DEMOCRATIZATION
April 2024
Volume 31, Number 3
Special Issue:
Agents of Resistance: Resolve and Repertoires Against Autocratization in Asia
edited by
Elvin Ong, Maggie Shum and Nhu Truong

Democratization

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/fdem20

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To cite this article: Marc Sanjaume Calvet, Jean-Baptiste Harguindéguy & Almudena Sánchez Sánchez (05 Apr 2024): Self-determination vs. state sovereignty. What are the determinants of agreed-upon independence referendums in liberal democracies?, Democratization, DOI: 10.1080/13510347.2024.2331709

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2024.2331709

Published online: 05 Apr 2024.

DEMOCRATIZATION
https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2024.2331709

Routledge
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Self-determination vs. state sovereignty. What are the determinants of agreed-upon independence referendums in liberal democracies?

Marc Sanjaume Calvet[a], Jean-Baptiste Harguindéguy [b] and Almudena Sánchez Sánchez[c]

[a]Department of Political and Social Sciences, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain; [b]Area of Political Science, Universidad pablo de Olavide, Seville, Spain; [c]UDIMA, Universidad a Distancia de Madrid, Spain

ABSTRACT

Secession referendums can help to resolve the tension between self-determination and state sovereignty. Nevertheless, not all state governments accept holding such consultations in collaboration with secessionist movements. This article tackles this issue by focusing on the determinants of agreed and non-agreed upon independence referendums. Through a statistical analysis based on a dataset of independence referendums held in liberal democracies from 1945 to 2022 ($N = 70$), we demonstrate that the decision of the parent state's government to agree to an independence referendum depends on two factors. The first is the perception of competition and/or electoral proximity to the referendum demand. The second depends on the expectation of the low cost of an eventual secession – at least in terms of population, area and natural resources. Accordingly, we propose a general model designed to predict the disposition of a liberal democracy to agree to an independence referendum.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 17 October 2023; Accepted 13 March 2024

KEYWORDS Sovereignty; referendum; independence; secession; self-determination; conflicts

Introduction

During the last decade, several territories within liberal democracies have held a vote on their independence.[1] While in some territories unilateral referendums took place, in other cases the parent state agreed to hold the vote (see Appendix). Both groups present commonalities but are also highly heterogeneous. So, what are the determinants of agreed independence referendums in liberal democracies?

Independence referendums generally involve at least three elements: (1) a direct popular vote (2) about the transfer of sovereignty from a parent state to a sub-state unit (3) to convert the latter into an independent country.[2] These electoral

CONTACT Jean-Baptiste Harguindéguy jbhar@upo.es

consultations have been the object of several academic analyses in recent years.[3] Studies on this topic have included, among other issues, the concept of an independence referendum and secession,[4] and their strategic use,[5] legality,[6] or political effects.[7] There have also been some studies on the specific question of when parent states accept holding a referendum and the main variables associated with this decision.[8] Nonetheless, except for some valuable case studies,[9] no systematic analysis of liberal democracies and independence referendums has been performed. This article thus specifically focuses on territories within liberal democracies in which a referendum on independence, agreed or unilateral, has been held since 1945.

Beyond the existence of this gap in the literature on independence referendums, there are two reasons to focus on liberal democracies. First, liberal democracies are explicitly based on the principle of self-determination as an expression of the will of the people. However, most democracies reject this principle when it is to be applied to a portion of their territory and endangers territorial unity.[10] Indeed, an agreed referendum on independence in a liberal democracy is a rare event, although we counted 58 agreed independence referendums since 1945, 33 of which entailed the creation of a new state (see Appendix). Second, demands for self-determination are normally associated with deep and persistent conflicts, sometimes of a violent nature. The demise of armed pro-secessionist groups in recent decades in liberal democracies has progressively institutionalized these conflicts. Nevertheless, many cases, such as the recent conflict on self-determination in Catalonia, have shown that territorial tensions remain a potential source of instability, polarization, and democratic erosion.[11]

In this article, we focus on the factors that might explain under what conditions liberal democracies accept holding an independence referendum. We identify strong evidence of the validity of the competition/proximity thesis proposed by Qvortrup[12] applied, in our research, to the parent state decisions. Governments in liberal democracies tend to accept independence referendums, actively or passively, when they face electoral competition, and they share the same electorate preferences as the independentist region's citizens. Additionally, the data suggest that when regimes are already liberal democracies, the level of democracy does not explain the decision to accept holding an independence referendum. In contrast, the cost of potential secession seems to be relevant and negatively associated with agreement to a demand for an independence referendum.

The remainder of this article is divided into five sections. First, we review the existing literature and the main variables associated with accepting or rejecting calls for independence referendums. We then briefly establish the contextual and historical framework of independence referendums. Subsequently, we formulate a series of hypotheses and present the research design and dataset ($N = 70$). Next, we present the descriptive statistics and a multiple regression leading to the results. Finally, we discuss the findings before focusing on the competition-proximity variable using statistical evidence and discussing the results.

A growing literature

The specific literature on the factors pushing liberal democracies to accept (or decline) an independence referendum is still scarce. However, research on the strategic decisions of secessionist and counter-secessionist actors (and the use of independence referendums) constitutes a growing field of study. The debate around self-

determination and secession has long been dominated by studies emphasizing the moral and philosophical dimension of the right to secede and/or its international and domestic legality.[13] These debates are still relevant, as seen in recent publications discussing these approaches.[14] Within these debates, the legacy of the Quebec case and the 1998 Supreme Court Reference has been very influential; it has had a profound impact on how independence referendum demands are addressed by liberal democracies.[15] However, in recent years, there has been a growing interest in a more empirical approach to this question.[16] For example, Kartsonaki[17] tested the success of remedial approaches to the right to secede. In the same way, Griffiths and Martinez[18] systematized the existing grievances among secessionist movements in a dataset.

Previously, Griffiths[19] had theorized the secessionist and counter-secessionist dynamics as a "strategic playing field." In this strategic setting, the independence referendum appears to be an instrument used by either central governments or secessionist actors to achieve their political objectives rather than a practical implementation of a democratic principle. According to this approach, the fight for independence or territorial integrity has at least two dimensions: a domestic and an international arena. Both parent states and secessionist actors are worried about their own legitimacy. Therefore, their decisions (such as violent or non-violent mobilization, applying repression, calling for a vote, seeking recognition, petitioning, and so on) are conditioned by contextual factors at both the domestic and international levels. Following this line of thought, the specific literature on independence referendums can be organized according to its two main actors: parent states and secessionist movements.

Regarding parent states, the decision to call or accept an independence referendum has been attributed to a variety of factors. A normative-driven approach has led some authors[20] to assume that high levels of democratization and limited ethnic conflict can explain why states organize independence referendums. This approach is consistent with a long tradition linking national self-determination with democracy since Woodrow Wilson's initial formulation after World War I.[21] Roeder (2007) offered an alternative factor by pointing to past institutions and existing sub-state structures as the main predictors of secession and independence referendums. Sorens[22] supported this theory and pointed to ethnic distinctiveness as a crucial factor for understanding both secessionist demands and secessionist referendums. Moreover, according to a more economic and sociological theory, wealth would prevent parent states from conceding an independence referendum when the demand comes from a relatively rich region.[23] Finally, Cetrà and Harvey,[24] working on the Scottish case, emphasized the potential role of ideational and constitutional hurdles in explaining why parent states reject self-determination demands. Therefore, democratization, sub-state boundaries, ethnic distinctiveness, ideational or constitutional factors, and (the absence of) relative wealth could explain the decision to accept an independence referendum according to these approaches.

Beyond these approaches, the emerging strategic framework for this question has emphasized the role of parent states' rationality in the decision to accept an independence referendum demand. The existence of more than one separatist movement was first theorized by Walter[25] as a crucial factor for understanding why some parent states fight independence movements instead of accommodating them. Moreover, a growing literature has defined referendums as instruments either to maintain the status quo and/or to tame secessionist demands contextually through a controlled vote on their constitutional status.[26]

Qvortrup[27] formalized this strategic approach to the decision to accept or refuse an independence referendum demand using the so-called competition/proximity model. According to Qvortrup, the probability of submitting a referendum proposal (P_{ref}) depends on the relationship between the competition faced by the actor calling for the referendum (C) and the square of the distance between the actor calling for the referendum's preference point (P_i) and the position of the median voter (I_m).

$$P_{ref} = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{C}{(I_m - P_i)^2}$$

When the value $(I_m - P_i)^2$ is small, the probability of holding a referendum is larger than 1.[28] Qvortrup found that ethnonational referendums generally follow the rationality described above and occur when (a) the initiator faces competition (military, electoral, or political) and (b) the initiators feel their policy is more or less similar to the preferences of the majority of voters.[29] There is robust evidence from large-N and case studies that this model works fairly well to explain parent state governments' decisions when facing independence referendum demands.[30] Achieving statehood has been theorized as a complex interaction of effectiveness and recognition for secessionist movements.[31] The literature explaining independence demands from secessionist groups suggests a variety of factors, such as ethnic distinctiveness, psychology, geography, institutions, democratization, repression, wealth, elites, and/or interactions among them as overlapped grievances.[32]

The use of (unilateral) referendums by secessionist movements can be understood as part of a broad, non-violent repertoire of contention designed to obtain leverage vis-à-vis the parent state.[33] Moreover, unilateral referendums can be a way to express consent from the population to a de facto sovereign state. In this case, their function may consist of signalling to the international community the existence of a strong will to become part of that international community. Beyond leverage and signalling, referendums can be used with several objectives, including popular mobilization, timing control, democratic framing, and strengthening local identity.[34]

A more historical approach suggests that, since the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the creation of the Badinter Commission, the use of referendums has almost been stipulated as a *sine qua non* condition for gaining international recognition.[35] Secessionist movements thus feel even more compelled to claim and use independence to access the international community. The former "right to self-determination" used as a legitimation of colonial secession processes has been somewhat replaced by the so-called "right to decide."[36] In Catalonia, Veneto, or South Brazil, the parent state's refusal to accept an independence referendum pushes secessionist leaders to hold a unilateral vote on independence, while from the point of view of the parent states, there is a strong demand to prove democratic support for secession in a direct vote, as in the Scottish case.[37]

The setting

Since the end of the eighteenth century, when the citizens of Avignon voted in a plebiscite to acknowledge their adherence to the French Republic, thus seceding from the papal jurisdiction, more than 600 referendums on sovereignty have been held.[38] Among these hundreds of referendums, around 131 have dealt with the independence of a territory since 1945. Approximately half of them (70) took place in a liberal democracy (Figure 1).

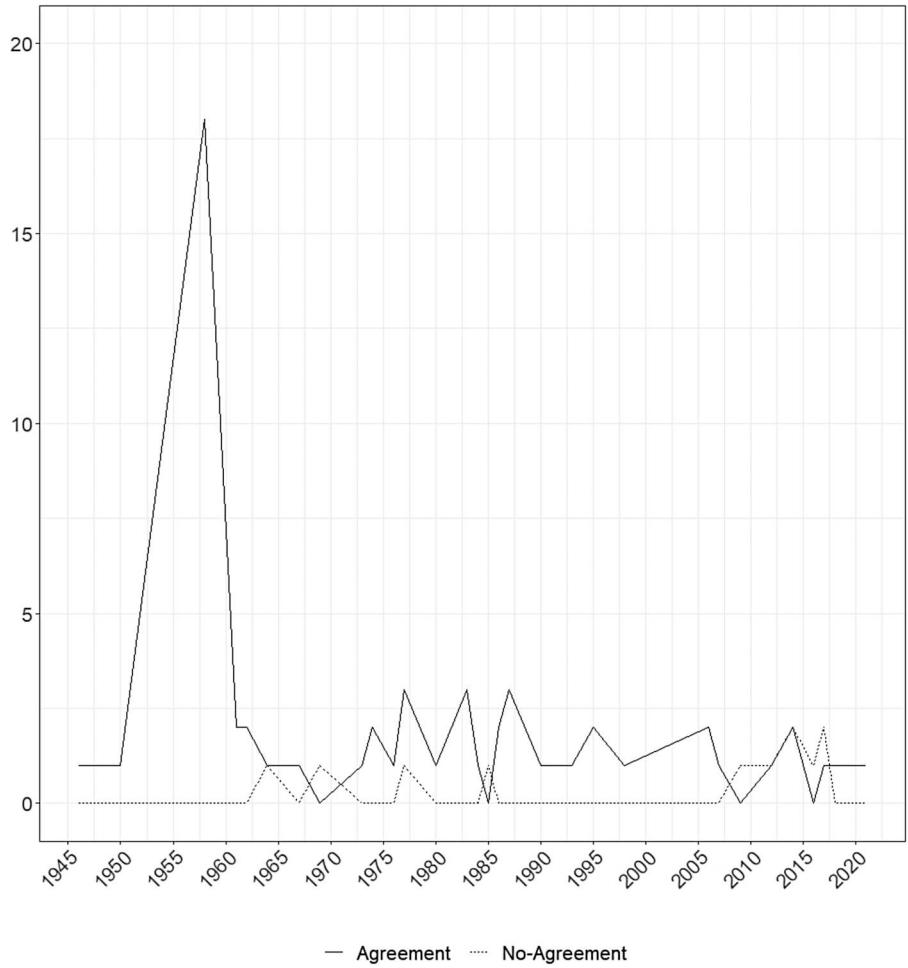

Figure 1. Evolution of independence referendums in liberal democracies (1945–2022).

Restricting the analysis to the 70 independence referendums that took place in a liberal democracy after World War II, we can draw some preliminary observations. First, most referendums held in liberal democracies (58 out of 70) have been agreed to by the parent state. Second, we observe variations in the use of referendums by secessionist groups over time. The highest number of independence referendums occurred during the decolonization process in the 1950s. Non-agreed referendums were initially circumscribed to colonial territories with small populations: Anguilla, Nevis, Northern Cyprus, and Rhodesia; but during the last two decades, referendums without consent have occurred in the non-colonial context with a growing frequency, mostly with an important strategic component.[39] Third, it appears that the majority of cases are concentrated in a few countries. To be more precise, the three great powers (the United States of America, France, and the United Kingdom) are home to 50 cases (Figure 2). France ranks first with 28 referendums held in French territories. The top ranking is completed by the United States (14), the United Kingdom (9), New Zealand (4), and Spain (4).

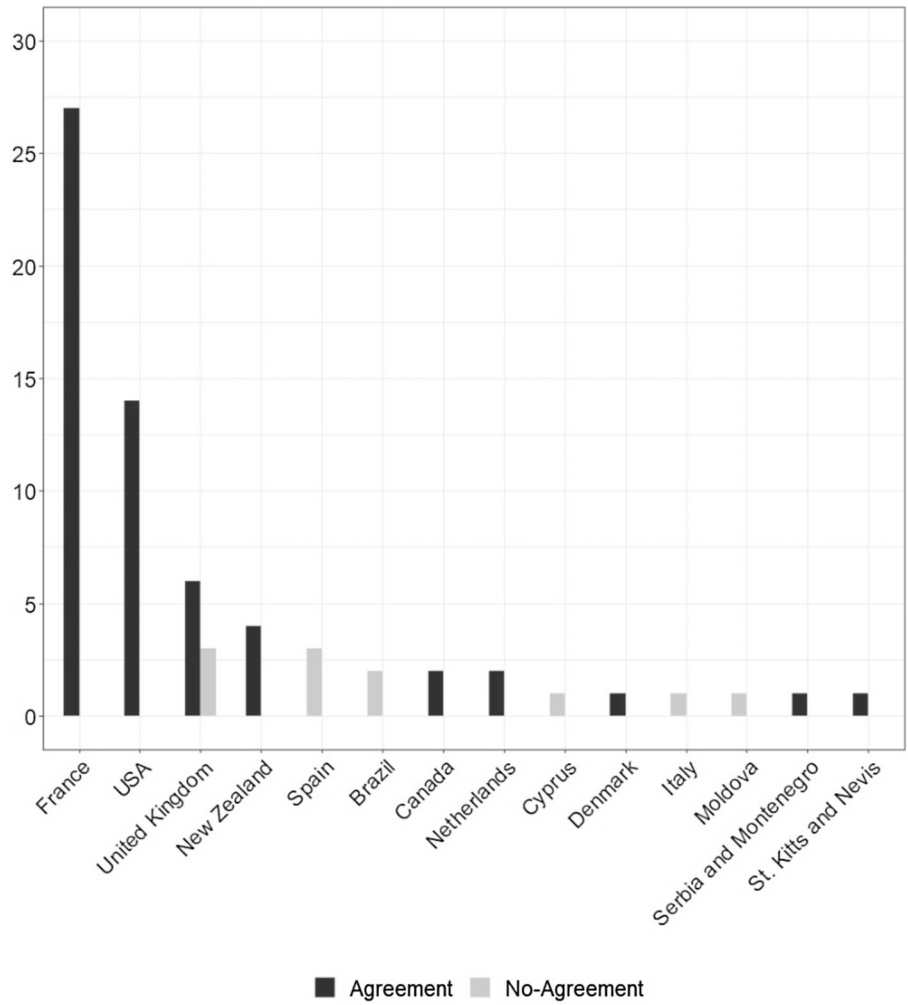

Figure 2. Number of independence referendums by liberal democracy (1945–2022).

Interestingly, in countries such as the United Kingdom, there have been both agreed (six) and non-agreed (three) referendums, whereas in New Zealand or Spain, all of them have been non-agreed. Fourth, related to the previous point, several cases correspond to colonial or postcolonial contexts – that is, to territories that either had direct colonial rule from the metropole and/or formerly depended on it.

Referendums also tend to repeat overtime, and as can be seen in territories such as Palau (nine), New Caledonia (five), Djibouti (three), and Catalonia (three), agreed and non-agreed referendums can be quite frequent. In the Catalan, Basque, or South Brazil cases, some non-agreed votes on independence were held at the municipal level. In other cases, such as Nevis, non-agreed referendums preceded agreed referendums held in the same territory some years later. The meaning of parent state agreement is not always the same: it ranges from tolerating a legal referendum (e.g. the Quebec referendums in 1980 and 1995) to agreeing to a specific ad hoc document to hold a referendum (Scotland, 2014) or a series of referendums (New Caledonia).

Hypotheses

Our hypotheses derive from the literature review presented in the last section and the historical record of independence referendums in liberal democracies. Our first hypothesis relies on the competition/proximity model,[40] but we use a reverse version of Qvortrup's model. In our hypothesis, we understand competition and proximity from the point of view of the parent state, not the pro-independence movement proposing a referendum. This is a relevant difference in the specific interpretation of the model. Moreover, we aim to assess this approach in liberal democratic contexts. This hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

> *H_1: Parent states' central governments accept—actively or passively—the organization of independence referendums when they face pressure (competition) and feel that the result will serve their interests (proximity).*

Our second main hypothesis is based on the idea advanced by Pavković and Radan.[41] We assume that the greater the democratization, the greater the probability of a central government allowing an independence referendum. We expect the quality of liberal democracy to be crucial for understanding the accommodation of demands for self-determination – although the weight of constitutional designs, even in high-quality democracies, is generally an important impediment to holding independence referendums.[42] In sum:

> *H_2: The greater the democratic quality, the more likely the central government is to agree to hold an independence referendum.*

We added a series of counterhypotheses to control the first two. A third hypothesis, or group of hypotheses, deals with the costs involved in independence referendums. Accordingly, we assumed that a parent state will always oppose a potential "secession of the rich" or "vanity secession."[43] Nevertheless, the cost of allowing an independence referendum is not only a matter of gross domestic product (GDP), so we also included more factors – such as population share, area share, reputation, and natural resources – as proxies able to influence the parent state's decision-making vis-à-vis independence referendums:

> *H_3: The more relatively rich a territory is (i.e., regional GDP per capita vis-à-vis total GDP per capita), the more likely its central government is to refuse an independence referendum.*

Our fourth hypothesis stresses the relevance of violent conflicts.[44] We expect violence to boost agreements allowing the organization of an independence referendum. For instance, in the cases of Algeria, New Caledonia, or Northern Ireland, violent conflicts preceded a self-determination referendum. Consequently, our hypothesis points to previous conflict as a predictor of agreeing to an independence referendum to solve the tensions between independentists and central government:

> *H_4: The longer the previous violent conflict, the greater the probability of state agreement to an independence referendum.*

The fifth hypothesis is related to the institutional dimension. Several theories of secessionism perceive strong sub-state institutions as the main predictor of success.[45] However, sub-state institutions can also be the result of bargaining processes in which secessionism and self-determination demands might have the objective of strengthening regional autonomy.[46] Accordingly, is decentralization a predictor of state agreement? We believe that higher levels of decentralization might be associated with state agreement to independence referendums, because the existence of strong

institutions might indicate a higher capacity to negotiate on the self-rule of a given region. This corresponds to the following hypothesis:

> *H_5: The more decentralized (self-rule and shared rule) a country is, the greater the probability of agreeing to an independence referendum.*

The sixth hypothesis tackles the reputation theory developed by Walter.[47] According to this approach, a central government has strong incentives to fight separatist challengers in countries with several secessionist movements. The logic is the parent state government's aim to build a reputation as a tough player vis-à-vis ethnic groups to avoid any future demand. In other words:

> *H_6: Parent states that face more than one secessionist movement in their territory will be less likely to accept, actively or passively, an independence referendum demand.*

Finally, the seventh hypothesis aims to test the effect of international pressure for decolonization. According to the United Nations' Resolution 1514 (1960), all Non-Self-Governing territories were offered the possibility to choose their own fate. These territories had three possibilities: emergence as a sovereign independent State; free association with an independent State; and integration with an independent State. Colonial powers did not immediately react to the UN demands and even today seventeen territories remain in the Non-Self-Governing category. However, following Coggins,[48] we assume that decolonization is a relevant factor in explaining agreed independence referendums:

> *H_7: Parent states that face a secessionist movement in their colonial, or former colonial territories, will be more likely to accept, actively or passively, an independence referendum demand due to international pressure for decolonization.*

Research design

A specific dataset

We address the hypotheses formulated above through a quantitative analysis of all independence referendums (agreed and non-agreed by the parent state) held in liberal democracies since World War II ($N = 70$). Our dataset is a selection of democratic cases included in the dataset built by Sánchez Sánchez et al.[49] This dataset constitutes an updated and expanded version of the original dataset designed by Mendez and Germann.[50] We consider liberal democracies those countries whose V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index[51] was above 0.50 at the time when the referendum occurred. By sorting the dataset in this way between 1944 and 2022 to get reliable and comparable information, we obtain a total of 70 cases.

Dependent variable

Our dependent variable (parent state agreement) is a dummy variable, given a value of 1 for agreement and 0 for disagreement (even if the referendum was held). The proxy used for classifying agreed and not agreed referendums was the boycott policy of the central government using legal instruments or armed violence. For example, the referendums held in Quebec (in 1980 and 1995) are coded as 1 (agreement) although there was no specific agreement on their organization from the federal government. Although imperfect, it is worth noting that our classification coincides with other recent academic studies.[52]

Independent variables

Our main independent variables (H_1 and H_2) are described as follows. First, we operationalized the competition/proximity model formulated by Qvortrup[53] following the calculation of Sánchez Sánchez et al.[54] This variable is a three-point scale entitled "competition/proximity," which works in this way: 0 for those cases in which the central state faces neither competition nor proximity, 1 when one of those two dimensions is present, and 2 when both are at work. As we mentioned above, we apply Qvortrup's model in a reverse way – that is, it is applied to governmental decisions facing a referendum demand. Therefore, in cases such as the Catalan referendums, we exclude the possibilities of any type of pressure to accept a referendum demand or the existence of any electoral benefit (the value of this variable is 0). On the contrary, in cases such as Algeria, there was strong pressure and electoral support for the referendum (the value is 2). The concepts of competition and proximity are coded in a common scale but might have different meanings in each case, while some contexts are related to electoral competition and proximity in other cases might involve violence and post-conflict situations.

Second, we included a variable on the level of democracy by year and country from the Liberal Democracy Index included in the V-Dem project. We selected those cases with values between 0.50 (less democratic) and 1 (more democratic). In our more relaxed model, used as a robustness test, we apply a threshold of 0.30 (see Appendix). Moreover, according to the website of the Swedish International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance,[55] we incorporated a second variable on "democratic experience" that measures the number of years of democratic experience in the country (Table 1).

Controls

Our control variables, allowing us to test the rest of the hypotheses, include a variety of factors related to the literature review and the hypothesis. These variables include state creation, or if the territory eventually became an independent state; reputation, as the number of active secessionist movements present in a given country during the year of the referendum from the Self-determination Movements dataset designed by Sambanis et al.[56]; hydrocarbons, based on the presence or absence of natural resources; previous

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the variables.

Statistic	N	Min	Pctl(25)	Mean	Pctl(75)	Max	Median	St. Dev.
State agreement	132	0	0	0.5	1	1	1	0.5
Competition/proximity	132	0	0	0.8	1	2	1	0.8
Level of democracy (V-Dem)	132	0.03	0.1	0.5	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.3
Experience	132	0	0	67.4	117.2	229	35.5	70.6
State creation	132	0	0	0.5	1	1	0	0.5
Reputation	132	0	2.8	10.5	11	67	5	16.7
Time	132	0	22	34.4	49	77	30	20.3
Hydrocarbons	132	0	0	0.4	1	1	0	0.5
Previous violence	132	0	0	5.3	2	57	0	12.1
Level of decentralization (RAI)	132	0.0	5.0	11.2	15.1	33.6	7.0	9.7
GDP share	132	0.0	23.7	60.9	94.9	168.8	59.9	41.4
Population share	132	0.0	0.4	9.9	8.3	196.3	2.4	23.7
Area share	132	0.0	0.3	40.7	22.3	375.5	5.2	66.2
Colony	132	0	0	0.4	1	1	0	0.5

violence, as the number of years of violent conflict before the referendum from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset version 20.1 released by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program[57]; decentralization, as the Regional Authority Index score from 0 to 40 in terms of regional authority (shared and self-rule of the given territory)[58]; GDP share, as the weight (in percent) of the economy (GDP per capita) of the territory vis-à-vis the parent state in that year; population share, as the weight of the population of the territory vis-à-vis the parent state total population in that year; area share, as the weight of the area of the territory vis-à-vis the parent state total territory in that year; colonialism, coded as binary and including postcolonial territories; and time, as the number of years since the first case occurred between 1944 and 2022.

Findings

A challenging result

Our statistical analysis using multiple regression models (see Appendix) proved to be robust, with an R square demonstrating that the significant variables explain around 70 percent of variation of our dependent variable.

On the one hand, we observe that three variables present a positive association with the parent state agreement variable: competition/proximity (0.40***), time (0.01***), and area share (0.001*). On the other hand, three variables present a significant negative association with the dependent variable, namely decentralization (−0.01*); population share (−0.02***), and colonialism (−0.42***). We tested the robustness of these findings using different strategies in a series of models, including a more relaxed approach to democratic threshold, a model without the 1958 French constitutional referendum, a model including all independence referendums (132) since 1945 even in non-democratic countries, and, finally, a model using a fixed effects control by states (see Appendix).

Positively associated variables

The significance and strength of the competition/proximity variable confirms H_1. This is not surprising, because this theory had already been tested with larger datasets[59] and in case studies.[60] The theory is now showing validity in our specific analysis of liberal democracies. We can affirm that democratic governments respond to independence referendum demands according to their electoral incentives and perceived competition threats. For example, in 2014, the British government faced both electoral competition and a certain electoral proximity when it agreed with the Scottish government to transfer the necessary powers to hold an independence referendum through Section 30.[61] Meanwhile, the Spanish Government opposed and repressed the unilateral referendums in Catalonia in 2014 and 2017 because it had few incentives to concede an independence referendum.[62]

Qvortrup's model proves to be a useful approach for understanding when governments accept independence referendum demands. Among the cases of unilateral referendums in our dataset, the Gagauzian referendum in 2014 is the only one in which the parent state authorities faced some kind of pressure to authorize the vote – in this case, from foreign powers and anti – European Union political forces. In the other cases, the parent state did not face any relevant military or electoral pressure, nor the proximity

of the electorate to the project referendum. We further discuss these points in our concluding section.

A second variable, time – initially designed as a control – proved to be (very weakly) positively and significantly associated with the dependent variable. This effect is understandable, because several unilateral referendums have occurred recently; indeed, seven of them occurred during the last decade. Time thus seems to make referendum agreements less probable and unilateral referendums more probable. The relevance of this finding is still doubtful and will probably require more research. On the one hand, this finding reinforces the idea of referendums being used as a strategic claim by secessionist movements in recent years compared to the decolonization period. We already referred to the mutation from colonial and ethnic self-determination to the "right to decide" referendums[63] that inspires most of the recent cases in Catalonia, Basque Country and other regions. On the other hand, in our test model with all cases (including non-democratic ones), this variable is not even statistically significant. This finding will probably require a more fine-grained research on global trends and specific case-studies.

Negatively associated variables

The negatively associated variables are consistent with H_3 on the costs of a potential secession to the parent state. In some cases, the continuity of the parent state might be compromised if the seceding territory contains an important share of resources or population.

As shown in Figure 3, three territories in which no agreement was reached are among the most populated of our dataset (Northern Cyprus, Catalonia, and South Brazil). In contrast, the remaining cases, representing more than 15 percent of the total population where an agreed referendum was held, are in some sense peculiar. The Quebec referendums were legal but unilaterally called by the provincial government without any official consent from the federal government. The two Algerian referendums correspond to the result of the Algerian War in the context of decolonization. The Nevis 1998 referendum is also a very rare case of a geographically insular territory with a constitutional clause allowing Nevis secession (this territory had held a unilateral referendum in 1977 while still under the rule of the United Kingdom).

Our findings also suggest that resources might be relevant in explaining agreement for independence referendums. The presence of hydrocarbons does not appear to be significant in our first model, but it becomes statistically significant (as a negative factor) when we remove the French 1958 referendums. These referendums were treated as independence referendums in our dataset, but at the same time, the logic of this vote was the approval of the Fifth Republic Constitution in all French domains regardless of their specific demands (only Guinea voted against and became an independent country at that time). Compared with the GDP share – a variable that did not show any significant correlation – the presence of hydrocarbons is a significant variable that clearly points to the importance of the perceived costs to the parent state when allowing an independence referendum.

The costs approach can thus be divided into at least two sub-categories. On the one hand, one potential cost could be the wealth lost in an eventual secession of a territory containing natural resources, a factor that has been widely studied in the literature on ethnic conflict. On the other hand, another type of cost can be theorized as the

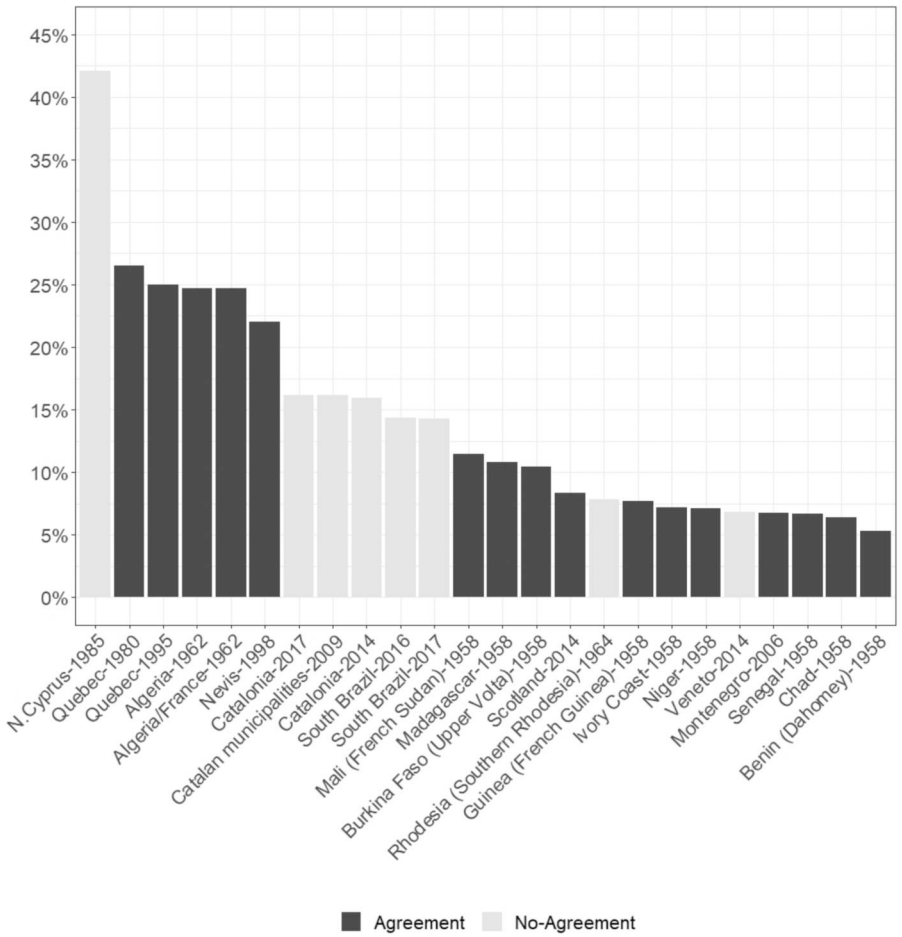

Figure 3. Population share and agreement (above five percent).

perceived cost of repression. We found some potential evidence of the former in terms of population and the presence of hydrocarbons. However, it might be counterargued that the more populated a region is, the more difficult it will be to repress in case of denying an independence referendum. In our third model (see Appendix), removing the French 1958 referendum, the costs appears to be a matter of both natural resources and population.

A general challenge to our research design appears with the role of colonialism (H_7), negatively associated with agreed referendums. Our design is a second-stage approach: the dataset comprises those cases in which referendums (either agreed or unilateral) occurred. Again, we do not measure the presence of secessionist movements that did not organize a unilateral referendum. Therefore, this factor should be considered in further research. In colonial contexts, several decolonization movements were granted independence without any referendum. Besides this caveat, this finding reinforces the arguments in the literature on the evolution of self-determination towards the requirement of referendums for such processes.

Non-associated variables

Besides significant variables, several variables were expected to be relevant in explaining referendum agreements, but most of them turned out to be contingent. We expected GDP share to be negatively associated with a referendum agreement (H_3). However, this variable did not appear as a pertinent factor in our model. One potential explanation of this finding is, again, related to selection bias when building the dataset. Because we captured non-agreed and agreed referendums (not the presence of a secessionist movement), relatively rich regions might be more capable and/or willing to organize unilateral referendums. In fact, among the richer territories with respect to their parent state (only 9 out of 70) included in our dataset, we observed that only two held an agreed referendum – the richest and the poorest among the group, being Bermuda and Scotland, respectively. We also hypothesized about the impact of violent conflicts on state agreement probability. However, these variables appear to be unrelated (H_4). While Algeria, Montenegro, or New Caledonia are examples of this logic, in which postconflict agreements lead to an agreed referendum, counterexamples are also present in our dataset through the cases of Gagauzia and Northern Cyprus, in which referendums were used as part of the conflict. The violent conflicts variable would probably benefit from controlling the dimension of the conflict and the presence of colonial ties (Algeria and New Caledonia) as potential explanatory factors of the final agreements (Évian in 1962 and Matignon in 1988, respectively) as well as the strategic use of referendums. This should probably be the object of specific research on the use of referendums during and after conflicts.

Decentralization is also not a relevant variable in our model (H_5). We did not find a clear pattern in this case. Unilateral referendums have been held in decentralized territories (Catalonia) and in less decentralized ones (Kosovo). Again, we observed agreed referendums in very decentralized territories such as Montenegro and in non-decentralized ones such as Western Samoa. Indeed, decentralization and independence referendums seem to have no direct relationship, although several unilateral referendums (but especially in non-democratic contexts) were held in former republics, such as the former USSR and Yugoslavia republics. Therefore, the absence of decentralization effects in liberal democracies must be distinguished from the existence of former institutional structures described in the literature in non-democratic contexts.

The reputation variable was expected to be relevant (H_6); following Walter[64], we expected that parent states with more secessionist movements would be less likely to accept independence referendum demands. This hypothesis was not only built on Walter's concept of reputation, but also on the notion of a potential secessionist contagion or domino effect, a classic argument in ethnically diverse societies.[65] We found these potential explanations not to be valid in the scope of liberal democracies. This phenomenon might be related to two different explanations. First, many cases of independence referendums occurred in the same group of parent states. This makes us think that these demands for referendums have also been concentrated in a few states that account for many cases (France, the United States, and the United Kingdom). Second, a more substantive explanation could be related to the fact that liberal democracies respond differently to the existence of multiple secessionist movements. Democracies with many colonial domains seem to be more likely to find global solutions than to repress a single separatist movement. This is what happened in France through the agreed 1958 referendum within the framework of a constitutional

change, or in the United States regarding its peripheral territories. However, this explanation does not work in cases of other domestic secessionist movements within the metropolitan territories. Moreover, in our model including fixed effects by parent states (See Appendix) the main variables remain statistically significant. Finally, it is relevant to note that most of the cases included in our dataset correspond to small peripheral territories (islands) that obviously present less reputational potential than larger contiguous territories (we will come back to this argument in the next sections).

A few factors appeared to be negatively associated with the decision of a parent state to accept an independence referendum but not statistically significant. Among them, the strongest negative effect came from the level of democracy (with a large standard error). According to H_2, the more democratic a country is, the more likely it would be to accept an independence referendum[66]; indeed, previous studies pointed in this direction.[67] The lack of democratic standards has been a common argument among secessionist movements to discredit their own parent states when their central government rejected a referendum demand.[68] But our findings point in a different direction, while the model including cases in democratic contexts does not show statistical significance, our model including non-democratic contexts (see Appendix) does find a significant correlation with the level of democracy. Therefore, this is a relevant finding: the quality of democracy does not seem to have an impact within democratic contexts, but at the same time democratization matters for agreed referendums to occur.

Again, this finding might be the result of our research design. Unilateral referendums seem to be more frequent in well-developed democracies than in less developed ones. For example, France scored between 0.63 and 0.78 in the democracy index (V-Dem) during the analysed period and has experienced no unilateral referendum in its territory. In contrast, Spain experienced three unilateral referendums in Catalonia while scoring between 0.78 and 0.85. Only three of the eleven unilateral referendums recorded in our dataset occurred below the 0.70 threshold (Northern Cyprus, South Brazil, and Gagauzia). Regardless of other factors, this finding reinforces the idea that even well-developed democracies are reluctant to agree on independence referendums in their metropolitan territories. Italy and Spain represent two cases in which there has been no agreed referendum, except for the Spanish agreed referendum of 1963 on Guinea, during the dictatorship period. Despite their democratic credentials, the constitutional doctrine did not allow holding an independence referendum without (a very improbable) constitutional reform.[69]

Finally, the area share variable did not seem to have any effect at all. In some sense, this contradicts H_3 on costs. Although the GDP share is not significant, the extension area potentially lost by the parent state might count as a proxy for the cost of the territory.

Discussion and implications

Under what conditions do agreed independence referendums occur? The evidence presented in this article derived from our statistical analysis of a comprehensive dataset of independence referendums held in liberal democracies from 1945 to 2020 ($N = 70$) allow for some reflections and caveats. On the one hand, we can present a picture of the main factors that help to explain (and predict) the future acceptance and rejection by parent state governments of demands for independence referendums. On the other hand, our analysis raises relevant questions that should be addressed in

future research. According to our findings, parent state governments in liberal democracies accept independence referendums when they perceive, in order:

- Competition and/or electoral proximity to the referendum demand;
- That the costs of an eventual secession – at least in terms of the proportion of potentially seceding population and natural resources – are low; and
- According to our model, this happens mostly outside the colonial context because colonial domains were negatively correlated with agreed referendums.

A theoretical model designed to predict the odds of a given liberal democracy accepting an independence referendum would take the form of Figure 4, with four scenarios of probability appearing when combining competition/proximity and costs analysis.

There is a very high probability of agreement (one in two) in cases of small populations, without the presence of hydrocarbons, and with some degree of competition/proximity. Territories belonging to this category are typically former colonies or have postcolonial status, such as Palau. They are usually recognized by the United Nations and are sovereign nations. For instance, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands of the United States has voted eight times on its status in agreed consultations and its population is around 18,317 inhabitants. Territories with relatively low competition/proximity leverage and with a relatively small population still have a high probability of referendum acceptance. This was the case for several French domains in 1958. Obviously, the probability of agreement decreases if the competition/proximity factor disappears (even in the case of very small territories such as Nevis in 1974

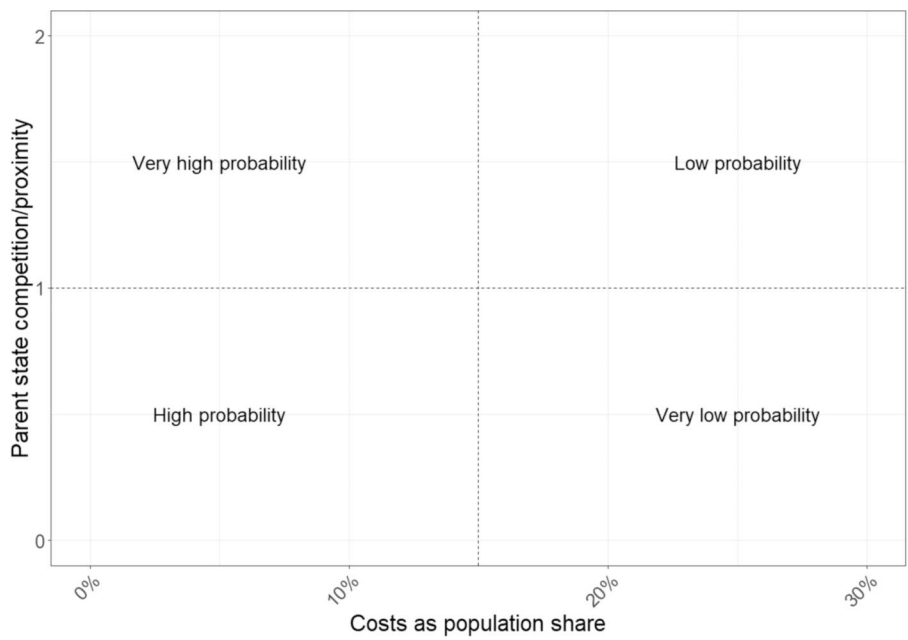

Figure 4. Predictive model for acceptance of independence referendums in liberal democracies.

and/or if they possess hydrocarbon resources). For example, the Moldovan authorities received pressure from external actors (Russia) to accept the Gagauzian demand, but they did not accept the referendum of a region with 4.5 percent of the Moldovan population and some natural resources in its territory.

In more populated territories, the chance of an agreed referendum is much lower. In fact, there have been few cases since 1945 of territories that account for more than 10 percent of the parent state population that obtained an agreed referendum. Algeria is a low probability of agreement case, because it is an exception as a colonial domain considered a metropolitan territory by its parent state, France. This territory accounted for more than 20 percent of the French population in 1962 and it also had natural resources. Following the 1954–1962 war and the Évian Accords, two referendums were eventually held. Finally, a very low probability case is the Canadian province of Quebec. This province, which also accounts for more than 20 percent of the Canadian territory, did not have any special leverage such as competition or proximity. However, the 1980 and 1995 referendums were held without any boycott from the Federal Government, which even took part in the electoral campaigns (against independence).

The model presented above allows for some relevant reflections on the acceptance of independence referendums in liberal democracies. Independence referendums accepted (actively or passively) by parent states are very rare. Since 1945, there have been 70 independence referendums in liberal democracies, 58 of which were accepted by the parent state. However, beyond the colonial scope, there have been only seven cases (Quebec has voted twice), and just one led to the formation of a new state (Montenegro). Moreover, only three cases – Quebec, Montenegro, and Scotland – happened in contiguous territories, with the rest corresponding to insular or remote territories (Table 2).

A more refined analysis should dig into a qualitative study of the factors that would allow us to understand these cases. Given that the United Nations Non-Self-Governing Territories list contains fewer than twenty cases at present, future secessionist conflicts in liberal democracies will probably emerge from electoral secessionist movements in metropolitan territories.[70]

As already mentioned, several independence processes in the context of decolonization were internationally sponsored by UN norms and did not require referendums to be held. The nature of these state-formation moments was somehow different from the threat to state unity posed by contiguous territories even when defined as "internal colonies" by some pro-independence movements. Moreover, the self-determination principle democratized itself from choosing among the UN Resolution 1514 options to effectively voting on independence as suggested by the Badinter Commission.

Table 2. Agreed independence referendums in non-colonial territories since 1945

Year	Entity	Parent state	Macro region
1946	Faroe Islands	Denmark	Europe
1961	Western Samoa	New Zealand	Oceania
1973	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	Europe
1980	Quebec	Canada	North America
1995	Quebec	Canada	North America
1998	Nevis	St. Kitts and Nevis	Latin America
2006	Montenegro	Serbia and Montenegro	Europe
2014	Scotland	United Kingdom	Europe

Nowadays, holding a referendum is almost imperative to achieve statehood even in contested contexts such as the Ukraine conflict.

Our finding on democratization suggests that even if democracies maintain a growing democratic quality – a controversial assumption given the current trends of democratic backsliding[71] – this does not mean that they become more likely to accept independence referendums. Democratization is a relevant factor, according to our third model (see Appendix) within democracies, but democratic quality is not a relevant factor. Because we observe a trend over time towards less acceptance of independence referendum demands, we can forecast more territorial conflict on this issue. Recent developments in the Scottish and Catalan cases point in this direction.

The 2014 referendum in Scotland appears to be a rarity according to our model. The 2012 agreement between governments was possible because of Prime Minister David Cameron's strategic approach in a minority position and in a less polarized context.[72] Following the Brexit referendum and the political developments in recent years, the Scottish National Party government is demanding a new independence referendum that has been rejected by the last three British Prime Ministers. Moreover, the recent decision of the British Supreme Court rules out the possibility of a Quebec solution, because the Court does not consider an eventual referendum called by the Scottish Parliament without Westminster approval or transfer of powers constitutional.[73] In the Catalan case, the secessionist movement has now switched its strategy from a unilateral approach, as in 2017 under the Conservative government, to a more moderate position supporting the leftist coalition in Madrid. However, despite some concessions from the central government – such as the pardon for the convicted Catalan leaders and a Criminal Code reform – the issue of self-determination remains blocked by the central government.

Future research should expand the analysis. The competition/proximity model suggested by Qvortrup[74] and the costs of allowing an independence referendum arise as key variables, these remain something of a black box. What kind of perceived competition explains the acceptance of a referendum demand? How much electoral proximity is necessary to change a parent state's approach to a referendum demand? Which costs weigh more? These questions are relevant and cannot be fully answered in a large-N approach including only cases of referendums because, as we have shown, cases of independence referendums in liberal democracies are not abundant.

Conclusion

What are the determinants of agreed independence referendums over unilateral ones? In this article, we have tried to answer this question through a large-N approach. On the one hand, we addressed this issue through the analysis of all independence referendums (agreed and non-agreed by the parent state) held in liberal democracies ($N = 70$). On the other hand, we included additional multiple regression models (see Appendix). As previously mentioned, our two main initial hypotheses pointed to two factors to explain the agreed referendums between independentist movements and parent state governments. We expected the competition/proximity model[75] and the level of democracy[76] to be the main predictors of agreement.

However, the statistical analysis demonstrated that only the competition/proximity model mattered: democratization matters, but within liberal democracies democratic

quality does not seem to have an effect. This result showed the relevance of time – one of the control variables – along with a negative association with a high population share. The significance of the time variable has a simple explanation, because agreed referendums have become very rare over the last several years. In the case of hydrocarbons and population share, it seems that parent states' leaders are constrained by a cost/benefit analysis, which leads them to disagree with sub-state actors' demands for independence referendums in wealthy and populated areas.

From a methodological perspective, this article provides a new quantitative approach to decision-making in democratic regimes vis-à-vis independentist pressure, a field traditionally dominated by case studies. Its quantitative dataset contains relevant information that provides interesting perspectives on the study of secession in democratic countries. From a theoretical viewpoint, this article confirms the relevance of the competition/proximity model, but it also shifts the focus from state leaders' situation to the nature of the seceding territories. By doing so, it aims to complete Qvortrup's model by suggesting that democratic states consider local variables like population and hydrocarbons when determining whether to agree to an independence referendum, especially in the post-colonial context.

Drawing on these findings, we proposed a theoretical model to predict independence referendums' acceptance by the parent state based on two dimensions: competition/proximity and costs such as population share. However, the specific costs of each case should be adapted in a more qualitative analysis based on a case-study.

The first concerns the comparability of cases – a classic problem in independence referendum studies since there are literally no two identical consultations. The second problem is the period in this study (1945–2022) and the case selection. The need to compare contemporary cases through reliable data impedes consideration of older but instructive cases such as the Avignon Treaty. Beyond that, a comprehensive dataset should deal with cases in which there was a demand for a referendum and it never took place (either unilaterally or agreed). This would shed more light on potential selection biases. Finally, a series of interviews with the main decision-makers involved in some of the cases in our dataset would probably have been very instructive for grasping their individual motivations. In sum, further research could consider these questions.

Notes

1. Lecours and Dupré, "The Emergence and Transformation of Self-Determination Claims in Hong Kong and Catalonia."
2. Sánchez Sánchez et al., "Comparing Independence Referendums," 1868–1869.
3. Dion, "Why is Secession Difficult in Well-Established Democracies?"; Harguindéguy et al., "Why Do Central States Accept Holding Independence Referendums?"; Qvortrup, "New Development"; *Referendums and Ethnic Conflict*; "Breaking Up is Hard to Do"; *I Want to Break Free*.
4. Pavković and Radan, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Secession*, *Creating New States*.
5. Cortés-Rivera, "Creating New States"; López and Sanjaume-Calvet, "The Political Use of de Facto Referendums of Independence."
6. Crawford, *The Creation of States in International Law*; Gökhan Şen, *Sovereignty Referendums in International and Constitutional Law*; Kohen, *Secession: International Law Perspectives*; Laponce, *Le référendum de souveraineté*.
7. Berwari and Ambrosio, "The Kurdistan Referendum Movement"; Carboni, "Le funzioni dei referendum secessionisti"; Collin, "Peacemaking Referendums"; Lecours, "The Political Consequences of Independence Referenda in Liberal Democracies"; Muñoz and Guinjoan,

"Accounting for Internal Variation in Nationalist Mobilization"; Oklopcic, "Independence Referendums and Democratic Theory in Quebec and Montenegro."
8. Harguindéguy et al., "Why Do Central States Accept Holding Independence Referendums?"
9. Cetrà and Harvey, "Explaining Accommodation and Resistance"; López and Sanjaume-Calvet, "The Political Use of de Facto Referendums of Independence."
10. Weill, "Secession and the Prevalence of Both Militant Democracy and Eternity Clauses Worldwide."
11. Rodon and Guinjoan, "When the Context Matters."
12. Qvortrup, *Referendums and Ethnic Conflict.*
13. Buchanan, *The Morality of Political Divorce from Fort Sumter to Lithuania and Quebec*; Crawford, *The Creation of States in International Law*; Kohen, *Secession: International Law Perspectives*; Pavković and Radan, *Creating New States.*
14. Bauböck, "A Multilevel Theory of Democratic Secession"; Bossacoma, *Morality and Legality of Secession*; Brando and Morales-Gálvez, "The Right to Secession"; Palermo and Kössler, *Comparative Federalism.*
15. Delledonne and Martinico, *The Canadian Contribution to a Comparative Law of Secession.*
16. Sanjaume-Calvet, "Moralism in Theories of Secession."
17. Kartsonaki, "The False Hope of Remedial Secession."
18. Griffiths and Martinez, "Local Conditions and the Demand for Independence."
19. Griffiths, *Age of Secession.*
20. Pavković and Radan, *Creating New States.*
21. Lynch, "Woodrow Wilson and the Principle of National Self-determination."
22. Sorens, *Secessionism: Identity, Interest, and Strategy.*
23. Dalle Mulle, *The Nationalism of the Rich.*
24. Cetrà and Harvey, "Explaining Accommodation and Resistance."
25. Walter, "Building Reputation."
26. Walker, *The Strategic Use of Referendums*; Tierney, *Constitutional Law and National Pluralism.*
27. Qvortrup, *Referendums and Ethnic Conflict.*
28. Ibid., 32.
29. Ibid., 145–46.
30. Cetrà and Harvey, "Explaining Accommodation and Resistance to Demands for Independence Referendums in the UK and Spain"; López and Sanjaume-Calvet, "The Political Use of de Facto Referendums of Independence"; Sánchez Sánchez et al., "Comparing Independence Referendums."
31. Coggins, "Friends in High Places"; *Power Politics and State Formation in the Twentieth Century.*
32. Cetrà and Harvey, "Explaining Accommodation and Resistance to Demands for Independence Referendums in the UK and Spain"; Hopkins, "Young People and the Scottish Independence Referendum"; Requejo and Sanjaume-Calvet, "Explaining Secessionism"; Sambanis et al., "SDM"; Sorens, *Secessionism: Identity, Interest, and Strategy.*
33. Cunningham, *Inside the Politics of Self-determination*; Kelle and Sienknecht, "To Fight or to Vote."
34. Cortés-Rivera, "Creating New States."
35. Kohen, *Secession: International Law Perspectives*; Pellet, "The Opinions of the Badinter Arbitration Committee."
36. Palermo and Kössler, *Comparative Federalism*, 273.
37. López and Sanjaume-Calvet, "The Political Use of de Facto Referendums of Independence."
38. Mendez and Germann, "Contested Sovereignty."
39. Kelle and Sienknecht, "To Fight or to Vote"; Sanjaume-Calvet, "Plebiscitarianism Revisited."
40. Qvortrup, *Referendums and Ethnic Conflict.*
41. Pavković and Radan, *Creating New States.*
42. Cetrà and Harvey, "Explaining Accommodation and Resistance to Demands for Independence Referendums in the UK and Spain"; Sanjaume-Calvet, "Democracy and Secessionism"; Weill, "Secession and the Prevalence of Both Militant Democracy and Eternity Clauses Worldwide."
43. Dalle Mulle, *The Nationalism of the Rich.*
44. UCDP/PRIO, *Conflict Encyclopedia.*
45. Roeder, *Where Nation-states Come From*; Webb, "The Importance of Predecessor Centers of Sovereignty and Processes of State Formation in Explaining Secession."

46. Siroky et al., "Center-Periphery Bargaining in the Age of Democracy."
47. Walter, "Building Reputation."
48. Coggins, *Power Politics and State Formation in the Twentieth Century.*
49. Sánchez Sánchez et al., "Comparing Independence Referendums."
50. Mendez and Germann, "Contested Sovereignty."
51. See https://www.v-dem.net/en/
52. Mendez and Germann, "Contested Sovereignty"; Remond, *Questioned Sovereignties.*
53. Qvortrup, *Referendums and Ethnic Conflict.*
54. Sánchez Sánchez et al., "Comparing Independence Referendums."
55. https://www.idea.int/
56. Sambanis et al., "SDM."
57. Svensson et al., "Violent Political Protest."
58. Hooghe et al., *Measuring Regional Authority.*
59. Harguindéguy et al., "Why Do Central States Accept Holding Independence Referendums?"; Qvortrup, *Referendums and Ethnic Conflict.*
60. López and Sanjaume-Calvet, "The Political Use of de Facto Referendums of Independence."
61. Cetrà and Harvey, "Explaining Accommodation and Resistance to Demands for Independence Referendums in the UK and Spain."
62. López and Sanjaume-Calvet, "The Political Use of de Facto Referendums of Independence."
63. Palermo and Kössler, *Comparative Federalism*, 273.
64. Walter, "Building Reputation."
65. Forsberg, "Do Ethnic Dominoes Fall?"
66. Pavković and Radan, *Creating New States.*
67. Harguindéguy et al., "Why Do Central States Accept Holding Independence Referendums?."
68. Kartsonaki, "The False Hope of Remedial Secession."
69. Sanjaume-Calvet, "Democracy and Secessionism."
70. Sambanis et al., "SDM"; Sorens, *Secessionism: Identity, Interest, and Strategy.*
71. Levitsky and Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*; Norris, "Is Western Democracy Backsliding?."
72. Cetrà and Harvey, "Explaining Accommodation and Resistance to Demands for Independence Referendums in the UK and Spain"; Harguindéguy et al., "Why Do Central States Accept Holding Independence Referendums?"
73. McHarg, "Constitutional Law and Secession in the United Kingdom."
74. Qvortrup, *Referendums and Ethnic Conflict.*
75. Ibid.
76. Pavković and Radan, *Creating New States.*

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación [grant number PID2021-123861NB-I00].

Notes on contributors

Marc Sanjaume Calvet is currently an assistant professor of political theory in the department of political and social sciences at Universitat Pompeu Fabra. He is a member of the Political Theory Research Group and coordinator of the Master in Current Democracies programme. His research deals with territorial politics and his articles have been published in the Journal of Politics, Party Politics, Nations and Nationalism, Canadian Journal of Political Science, and Representation among others.

Jean-Baptiste Harguindéguy is an assistant professor at the Universidad Pablo de Olavide of Seville (Spain) where he teaches public administration and policy analysis. His research focuses on regional

politics and his articles have been published in *Regional Studies, Territory Politics Governance, Electoral Studies*, and Publius, among others.

Almudena Sánchez Sánchez is PhD in mathematics and an assistant professor at the UDIMA in Madrid where she teaches social sciences and education. Previously, she has been working for the Catholic University of Avila, the University of Castile-La Mancha, and the UNIR. She has also experience in the private sector as a senior data scientist and project manager (Banco Santander, EvoBanco S.A., IBM GBS Spain). Her research has been published in scientific journals like Mathematics, Diabetology, Regional Studies, and Electoral Studies.

ORCID

Jean-Baptiste Harguindéguy http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1151-3007

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Appendix

Table A1. Multiple regression models of referendum acceptance by parent states in liberal democracies.

	Dependent variable: Parent State Agreement				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Competition/ proximity	0.40***	0.41**	0.41**	0.41**	0.41**
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Level of democracy	−0.58	0.44	−0.03	0.59**	0.15
	(0.50)	(0.34)	(0.59)	(0.17)	(0.66)
Experience	0.0004	0.0003	0.001	0.001	0.05
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.07)
Reputation	0.01	0.01	0.01	−0.002	−0.02
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.001)	(0.01)
Time	0.01***	0.01***	0.004*	0.01***	0.05
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.07)
Hydrocarbons	−0.09	−0.01	−0.26**	0.08	0.07
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Previous violence	0.001	0.005	0.0004	0.01**	0.05
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.07)
Decentralization	−0.01*	−0.005	−0.01	−0.004	−0.02*
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.01)
GDP share	−0.001	−0.001	−0.0002	−0.001	−0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Population share	−0.02**	−0.02**	−0.02**	0.001	−0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.001)	(0.01)
Area share	0.001*	0.001	0.001**	−0.0004	−0.001*
	(0.0005)	(0.0005)	(0.001)	(0.0004)	(0.0005)
Colony	−0.42***	−0.39***	−0.48**	−0.16	−0.49**
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.10)	(0.09)
Constant	0.93**	0.01	0.56	−0.24**	−1.00
	(0.39)	(0.21)	(0.47)	(0.11)	(2.17)
Model 1: democracies (>0.5); Model 2: relaxed dem. (>0.3); Model 3: relaxed dem. (>0.3) without 1958 French referendum; Model 4 all referendums since 1945; Model 5: Model 1 with fixed effects by state.					
Observations	70	78	52	125	70
R2	0.74	0.76	0.79	0.79	0.93
Adjusted R2	0.68	0.72	0.72	0.77	0.90
F Statistic	13.31*** (df = 12;57)	17.46*** (df = 12;65)	12.19*** (df = 12;39)	35.71*** (df = 12;112)	24.81*** (df = 25;44)

Note: *$p < 0.1$;**$p < 0.05$;***$p < 0.01$.

Table A2. List of cases included in the dataset.

Year	Entity	Host-state	Macro-region
1946	Faroe Islands	Denmark	Europe
1950	Cyprus	United Kingdom	North Africa & Middle East
1958	Saint Pierre et Miquelon	France	North America
1958	New Caledonia	France	Oceania
1958	French Polynesia	France	Oceania
1958	Djibouti (French Somaliland)	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1958	Comoros	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1958	Gabon	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1958	Mauritania	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1958	Congo (French Congo)	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1958	Central African Republic (Ubangi-Shari)	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1958	Benin (Dahomey)	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1958	Chad	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1958	Senegal	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1958	Niger	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1958	Ivory Coast	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1958	Guinea (French Guinea)	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1958	Burkina Faso (Upper Volta)	France	Sub-Saharan Africa

(*Continued*)

Table A2. Continued.

Year	Entity	Host-state	Macro-region
1958	Madagascar	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1958	Mali (French Sudan)	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1961	Western Samoa	New Zealand	Oceania
1961	Jamaica	United Kingdom	Latin America
1962	Algeria	France	North Africa & Middle East
1962	Algeria/France	France	Europe
1964	Malta	United Kingdom	Europe
1964	Rhodesia (Southern Rhodesia)	United Kingdom	Sub-Saharan Africa
1967	Djibouti (French Somaliland)	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1969	Anguilla	United Kingdom	Latin America
1973	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	Europe
1974	Comoros	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1974	Niue	New Zealand	Oceania
1976	Palau	United States of America	Oceania
1977	Djibouti (French Somaliland)	France	Sub-Saharan Africa
1977	Aruba	Netherlands	Latin America
1977	Marshall Islands	United States of America	Oceania
1977	Nevis	United Kingdom	Latin America
1980	Quebec	Canada	North America
1983	Marshall Islands	United States of America	Oceania
1983	Micronesia	United States of America	Oceania
1983	Palau	United States of America	Oceania
1984	Palau	United States of America	Oceania
1985	Northern Cyprus	Cyprus	North Africa & Middle East
1986	Palau	United States of America	Oceania
1986	Palau	United States of America	Oceania
1987	New Caledonia	France	Oceania
1987	Palau	United States of America	Oceania
1987	Palau	United States of America	Oceania
1990	Palau	United States of America	Oceania
1993	Palau	United States of America	Oceania
1995	Bermuda	United Kingdom	North America
1995	Quebec	Canada	North America
1998	Nevis	St. Kitts and Nevis	Latin America
2006	Montenegro	Serbia and Montenegro	Europe
2006	Tokelau	New Zealand	Oceania
2007	Tokelau	New Zealand	Oceania
2009	Catalan municipalities	Spain	Europe
2012	Puerto Rico	United States of America	Oceania
2012	Gagauzia	Moldova	Europe
2013	Basque municipalities	Spain	Europe
2014	Scotland	United Kingdom	Europe
2014	Sint Eustatius	Netherlands	Latin America
2014	Catalonia	Spain	Europe
2014	Veneto	Italy	Europe
2016	South Brazil	Brazil	Latin America
2017	Puerto Rico	United States of America	Oceania
2017	South Brazil	Brazil	Latin America
2017	Catalonia	Spain	Europe
2018	New Caledonia	France	Oceania
2020	New Caledonia	France	Oceania
2021	New Caledonia	France	Oceania