

Electoral studies of the Spanish party system have consistently noticed that social class has no influence on the vote. This paper will argue that social class has emerged as influential in determining the vote between the two major parties—the PSOE and PP. The development of these links between social class and political parties resulted from the strategic programmatic choice made by the political elites of both major parties since 1989 and the policy adopted by the governing PSOE. Evidence for this argument will be drawn from a very large Spanish survey conducted in 1992, a textual analysis of party platforms, and a survey of government economic policy since 1989. The attribution of this association between social class and the vote in Spain to the strategic policy choices made by elites also offers an additional perspective on how social divisions come to be linked to party systems.

ELITE STRATEGY, SOCIAL CLEAVAGES, AND PARTY SYSTEMS IN A NEW DEMOCRACY

Spain

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Most studies of the evolution of the Spanish party system conclude that leadership and the left-right scale, not social cleavages, are principal determinants of the vote (Barnes, McDonough, & López Pina, 1985; Caciagli, 1986; Gunther 1991; Gunther & Montero, 1994; Gunther, Sani, & Shabad, 1986; Justel, 1992; Linz & Montero, 1986). The weak association of social divisions, especially social class, with political parties, allowed political elites to adopt catch-all electoral strategies. Both major parties that

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have governed Spain since democracy was established—the Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD), then the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE)—were able to draw support across most social divisions (Caciagli, 1986; Gunther et al., 1986; Puhle, 1986; Tezanos, 1989).

This article makes two interrelated claims. First, contrary to contemporary understandings of the Spanish party system, social class has emerged as influential in structuring the party system in Spain since 1989. Both of the major parties, the PSOE and the conservative Partido Popular (PP), now draw support from distinct segments of Spanish society. PSOE supporters are a little older, less educated, not as religious, and belong to a lower social class than PP voters. Second, the contemporary salience of social class may be attributed to the strategic policy choices made and implemented by political elites of both major parties since 1989.

Attributing the formation of this association between social class and the vote to the strategic policy choices made by elites offers an additional perspective on how social divisions come to be linked to party systems and the vote. The emergence of political cleavages has been seen either as a result of the political mobilization and organization of sectors of society affected by the national and industrial revolutions that took place during the formation of contemporary political societies (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967), or because individuals identified with particular social groups, which are then used as markers by political parties to mobilize support (Bates, 1989; Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954; Horowitz, 1984). Both perspectives underplay the role of agency in creating links between social cleavages and political parties. Political elites are especially able to play a more active role in defining the social basis of party support in nation-states in which there is a marked absence of secondary organizations and party structures. Secondary organizations are not significant political actors in nations that are emerging from a prolonged period of authoritarian rule. In Spain, secondary associations were weak, allowing elites to play a critical role in decreasing the weight of various traditional social divisions and in depolarizing the party system during the phase of democratic consolidation (Gunther et al., 1986; Linz & Montero, 1981). Extending the latter argument, this article sees the program-

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matic strategies adopted by the political elites of the major parties and the fiscal and distributive policies adopted by the governing PSOE since 1989 as modifying the nature of electoral support for the PSOE, thereby making social class a salient political division.

This argument, developed in the following pages, has four distinct parts. In the first part, we provide a brief overview of current theories on social cleavages and party systems, with special attention to the European formulation, especially the set of ideas generated by Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) original thesis. In the next section, we demonstrate, contrary to most understandings of Spanish politics, that social class structures support for the PSOE, even when controlling for attitudinal variables such as leadership evaluation and ideological self-location. We then discuss elite strategies and government policies adopted since 1989 that have led to the creation of clearer links between particular social classes and Spanish party system. Further evidence for the role of policy in generating ties between party support and social divisions will be provided through an analysis of the vote in the various regions of Spain. In regions where the socialists were in power, social divisions structure the support of both major parties quite clearly. In other regions of Spain, there is no evidence of such a link. This regional analysis provides further support for our basic thesis: The development of a clear relationship of social divisions to the vote is contingent on strategic policy choices made by elites and hence, there may be no axiomatic relationship between social cleavages, the vote, and party systems.

ELITES, SOCIAL CLEAVAGES, AND PARTY SYSTEMS

In the original formulation of the cleavage theory of party systems, links between cleavages and the party system arose as a consequence of the political mobilization and organization of sectors of society affected by the national and the industrial revolutions that took place during the formation of contemporary European political societies (Lipset 1994; Lipset & Rokkan, 1967).¹ Over time, however, the concept of cleavage has become a vague and ambiguous catch-all category to classify any political conflict. Furthermore, attempts to avoid this problem have produced "a set of more confusing

1. The Lipset and Rokkan "freezing hypothesis" has been the center of many challenges based on either cumulated aggregate empirical evidence (Dalton, Flanagan, & Beck, 1984; Maguire, 1983; Pedersen, 1983; Wolinetz, 1979) or on analysis of long-term aggregate trends (Ersson & Lane, 1987; Shamir, 1984). It is still, however, one of the most powerful theories for explaining patterns of electoral stability (Bartolini & Mair, 1990).

classifications that tend to deprive the concept of its own independent theoretical value" (Bartolini & Mair, 1990, p. 213).

Addressing this concern, Bartolini and Mair (1990, p. 219) proposed that all cleavages are constituted by the combination of "social stratification, corresponding cultural systems, and socio-political organizational forms—not only political parties, but also the network of social, professional, and other organizations which are expressive of the cleavage." In this interpretation, the first two elements of a cleavage emerge from the processes of state formation and from the development of capitalism and industrialization, but the cleavage itself is a product of politicization, electoral mobilization, and democratization. A class cleavage therefore not only must have a social and cultural basis, it also must be institutionalized, developing its own "autonomous strength" and "acting as an influence on social, cultural, and political life" (Bartolini & Mair, 1990, p. 218). Although this interpretation is not as deterministic about the relationship of social cleavages and party systems, it lacks a theory of agency. From this formulation it is not clear why, despite the presence of many social differences, only some are institutionalized as the basis of the party system.

New democracies provide a window of opportunity to study the politicization of cleavages. In Spain, as in other regimes that have just undergone the transition to democracy, institutional elements of cleavages have to be formed almost from scratch. How are the links between political parties and social cleavages created in these regimes? There have been two answers to this question. A first interpretation relies on cleavage formation as exogenous to party elite strategies (Kitschelt, 1992). An alternative formulation, best represented by those who have studied party system formation in postauthoritarian regimes (Gunther, Nikiforos, & Puhle, 1995; Gunther et al., 1986; Linz & Montero, 1986), maintains that leadership together with institutional design plays an important role in managing existing social divisions to form less divisive cleavages (Gunther & Mughan, 1993; Lijphart, Rogowski, & Weaver, 1993).

We claim that strategic policy choices made by elites leads to the formation of linkages between political parties and social cleavages. Party elites have greater flexibility to make strategic choices in societies in which there are no well-developed secondary organizations; without them political elites and voters are tied more directly to each other, and the link is unmediated by the efforts of other organizations, such as trade unions.² Industrialized and semi-industrialized nation-states that have just undergone a transition from

2. The role of elites in creating links between political parties and cleavages has been noted in diverse situations. In India, the action of party elites, especially those of the Congress and the

authoritarianism to democracy are societies that, having had an authoritarian past, had little organizational life outside that sanctioned by the state. With the transition to democracy, political parties operate in an organizational vacuum (especially when contrasted to well-established democracies in Western Europe and the United States).

In this context, links between voters and political parties are formed by direct interaction. As political parties and voters relate to each other directly, political elites have greater capacity to structure voter preferences along a set of concerns. This is not to say that elites are free to take any position whatsoever. Obvious constraints on elite strategy are imposed by the historical evolution of a society. Social and economic structures, such as the ethnic makeup of a society, limit the set of choices available to elites. Within that set, however, elites can influence which issues will be emphasized, especially without the powerful institutional constraints that may be imposed by secondary organizations. Over time, these choices may become stable and form the basis for more enduring social cleavages that link political parties with specific sectors within society.³ We believe the argument that attributes the linkage between social cleavages to political parties to elite strategy is especially valid because of a continuing lack of secondary organizations in Spain. Not only does Spain have the lowest density of union affiliation among all Western European countries, but also the proportion of salaried workers who are union members had dropped from 20% in 1981 to less than 15% by 1991 (Gunther & Montero, 1994, p. 509; Modesto, 1993, p. 6).

SOCIAL CLEAVAGES AND POLITICAL PARTIES IN SPAIN DURING THE 1980s

In Spain, concerns of democratic consolidation dominated the political agenda of political elites through the 1970s and much of the 1980s. Politicians

Muslim League, during the independence movement created institutionalized links between the religious cleavage and political parties (Brown, 1994). In rentier states, elites have the ability to design policies that remove economic issues from the agenda and consequently voter preferences are arrayed along a purely cultural dimension (Anderson, 1991). On the other hand, if elite strategy focuses on economic concerns only, voter preferences will be sorted along the economic dimension.

3. Przeworski and Sprague (1988) also note that "the salience of class as a determinant of political behavior can be attributed to the strategies pursued by political parties, especially parties of the Left" (p. 11). Our argument differs in three critical areas. First, socialist parties can, in some circumstances, move to the left and recreate class as salient in voting decisions, whereas for Przeworski and Sprague, socialist parties tend to move toward the center for electoral considerations. Second, the salience of class is dependent on the parties of the Right as much as

of major parties considered economic concerns to be secondary. Despite an economic crisis and the presence of one of the highest degrees of social inequality in Europe, economic decisions were consensually postponed to consolidate political changes (Maravall, 1995). Also, elites among most of the significant national parties adopted catch-all electoral strategies.⁴

Not surprisingly, electoral studies consistently noticed that social class and other variables that measure social differences had almost no influence on the vote. Social cleavages did not structure the party system that emerged in the 1976-1979 period. Gunther et al. (1986, p. 390) assert that the characteristics of the new Spanish party system were the product of six factors: attitudinal predisposition interacting with voters' and party's ideological stance, the effects of the electoral law, the strength of each party's organization, the nature of transition to democracy, the advantages of incumbency, and the politics of consensus. Analysis of the 1979 survey data displayed that only two "social cleavages were significantly related to voting behavior—trade union membership and religiosity" (Gunther, 1991, p. 51). None of the other social cleavages were considered to be significant in structuring party politics in Spain.

The importance of social cleavages has even decreased since then. Gunther also maintains that "the social bases of partisanship [were] weak and (for all parties except the Alianza Popular) declining in importance between 1979 and 1982" (1991, p.50). During this period, the PSOE was very successful in getting electoral support across all social divisions and the social profile of its support hardly differed from that of the rest of society (Puhle, 1986, p. 325). Also, analyses of the 1986 and 1989 elections corroborated the view that social cleavages could not explain voting patterns and that leadership was still the most important variable in explaining the vote. Justel (1992, p. 54) observes that social class in particular did not have any statistical significance in explaining the vote for different political parties. By 1992, however, the PSOE no longer drew support across different social strata, and social class became salient in defining electoral support for the party.

it is on parties of the Left. Finally, and most important, state policy and perceptions of state policy play a critical role in creating links between social class and the party system.

4. The so-called Pactos de la Moncloa constituted the set of economic decisions that were agreed on by the various party elites to face urgent economic problems of that period. However, as Maravall (1995) maintains, the pacts had more political than economic implications.

BRINGING SOCIAL DIVISIONS BACK IN: SOCIAL BASIS OF PSOE SUPPORT

To demonstrate that the PSOE has lost its socially heterogeneous composition and that social class has become significant in explaining who votes for the PSOE, we analyzed a vast Spanish survey (over 27,000 cases) administered in November 1992 by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas. Before conducting the analysis, however, we redefined the scale measurements of leadership and ideological preferences and computed a new measure of social status to reflect more accurately the phenomenon these variables are supposed to capture:

1. **Leadership:** Current interpretations of Spanish politics measure the effect of leadership by examining the role of respondents' perceptions of different leaders on the vote on a 10 point scale (1 being least favorable to 10 being most favorable) (Gunther, 1991; Gunther & Montero, 1994; Justel, 1992). This measure overlooks the fact that in electoral democracies, leaders are often evaluated with respect to one another. We believe that a more accurate measure should be based on a comparative respondent evaluation of competing leaders: Felipe González (of the PSOE) and Jose Maria Aznar (of PP) in our case. A simple example will help clarify the advantages of using this method to measure leadership effect. For instance, if respondent A rates González 5 and Aznar 5, just using respondent evaluation of González would make this person more likely to vote for the PSOE than respondent B, who rated González 4 and Aznar 1. If leadership is a significant factor in the vote, we would expect respondent B to be more likely to vote for the PSOE, whereas a single metric model would lead us to predict that A is a more likely voter for the PSOE. To this end, we constructed a new variable by subtracting evaluations of Aznar from evaluations of González, giving us a scale from -9 to 9. A negative score suggests a more favorable evaluation of Aznar compared with González, whereas the positive values suggest a more favorable predisposition toward the socialist leader. This measure works when only two leaders are being evaluated simultaneously.
2. **Distance:** Measuring ideological perceptions is even more problematic. Using self-placement of respondents along a left-right scale is highly questionable because more important than self-placement is a respondent's distance from a political party. Sani (1974) resolved this problem by taking the absolute value of the difference of self-placement from respondent placement of a party on the left-right scale. This gives us a scale from 1 to 10, with lower values reflecting closer ideological links between a respondent and a party. This mode of evaluation has its problems. By centering the analysis on a single party, we overlook the fact that a respondent could be equidistant from both parties. For instance, respondent C could place herself as 5 on a left-right scale and see

the PSOE as 4 and the conservatives as 6. In this case respondent distance from each party is 1. The notion of ideological distance is based on the assumption that one votes for a party closer to one's own ideological position (Downs, 1957; Sani & Montero, 1986). In this case, for example, C being equidistant from both parties, would find it difficult to decide which of the two competing parties she would vote for. The single metric, by assigning a value of 1 to C's position, would lead to the conclusion that C was more likely to vote for the PP or the PSOE, depending on which party's vote was analyzed, though C was not likely to prefer either party. To cover for such contingencies, the absolute value of the difference of a respondent's self-placement from the PSOE was subtracted from the absolute difference of a respondent's self-placement from PP. This gave us a score from -9 to 9, with the low score reflecting a respondent's closeness to the PSOE and high score meaning that the respondent was closer to PP. In the case discussed above, C would get a score of 0, reflecting C's equidistance from both parties. This is a more accurate operationalization of the "least-distant model of voting choice." This operationalization works when we evaluate only two competing parties.

3. Status: A measure for social status was created by combining respondent income and education. Respondent education and income were ordered from low to high, standardized, and then added to give us a metric that measured status from low to high. Given concern with reported income and to maintain consistency with earlier research on the links between social cleavages and the party system, we also redid the regression models using subjective social class instead of social status.⁵

Table 1 displays the results of two logistic regression models, one including social status (combination of income and education) and the other with subjective social class and education as the key independent variables.⁶ The dependent variable is whether a respondent voted for the PSOE (1) or either did not vote or voted for another party (0). The data presented in this table show that, in accordance with previous findings, favorable evaluations of González and ideological distance still have a significant and independent effect on vote for the PSOE. The most relevant finding of this table is the significant influence of social status and subjective social class (respondent's self-placement on a lower-class to upper-class scale) vote for the PSOE, even when controlling for a number of variables such as: evaluation of González, ideological distance, religiosity (a measure of church attendance that varies from more frequent to no attendance), education (reports respondent education level—from illiterate to highly educated), occupation (a nominal vari-

5. Social class is a linear function of social status—a regression reveals significant coefficients and a correlation coefficient of 0.6.

6. Education is added as an independent variable to the model estimating the influence of subjective social class for two reasons. First, education is a component of social status and including it in that model would introduce multicollinearity. Second, current interpretations of Spanish voting behavior incorporate education and subjective social class in the same model.

Table 1
Social Basis of Partido Socialista Obrero Español Support: Logistic Regression Coefficients

Variable	Coefficient	Coefficient
Sex	.0229	.0265
Habitat	-.0020	-.0091
Left-Right scale	-.3035*	-.2967*
Leadership evaluation	.6009*	.5921*
Religiosity	-.0028	-.0149
Subjective social class	.0928*	—
Social status	—	-.1269*
PSOE membership	.0188*	.0141**
Wealth index	.0000	.0000
Age	.0007	.0015
Education	-.1928*	—
Occupation categories*		
Civil servant	-.0021	-.0521
Entrepreneur	-.2940**	-.1372
Housewife	.0546	.0835
Professional	Reference	Reference
Retired	.2989*	.2703*
Salaried in private sector	.1884*	.2329*
Student	-.2400*	-.2238*
Unemployed	.0748	.0092
Intercept	-2.9601*	-3.2841*
Chi-square of the improvement of model	6326.26*	4935.71*
Degrees of freedom	17	16
Overall prediction of the model	80.95%	79.56%

*Significant at .01. **Significant at .05.

able, included in the model as a categorical variable), habitat (an ordinal variable that reports the size of the town a respondent lived in), age, sex, the wealth index of a province, and the number of the PSOE members per thousand inhabitants in each province in 1992.

Additionally, occupation does have a statistically significant influence on who votes for the PSOE, although the only occupational categories that appear statistically significant are entrepreneur (only in the social status model), students, salaried in the private sector, and the retired. The first two are less likely to vote for the PSOE and the latter more likely.⁷ Age, sex,

7. The reference category used in the construction of the categorical variable is the effect of occupation as a whole on the vote. The signs associated with individual occupations display the increasing or decreasing probability that these occupations have of voting for these parties compared with the influence of occupation as a whole.

religiosity, and the wealth of a province are sociodemographic variables that do not appear to have a statistically significant influence on voting for the PSOE.⁸ The coefficient of religiosity confirms the decreasing importance of this variable in defining the vote (Montero, 1994). The results of this regression clearly demonstrate that some social divisions appear to be significant in defining support for the PSOE. The heterogeneous social composition of support that characterized the PSOE appears to have disappeared.

STRATEGIC POLICY CHOICES, SOCIAL STATUS (SOCIAL CLASS), AND PARTY SUPPORT

The emergence of social status as a salient factor is largely due to the strategies pursued by party elites and the economic and fiscal policies adopted by the PSOE government. In contrast to the early and mid-1980s, the programmatic positions adopted by the two main parties on economic and fiscal policy since 1989 have differed quite substantially. These differences were exacerbated by the distributive policies implemented by the socialist government, which clearly favored some segments of society over others. These two factors led to a clear class basis to public perceptions of the parties and the vote.

Party economic and social programs. Over the last few years, the Spanish economy, especially fiscal policy and public expenditures, has emerged at the center of much of the political debate between the PSOE and PP. This debate and its intensity constitute a substantial shift from that taking place at the end of the 1970s and for the first half of the 1980s. The deep economic crisis and its most conspicuous consequence—the high rate of unemployment (21.7%), when the last elections took place in 1993—could be cited as a reason for the politicization of this issue in the 1990s, but unemployment and other economic issues were important at the end of the 1970s and during the 1982 elections, too. Political discourse in that period, however, focused more on the modernization of the economy. In sharp contrast, by the end of the 1980s the positions of the major parties on economic matters were clearly distinct. Interparty debate is now focused around economic concerns and a

8. We used a wealth index that represents the actual wealth of each province (Informe Banesto, 1993, pp. 131-136). This variable is introduced to address objections that the socialists are more likely to do better in poorer provinces and that the national level results we obtained in this analysis could be a result of the predominance of poorer regions among the socialists' supporters.

redistribution of wealth. Also, the solutions offered by the two major parties to the contemporary economic crisis differ significantly.

In 1982 the deep economic crisis did not receive as much attention as the consolidation of democracy, the territorial organization of the state, education, and the precarious situation of some public services. The programmatic orientation of both major parties reflected their central concern with these issues. The strategy of the socialist party was to resolve the crisis by advocating a general modernization of the economy (PSOE, 1982, pp. 7-21). The party proposed reducing inflation, maintaining the basic macroeconomic balances, reducing public debt, and promoting structural reforms. These policies were very similar to those proposed by the previous UCD government, with the only difference being that the socialists applied those policies more coherently and decisively (Maravall, 1995, p. 121). The conservative party, then called *Alianza Popular*, (AP), also proposed control over the public deficit and increasing taxes. The economic concerns advocated by the AP were overshadowed however, by conservative and religious social proposals dealing with education, family, and abortion.⁹

Between 1982 and 1986, the PSOE faced electoral competition only from a centrist party—founded by the previous president Suarez, Centro Democrático y Social (CDS), and the potential challenge of adventurous political operations, such as the so-called Operacion Roca, the efforts of an important Catalan leader to form a center-liberal national political project. For the 1986 elections, the strategy of the PSOE focused on responding to these threats to its electoral dominance. The PSOE created a very ambiguous program full of vague promises, containing few specific proposals (*El País*, June 1, 1986). The central idea of the 1986 program was to continue the process of modernizing the economy and society, and the party's main political slogan was "On the Right Track" (PSOE, 1986; *El País*, June 21, 1986). Only the conservatives, included in an electoral coalition called Coalición Popular (CP), provided a more elaborate economic program. The CP proposed some specific economic and fiscal measures, such as a reduction in the rate of the money retained monthly for the income taxes (IRPF), lowering the fiscal burden for those with the lowest incomes, increased flexibility of the labor and finance markets, and the privatization of public companies. These economic proposals were not, however, at the core of the conservative program. Although less extreme in some of their positions, the conservatives still stressed moral issues, including support of the pro-life option, withdrawal of the propublic education law passed by the socialists

9. The AP's 1982 electoral program was a very long one, consisting of 198 pages. Economic issues constituted only 15% of the total program.

(LODE), and other concerns such as freedom of choice for doctors in hospitals. In 1986, then, economic considerations were still not at the center of the electoral campaign.

For the 1989 elections, however, party elites of both socialist and conservative parties presented very different programs to the electorate. The PSOE paid hardly any attention to fiscal policy, which was practically reduced to two measures: fighting fiscal fraud and creating better fiscal treatment for the lowest income brackets. The PSOE stressed, instead, distributive measures such as raising retirement payments to the intersectoral minimum salary and extending unemployment insurance to a bigger percentage of the unemployed (PSOE, 1989; *El País*, October 23, 1989). Conservatives, on the other hand, proposed freezing all income taxes for two years and advocated a progressive decrease in the tax after this period, a reduction of the marginal tax rate in three brackets of income, reduction of public deficit by decreasing public consumption, and the privatization of some public companies. The conservatives were clearly supporting supply-side economics, with special attention to a lowering of the income tax rate and the reduction of public consumption (PP, 1989, pp. 58-63; *El País*, October 26, 1989). This was highlighted two days before the election, when Aznar, the conservative leader, invited the assistants to one of his political rallies "to fill in the income tax form before going to cast their ballots" (*El País*, October 27, 1989).

The conservatives, with Aznar as a leader, also decided to present an image to the electorate of a renewed party with younger leaders. The PP dropped many of the previous conservative concerns on social and moral matters such as abortion, family issues, and the withdrawal of the education law—LODE (*El País*, October 26, 1989). The PP manifesto for the 1989 elections avoided references to family and abortion issues (PP, 1989, pp. 10-12). In 1989, then, the programs of both parties not only contained different sets of economic proposals, these proposals clearly contrasted with the manifestos of these parties for previous elections. The conservatives quite clearly favored a reduction in taxes, whereas the socialists focused on specific redistributive measures.

Why did the socialists pursue a political strategy of moving to the left when the occupation of the center is what had allowed them to dominate the Spanish electoral scene? The socialists changed their economic plank and stressed redistributive measures because, in the aftermath of the 1986 elections, the Izquierda Unida (IU), a leftist electoral coalition that included communists, doubled its vote share at the expense of the socialists. The IU increased its vote from 4.61% in 1986 to 9.23% in 1989, whereas the

socialists dropped their share of the vote from 43.44% in 1986 to 40.32% in 1989. A serious challenge to the predominant position of the socialists also came from the unions. Politicized unions constituted growing extraparliamentary opposition to the PSOE. The increasing pressure of unions on the socialists reached its peak with the successful landmark general strike of December 1988. The PSOE responded to this extraparliamentary pressure.

The socialist response shows that the party had to heed union demands because dominant catch-all parties face dilemmas that are unique to them. Parties rooted more firmly in social cleavages know what the interests of their constituents are and advocate policies largely in consonance with the interests of their supporters. A dominant catch-all party has no fixed social basis. Such parties are more likely to react to electoral and extraparliamentary pressures from many different groups, for they are not certain of retaining the support of any one group. Moreover, if a dominant catch-all party loses the support of a significant segment of the population, it can no longer consider itself as catch-all, a position essential to its self-image and electoral success. As the communists doubled their vote share and the trade unions struck work, the socialists shifted to the left to make sure that certain social sectors did not abandon them. This shift was capitalized on by the conservatives.

What were the reasons behind the strategic shift made by the conservatives? The conservatives in 1989 were endeavoring to deal with a series of electoral defeats which began in 1982. PP elites realized that for them to win an election, it was necessary to capture voters located more toward the center of the ideological spectrum. Attempts to capture the center focused on changing the perception of the electorate about the conservative's ideology. The conservatives made a strategic choice to moderate their position on moral issues and stress a concrete and more liberal economic program. To meet these goals the party also changed its leadership from Manuel Fraga, who was a principal advocate of conservative positions on moral issues. In 1989, at the 9th national party congress, new party elites, led by Aznar, emerged after some years of intraparty conflict following the resignation of Fraga. These elites believed that the creation of a coherent economic program would be a way to end internal conflicts, stabilize the new leadership, and ensure electoral success (Gangas, 1984).

The adoption of distributive policies as the centerpiece of an economic policy by the PSOE gave the PP the opportunity it needed and the PSOE came to be clearly distinguished from the more economically conservative PP. The contrasting policies offered by both parties provided cues to the Spanish voters that the parties were pursuing clearly defined and different economic

policies. By itself, perhaps, this strategic shift would not necessarily have provoked an identification of different sectors of the society with these parties, but, in addition, the socialists alienated the middle and upper classes and favored pensioners and the unemployed by using its control over the Spanish state to actively distribute resources to the latter.

PSOE government economic policies from 1989 onward. Starting in 1989, the socialist government embarked on a series of distributive measures. The government raised unemployment coverage by increasing the number of beneficiaries by almost two thirds. This reform led to an increase in the number of unemployed with total coverage—which went up from 449,000 in 1989 to 700,000 in 1992 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 1992). This larger coverage led to a jump of almost 25% in government expenditures on unemployment benefits in 4 years. Additionally, a law was passed in Parliament to cover people who had never even made contributions toward their pensions (Law 26/1990 of December 20, 1990), and, in accordance with this law, another law (Law 22/1991 of June 28, 1991) was approved to give 65,000 million pesetas credit to finance pension shortfalls. The number of citizens that received some type of pension rose from 5,942,800 in 1989 to 6,422,600 in 1992 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 1992).

As a result, social expenditures increased dramatically in this period. The OECD estimates that there was an increase in social expenditures of greater than 50% in the 3 years prior to 1992—from 696,200 million pesetas in 1988 to 1196.700 million pesetas in 1992 (from 17% to 20% of gross domestic product).¹⁰ The PSOE could not meet these expenditures through budgetary deficits because of the restrictions imposed by Spain's having joined the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) of the EEC in 1988. To meet the requirements of the ERM—one of which was limits on budgetary deficits—the Spanish government garnered the extra resources by raising taxes. In 1991, the value added-tax (VAT) was raised from 12% to 13% and excise duties on oils and tobacco were increased. In July 1992, the government increased the VAT by an additional 2%, to 15%. The personal income tax was raised as well, by an average of 2% for all but the lowest categories, whereas the withholding tax rate also went up. To fund its social expenditures, employer social security contributions were raised from 5.2% to 6.2%. In addition, companies were to assume part of the sick leave payments borne by the social

10. Some of the increases in government expenditures may be attributed to investments made for the 1992 Olympic Games and the International Fair in Seville.

security system. To deal with the resulting increase in social spending, the "tax burden on households and business was increased, public sector investment was contained and the downward trend in interest rates was reversed" (Organización Económica para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo, 1992-1993, pp. 81-87). Despite these changes, by 1992 the public deficit had reached 5% of GDP, reverting the trend observed in the previous period (1985 to 1989), during which the deficit had been reduced from 6.9% to 2.7%.

Public perception of socialist economic policies. As the socialists advocated and pursued distributive policies that favored some segments of Spanish society, evaluation of the socialist government's policy and general economic situation in Spain also differed by respondent social status. Those of lower status had more favorable perceptions of the economic situation and the economic performance of the socialist government, despite the high unemployment rate, 21% in 1992, which disproportionately affected them. Table 2 displays the average social status for different categories of the evaluation of the general economic situation and government economic performance. The data show a clear relationship between social status and evaluation of the economic situation: the lower the status, the more favorable the perceptions of the economic situation. Evaluation of the economic performance of the PSOE also presents a somewhat similar relationship with social status. The average status for those who have a positive opinion of the economic performance of the PSOE government is $-.0171$, whereas for those who express a negative evaluation it is $.1609$. Furthermore, social status influences the evaluation of the government regardless of party support. We regressed economic performance on the intended vote, status, and the interaction between vote and social status. The analysis generated statistically significant coefficients of $-.9514$, $.0205$, and $-.0234$, respectively, in a model with a coefficient of determination of 0.232. These coefficients suggest that those of higher status evaluate the economic performance of the socialist government negatively regardless of their party preference.

Assessments of the economic situation and the economic policy adopted by the socialists divide along class lines more clearly than on other issues. This is most clear when differences between the class basis of perceptions of socialist economic performance are contrasted with respondent evaluation of government performance on issues such as the image of Spain abroad and the consolidation of democracy. The latter issues do not display any class differences in respondent evaluation of the performance of the socialists (see Table 2).

Table 2

Relationship of Social Status With Perceptions of Economic Situation and Partido Socialista Obrero Español Performance

	Means	Number of Cases
Economic Situation		
Very good	-1.0463	43
Good	-.6305	1101
Fair	-.1284	5212
Bad	.0890	7312
Very bad	.0858	4754
Economic policy performance of PSOE		
Good	-.0171	7947
Bad	.1609	7932
Foreign policy performance of PSOE		
Good	.1234	13134
Bad	.0998	2563
PSOE contribution to democratic stability		
Good	.1209	11166
Bad	.1171	3794

SOCIAL DIVISIONS AND ELECTORAL COMPETITION BETWEEN THE PSOE AND PP

As the conservative PP had an economic program that contrasted sharply with the PSOE, we can expect upper-class respondents, who were more critical of the economic situation and the economic performance of the socialists, to support the PP and lower-class respondents to vote for the PSOE. To test whether class plays a significant role in structuring support for the PSOE and PP, we created a dichotomous variable which reported whether a respondent voted for either the PSOE (1) or the PP (0), and regressed it on the same set of attitudinal and social cleavage variables used to determine who voted for the PSOE. We introduced some additional controls: Respondent evaluation of the economic performance of the socialist government was included in both models because the declining vote share of the socialists could be interpreted as a response to the economic situation and party organization strength (the variable reported the absolute value of the difference between the PSOE and the PP party members per 1000 inhabitants in each province), with the expectation that a province in which one of the parties had a greater advantage in the number of party members it would also have a larger organizational presence, implying a better ability to mobilize the vote. Three other controls were added as well: the wealth index of a province, the number of pensioners, and the number of recipients of unem-

ployment benefits living in a province. These variables were introduced to assess whether the socialists gained support only in poor provinces and in provinces in which there were a high number of pensioners and unemployment benefits recipients.

Table 3 presents a very different picture of the Spanish party system than has been hitherto assumed. We see two different types of voters—those supporting the PSOE and others who prefer PP. On average, PSOE voters tend to evaluate González positively, locate themselves more on the left side of the ideological scale, are a little older and less educated, evaluate government performance more positively, are less religious, and, finally, tend to belong to a lower social class than PP voters. Additionally, salaried employees in the private sector are inclined to vote socialist, whereas students tend to vote for the conservatives.

It could be argued that this explanation of the emergence of links between social divisions and party support is no more than issue voting or “pocket-book” voting. We believe that the interpretation we offer is more than simple issue or pocketbook voting, for a variety of reasons. First, the results in Table 2 indicate quite clearly that the perception of socialist policies is filtered by social status and that respondents of lower social status view the economic performance of the socialist government more favorably. Similarly, the regression results demonstrate quite unequivocally that neither the number of employed receiving benefits nor those who are retired and are beneficiaries of government largesse can explain votes for the socialists or the PP. What the results have shown is that social status filters the perception of politics and influences the vote. Finally, the class basis of the party system retains its significance even when controlling for respondent perceptions of the economic performance of the socialists.¹¹ Among those who assessed the socialist’s economic performance negatively, there are marked differences in the voting preferences of the various social classes: 11% of those who saw themselves as belonging to the upper-class voted for the PSOE, whereas 47% of those who saw themselves as of the lower social classes voted for the PSOE.

The results generated by these models reinforce the basic argument that social class and/or social status now define party support in Spain, thereby confirming our basic hypothesis that the policy adopted by the socialists and their shift to the left led to the emergence of social class as a politically salient cleavage. This constitutes a new development in Spanish politics. Many

11. As an additional test, we added an interactive term of subjective social class and economic performance in the logistic regression estimated in Table 3. Subjective social class still retained its significance and direction, whereas the interactive term did not have a significant influence on the vote.

Table 3
Social Basis of the Electoral Competition Between PSOE and PP: Logistic Regression Estimates

Variable	Coefficient	Coefficient
Sex	.1178	.1889
Habitat	.0629	.0775**
Ideological distance	-.4709*	-.5068*
Leadership evaluation	.6361*	.6355*
Religiosity	.4098*	.4475*
Subjective social class	—	.4480*
Social status	-.2500*	—
Membership difference	.0315**	.0301**
Wealth index	.0000	.0000
Age	-.0225*	-.0245*
Education	—	-.3452*
Government economic performance	-.4594*	-.4653
Unemployment payments by province	-.0026	-.0061
Retirement payments by province	-.0029	-.0019
Occupation categories*		
Civil servant	-.0140	.0623
Entrepreneur	-.3384	-.7885**
Housewife	.0794	.0310
Professional	Reference	Reference
Retired	.3109	.4769**
Salaried in private sector	.5131*	.5791*
Student	-.6663*	-.5803*
Unemployed	.4282**	.4906*
Intercept	.6853*	-.1241
Chi-square of the improvement of model	4511.54*	5868.11*
Overall prediction of the model	94.32%	94.36%

*Significant at .01. **Significant at .05.

scholars of Spanish politics have suggested that this variable has no significance whatsoever in explaining respondent vote choice in Spain (Gunther, 1991; Justel, 1992).

In 1986, for which we have comparable election data, the social status of a respondent did not influence to any significant degree whether a respondent voted conservative or socialist. Lower-status respondents were only 5% more likely to vote socialist than upper-status Spaniards (Table 4). By 1992, the picture had changed dramatically. Although lower-status respondents were still as likely to vote socialist, the probability of upper-status Spaniards voting socialist was reduced by half.

Table 4

Social Status and Probability of Vote for Socialists:^a Derived from Logistic Regressions—Conservative Versus Socialist

Social Status	1986	1992
Lower	0.98	0.92
Average	0.97	0.77
Upper	0.93	0.42

a. Table entries report the probability of a vote for the socialists in contrast to the conservatives, based on respondent social status. The probabilities were calculated from logistic regression estimates holding other variables such as ideological distance, leadership evaluation, occupation, sex, and habitat constant. The 1986 analysis was based on a postelection study conducted by Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas in July 1986.

REGIONAL POLICIES AND PARTY SUPPORT

Further evidence for the validity of the argument that the links between social divisions and support for political parties is not axiomatic—but rather—is conditional on elite strategies, comes from an analysis of the various regions of Spain. Spain started its new democracy with a process of decentralization that resulted in 17 different regional governments (Comunidades Autonomas) each of which display heterogeneous features in their levels of wealth, social composition, and political competition (Montero & Torcal, 1990; Vallès, 1987). In all but Catalonia and the Basque region, however, there are two dominant parties, the PSOE and the conservatives alone or in coalition with a regional conservative party. Thus the various regions in 1992 were either under socialist or conservative rule.

The regional governments are not responsible to their electorate for most tax payments (as most taxes are administered by central authorities), so “there is pressure for them to yield to persistently strong demand for more and better services” (Organización Económica para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo, 1992-1993, p. 63). This has led to excessive social expenditures in the regions, which are an area of concern given that the deficit accumulated by regional governments is almost 1.5% of GDP. The percentage of regional government spending in the total public budget has increased from 10.9% in 1984 to 20% in 1992, and regional government expenditures constitute 9.5% of GDP, twice that of 1984 (Ministerio de Economía y Hacienda, 1993a, pp. 37-127).

How do regional governments spend their money? Each regional government has sufficient autonomy, although in somewhat different degrees, to

direct the resources it receives from the national government in Madrid toward the economic and social sectors it deems appropriate. Regions ruled by the socialists tend to follow more closely the policy line of the national party, and on average have greater social spending and a larger wage bill. With regard to the wage bill, among article 151 regions, Galicia, which is under conservative rule, spends the least (37,000 pesetas) per inhabitant whereas Andalusia spends almost double that amount (73,000 pesetas). As far as article 143 regions are concerned, those governed by the socialists tend on average to spend more on their wage bill than the conservative governed regions. The socialist governments in Valencia, La Rioja, or Murcia, for instance, spent 61,000, 22,000, and 16,000 respectively, whereas the conservatives Balearic Islands and Aragon spent 10,000 and 14,000, respectively, in that same year (*Organización Económica para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo*, 1992-1993, p. 68).

Socialist-run regions also tend to spend a larger share of the total expenditure on social and current transfers—27% in regions in which socialists were governing and 19% in which the conservatives ruled. An analysis of the functional classification of total expenditures reinforces this conclusion. Table 5 shows that socialist regions, between 1989 and 1992, spent more on social security, protection and promotion of social programs (sec. 3), and production of social goods (sec. 4 of the functional classification of regional budgets). The average spending for that period was 56.24% of the total expenditures for the socialist-ruled regions and only 41.56% for the conservative regions. Only two conservative regions, Galicia and Navarra, spent above the conservative average. Three socialist regions—Castillia-La Mancha, La Rioja, and Asturias—spend less on average than their fellow socialist regions.¹²

Insofar as the strategies adopted by the regional socialist elites are very similar to those designed by the national elites, social status and subjective social class, in accordance with our basic line of argument, should influence respondent assessments of the economic performance of the national government as well as the regional governments in regions in which the socialists were governing until 1992 (Andalusia, Asturias, Canary Islands, Castillia-La Mancha, Valencia, Extremadura, Madrid, Murcia, and La Rioja). Social status should have little impact in regions in which the PP or any conservative coalition with this party were governing in 1992 (Aragon, Balearic Islands, Cantabria, Castillia-Leon, Galicia, and Navarra).

12. The data has been computed from the official budget of the regional governments in Spain published by Ministerio de Economía y Hacienda, Dirección General de Coordinación con las Haciendas Territoriales (1993b).

Table 5

Social Spending By Regions 1982-1992: Percentage of the Sections 3 and 4 of the Functional Classification of the Spending

	1989	1990	1991	1992	Average
Poor Regions					
Extremadura	50	53	—	78.6	60.5
Andalusia	69.9	70	70.2	68.7	69.7
Castillia La Mancha	30.5	30	34.2	33.4	32
Galicia	53.7	55	—	57.6	55.4
Rich Regions					
Balearic Islands	37.5	37	31.9	38.5	36.2
Basque Country	70	70	32.8	68.7	54.3
Navarra	46.4	47	53.7	49.3	49
Madrid	60.3	62	58.7	39.9	55.2
Catalonia	67.1	64.6	63.7	66.9	65.8
Middle Regions					
Aragon	35.4	45	27.9	38.2	36.6
La Rioja	46.7	46.8	—	44.35	45.9
Cantabria	23.3	30.4	—	26.3	26.6
Valencia	74	73	74.2	76.1	74.3
Castillia Leon	44.2	42.2	44.4	42	43.2
Murcia	53.6	51	—	59.5	54.7
Canary Islands	70.9	69	—	67.9	69.2
Asturias	47.4	42.8	—	43	44.4

In accordance with our expectations, respondent perceptions of the performance of the regional governments also varied by class and region. In regions in which the socialists were in power, the average social status of those who have a positive evaluation of the economic performance of the regional government is significantly lower (-0.2474) than for those who do not have a favorable perception of the regional government's performance (0.0574). On the other hand, in regions in which the conservatives governed, there is almost no difference in the social status of those who have positive and negative evaluations of the government's performance (0.1179 and 0.1718 respectively).

These results are corroborated by respondent evaluation of the performance of the regional government in other issue areas. Table 6 reports the average social status of those who declare a negative or positive evaluation of the performance of the regional government. In regions in which the PSOE is in power, attitudinal polarization along social status lines is sharper for areas such as housing, unemployment, health, industry, and terrorism. In PP-governed regions, terrorism and crime, followed by infrastructure and

Table 6

Relationship Between Social Status and Evaluation of Regional Government Performance: Mean Social Status by Respondent Views of Government Performance

Issues	Socialist Regions		Conservative Regions	
	Improved	Worsened	Improved	Worsened
Crime	-.21	-.20	.36	-.04
Education	-.25	-.06	.07	.09
Health	-.37	-.08	-.07	.09
Housing	-.41	-.03	.05	.16
Industrialization	-.22	.09	.24	.21
Infrastructure	-.14	-.21	.17	-.07
Terrorism	-.04	-.33	.29	-.19
Unemployment	-.54	-.18	-.04	.07

Note. Table entries reflect the mean social status of those who perceived the performance of the regional government had improved or worsened.

Table 7

Social Basis of the Party Support in Psoe Regions: Logistic Regression Estimates—PP versus PSOE

Variable	Coefficient	Coefficient
Sex	.1476	.1196
Habitat	.0293	.0767
Ideological distance	-.4813*	-.5035*
Leadership evaluation	.6727*	.6770*
Religiosity	.6129*	.6196*
Subjective social class	—	—
Social status	-.4274*	—
Membership difference	.0025	.0185
Wealth index	.0000	.0000
Age	-.0322*	-.0293*
Education	—	-.4282*
Government economic performance	-.5649*	-.5329*
Unemployment payments by province	-.0012	-.0038
Retirement payments by province	-.0076	-.0042
Occupation categories*		
Civil servant	.2537	.0158
Entrepreneur	-.4273	-.6835
Housewife	.2060	.1659
Professional	Reference	Reference
Retired	.6688**	.7701**
Salaried in private sector	.4097**	.4911**
Student	-.9231*	-.6962**
Unemployed	.1608	.3191
Intercept	.8489*	-.3413*
Chi-square of the improvement of the model	2623.51*	3265.77*
Overall prediction of the model	94.86%	95.07%

*Significant at .01. **Significant at .05.

Table 8

Social Basis of Party Support in PP Regions: Logistic Regression Estimates—PP versus PSOE

Variable	Coefficient	Coefficient
Sex	-.1549	.1026
Habitat	.0154	.0143
Ideological distance	-.4876*	-.5049*
Leadership evaluation	.6528*	.6814*
Religiosity	.0107	.1010
Subjective social class	—	.0063
Social status	-.0797	—
Membership difference	.0501	.0495
Wealth index	.0004	.0004**
Age	-.0059	-.0178**
Education	—	-.3060*
Government economic performance	-.4394*	-.4251*
Unemployment payments by province	-.0214	-.0385
Retirement payments by province	-.0012	-.0013
Occupations categories*		
Civil servant	-.4968	-.3002
Entrepreneur	.5727	.1880
Housewife	.1399	.0317
Professional	Reference	Reference
Retired	-.3126	.0922
Salaried in private sector	-.0258	.0489
Student	-.0189	-.0881
Unemployed	.3181	.4309
Intercept	1.1033*	1.6101*
Chi-square of the improvement of the model	1627.78%	2304.46*
Overall prediction of the model	92.18%	92.56%

*Significant at .01. **Significant at .05.

health, are the only issues that display significant variation among different social strata.

In line with our basic hypothesis, we could also expect that social class would structure party support only in the PSOE regions. We regressed the aforementioned dichotomous variable PSOE-PP vote on the same set of variables in these two groups of regions (Tables 7 and 8). In regions in which the PSOE was in power, social status and/or subjective social class, even when controlling for level of education, are significant and influence the vote. In these regions (Table 7), we obtained very good models with social status (first model) and subjective social class and education (second model) as statistically significant variables structuring the vote for either the PSOE or PP. Leadership evaluation and ideology are still important in both models.

There are other significant variables in the models such as age, religiosity, evaluation of the government economic performance, and some occupation categories, especially students. Neither the wealth of a constituent province nor the number of retired and unemployed, however, have any influence on the model, reaffirming the previous findings.

In regions in which the PP was governing alone or in coalition with other regional conservatives parties, most of the social variables have no influence on the vote (Table 8). Where the PP was ruling, the only significant variables influencing the voter choice between these two competing parties were leadership evaluation, ideological distance, government economic performance evaluation, and education (only in the social class model).

It appears, then, that social divisions structure the party system only in some regions of Spain. In regions governed by the socialists, social class influences the vote, whereas in other regions, social class has not yet surfaced as a variable influencing the vote. In those regions, leadership and ideological distance are still the only basis of electoral sustenance. This finding reinforces our basic hypothesis that elite political strategies and the policies they implement are an essential key to explain the links between social divisions and vote.¹³

CONCLUSION

The analysis presented in the preceding sections demonstrates that by 1992, the PSOE was no longer a party with heterogeneous electoral support, that there is a class basis to the PSOE, and that class structures the party system. We contend that this emergence of social class as a salient political conflict resulted from strategic policy choices made by the elites of both major parties since 1989. The use of redistributive measures targeted to specific sectors of society and fiscal policy adopted to finance these measures by the governing socialists and the programmatic reaction adopted by the conservatives led to the emergence of social class as a variable that structures the electoral competition between the PSOE and the PP.

13. Further support for this thesis comes from analyzing respondent attitudes toward government performance on unemployment, controlling whom the respondent voted for as well as the respondent's age and sex. In PSOE regions, social status did influence perceptions of the government's performance, whereas in PP regions social status did not have a significant impact on evaluations of government performance. These results indicate quite clearly that social status is important, but only where government policy and elite messages make it so.

In sum, this article has shown that elites in new democracies, in which party organization and other associational life tend to be weak, have a greater possibility of structuring the relationship between social divisions and party electoral support through the policies they adopt, thereby constituting the first step toward creating an enduring cleavage. This perspective provides an alternative to current theories that axiomatically link party systems to social divisions. The linkages between the different elements that constitute a cleavage are more dynamic than commonly assumed, especially in new democracies in which elites not only can mitigate social divisions but can also politicize them through strategic policy choices.

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