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# **EXTERNAL FACTORS DETERMINING THE ELECTORAL STRATEGIES OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN MULTI-LEVEL SYSTEMS**

## **ABSTRACT**

This article identifies the factors which determine the electoral strategies of political parties in multi-level systems and describes how they can influence these strategies. It particularly focuses on the two aspects: regionalisation and “nationalisation” (centralisation) of the strategies. In the first case, state-wide parties allow their regional branches to develop their own strategies, in the second one – the regional strategies are dominated by the strategies of state-wide parties. The article shows the features of political systems that foster each of these cases, especially the way in which a multi-layered system is created (bottom-up, top-down), the relations between the state authorities at central and regional levels (connected, separated), electoral systems and cycles.

## **Key words**

electoral strategies, political parties, multi-level system, party organisation, regionalisation

## **1. Introduction**

Electoral strategies – together with programmatic, personal, promotional and coalitional – can be regarded as partial strategies, which make up the general strategies of political parties (Pawłowski, 2003, pp. 89–90). Therefore they can be considered as a concrete expression of the overall strategy, a way that serves the preparation and implementation of the policy offers that allow voters to

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be acquired (Wiszniewski, 2000, p. 61). Electoral strategies are determined by many factors, which generally can be divided into internal (such as organisational structure and party resources) and external ones. Among the latter we can distinguish the domestic and foreign environment, the political system and the nature of a political regime. The environment consists of factors such as culture, demography, economy, cleavages and legal framework. The external factors include the competitive environment composed of other political parties and the party system, organisations, interest groups, public administrations and voters as well (Stobiński, 2013, p. 3; Wyciślak & Kosowska-Gąstoł, 2012, pp. 421–423).

All of the factors mentioned above influence the electoral strategies of political parties to some extent, hence the development of these strategies has never been an easy task. In a multi-level political system it is even more complicated. In federal states, but also in states carrying out reforms of devolution or regionalisation, the power is divided between organs (parliaments, executives) operating at different levels. Hence, political parties have to adjust because their traditional perception as organisations operating at a state level is increasingly inadequate, the so-called “territorial dimension” of party politics should also be taken into account (Swenden & Maddens, 2009). The state-wide parties, which participate in elections at several levels, are often enforced to compete with different players at each of them (Sobolewska-Myślik, 2011). There can be distinct social cleavages and issues on which political discourse is conducted. In addition, the interests of voters residing in a specific region (a part of the federation) may be different than those of the electorate in other regions. Political parties participating in elections to parliaments or assemblies at several levels (e.g. supranational, national, subnational) have to apply different electoral strategies at each of them. There is a further problem of the interactions between party structures operating at various levels, including the pressure exerted by one on another in order to take specific actions or to refrain from them if they are not beneficial to the structures at the level considered to be more important. In this context, a concept of second order elections can also be mentioned (Reif & Schmitt, 1980, pp. 3–34). According to this, political parties concentrate their electoral activities at the level where there is “more at stake” (usually the national one) whereas the other elections (at the sub- or supranational level) are regarded as less important. Therefore multi-level electoral competition has its own characteristics, so there is a group of factors which play a special role in determining the electoral strategies of parties functioning in multi-layered political systems. The aim of this article is to identify them and describe how they can determine the electoral strategies of political parties. Attention is focused only on external factors, especially those

of a systemic nature. Two levels are taken into consideration – the lower one, which is referred to as “regional” or “subnational” and the higher one described as “national.”<sup>1</sup> The relations between “subnational” and “supranational” levels seem also to be very interesting (Hepburn, 2010), however they go beyond the scope of this article.

## 2. A typology of multi-level party organisations by Kris Deschouwer

According to Kris Deschouwer there are some variations between parties operating within multi-level systems. He has identified two main dimensions of these variations: participation in elections at different levels of the political system and territorial pervasiveness (structures and activity). Parties in multi-level systems can take part in elections at one level only (regional or national) or at both levels (regional and national). Hence, taking the first dimension into account, parties can be divided into those that participate in elections: 1) at the regional level only, 2) at the national level only, 3) at both regional and national levels. As far as territorial pervasiveness is considered (the second dimension) parties can be placed on the continuum – from parties being active in only one region to parties covering the territory of the whole state. However, they can also be divided into three types: 1) parties covering one region only (e.g. the German CSU, Catalan PSC), 2) parties covering more than one region, but not the whole state (e.g. the German CDU, Spanish PSOE), 3) parties covering all regions (e.g. the German SPD, Spanish PP).

**Table 1.** A typology of parties in multi-level systems

		Participating in elections		
		Regional level only	National level only	Regional and national level
Territorial pervasiveness	One region	1	4	7
	Some regions	2	5	8
	All regions	3	6	9

Source: Deschouwer, K. (2006). Political Parties as Multi-level Organisations. In R.S. Katz & W. Crotty (Eds.), *Handbook of Party Politics* (p. 292). Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage Publications, .

<sup>1</sup> In the context of the multi-level system of the European Union the lower level should be described as “national” and the higher as “supranational.”

Combinations of both dimensions (participating in elections, territorial pervasiveness) allow one to distinguish nine types of parties that: 1) participate in regional elections only and are active in one region, 2) participate in regional elections only and are active in some regions, 3) participate in regional elections only and are active in all regions, 4) participate in national elections only and are active in one region, 5) participate in national elections only and are active in some regions, 6) participate in national elections only and are active in all regions, 7) participate in regional and national elections and are active in one region, 8) participate in regional and national elections and are active in some regions, 9) participate in regional and national elections and are active in all regions (Deschouwer, 2006, pp. 292–295). The typology is presented in Table 1.

The selection of a particular electoral strategy largely depends on the type of party – to which of the nine categories distinguished by Deschouwer it belongs. The parties that cover more than one region (including those that operate throughout the country), and compete in elections both at the regional and national level, face the problem of coordinating their strategies, so that the party is successful in elections at every level and at the same time retains cohesion.<sup>2</sup> The parties generally pay more attention to the elections with “more at stake.” In the parliamentary systems which are the most frequent in the European Union states, more important are usually the elections to the state-wide parliament, because their winner is legitimised to take power – to form a central government. Hence, regional and European elections are considered as “second order elections” with a lower turnout, worse results for the governing parties and a strengthening of relatively unimportant parties (Reif & Schmitt, 1980, pp. 3–34).

However, political parties very often try to gain the possibly greatest support in elections at all levels, including those regarded as second order elections. The electoral support for political parties is determined by many factors, *inter alia* their electoral strategies. This article focuses on the factors determining those strategies which are specific for multi-level political systems, especially:

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<sup>2</sup> For example, when a region is poorer than the rest of the country, political parties demand state subsidies for it in their electoral strategies before regional elections. But if the same parties govern at the state-wide level and they have to face the problem of a budget deficit, they are forced to call for cuts to rescue the public finances. Similarly, when it comes to issues of regional autonomy, in the regional strategies it can be popular to draw attention to the distinctiveness of a region, which may be related with the need to ensure certain autonomy for it. In turn, at the state-level these strategies could not be popular, because an increase in autonomy of a region may lead subsequently to its separation from the rest of the country.

the way in which a multi-layered system is created (bottom-up, top-down); the relations between the state authorities at central and regional levels (connected, separated), the types of electoral systems used at various levels and the electoral cycles. Analysis of these factors helps to point out how they influence the electoral strategies of parties operating within multi-level political systems.

### **3. Different paths to a multi-level system and their influence on the electoral strategies of parties**

Processes of integration and disintegration, ones taking place on a large scale today, mean that the traditional classification of states as unitary or federal is not as categorical as it was earlier. On the one hand, many political systems, characterized as unitary, have started reforms towards decentralisation, regionalisation or devolution over the last few decades. On the other hand, in some systems there can be observed the gradual strengthening of the federal government at the expense of the state units. Federalism and the degree of its development can be considered a dynamic feature of the system (Bay Brzinski, 1999, p. 45), hence it is increasingly difficult to categorize some polities as simply unitary or federal. Therefore the concepts of multi-layered, multi-level or complex political systems have gained in popularity and have become more adequate to describe contemporary polities.

Institutional changes may lead to the transformation of both unitary states and independent polities (regions, countries) into federal systems. In the first case we are dealing with the processes of disintegration, in the second – integration. Many contemporary federal states (e.g. Germany, Switzerland, and the United States of America) were established as a result of the unification processes of independent countries or states into a common political system. This is also the origin of the political system of the European Union. However, there are some multi-level political systems which are the results of opposite processes associated with the decentralisation of state authority and strengthening the power of regional governments (for example Belgium, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom).

Formal political institutions largely determine the actions of political actors in the polity (Fabre, 2008, p. 310). Hence, parties which attempt to operate and fulfil their functions effectively have to take into account the changes in their environment, especially the institutional ones, therefore the way in which a multi-level political system is created seems to be an important determinant of the electoral strategy of a party. According to Joanna Bay Brzinski, we can assume that, if a multi-layered system is the result of disintegration and decentralisation

(devolution, regionalisation), regional party units will likely emphasize regional distinctiveness. But if it is created as a result of integration (unification) and centralisation processes, parties will be more inclined to stress common values, goals and interests than regional diversities.

Bay Brzinski tested the above-mentioned claims on the example of Belgium and the European Union (EU), which represent two different paths to federalism. The first one is an example of a political system where power was shifted between 1970 and 1992 from a single overarching government towards shared power with three newly created regional governments (disintegration, decentralisation). In the case of the European Union, power was shifted from national states towards the supranational institutions (integration, centralisation). According to Bay Brzinski both claims can be proved – when federal political systems are the result of decentralisation, regional interests become more significant, and when the federal systems are created by centralisation – common interests turn out to be increasingly important. However, while she managed in the case of Belgium to fully confirm this, in the case of the European Union, it was not quite clear, although changes in party strategies during the elections to the European Parliament proceeded in the expected direction (Bay Brzinski, 1999, pp. 69–70).

The shift of power is very slow in the EU and the governments of Member States still retain a dominant position. On the one hand, the EU level is increasingly amplified by the introduction of direct elections to the EP in 1979; the adoption of the Single European Act, which strengthened the EU bodies, including the European Parliament; the creation of political union through the Treaty of Maastricht, as well as reforms introduced by successive treaties, particularly the Treaty of Lisbon. On the other hand, the EU has still failed to adopt a uniform electoral act to the EP and Member States take part in the elections on the basis of their own national laws. The elections are not truly European; they are held in 28 Member States, national parties compete with each other, and the campaigns are based on national problems. Hence the electoral party strategies are also national. European parties support the national ones which are their members, instead of directly taking part in the campaign before the elections to the European Parliament (Gagatek, 2009, p. 36).

However, the Europarties gradually increase their role in the electoral area, which causes a slow shift towards supranational strategies. The centralisation of electoral strategies manifests itself in three ways: 1) the number of national parties represented in the Europarties increasingly grows, 2) the Europarties are able to adopt common electoral manifestos, 3) the level of acceptance and the use of these election programmes in European elections increases on the part of

national parties (Bay Brzinski 1999, p. 63). Before the European elections in 2009 some national parties, for example the French Socialist Party, the Slovak Green Party (Sigalas & Pollak, 2011), the Polish Alliance of the Democratic Left and Union of Labour (Grosse, 2012, p. 212) did not adopt their national manifestos, but chose to translate the electoral manifestos of the Europarties they belonged to. Most parties adopted their own national manifestos, but they partly referred to the Europarties' electoral documents. Wojciech Gagatek has also drawn attention to the role Europarties play in developing various forms of support for national parties during the campaign. They prepare lists of the achievements of their political groups in the EP, produce a range of promotional gifts, leaflets, stickers and other materials promoting them and their groups. Moreover, the Europarties organize electoral Congresses, where they present their manifestos. These meetings also give EP candidates the opportunity to have their pictures taken with well-known European politicians, which are used later in the electoral campaign (Gagatek, 2009, pp. 35–36).

In sum, both claims by Bay Brzinski about the influence of the institutional changes producing federal arrangements exerted on parties and their electoral strategies seem to work in the observed cases. Pradeep Chhibber and Ken Kollman aptly state that: “[...] centralising authority at the national level will create more national party systems because voters will be less inclined to vote for regional, state- or province-level, or local parties. The opposite trend, decentralisation or provincialisation, makes it more likely that there will be an increase in voting for parties with regional, state or provincial labels” (Chhibber & Kollman, 2004). However, the extent of change in party strategies corresponds with the degree of change in a political system. Belgian federalism involved a shift of power to the regions; hence party strategies have increasingly focused on regional politics. In the EU, treaty reforms have shifted certain powers to the European level and Europarties have succeeded in playing a progressively larger role in the European elections. However, the extent of change in the EU is not as striking as in Belgium. The European elections are fought and evaluated on national criteria and the resources available to the Europarties from the EU are very limited. If the reforms are only partial in nature and there has not been a clear shift of power between levels – as in the case of the European Union – one should also not expect major shifts in electoral strategies.

## 4. Relations between the state authorities at central and regional levels

### Dual and cooperative federalism

The electoral strategies of political parties depend to some extent on the institutional context in which they operate. In the case of a multi-level political system the vertical division of state power between bodies at different levels is very important. There are expectations whereby political parties in multi-layered systems will follow the organisation of the state, hence they will adapt to the organisation and distribution of power and competencies across levels of government. In the context of federal states, we can distinguish two model solutions of a vertical division of power: dual and cooperative federalism. In the first one levels of state power are separated, in the second they are interconnected. If the levels of policy-making are separated, the relations between them are limited, but if they are connected the decision taken at one level determines those taken at the other.

The solution of dual federalism was used especially in the first period of the history of the United States, when the line separating the competences belonging to the individual states' authorities and these delegated to the federal government was very clear. However, the evolution of the US political system brought it to cooperative federalism, in which the dividing line between the powers of the states and the federal government is not so clear, more and more issues requires cooperation between the authorities operating at different levels (Sarnecki, 2008, pp. 79–84). The need for cooperation is important also if the division of powers in a state is functional. In such federalism the decision taken at a higher level needs to be implemented at the lower one. That is the case of Germany or Austria, where federal parliaments produce general legal frameworks that need to be implemented at the level of regions (federations' units). That is, for instance, very much the case of the European Union, where the decisions made at the EU level are implemented at the national one (Deschouwer, 2006, p. 295).

Relationships between the levels of state structure are one of the key factors affecting the electoral strategies of parties at different levels. If a political party has its structure throughout the state and participates in both the elections for central and regional parliaments (type 9 in Deschouwer's typology, see Table 1) it has to take into account the vertical relations between central and regional state authorities. Dual federalism is expected to encourage the separation between the central and regional levels of party structure. If there is a lack of interconnections between the levels of state authorities at different levels or the connections



are weak, the party structures acting at different levels also do not require close coordination. In such a situation the state-wide parties can leave their regional branches full independence in the adoption of their own electoral strategies. This will affect the process of candidates selection, creating a manifesto and conducting a campaign. The regional party branches may vary from each other and from the national structures as well in terms of programming, and after coming to power also in policy. This poses no major problems, because state and regional authorities follow different substantive competences. Every level of state power takes responsibilities in its own areas of competencies, and they do not interfere each other. However, if the levels of state authorities are interconnected or they even overlap, the electoral strategies of state-wide parties also have to be coordinated. In such a case, the electoral politics is strongly “nationalised”<sup>3</sup> and the regional party branches are very much obligated to accept and follow the national party strategy (Caramani, 2004; Schakel, 2013), as differential regional strategies and policies entail the risk of the party appearing divided (van Biezen & Hopkin, 2006, pp. 17–18).

### **The decision-making process at the state level and regions’ involvement**

An important factor is also whether and how the lower level of a multi-level political system is incorporated in the decision making process at a higher level. One of the possible solutions is the formal presence of the regional level in national decision-making through the second chamber of parliament. If its position is strong like in symmetrical bicameralism, where the approval of both chambers is necessary for all bills to be accepted (for instance in Italy), the need for the coordination of regional branches’ electoral strategies is obvious. If the party were to leave its regional branches full freedom, this might cause the representatives elected to the second house of parliament from various regions to present different ideas and principles, which additionally would also differ from the main political line of the party. The need to ensure that representatives in the second chamber will support the party programme is especially important if the party governs at the state-wide level. Parties attach great importance to the electoral strategies in the ballots to the second chamber, because their aim is not only to win the elections, but also to elect representatives who will support the

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<sup>3</sup> The “nationalisation” is understood here as the territorial homogenisation of voting behaviours and also the electoral strategies with disappearing regional specificities.

main political line of the party. This can be achieved through the proper selection of candidates in regions and the requirement that regional branches have to consult their programmes and campaign strategies with the national party leaderships. In countries where there is asymmetrical (unbalanced) bicameralism, this issue is not so important (Deschouwer, 2000, pp. 9–10).

Another way to integrate the regions of a multi-level system into the political decision-making process at the central level are more or less formal executives meetings (conferences of the regional prime ministers). Heads of the regional governments meet for instance in Austria, Australia and Canada to debate, consult their positions and influence the decision-making process at the state level.<sup>4</sup> In this case, the state-wide parties will pay more attention to regional elections, because their results determinate the political face of regional executives, hence also who on behalf of the regions will be involved in the decision-making process at the federal level. Parties will attempt to influence the electoral strategies in regional elections to ensure that their strategies are consistent with the electoral strategies of the whole party (Deschouwer, 2006, p. 295).

The German political system combines both of these ways to ensure representation of the regions (*Länder*) at the state-wide level. The *Länder* are represented at the federal level by the second chamber of parliament (*Bundesrat*) which is composed of the national executives members. The state-wide parties will therefore attach great importance to the regional elections in individual *Länder* and seek to subordinate the electoral strategy adopted in regional elections to state-wide purposes. This was especially important when the *Bundesrat* was an unusually strong second chamber, with an absolute veto over some 60 per cent of all federal legislation, reflecting the densely interlinked constitutional relationship of the federal level and *Länder* within the German federal system (Hough & Jeffery 2006, p. 119). Following the reform of federalism in Germany in 2006 the power of the *Bundesrat* has been decreased, and the second chamber has an absolute veto over 35–40 per cent of legislation (Kustra, 2007, p. 211). However, for political parties governing at the federal level its political composition is still very important.

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<sup>4</sup> The same is in the European Union, where the Council represents the position of national states.

### Autonomy of regions in a multi-level system

An important determinant of party strategies, including the electoral ones, is the level of regions' autonomy from the central government<sup>5</sup>. If it is low and the power is concentrated at the state level, the electoral strategies at the regional level are subordinated to the state-wide purposes of political parties. However, the situation is different when regions have real control over many important areas of state policy. This can affect all the units of a multi-level political system (e.g. cantons in Switzerland) or only some of them (e.g. devolution in the UK – Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland but not in England). In the second case there is an institutional asymmetry that is also likely to be reflected in the organisational and electoral strategies of the state-wide parties. Hence all the regional branches of a party structure may not have the same level of autonomy from the centre (Fabre, 2008, p. 310).

Power decentralisation and the transfer of competences from central to regional bodies (at the level of region, province, canton or Land) mean that elections at the subnational level are of growing importance. Appealing to a different electorate, and the existence of specific issues relevant to the region affect the electoral strategies of regional party structures, distinguishing them from those developed for the elections to the state-wide parliament. In their regional electoral strategies political parties will be willing to pay more attention to regional interests, especially if the region is different from the rest of the state because of a specific ethnic or cultural identity.

Multi-level politics can create tensions between the priorities of state-level party and their regional branches. State-level leaders would be able to sacrifice success in elections to the regional parliament, if it might alienate the party voters in other regions and lead to defeat at the state-wide level or threaten the unity of the party. Regional party elites will try to resist these tendencies and strive to develop strategies that will help them win elections to the regional assembly. According to Ingrid van Biezen and Jonathan Hopkin, parties can address these tensions in three ways. Firstly, state-level party leaders can attempt to impose discipline on regional elites, risking internal conflict. Secondly, parties can establish internal institutions for resolving differences (e.g. integrate regional elites into powerful decision-making bodies at central level). Thirdly, a party can

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<sup>5</sup> The authority of regional governments can be measured by the Regional Authority Index (Hooghe, Marks & Schakel, 2010).

accept the reality of conflict and allow regional structures to follow differential strategies with the risk that the party will appear incoherent (van Biezen & Hopkin, 2006, p. 18).

## **5. Electoral systems and cycles**

The need for different electoral strategies at the central and regional levels is often determined by the use of different electoral systems at each of them. If at one level a proportional formula is used and at the other a majoritarian one, parties are forced to make different choices and often also different alliances before the elections. Their chances to obtain seats can differ at each of the levels. This is very visible in European Parliament elections. This assembly shall be elected on the basis of proportional representation, using the list system or the single transferable vote, with a maximum threshold of 5 per cent. For parties from states where the majoritarian system is used, for instance the United Kingdom or France, the EP elections offer better possibilities to gain representation than the national ones. In the United Kingdom this is also the case of the regional elections to the Scottish Parliament or the Welsh Assembly, where mixed electoral systems are used, hence the threshold of representations is lower than it is to the parliament in Westminster. This means that small parties have better opportunities to gain seats in the European or regional parliaments than in national one (Deschouwer, 2006, p. 296).

Different strategies must sometimes, however, also be used when at both levels we are dealing with a proportional system. The number of seats available for a region is usually higher in regional than national elections. The higher number of seats in a regional assembly leads in general to a lower threshold of representation, and this can influence parties' decisions to participate in elections at this level. This may also influence the party's decisions about entering or not into electoral coalition. A lower threshold of representation increases the chances of the party entering into the regional parliament on their own, a higher threshold for representation in the case of national parliament may affect the decisions of the party to enter into coalition, to avail of the lists of other party or even to forfeit running in the elections.

The matter of elections timing is as important as the electoral formula (Schakel & Dandoy, 2013). The elections at one level are always in some way connected with the elections at the other. In this context three various situations can be distinguished: 1) the elections can coincide, 2) the elections can come just before or just after each other, 3) the election can come at a mid-term

(Deschouwer, 2003, p. 223). In the first situation, the coincidence can be horizontal and vertical. The horizontal simultaneity means that elections at the same level, for instance for all regional parliaments, take place on the same day in the whole state. In this case the so called “nationalisation” of the regional election is very likely, because the state-wide parties attach then great importance to the regional elections and the campaign is conducted throughout the country on the basis of issues important for the whole society. The vertical simultaneity means that elections at different levels coincide, for instance national and regional elections (or national and European elections). The vertical simultaneity means the elections where there is “less at stake,” so called second order elections, are absorbed by the elections where there is “more at stake.” The national elections are more likely to dominate the regional, which are more frequently regarded as second order elections. The regional structures of state-wide parties cooperate then more closely in the selection of candidates and in the development of electoral strategies with the elites at the national level. Both the horizontal and vertical simultaneity reduces the autonomy of the regional elections (Detterbeck, 2012, pp. 75–76).

When the elections at regional and national levels are separated in time, this can reinforce the importance of regional ballots and allow the regional structure of state-wide parties to develop separate electoral strategies. The more distant the regional elections are from the national one (ideally in mid-term), the more independent they are possible to be and the regional structures of parties can rely largely on their own strategies. By contrast, regional elections which take place shortly before or after a national one tend to be dominated by the national arena where there is “more at stake.” Therefore equally the electoral campaign before regional elections is dominated by issues of all-state importance. If the regional elections are just before the national ones, their importance grows, because they are regarded by the state-wide parties as a test of popularity before elections to the national parliament. National party leaderships competing in the upcoming national elections want to make sure that the regional elections are organized according to the needs of the national party. Their main aim is to gain voters in the national parliamentary elections, hence the autonomy of the regional party structure will be reduced and the electoral strategies will be dominated by issues important for the state as a whole instead of regional interests.

## 6. Conclusion

In the article the systemic features of multi-level polities were described to consider the question of whether they can contribute to the regionalisation and the nationalisation of the electoral strategies of state-wide political parties.

Regionalisation of electoral strategies is understood as a situation in which national party leaderships allow their regional party structures an autonomy in formulating electoral strategies and in campaigning at the regional level. In this case parties are able to compete on the regional issue and represent the regional interests. This phenomenon is more likely if the multi-level political system has the following characteristics: 1) it was created downwards (top-down) – by the processes of decentralisation, regionalisation or devolution of the earlier unitary states, 2) the arenas of politics are separated as in a dual federalism, 3) the influence of the units (regions) operating at the lower level on the governing process at the higher level is limited, for instance the second chamber of parliament, which represents regions, is weak, 4) the level of regions' autonomy is high, 5) the regional elections are held mid-term of the national ones.

Nationalisation or centralisation of electoral strategies, in contrary, is a situation in which the electoral strategies of regional parties are dominated by the national ones and the regional party elites have to act in agreement with the national party leaderships' instructions. This situation is more likely if we deal with the following features of a multi-level political system: 1) it was created upwards (bottom-up) – by the processes of the unification of the earlier independent unites (regions or states), 2) the arenas of politics are interconnected as in a cooperative federalism, 3) the influence of the units (regions) operating at the lower level on the governing process at the higher level is significant, for instance the second chamber of parliament, which represents units, is strong or there are other channels for regional representation at the central level (regional prime ministers' meetings), 4) the level of regions' autonomy is low, 5) the regional elections are held simultaneously, just before or just after the national ones.

Finally, it must be added that the claims stated above were logically deduced from the subject literature, but they need further empirical analysis to be proven.

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