.99** | 0 | 0.13 |
| Spain2007b | **1** | **0.83** | **0.56** | 0 | 0.15 |
| Spain2008a | **1** | **0.83** | **0.92** | **1** | 0.15 |
| Spain2008b | **1** | 0.31 | 0.11 | **1** | 0.34 |
| Spain2009a | **1** | 0.31 | 0.08 | 0 | **0.90** |
| Spain2009b | **1** | 0.31 | 0 | 0 | **0.99** |
| Spain2010a | **1** | 0.31 | **0.83** | 0 | **0.99** |
| Spain2010b | **1** | 0.31 | **0.81** | 0 | **0.93** |
| Spain2011a | **1** | 0.31 | **0.93** | 0 | **0.98** |
| Spain2011b | **1** | 0.31 | 0.01 | **1** | **0.99** |
| Spain2012a | **1** | **0.94** | 0.18 | **1** | **0.99** |
| Spain2012b | **1** | **0.94** | 0.20 | 0 | **0.97** |
| UK2004a | 0.22 | **0.95** | **0.99** | 0 | 0.49 |
| UK2004b | 0.22 | **0.95** | **0.98** | 0 | 0.44 |
| UK2005a | 0.22 | **0.95** | **0.81** | **1** | 0.3 |
| UK2005b | 0.22 | **0.95** | **0.68** | **1** | 0.01 |
| UK2006a | 0.22 | **0.95** | 0.39 | 0 | **0.80** |
| UK2006b | 0.22 | **0.95** | 0.12 | 0 | **0.60** |
| UK2007a | 0.22 | **0.95** | **1** | 0 | 0.19 |
| UK2007b | 0.24 | **0.95** | 0.36 | 0 | **0.51** |
| UK2008a | 0.24 | **0.95** | 0.09 | 0 | 0.20 |
| UK2008b | 0.24 | **0.95** | **0.97** | 0 | **0.76** |
| UK2009a | 0.24 | **0.95** | 0.04 | 0 | 0.33 |
| UK2009b | 0.24 | **0.95** | 0.31 | 0 | **0.91** |
| UK2010a | 0.24 | **0.95** | **1** | **1** | **0.97** |
| UK2010b | 0.24 | **0.72** | **0.85** | **1** | **0.91** |
| UK2011a | 0.24 | **0.72** | **0.93** | 0 | 0.07 |
| UK2011b | 0.24 | **0.72** | 0.01 | 0 | **0.75** |
| UK2012a | 0.24 | **0.72** | **0.62** | 0 | **0.98** |
| UK2012b | 0.24 | **0.72** | **0.97** | 0 | **0.94** |
| *Thresholds* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *1* | *25* | *0.62* | *+10%* | *Crisp* | *20* |
| *0.5* | *15* | *0.43* | *-5%* | *Crisp* | *33.33* |
| *0* | *5* | *0.24* | *-20%* | *Crisp* | *50* |

Cases that have membership in a speciﬁc condition (>0.5) are shown in bold.

*Analysis of sufficiency*

The empirical test of sufficiency set-relations between (combinations of) conditions and the outcome is conducted through the so-called ‘truth table’. More precisely, the process proceeds as follows: *i)* I convert the data matrix into the abovementioned truth table; *ii)* single truth table rows are assessed, on the basis of their consistency scores, as to whether or not they can count as sufficient conditions for the result; *iii)* if they can count as sufficient conditions, they are included into the so-called ‘Boolean minimization process’, otherwise they are not. See, on this point, Table A3.

Table A3 *Truth table*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Elections* | *Trust* | *Decision-making* | *Decentralization* | *Number* | *Outcome* | *Raw consist.* | *PRI consist.* | *SYM consist.* |
| 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 9 (17%) | 0 | 0.64 | 0.34 | 0.36 |
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 8 (32%) | 1 | 0.92 | 0.85 | 0.98 |
| 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 7 (46%) | 0 | 0.61 | 0.26 | 0.38 |
| 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7 (59%) | 1 | 0.88 | 0.79 | 1.00 |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 (67%) | 0 | 0.40 | 0.13 | 0.14 |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 (75%) | 0 | 0.58 | 0.39 | 0.43 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 (82%) | 0 | 0.65 | 0.54 | 0.55 |
| 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 (90%) | 1 | 0.89 | 0.79 | 0.83 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 (96%) | 1 | 0.98 | 0.95 | 0.99 |
| 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 (98%) | 1 | 0.86 | 0.75 | 0.75 |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 (100%) | 1 | 0.86 | 0.78 | 0.78 |
| 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 (100%) | - | - | - | - |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 (100%) | - | - | - | - |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 (100%) | - | - | - | - |
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 (100%) | - | - | - | - |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 (100%) | - | - | - | - |

Theoretical assumptions: decentralization contributes to outcome when absent; no theoretical assumptions for any other causal conditions.

Complex solution: ~elections\*~trust\*decision-making + trust\*~decision-making\*decentralization + decision-making\*decentralization\*~trust + decentralization\*~decision-making\*~elections + decentralization\*~trust\*~elections (consistency 0.87; coverage 0.72).

Parsimonious solution: trust\*~decision-making + decision-making\*~trust + ~decentralization\*~decision-making + ~decentralization\*~trust + ~decision-making\*~elections + ~trust\*~elections (consistency 0.84; coverage 0.75).

First of all, it should be noted that there are five logical remainders: this means that not all combinations of conditions are characterized by at least one empirical case and that problems of limited diversity may arise. Therefore, solution formulas – complex, parsimonious and intermediate – are not interchangeable[[1]](#endnote-1). The complex solution assumes that logical remainders do not produce the outcome. The parsimonious solution treats remainders as 'don’t care', stimulating outcome values to obtain parsimony. Conversely, the intermediate solution evaluates the plausibility of remainders in accordance with the researcher’s simplifying assumptions based on theoretical or substantive empirical knowledge. In these cases – even though the most advanced methodological literature does not reach consensus on this issue (Thiem 2016; Thiem *et al*. 2015) – it is generally suggested that one should consider the intermediate solution to lower the risk of drawing incorrect inferences about the automatic counterfactuals used in the parsimonious and complex solution[[2]](#endnote-2) (Ragin 2008, 175; Jano 2016, 15).

Secondly, as Schneider and Wagemann (2012) suggest, only combinations of conditions that show a raw consistency higher than 0.75 should contribute to the minimization of the truth table algorithm[[3]](#endnote-3); as a result, the intermediate solution formula is as follows:

Intermediate solution = decision-making\*~trust + trust\*~decision-making + ~trust\*~elections + ~decision-making\*~elections

*Literature cited only in the Online Appendix*

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**Notes**

1. Indeed, in QCA, solution formulas differ on the basis of assumptions on logical remainders. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. For the sake of transparency, as Thiem (2016) suggests, I also present both the complex and the parsimonious solutions, as well as their respective parameters of fit (consistency and coverage). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. However, the 0.75 threshold should not be applied mechanically, and theoretical argumentations are necessary to decide whether coefficients that slightly overcome the threshold have to be included or excluded. Anyway, in this case all combinations of conditions I selected are characterized by coefficients that are much higher than 0.75, therefore my choice has been easy. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)