



## The Exceptional Case of Post-Bailout Portugal: A Comparative Outlook

This is the peer reviewed (post-print) version of the following article:

*Original*

The Exceptional Case of Post-Bailout Portugal: A Comparative Outlook / De Giorgi, E., Santana-Pereira, J.. - In: SOUTH EUROPEAN SOCIETY & POLITICS. - ISSN 1360-8746. - STAMPA. - 25:2(2020), pp. 127-150. [10.1080/13608746.2021.1872152]

*Availability:*

This version is available at: 11368/2993136 since: 2021-08-02T15:19:29Z

*Publisher:*

*Published*

DOI:10.1080/13608746.2021.1872152

*Terms of use:*

Some rights reserved. More details in the PostPrint rights section below.

*License:*

Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International

*Publisher copyright*

--

(Article begins on next page)

## The Exceptional Case of Post-Bailout Portugal: A Comparative Outlook

Elisabetta De Giorgi  and José Santana-Pereira 

### ABSTRACT

The analysis explores government, party system and political attitudes as dimensions revealing Portugal's exceptionalism during its post-bailout period (2015–19) vis-à-vis three other South European countries, Greece, Italy and Spain. It shows that government stability was greater in Portugal, no party system revolution took place and political trust recovered more quickly than in the other countries. In contrast, Portugal is not dissimilar from the other cases regarding the prevalence of populist attitudes, even though populist actors did not achieve electoral success before 2019. The article includes an update on political attitudes and government-opposition relations during the covid-19 pandemic and introduces the other articles in this collection.

### KEYWORDS

Southern Europe; Greece; Italy; Spain; government; party system; political attitudes; covid-19

The political landscape across Southern Europe has changed remarkably in recent years. Amidst the shockwaves created by the Great Recession, South European countries first went through a phase of electoral epidemic (Bosco & Verney 2012) as a consequence of economic recession, popular protest, and a steady erosion of support for governing parties. This was followed by a phase of government epidemic (Bosco & Verney 2016), with longer processes of government formation, new parties joining government coalitions and, in some cases, the need to repeat elections. In a nutshell, the last decade has allowed us to witness South European governments being ousted from power, critical elections questioning the structure of (more or less) consolidated party systems, and new challengers making their triumphal entrance onto the political and parliamentary stage (Hobolt & Tilley 2016; Vidal 2018).

The extant literature has devoted a considerable amount of attention to the electoral and government woes of Southern Europe and their short-term and long-term consequences.<sup>1</sup> More concretely, a series of scientific works have explored political changes during the so-called austerity period.<sup>2</sup> Within this literature, Portugal is often depicted as an exceptional case in Southern Europe, as the only country in which there was significant continuity with pre-crisis political dynamics both during and after the 2011–2014 bailout period.<sup>3</sup> Most of the specialised literature notes that the political changes that took place in

Greece, Italy and Spain were indeed much more profound than in Portugal.<sup>4</sup> However, albeit with some exceptions (e.g. Fernandes, Magalhães & Santana-Pereira 2018; De Giorgi & Cancela 2019; Lisi, Freire & Tsatsanis 2020), the specific analysis of the Portuguese case generally stops with the formation of the Socialist government led by António Costa in late 2015 and has not covered more recent developments.

This collection of articles aims to fill this gap by testing whether the main patterns of Portuguese exceptionalism endured in the post-bailout period (2015–2019) and identifying the most distinctive features. Our goal is to contribute to this body of scholarly work by offering an up-to-date and systematic analysis of the main electoral and governmental patterns in Portugal from 2015 to the legislative election of 2019 – to which we devote one specific article – and the victory of the incumbent Socialists. This in-depth analysis allows us to fully understand whether bailout and austerity were a ticking time bomb that was running a bit slow, with its political consequences only becoming visible some years later due to the inertia of the Portuguese political system, or if the post-bailout period is indeed also marked by a great deal of continuity.

In this collection of articles, we explore the argument that Portugal during its post-bailout period also presents distinct patterns vis-à-vis other South European countries: namely, Greece, which was still under a bailout until 2018; Italy which did not have a bailout; Spain which was in a post-bailout period but only had a bank (not a sovereign) bailout. The four research articles that follow show that a number of factors combine to make Portugal a stimulating case study – namely, the stability of its party system (and of the mainstream parties' electoral support in particular); the nature of the demand side of populism in the country and its mismatch with the supply side; the successful union between left-wing anti-austerity parties supporting the government, which granted António Costa's first cabinet considerable stability; and the remarkable business-as-usual nature of the 2019 election, despite the entry of three new political parties to parliament. The collection therefore offers the academic community a comprehensive analysis of these trends in the Portuguese post-bailout period.

In this introductory article, we identify and explore three dimensions in which similar patterns can be seen in three South European countries – Greece, Italy and Spain – but not in Portugal. These dimensions are related with both the dynamics of supply and demand in the electoral arena (party systems and political attitudes of the citizenry) and its output (government). South European countries have followed similar paths in all these areas since the onset of the crisis, but Portugal appears to be a deviant case in both the bailout and post-bailout scenario.

The article is organised as follows. The next three sections provide a comparative analysis of government, party systems and political attitudes in Southern Europe, with a focus on post-bailout Portugal. This analysis is enriched

with literature and data focusing on the Great Recession period. Following this, we present an overview of political attitudes and the government-opposition relationship during the first phase of the covid-19 pandemic in Southern Europe, another unexpected context in which Portugal has showed a certain degree of exceptionalism. Finally, we discuss how the articles in this collection link to the discussion on Portugal's distinctiveness. The article concludes with a series of lessons learned about Portugal's exceptionalism in the post-bailout period and a brief reflection on the reasons behind this status.

### ***Eppur (non) si muove: governmental stability in post-bailout Portugal***

It is well known that the government sphere was significantly affected by the economic and political events that followed the onset of the financial crisis that shook Southern Europe from 2009. The 'political cost of the crisis, which had initially affected the national party systems, seems to have passed to the government level, shaking the process of government formation, changing the identity of incumbents and, ultimately, undermining the stability of the executives' (Bosco & Verney 2016, p. 383). Until 2015, the situation of Italy and Greece diverged significantly from that of Spain and Portugal. In fact, the governments of all four countries resigned in 2011 but, in Italy and Greece, this was followed by the alternation of several government solutions: first, a technocratic executive in Italy and a technocratic Prime Minister (PM) with a three-party cabinet in Greece (Verney & Bosco 2013), then earthquake elections leaving traditional governing parties with significantly reduced electoral support while challenger parties were successful, and, finally, a number of unstable executives.

In Greece, a short-lived coalition government led by a technocrat Prime Minister from November 2011 to May 2012 was followed by two elections in less than two months (Teperoglou & Tsatsanis 2014) and two cabinets in less than three years (Table 1). Prior to the crisis, Greece had had a long tradition of alternation in power between two parties, namely the centre right ND (Νέα Δημοκρατία – New Democracy) and the centre left PASOK (Πανελλήνιο Σοσιαλιστικό Κίνημα – Panhellenic Socialist Movement). In Italy, the Monti technocratic government lasted from late 2011 until the end of the legislature. In the February 2013 election, both the centre left and centre right coalitions ended up losing millions of voters, while a political force with no previous parliamentary experience, the M5S (Movimento 5 Stelle – Five Star Movement), secured about 25 per cent of votes (Baldini 2013). These results made the formation of a new government very difficult and eventually led to the establishment of an executive supported by a grand coalition formed by the mainstream parties that had previously been competing for power amongst themselves (Bull & Pasquino 2018). While no election was called until the end of the legislature in 2018, three cabinets alternated in office.

**Table 1.** Elections and governments in Southern Europe, 2011–2014 and 2015–2019.

|          | NUMBER OF ELECTIONS |         | NUMBER OF NEW GOVERNMENTS |         | CABINETS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | INCUMBENT PARTIES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------|---------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|          | 2011–14             | 2015–19 | 2011–14                   | 2015–19 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| PORTUGAL | 1                   | 2       | 1                         | 3       | <b>Passos Coelho I</b> (21 June 2011–30 October 2015)<br><i>Passos Coelho II</i> (30 October–10 November 2015)<br><b>Costa I</b> (26 November 2015–26 October 2019)<br><b>Costa II</b> (26 October 2019–)<br><b>Papademos</b> (11 November 2011–16 May 2012)<br><b>Samaras I</b> (20 June 2012–21 June 2013)<br><b>Samaras II</b> (24 June 2013–26 January 2015)<br><b>Tsipras I</b> (26 January 2015–27 August 2015)<br><b>Tsipras II</b> (23 September 2015–13 January 2019)<br><b>Tsipras III</b> (13 January 2019–8 July 2019)<br><b>Mitsotakis</b> (8 July 2019–)<br><b>Rajoy I</b> (21 December 2011–31 October 2016)<br><b>Rajoy II</b> (31 October 2016–7 June 2018)<br><b>Sanchez I</b> (7 June 2018–13 January 2020)<br><b>Sanchez II</b> (13 January 2020–)<br><b>Monti</b> (16 November 2011–28 April 2013)<br><b>Letta</b> (28 April 2013–21 February 2014)<br><b>Renzi</b> (22 February 2014–12 December 2016)<br><b>Gentiloni</b> (12 December 2016–1 June 2018)<br><b>Conte I</b> (1 June 2018–5 September 2019)<br><b>Conte II</b> (5 September 2019–) | PSD, CDS-PP<br>PSD, CDS-PP<br>PS<br>PS<br>PASOK, ND, LAOS<br>ND, PASOK, DIMAR<br>ND, PASOK<br>SYRIZA, ANEL<br>SYRIZA, ANEL<br>SYRIZA<br>ND<br>PP<br>PP<br>PSOE<br>PSOE, Unidos Podemos<br>Technocratic government<br>PD, PdL, SC, Udc, RI<br>PD, SC, NCD, Udc, RI<br>PD, NCD, Udc<br>M5S, Lega<br>M5S, PD, LeU, IV |
| GREECE   | 2                   | 3       | 3                         | 4       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| SPAIN    | 1                   | 4       | 1                         | 3*      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| ITALY    | 1                   | 1       | 3                         | 3       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

Source: Authors' elaboration of data from ParlGov database (Döring & Manow 2019).

Note: Party acronym meanings, by order of appearance in the table (original language name provided only for parties not mentioned in the main text):

- In Portugal, PSD – Social Democratic Party; CDS-PP – CDS-Popular Party; PS – Socialist Party.
- In Greece, ND – New Democracy; PASOK – Panhellenic Socialist Movement; DIMAR – Democratic Left; SYRIZA – Coalition of the Radical Left; ANEL – Independent Greeks.
- In Italy, PD – Democratic Party; Pdl – People of Freedom (Popolo della Libertà); SC – Civic Choice (Scelta Civica); Udc – Union of the Centre (Unione di Centro); RI – Italian Radicals (Radicali Italiani); NCD – New Centre Right (Nuovo Centro Destra); M5S – Five Star Movement; LeU – Free and Equal (Liberi e Uguali); IV – Italy Alive (Italia Viva).
- In Spain, PP – Popular Party; PSOE – Spanish Socialist Worker's Party.

\* There were formally two new governments in Spain in the period 2015–2019, as the second Sanchez government only formally took office in early January 2020. It was however included in the table since it was formed as a result of the election held in November 2019.

The picture in Spain and Portugal was significantly different. In both countries, the 2011 elections resulted a government that remained in power until elections were called four years later. In Spain, the government was led by the centre right mainstream PP (Partido Popular – Popular Party) of Mariano Rajoy and in Portugal by the centre right PSD (Partido Social Democrata – Social Democratic Party) of Pedro Passos Coelho (Table 1). In other words, at the government level, the Iberian peninsula had not yet been hit by the government epidemic.

In Spain, the competitive scenario started changing between 2014 and 2015 when two parties, Podemos (We Can) and Ciudadanos (Citizens), began posing a direct challenge to the mainstream political forces at the national level.<sup>5</sup> As a result, Spain had four general elections and three different cabinets between 2015 and 2019 (Table 1). The apparently small number of cabinets (compared to the number of elections) is explained by the fact that it was not possible to form a government after two of the four elections (December 2015 and April 2019) so the previous executives remained in office until the following electoral race. This is extraordinary data for a country that had been characterised since the 1980s by remarkable political stability, thanks to the alternation in government of the mainstream parties PP and PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español – Spanish Socialist Worker's Party). The current cabinet led by Pedro Sanchez, appointed in January 2020, is the first coalition government in modern Spain.

Meanwhile, in Greece, both mainstream parties were severely punished in the January 2015 election, which was won by a previously minor opposition party, SYRIZA (Συνασπισμός Ριζοσπαστικής Αριστερά – Coalition of the Radical Left) in a demonstration of the Greek electorate's will for a 'total change in the governing paradigm' (Tsirbas 2016, p. 422). However, the newly formed coalition government between SYRIZA and the nationalist right-wing ANEL (Ανεξάρτητοι Έλληνες – Independent Greeks) did not last long. The Greeks were called back to the polls in September 2015 but, surprisingly, again SYRIZA came out as the major winner (Tsatsanis & Teperoglou 2016) and governed for the following four years.

In Italy, the tripolar party system resulting from the 2013 election was confirmed in 2018, but with a radical change in the balance of power between the three poles (De Giorgi 2018). After lengthy negotiations, M5S and Lega (League) were able to appoint one of the first cabinets<sup>6</sup> in Western Europe that did not include mainstream parties. But this alliance was short-lived: in August 2019, the government resigned and was replaced by cabinet led by the same PM, but supported by a different majority, made up of M5S and the centre-left PD (Partito Democratico – Democratic Party).

Therefore, Greece, Italy and Spain not only witnessed the crisis of governing parties and the alternation of a large number of government solutions between 2015 and 2019, but also the rise of challenger parties (Hobolt & Tilley 2016). The

latter were initially confined to the opposition but later were able to win office by either forming or joining governments.

In Portugal, the situation was quite different. The 2015 legislative election did not result in either the unequivocal victory of the centre right governing coalition or the clear success of its main challenger, the PS. Nevertheless, unlike in Italy, Spain and Greece, neither of the two mainstream parties experienced strong defeats at the polls. In a controversial decision, the President of the Republic named the incumbent PM Passos Coelho as *formateur*, despite the evident lack of a majority in parliament. His cabinet lasted only a few weeks until a no-confidence motion was tabled and passed with the votes of the PS and the radical left parties, BE (Bloco de Esquerda – Left Bloc), PCP (Partido Comunista Português – Portuguese Communist Party) and PEV (Partido Ecologista ‘Os Verdes’ – Ecologist Party ‘The Greens’). After a period of negotiation, the latter three parties decided to give their external support to a Socialist minority government for the first time in Portugal’s history, thus implementing a governmental solution of contract parliamentarism dubbed *geringonça*, or contraption (De Giorgi & Santana-Pereira 2016). Contrary to the expectations of many, this executive lasted for an entire legislature.

The birth of the new government was due to a combination of factors: the PSD’s shift to the right, which made an understanding between this party and the Socialists less likely; the desire of left-wing parties to avoid a second Passos Coelho cabinet; and PS leader António Costa’s own personal agenda (Freire 2017; Freire & Santana-Pereira 2019). In turn, the government’s durability is undoubtedly linked to the fact that the main protest parties were supporting the government, the absence of convincing alternatives – no new strong challenger parties and the main opposition party, PSD, led by the former PM until 2018 and then by the remarkably collaborative Rui Rio – and the fact that the Socialist government was lucky enough to preside over positive economic developments and succeeded in respecting the EU’s budgetary rules (see Fernandes, Magalhães & Santana-Pereira 2018 and Moury, De Giorgi & Pita Barros in this collection of articles) whilst also largely fulfilling the interparty agreements on which it was based (De Giorgi & Cancela 2019).

### **Still frozen: the exceptional resilience of the Portuguese party system**

One of Portugal’s most striking features is its party system’s resilience to the shocks created by the economic crisis, the bailout and the implementation of severe and unpopular austerity measures during the first half of the 2010s. In fact, neither the 2011 nor the 2015 general elections caused any earthquake at the party system level in terms of fragmentation (effective number of electoral and parliamentary parties; Laakso & Taagepera 1979) and innovation (strength of electoral support for new parties reaching more than 1 per cent of the vote, mergers and splits excluded; Emanuele & Chiaramonte 2018). The same cannot

be said of the elections of 2012 in Greece (Teperoglou & Tsatsanis 2014), 2013 in Italy (Bull & Pasquino 2018) or 2015 in Spain (Orriols & Cordero 2016; Vidal 2018).

In the early legislative election of 2011, the incumbent PS was indeed punished, but this defeat was accompanied by an almost equivalent growth of the centre right PSD, no entry of new parties to parliament and a fairly straightforward and already tested government coalition between PSD and the conservative CDS-PP (CDS-Partido Popular – CDS-Popular Party) (Fernandes 2011; Freire & Santana-Pereira 2012; Magalhães 2012). Competition to the PS opposition continued to come from the traditional left parties, i.e. the BE and the PCP, as no significant new forces had entered the political arena, despite the high level of mobilisation before and during the so-called austerity period that followed the election. In 2015, in spite of the right-wing coalition that implemented the economic adjustment programme having lost a significant amount of votes, it still remained the first political force, and the only innovation in parliament was the entry of the animalist party PAN (Pessoas-Animais-Natureza – People-Animals-Nature), which is neither blatantly anti-system nor populist (De Giorgi & Santana-Pereira 2016; Silveira, Nina & Teixeira 2019).

In the post-bailout period, Portugal has remained an exception within the South European region in terms of party system stability. First, party system innovation has been remarkably low over the last decade, and this did not change in the post-bailout period (Figure 1). The 2019 figure is higher than the previous ones due to both the rise of two new right-wing parties, the liberal IL



**Figure 1.** Party system innovation in Portugal, Greece, Spain and Italy, 2008–2019.

Source: Authors' elaboration of data by Emanuele (2016), updated in December 2019.

Notes: Figures are the percentage of votes for new parties at each election. Fringe parties (receiving less than 1 per cent of the votes) and those resulting from mergers or splits are not included. Elections presented as XXXXb are the second legislative elections taking place in that same year.

(Iniciativa Liberal – Liberal Initiative) and the radical right Chega (Enough), and the growth of left-wing Livre (Free). These three parties entered parliament for the first time, electing one MP each. Second, electoral volatility between 2015 and 2019 was quite modest in Portugal and, in fact, considerably lower than that of previous legislative elections in the country; it was also lower than that of the most recent Italian, Greek and Spanish elections, November 2019 excluded. Third, despite a slight increase in the effective number of electoral parties, no profound party system fragmentation was witnessed, especially at the parliamentary level, since it is still possible to observe a three-party system model (Table 2).

Generally speaking, none of this can be observed in the other three South European democracies under analysis. In Italy, the 2013 general elections triggered a striking level of party system innovation with six new parties entering the Italian Chamber of Deputies and occupying about one third of its seats. The most relevant novelty was, of course, M5S, an anti-establishment populist party that won the 2018 general elections (Garzia 2019; see also Chiaramonte et al. 2018; Paparo 2018), putting an end to the bipolar trend that had been established in Italy since the mid-1990s (Bull & Pasquino 2018). Interestingly, the 2018 election brought not only the growth of M5S but also a shift in the relative strength of centre right and right-wing parties, with Lega collecting many more votes than Berlusconi's Forza Italia (Forward Italy) (Chiaramonte et al. 2018; De Giorgi & Dias 2020).

In Spain, the wind of party system innovation arrived in 2015 with the electoral affirmation of two parties, Podemos and Ciudadanos, in the December general election. This was associated with a sharp decline in support for PP and, to a lesser extent, PSOE, which had already collapsed in the 2011 election (Martín & Urquizu-Sancho 2012; Orriols & Cordero 2016). These results mirror a notable crisis of representation, in which dissatisfaction with the political system as well as economic considerations led to the vote for these political forces (Vidal 2018). In April 2019, the election resulted in a second peak, albeit more modest, in the party system innovation and electoral volatility indexes, caused by the rise and entry to parliament of the radical right party Vox (Latin word for 'Voice'). This event also interrupted a long tradition among voters in post-authoritarian Spain, as it was the first time they allowed an extreme right party to enter parliament.

Lastly, in Greece, there have been three party innovation peaks over the last decade, two of them in the last five years. The May 2012 earthquake election (Teperoglou & Tsatsanis 2014) was a moment of marked electoral volatility and party system innovation. The electoral support of PASOK, hitherto a pillar of the Greek party system, was crushed in this election. Greek votes were spread across more radical political forces: on the right, the neonazi Golden Dawn (Χρυσή Αυγή) and the nationalist ANEL; on the left, SYRIZA. The levels of volatility and fragmentation declined in subsequent elections and the current Greek parliament is effectively composed of two-and-a-half parties, as in 2009–2012. However, two other peaks in

**Table 2. Electoral volatility, effective number of parties, dispersion of parliamentary representation and new entries in parliament in Southern Europe (2008–2019).**

| Country  | Election            | Electoral Volatility | Effective Number of Electoral Parties | Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties | Number of Parties winning seats (new parties in parliament) | New entries (number of seats/total seats)             |
|----------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Portugal | <b>2009</b>         | 9.1                  | 3.8                                   | 3.1                                       | 6 (0)                                                       | –                                                     |
|          | <b>2011</b>         | 13.7                 | 3.7                                   | 2.9                                       | 6 (0)                                                       | –                                                     |
|          | <b>2015</b>         | 13.8                 | 3.6                                   | 2.9                                       | 7 (1)                                                       | PAN (1/230)                                           |
|          | <b>2019</b>         | 11.3                 | 4.4                                   | 2.9                                       | 10 (3)                                                      | Chega (1/230)<br>IL (1/230)<br>Livre (1/230)          |
| Greece   | <b>2009</b>         | 10.0                 | 3.2                                   | 2.6                                       | 5 (0)                                                       | –                                                     |
|          | <b>2012 (May)</b>   | 48.5                 | 9.0                                   | 4.8                                       | 7 (3)                                                       | ANEL (33/300)<br>DIMAR (19/300)<br>XA (21/300)        |
|          | <b>2012 (June)</b>  | 18.7                 | 5.2                                   | 3.8                                       | 7(0)                                                        | –                                                     |
|          | <b>2015 (Jan.)</b>  | 20.5                 | 4.4                                   | 3.1                                       | 7(1)                                                        | Potami (17/300)                                       |
| Spain    | <b>2015 (Sep.)</b>  | 8.4                  | 4.5                                   | 3.2                                       | 8 (0)                                                       | –                                                     |
|          | <b>2019</b>         | 21.8                 | 3.7                                   | 2.7                                       | 6 (2)                                                       | EL (10/300)<br>MeRA25 (9/300)<br>UPyD (1/350)         |
|          | <b>2008</b>         | 5.3                  | 2.8                                   | 2.4                                       | 10 (1)                                                      | –                                                     |
|          | <b>2011</b>         | 17                   | 3.3                                   | 2.6                                       | 13 (0)                                                      | Ciudadanos (40/350)<br>Podemos (42/350)               |
|          | <b>2015</b>         | 35.5                 | 5.8                                   | 4.5                                       | 13(2)                                                       | –                                                     |
|          | <b>2016</b>         | 5.5                  | 5.0                                   | 4.2                                       | 12 (0)                                                      | –                                                     |
|          | <b>2019 (April)</b> | 22.9                 | 6.1                                   | 4.9                                       | 15 (1)                                                      | Vox (24/350)                                          |
|          | <b>2019 (Nov.)</b>  | 11.4                 | 6.2                                   | 4.7                                       | 20 (3)                                                      | CUP-PR (2/350)<br>Más País-Equo (2/350)<br>TE (1/350) |

(Continued)

**Table 2. (Continued).**

| Country     | Election    | Electoral Volatility | Effective Number of Electoral Parties | Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties | Number of Parties winning seats (new parties in parliament) | New entries (number of seats/total seats) |
|-------------|-------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Italy       | <b>2008</b> | 11.3                 | 3.8                                   | 3.1                                       | 9(1)                                                        | MAIE (1/630)                              |
|             | <b>2013</b> | 36.7                 | 5.3                                   | 3.5                                       | 13(6)                                                       | CD (6/630)                                |
|             |             |                      |                                       |                                           |                                                             | Fdl (9/630)                               |
|             |             |                      |                                       |                                           |                                                             | M5S (109/630)                             |
|             |             |                      |                                       |                                           |                                                             | SEL (37/630)                              |
| <b>2018</b> |             |                      |                                       |                                           |                                                             | SC (39/630)                               |
|             |             |                      |                                       |                                           |                                                             | USEI (1/630)                              |
|             |             | 26.7                 | 3.4                                   | 2.9                                       | 13(5)                                                       | Insieme (1/630)                           |
|             |             |                      |                                       |                                           |                                                             | LeU(1/630)                                |
|             |             |                      |                                       |                                           |                                                             | CP (2/630)                                |
|             |             |                      |                                       |                                           |                                                             | Ncl (4/630)                               |
|             |             |                      |                                       |                                           |                                                             | +E (3/630)                                |
|             |             |                      |                                       |                                           |                                                             |                                           |

Source: Authors' elaboration of data on volatility provided by Emanuele (2015), updated in December 2019; of data on the effective number of electoral and parliamentary parties provided by Gallagher (2019) and of data on new parties provided by Emanuele (2016), updated in December 2019. Official records were also consulted.

Notes: In bicameral systems, such as Italy and Spain, the data refers to the lower chamber. Party acronym meanings, by order of appearance in the table (original language name provided only for parties not mentioned in the main text):

- In Portugal: PAN – People-Animals-Nature; IL – Liberal Initiative.
- In Greece, ANEL – Independent Greeks; DIMAR – Democratic Left; XA – Golden Dawn; EL – Greek Solution (Ελληνική Λύση); Mera25 – European Realistic Disobedience Front (Μέτωπο Ευρωπαϊκής Ρεαλιστικής Ανυπακοής).
- In Spain: UPYD – Union, Progress and Democracy (Unión Progreso y Democracia); CUP-UP – Popular Unity Candidacy-For Rupture (Candidatura d'Unitat Popular-Per la Ruptura); TE – Teruel Exists (Teruel Existe).
- In Italy: MAIE – Associative Movement Italians Abroad (Movimento Associativo Italiani all'Estero); CD – Democratic Centre (Centro Democratico); Fdl – Brothers of Italy; M5S – Five Star Movement; SEL – Left Ecology Freedom (Sinistra Ecologia Libertà); SC – Civic Choice (Scelta Civica); USEI – South American Union Italian Emigrants (Unione Sudamericana Emigrati Italiani); LeU – Free and Equal (Liberi e Uguali); CP – Popular Civic List (Civica Popolare); Ncl – Us with Italy (Noi con l'Italia); +E – More Europe (Più Europa).

party system innovation can be observed in the case of Greece: in the January 2015 legislative election, 9.6 per cent of votes went to new parties (Rori 2016), most of them to the centre party To Potami (Το Ποτάμι – The River), and the July 2019 contest saw a similar level of innovation, leading to two new parties in parliament.

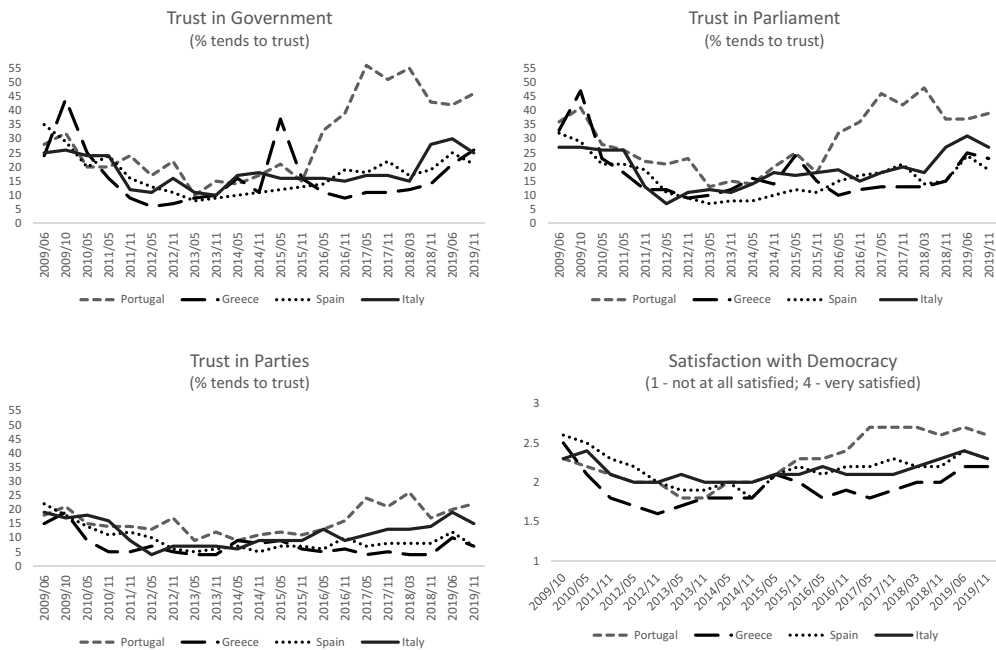
In sum, relative to its South European neighbours, Portugal is indeed exceptional when it comes to party system stability. Three factors may account for the trends observed in Portugal. The first is the lack of an innovative, alternative and credible political party and of a capable political *entrepreneur* able to exploit the citizens'/voters' disappointment when it was the right time to do so, i.e. during or just after the Great Recession and the austerity period that followed. The second factor is the choice of a significant portion of the Portuguese electorate to exit (that is, to abstain), rather than voice its discontent by going to the polls and voting for a challenger party. Last but not least, protest parties had long existed within the Portuguese parliament. In fact, this category was well represented by the radical left parties PCP and BE, which indeed obtained a very good result at the first post-bailout legislative election of 2015.

### Political attitudes in Portugal: mending fences with the political system

The Portuguese case also stands apart from the other South European democracies under analysis in that, after the collapse in political support due to the economic crisis and the austerity period that followed, satisfaction with democracy and trust in political institutions recovered quickly from 2015 onwards.<sup>7</sup>

Satisfaction with democracy had reached manifest lows in all four South European democracies between 2012 and 2014, with average values below 2 on a 4-point scale going from 'not satisfied at all' (1) to 'very satisfied' (4) (Figure 2). However, although this indicator displayed a value of 2.1 in the four countries in spring 2015, its evolution thereafter was quite different. In fact, levels of satisfaction with democracy in Portugal rose from 2.1 in early 2015 to 2.7 in early 2017 and have not since dropped from the midpoint of the scale (2.5). The same has not happened in the other three polities. Despite a trend towards convergence among the four countries from 2018 onwards, Portuguese citizens are still ahead of their South European counterparts.

Similar trends can be seen in terms of trust in government. Again, prominent lows had been identified in all four countries between 2012 and 2014, with less than 20 per cent of citizens declaring that they tended to trust the government. What stands out again is the growth in the proportion of Portuguese citizens who trust the government in the post-bailout period. Trust levels went from 15 per cent in November 2015, during the short-lived second Passos Coelho cabinet, to 33 per cent in spring 2016, a few months after the formation of the Costa government, and 53 per cent one year later. They have not since dropped below 42 per cent. On the other hand, from 2015 onwards, the level of trust remained largely unchanged in the case of Spain, while in Italy it recovered



**Figure 2.** Trust in political institutions and satisfaction with democracy in Portugal, Spain, Greece and Italy, 2009–2019.

*Source:* Authors' elaboration of data from Eurobarometer.

considerably at the end of 2018, during the first months of the M5S-Lega cabinet. In Greece, after the initial enthusiasm for the new SYRIZA government in the spring of 2015, trust in government plummeted and only reached the 20 per cent threshold again in June 2019, during the campaign for an election SYRIZA was expected to lose.

A very similar story can be told for trust in parliament. Between May 2013 and 2015, less than 20 per cent of the citizens trusted the parliament in the four countries. Thereafter, a feeble recovery in this indicator is only observed in late 2018–early 2019 in the case of Spain, Italy and Greece (always with two-thirds of citizens distrusting parliament), whereas Portugal showed improvements as early as 2016, and almost half of its citizens would soon declare they trusted the parliament. Since 2018, a slight decline in this indicator in Portugal, accompanied by a positive trend in the other countries, created a pattern of convergence, but twice as many Portuguese citizens as their Spanish counterparts consider their parliament trustworthy.

The only partial exception to this trend concerns trust in political parties. Indeed, between 2017 and 2018 Portugal distanced itself from the other countries due to a positive trend in this indicator. Since then, values have dropped slightly in Portugal and improved in Italy, so Portugal does not stand out as sharply; however, in November 2019 the proportion of Portuguese citizens who trusted political parties was three times higher than in Spain and Greece.

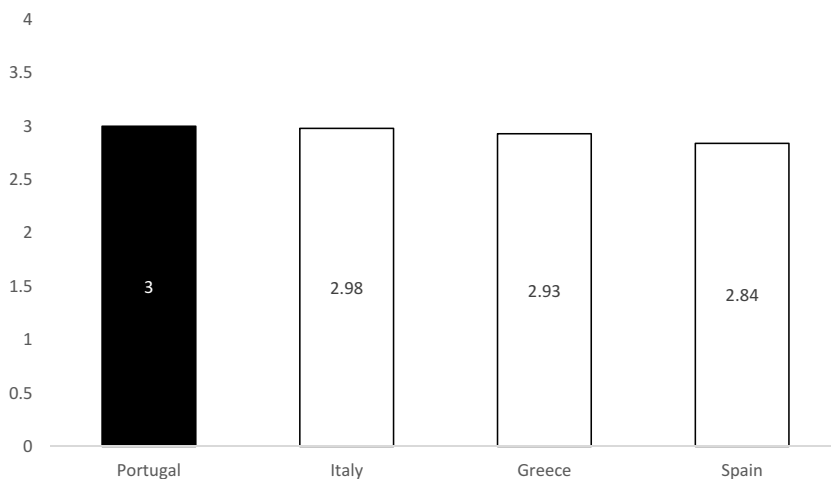
The sudden growth in the levels of satisfaction with democracy in Portugal as of 2015 can be partly attributed to the improving economic conditions, a key factor of this attitude in contemporary Southern Europe (e.g. Quaranta & Martini 2017; Fernandes et al. 2019). Similar considerations can be made about trust in parliament, the government and political parties (Fernandes et al. 2019). Also, after the Great Recession, corruption perceptions became more important to satisfaction with democracy and trust in representative political institutions (Fernandes et al. 2019), and Portugal has scored better than the three other South European countries on this item.<sup>8</sup> A third possible relevant factor in Portugal is the surprising stability of the understanding between the left-wing parties, as support for a left-wing coalition (considered highly unlikely before 2015) was found to be associated with higher levels of satisfaction with democracy and political trust in 2016 (Freire & Santana-Pereira *forthcoming*).

Let us now shift to the analysis of populist attitudes. Over the last decade, the perception that Portugal was quite immune to the populist rise observed in other European democracies, including Italy, Spain and Greece, and the reasons underlying the resilience of the Portuguese party system to this kind of development have been the subject of debate (e.g. Santana-Pereira 2016; Carreira da Silva & Salgado 2018). To what extent is that exceptional pattern linked to differences in the demand side, namely in terms of populist attitudes? As can be seen in Figure 2, political parties do not enjoy a great deal of trust from citizens in either Portugal or the other South European democracies, even in the post-bailout period. To a certain extent, these levels of distrust can be linked with populist attitudes, at least in its subdimension of anti-elitism. But more specific data can be used to tackle this question.

Below, we present and discuss an index of populist attitudes computed from data recently gathered in Portugal (2019) and three other South European democracies (2015). This is, to our knowledge, the most recent comparable data currently available for this set of countries. The populist attitudes scale employed is composed of six statements designed to measure the main components of populism as an ideational orientation, based on the minimal definition of populism proposed by Mudde in 2004: a thin-centred ideology that considers that society is basically divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic fields – the pure people versus the elite, corrupt or incompetent – and argues that politics should be the expression of the general will, or *volonté generale*, of the people. Each of the six items, developed by Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove (2014), provides an isolated or concomitant measure of the components of the ideational definition of populism, such as people-centrism (the people as a central element of politics), anti-elitism (a negative view of the nature and action of the elites), the homogeneity of the people and the elite, and the Manichaeian antagonism between them.<sup>9</sup> The index was created by taking the average of the answers to the six items and

varies from 0 (populist attitudes not held) to 4 (populist attitudes strongly held).

Figure 3 allows us to conclude that there are no striking differences between the Portuguese, the Italians and the Greeks in terms of how strongly they express populist views on politics. Spain scores a little lower, but still much higher than the midpoint of the scale. In general terms, levels of populist attitudes are extremely high in Southern Europe.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the exceptionalism of the Portuguese case is not found in the prevalence of populist attitudes within the citizenry, which is indeed high, but in the fact that it seems that those with populist attitudes did not find populist parties or political entrepreneurs blatantly expressing these views. The leader of the new radical right populist party Chega, André Ventura (who secured one parliamentary seat in the 2019 legislative election), might appear to be the political entrepreneur figure that was lacking, but his arrival came much later than in the other countries; elsewhere, they appeared and thrived during or right after the crisis and/or the bailout. Interestingly enough, vote intentions for Ventura's party are currently much higher than the 1.3 per cent of the popular vote it received in 2019, having varied between 7 per cent and 8 per cent in December 2020 (Dinis, Garcia & Rosa 2020; Machado 2020). These polls therefore place Chega as the third or fourth most relevant political party in electoral terms. It remains to be seen if the party will be able to keep these favourable numbers until the next legislative election (expected to take place in the fall of 2023, if Costa's minority



**Figure 3.** Index of populist attitudes in Southern Europe (2015 and 2019).

Source: Authors' elaboration of data from Sondagens ICS/ISCTE (May 2019 Report 3, available at: <https://sondagens-ics-ul.iscte-iul.pt/2019/06/01/sondagem-maio-2019-para-sic-expresso-parte-3/>) for the case of Portugal and from Rico and Anduiza (2019) – namely their supplementary materials online – for the other countries.

Notes: In Portugal the data was collected in April-May 2019, whereas the data was collected in the other countries in 2015. The index varies from 0 (populist attitudes not held) to 4 (populist attitudes strongly held).

government manages to serve a full mandate). If it does, that would put a definitive end to the depiction of Portugal as one of the last European democracies free of relevant radical right populist parties.

### **Breaking news: Portuguese exceptionalism, pandemic style**

Before concluding, a few final considerations on recent developments are made in light of the exceptional times in which we live and write. As we all know, in late 2019 a new virus was identified in the Chinese city of Wuhan. The virus spread extremely quickly and an increasing number of cases of covid-19 were registered in Europe between late February and early March, with particular severity in Italy and Spain. On March 12, the Director General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared that 'covid-19 can be characterised as a pandemic' (WHO 2020). The consequences of this massive health emergency have touched all countries at social, economic and political levels. In Southern Europe, a range of restrictions commonly referred to as lockdowns were enforced from March to May 2020.

This first phase of the covid-19 emergency shook up attitudes towards the political system. In a recent paper, Bol et al. (2020) show that the lockdowns had a positive effect on both trust in government and satisfaction with democracy in an array of European countries. Italy is a good example of this, with one in every three citizens declaring their opinion of the PM had improved after the crisis (DG Comm 2020a). Nevertheless, a survey carried out in late April 2020 showed that trust in government was still considerably higher in Portugal than in Spain, with Italy and Greece placed in between (DG Comm 2020a).

In fact, in Spring 2020, three out of every four citizens in Portugal seemed to trust the PM's actions in the fight against covid-19 (DG Comm 2020b, 2020c). Government approval reached 60 per cent in early April 2020 – about 10 percentage points higher than in 2019 (DG Comm 2020d). May 2020 polls suggested that, if elections had been held at that time, the PS would have won new by a landslide, with a good chance of achieving the absolute majority of seats in parliament it had failed to obtain in 2019 (DG Comm 2020c).

Spain is indeed a good example of a sharp contrast to the Portuguese panorama with regard to public opinion about the government during the covid-19 outbreak. In fact, in March 2020, 36 to 43 per cent of Spaniards strongly or somewhat disapproved of the government's handling of the crisis (DG Comm 2020b). A few weeks later, 54 per cent said the government had failed more than it had succeeded, and 48 per cent had little or no trust in the way it was dealing with the emergency (DG Comm 2020e). In May, 52 per cent wanted new elections so that another government would manage the crisis, but the May 2020 polls revealed that, if elections were to be held, the Socialists would have roughly the same results they had secured in late 2019 (DG Comm 2020c, 2020f). Interestingly, citizens seemed to dislike the political struggle

surrounding the emergency, since 88 per cent believed parties should support the government and leave criticism for later (DG Comm 2020e).

This brings us to another dimension that, at this time of emergency, again sets Portugal apart from other South European countries: the relationship between government and main opposition parties, and notably the behaviour adopted by the opposition in parliament vis-à-vis the executive's action. As we know, the highest level of consensus in parliament is usually found on matters of national interest commonly affecting the whole electorate (Rose 1984; Moury & De Giorgi 2015). The legislation presented by the governments to address the emergency caused by the spread of covid-19 is undoubtedly related to national interests. Nonetheless, cooperation between government and opposition was not present in all countries. To be precise, the four South European nations could be aligned on a continuum going from very adversarial to very collaborative attitudes of the opposition parties in parliament, with Portugal standing at the collaborative end of this continuum, followed by Greece, and Italy and Spain placed on the opposite side, as the most adversarial cases.

In both Italy and Spain, the opposition parties did not show any cooperation. In Italy, Lega and the far right FdI (Fratelli d'Italia – Brothers of Italy) publicly criticised the government from the outset due to the content of the measures to overcome the crisis and the fact that the executive chose to pass the emergency legislation through Prime Ministerial Decrees, without any discussion in parliament. The clash with the government peaked in mid-April, when the PM Giuseppe Conte attacked the two main opposition leaders, Matteo Salvini and Giorgia Meloni, during his TV speech to the nation (Guerzoni 2020). The Italian opposition's attitude during this time of emergency was clearly illustrated by the parade organised on the occasion of the Republic Day, 2 June, aimed primarily at demonstrating against the government (Lopapa 2020) just a few weeks after the easing of the most severe containment measures.

In Spain, despite an apparent truce at the beginning of the emergency, the government and the official opposition frequently showed signs of friction. In mid-March the PP changed its strategy and tried to turn 'the coronavirus into a new weapon of opposition to the government' (Aduriz 2020), publicly charging the executive for its actions vis-à-vis the health crisis and trying to exploit its supposed economic efficiency as compared to that of the incumbent parties.

During the Spring of 2020, the Greek opposition was generally quite supportive of the government's health measures, acting very responsibly most of the time. SYRIZA's behaviour was mixed. At first, the party supported the governmental health policies, largely because the ND cabinet relied on expert opinions before taking any of the most relevant decisions and regularly communicated them to the public (Perrigo & Hincks 2020). But SYRIZA was critical in terms of the priorities of governmental economic support (workers versus employers).

From late April onwards, Alexis Tsipras criticised the government on economic grounds, saying that its response to the crisis was tardy and insufficient.

In Portugal, the situation has been different. The PS and PSD have often cooperated with each other in the legislative process, also in hard times (De Giorgi, Moury & Ruivo 2015), and this tradition of collaboration was confirmed in the recent period of emergency. In mid-March, the PSD leader Rui Rio voted in favour of declaring a state of emergency in the wake of the pandemic and offered collaboration with the executive, which, he stated, was no longer 'a government of an opposing party, but the government of Portugal, which we all have to help in this moment' (Moitinho Oliveira 2020).<sup>11</sup> Between late March and April, he confirmed his position and that of his party:

We need national unity. The country has a democratically elected government. To weaken the government is to weaken our fight. We must put aside the logic of opposition. We must all be opposed to the virus and not to each other (Avó 2020).<sup>12</sup>

His cooperative attitude was so striking that even the Spanish party Podemos – in government along with the PSOE – publicly noted this when it posted a video of Rio's parliamentary speech and tweeted 'This is the opposition in Portugal. So near and yet so far'.<sup>13</sup>

### **Illustrating Portuguese exceptionalism**

The research articles that follow offer the academic community a thorough analysis of the patterns illustrated above in the Portuguese post-bailout period, employing recent data and adopting a comparative or longitudinal stance whenever possible and relevant, in order to permit a true understanding of the patterns of this exceptionalism.

First, Catherine Moury, Elisabetta De Giorgi and Pedro Pita Barros put forward the idea of 'austerity by stealth' as a key feature (and tool) of the 2015–2019 Socialist cabinet, and part of its success. Austerity by stealth, as they define it, means fiscal contraction that is less visible and not highlighted in the government's public speeches, and that, in the case of the first Costa government, was implicitly supported by the left-wing parties in exchange for the approval of more visible anti-austerity measures. Their argument is backed by a quantitative analysis of revenue and expenditure data (showing that although the government reverted many austerity policies, there was no inversion of the fiscal contraction in practice since the Great Recession), a case study of austerity by stealth in the health sector and several interviews with cabinet officials and MPs (Moury, de Giorgi, & Barros, 2020). Carlos Jalali, João Moniz and Patrícia Silva – while focusing on the most recent Portuguese legislative election, held in October 2019, and providing insights on the context, protagonists, campaign dynamics and events, results and government formation – argue that the first Costa government represented a weak form of contract parliamentarism:

successful in terms of stability but at the same time unable to foster enough path dependency to lead to new agreements in the aftermath of the 2019 election or to bring the left parties closer together in terms of issue positions (Jalali, Moniz, & Silva, 2020).

The two other articles focus on the patterns of continuity of the Portuguese party system and the presence of populist attitudes along with the absence of electoral success of populist parties in the country. Marco Lisi, Edalina Sanches and Jayane dos Santos Maia argue that the increasing levels of abstention on the one hand and the strategies put forward by party leaders on the other are the key factors of party system stability in Portugal. The authors demonstrate their argument by analysing the 2015 and 2019 legislative election results at the county level and reporting their qualitative research on the matter (Lisi, Sanches, & Maia, 2020). In turn, José Santana-Pereira and João Cancela focus on the demand side of populist attitudes, starting by exploring their correlates: based on an array of hypotheses focusing on factors such as socio-economic status and attitudes towards political institutions. The link between populist attitudes, electoral participation and vote choice is then explored to glean a greater understanding of whether populist citizens are less likely to vote, and, for those who do turn out to the polls, identifying their vote choices in the absence of a relevant, clear-cut, populist political party (Santana-Pereira & Cancela, 2020).

## Conclusions

In the present work, we set the background for the above-mentioned collection of articles by mapping the contexts – notably, the government, party and public opinion dimensions – in which Portugal's exceptionalism is still clearly visible in the post-bailout period (2015–2019) relative to the three main South European reference cases. We confirm that Portugal presents distinct patterns vis-à-vis the other South European countries in all the aforesaid areas, demonstrating significant stability in both the input and output spheres of its political system; in contrast, the other South European countries experienced significant transformations.

In addition, while the quick recovery in satisfaction with democracy and political trust after 2015 contrasts with the patterns observed in Spain, Italy and Greece, levels of populism are similar across Southern Europe. However, unlike the latter three countries, in Portugal we find a clear mismatch between the demand and supply of populism – high levels of populist attitudes contrasted with the absence of a successful populist political party.

The patterns we observe in the Portuguese case can be explained by the lack of sophisticated political entrepreneurship, the existence of parties seen as protest parties (BE and PCP) albeit not anti-establishment, a trend towards abstention (exit) instead of vote (voice) in the citizenry, the stable relations between the minority PS cabinet and the radical left, and the fairly positive

economic results. The extent to which these exceptional trends are likely to continue is surely dependent on the covid-19 pandemic management and its social, economic and political impacts. The Portuguese parties and party system have proved resilient during both the bailout and post-bailout period. It remains to be seen whether they will be able to overcome unscathed this umpteenth moment of crisis, which came only a few years after the end of the previous one.

## Notes

1. Bosco & Verney 2012, 2016; Martín & Urquizu-Sancho 2012; Tsatsanis & Teperoglou 2016; Bull & Pasquino 2018; Chiaramonte et al. 2018; Orriols & Cordero 2016; Paparo 2018; Vidal 2018.
2. Bellucci, Costa Lobo & Lewis-Beck 2012; Freire et al. 2014; Moury & De Giorgi 2015; Tsatsanis, Freire & Tsirbas 2014.
3. The bailout was signed by the three Portuguese mainstream parties – the Socialist Party, the Social Democrats and the CDS-PP – in April 2011, just after the resignation of the Socialist government led by José Sócrates (who had been in office since 2005). New elections were then held in June and led to the victory of a centre right coalition which started the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding agreed with the lenders. Portugal managed to exit the bailout programme in 2014, after one of the harshest austerity periods in the country's history.
4. Freire & Santana-Pereira 2012; Magalhães 2012; Martín & Urquizu-Sancho 2012; Tsatsanis & Teperoglou 2016; De Giorgi, Moury & Ruivo 2015.
5. While Podemos was a brand-new party (founded in 2014), Ciudadanos had been already founded in 2006 as a Catalan party.
6. There had already been a precedent, in fact, in Southern Europe represented by the SYRIZA-ANEL government in Greece, formed in 2015.
7. Quaranta & Martini 2017; Muro & Vidal 2017; Sanches, Santana-Pereira & Razzuoli 2018; Fernandes et al. 2019.
8. According to the V-DEM (Varieties of Democracy) Corruption Perception Index, available at: <https://www.v-dem.net/en/>.
9. The six items implemented in the 2015 survey reported by Rico and Anduiza (2019) are as follows: 1. The politicians in [country] need to follow the will of the people. 2. The people, and not politicians, should make our most important policy decisions. 3. The political differences between the elite and the people are larger than the differences among the people. 4. I would rather be represented by a citizen than by a specialised politician. 5. Elected officials talk too much and take too little action. 6. What people call “compromise”, in politics is really just selling out on one's principles. The wording of the Portuguese scale sometimes differed: item 1 mentioned ‘MPs’ instead of ‘politicians in [country]’, and is therefore closer to the Akkerman, Mudde & Zaslove (2014) wording; item 4 mentioned ‘professional politicians’ instead of ‘specialised politicians’; lastly, item 5 mentioned ‘politicians’ instead of ‘elected officials’.
10. Based on Rico and Anduiza's (2019) data, we could also say that these figures are higher in Southern Europe than in Western Europe: in fact, countries such as Germany, Switzerland, Sweden and the UK present an average score of 2.6.
11. Quotation translated from Portuguese by the authors.
12. Quotation translated from Portuguese by the authors.

13. Tweet posted on the official account of Podemos on 7 April 2020, translated from Spanish by the authors. Tweet available at: <https://twitter.com/PODEMOS/status/1247551332707381248>.

## Disclosure statement

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

## Funding

This work was supported by the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia's R&D Unit Strategic Financing UID/SOC/03126/2019 and the project IF/00926/2015.

## Notes on contributors

**Elisabetta De Giorgi** is Assistant Professor at the Department of Political and Social Sciences (DiSPeS) of the University of Trieste. Her main research interests are parliaments from a comparative perspective and opposition parties. She has published several articles in national and international journals and the book *L'opposizione parlamentare in Italia. Dall'antiberlusconismo all'antipolitica* (2016). She has edited the volume *Opposition Parties in European Legislatures. Conflict or Consensus?* (2018) with Gabriella Ilonszki.

**José Santana-Pereira** is an Assistant Professor at ISCTE-Lisbon University Institute's Department of Political Science and Public Policy, and Researcher at CIES-Lisbon University Institute. His research focuses on issues such as media systems, media effects on public opinion, campaigns, political attitudes and voting behaviour. His work has been published in journals including *Electoral Studies*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, *South European Society and Politics*, *Swiss Political Science Review* and *International Journal of Press/Politics*.

## ORCID

Elisabetta De Giorgi  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6553-341X>

José Santana-Pereira  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1713-3710>

## References

- Aduriz, I. (2020) 'El PP convierte el coronavirus en una nueva arma de oposición al Gobierno', *El Diario*, 10 March, available online at: [https://www.eldiario.es/politica/PP-convierte-coronavirus-oposicion-Gobierno\\_0\\_1004050173.html](https://www.eldiario.es/politica/PP-convierte-coronavirus-oposicion-Gobierno_0_1004050173.html)
- Akkerman, A., Mudde, C. & Zaslove, A. (2014) 'How populist are the people? Measuring populist attitudes in voters', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 47, no. 9, pp. 1324–1353.
- Avó, C. (2020) 'Rui Rio: "O governo que vier será de salvação nacional"', *Diário de Notícias*, 29 March, available online at: <https://www.dn.pt/poder/rui-rio-o-governo-que-vier-sera-de-salvacao-nacional-12003089.html>

- Baldini, G. (2013) 'Don't count your chickens before they're hatched: the 2013 Italian parliamentary and presidential elections', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 473–497.
- Bellucci, P., Costa Lobo, M. & Lewis-Beck, M. S. (2012) 'Economic crisis and elections: the European periphery', *Electoral Studies*, vol. 31, pp. 469–471.
- Bol, D., Giani, M., Blais, A. & Loewen, P. J. (2020) 'The effect of covid-19 lockdowns on political support: some good news for democracy?' *QPE Working Paper 2020-1* (Version 3), 18 April.
- Bosco, A. & Verney, S. (2012) 'Electoral epidemic: the political cost of economic crisis in Southern Europe, 2010–11', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 129–154.
- Bosco, A. & Verney, S. (2016) 'From electoral epidemic to government epidemic: the next level of the crisis in Southern Europe', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 383–406.
- Bull, M. & Pasquino, G. (2018) 'Italian politics in an era of recession: the end of bipolarism?', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 1–12.
- Carreira da Silva, F. & Salgado, S. (2018) 'Why no populism in Portugal?', in *Changing Societies: Legacies and Challenges – Citizenship in Crisis*, eds M. Costa Lobo, F. Carreira da Silva & J. P. Zúquete, ICS, Lisbon, pp. 249–268.
- Chiaromonte, A., Emanuele, V., Maggini, N. & Paparo, A. (2018) 'Populist success in a hung parliament: the 2018 general election in Italy', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 479–501.
- De Giorgi, E. (2018) 'The never-ending transformation of the Italian party system', in *Party System Change, the European Crisis and the State of Democracy*, eds M. Lisi, Routledge, London, pp. 155–170.
- De Giorgi, E. & Cancela, J. (2019) 'The Portuguese radical left parties supporting government: from policy-takers to policymakers?', *Government and Opposition*, pp. 1–20. advanced online publication.
- De Giorgi, E. & Dias, A. (2020) 'Divided, but not by much: the parties of the centre right between government and opposition', *Contemporary Italian Politics*, vol. 12, pp. 169–181. advanced online publication.
- De Giorgi, E., Moury, C. & Ruivo, J. P. (2015) 'Incumbents, opposition and international lenders: governing Portugal in times of crisis', *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 54–74.
- De Giorgi, E. & Santana-Pereira, J. (2016) 'The 2015 Portuguese legislative election: widening the coalitional space and bringing the extreme left in', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 451–468.
- DG Comm (2020a) 'Public opinion monitoring at a glance in the time of covid-19', 5 May, available online at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/pt/be-heard/eurobarometer/public-opinion-in-the-time-of-covid-19>
- DG Comm (2020b) 'Public opinion monitoring at a glance in the time of covid-19', 20–27 March, available online at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/pt/be-heard/eurobarometer/public-opinion-in-the-time-of-covid-19>
- DG Comm (2020c) 'Public opinion monitoring at a glance in the time of covid-19', 27 May, available online at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/pt/be-heard/eurobarometer/public-opinion-in-the-time-of-covid-19>
- DG Comm (2020d) 'Public opinion monitoring at a glance in the time of covid-19', 3 April, available online at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/pt/be-heard/eurobarometer/public-opinion-in-the-time-of-covid-19>
- DG Comm (2020e) 'Public opinion monitoring at a glance in the time of covid-19', 27 April, available online at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/pt/be-heard/eurobarometer/public-opinion-in-the-time-of-covid-19>

- DG Comm (2020f) 'Public opinion monitoring at a glance in the time of covid-19', 12 May, available online at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/pt/be-heard/eurobarometer/public-opinion-in-the-time-of-covid-19>
- Dinis, D., Garcia, F. & Rosa, S. M. (2020) 'Sondagem Expresso-SIC: PS vale mais que toda a direita junta, PSD e Rio a descer', *Expresso*, 17 December, available online at: <https://expresso.pt/politica/2020-12-17-Sondagem-Expresso-SIC-PS-vale-mais-que-toda-a-direita-junta-PSD-e-Rio-a-descer>
- Döring, H. & Manow, P. (2019) 'Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov): information on parties, elections and cabinets in modern democracies. Development version,' available online at: <http://www.parlgov.org/>
- Emanuele, V. (2015) *Dataset of Electoral Volatility and Its Internal Components in Western Europe (1945–2015)*, Italian Center for Electoral Studies, Rome.
- Emanuele, V. (2016) *Dataset of New Parties and Party System Innovation in Western Europe since 1945*, Italian Center for Electoral Studies, Rome.
- Emanuele, V. & Chiaramonte, A. (2018) 'A growing impact of new parties: myth or reality? Party system innovation in Western Europe after 1945', *Party Politics*, vol. 24, no. 5, pp. 475–487.
- Fernandes, J. M. (2011) 'The 2011 Portuguese election: looking for a way out', *West European Politics*, vol. 34, no. 6, pp. 1296–1303.
- Fernandes, J. M., Magalhães, P. C. & Santana-Pereira, J. (2018) 'Portugal's leftist government: from sick man to poster boy?', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 503–524.
- Fernandes, T., Cancela, J., Sanches, E. & Santana-Pereira, J. (2019) *Instituições e Qualidade da Democracia: Cultura Política na Europa do Sul*, FFMS, Lisbon.
- Freire, A. (2017) *Para lá da «Geringonça»: O Governo de Esquerdas em Portugal e na Europa*, Contraponto, Lisbon.
- Freire, A., Lisi, M., Andreadis, I. & Leite Viegas, J. M. (2014) 'Political representation in bailed-out Southern Europe: Greece and Portugal compared', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 413–433.
- Freire, A. & Santana-Pereira, J. (2012) 'Portugal, 2011: the victory of the neoliberal right, the defeat of the left', *Portuguese Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 179–187.
- Freire, A. & Santana-Pereira, J. (2019) 'The President's dilemma: the Portuguese semi-presidential system in times of crisis (2011–16)', *International Journal of Iberian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 117–135.
- Freire, A. & Santana-Pereira, J. (forthcoming) 'Des politiques d'austérité et de la crise démocratique, à la sortie de l'austérité et au renouveau démocratique? Le cas portugais 2008-2016', in *L'Espagne et le Portugal Après la Crise: La Péninsule Ibérique en Transition?* eds A. Fernandez Garcia, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.
- Gallagher, M. (2019) 'Election indices dataset', available online at: [http://www.tcd.ie/Political\\_Science/people/michael\\_gallagher/ElSystems/index.php](http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/people/michael_gallagher/ElSystems/index.php)
- Garzia, D. (2019) 'The Italian election of 2018 and the first populist government of Western Europe', *West European Politics*, vol. 42, no. 3, pp. 670–680.
- Guerzoni, M. (2020) 'Coronavirus, l'attacco di Conte (stanco e arrabbiato) in diretta tv: «Salvini e Meloni dicono falsità»', *Corriere della Sera*, 11 April, available online at: [https://www.corriere.it/politica/20\\_aprile\\_11/coronavirus-show-premier-conte-diretta-tv-salvini-meloni-dicono-falsita-9396558e-7b67-11ea-afc6-fad772b88c99.shtml](https://www.corriere.it/politica/20_aprile_11/coronavirus-show-premier-conte-diretta-tv-salvini-meloni-dicono-falsita-9396558e-7b67-11ea-afc6-fad772b88c99.shtml)
- Hobolt, S. B. & Tilley, J. (2016) 'Fleeing the centre: the rise of challenger parties in the aftermath of the euro crisis', *West European Politics*, vol. 39, no. 5, pp. 971–991.
- Jalali, J., Silva, P. & Moniz, J. (2020). 'In the shadow of the Contraption? The 2019 Portuguese legislative elections', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 231–256.

- Laakso, M. & Taagepera, R. (1979) '“Effective” number of parties: a measure with application to west Europe', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 3–27.
- Lisi, M., Freire, A. & Tsatsanis, M. (eds) (2020) *Political Representation and Citizenship in Portugal: From Crisis to Renewal?* Lexington Books, Lanham.
- Lisi, M., Sanches, E. R., & dos Santos Maia, J. (2020). 'Party system renewal or business as usual? Continuity and change in post-bailout Portugal', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 181–205.
- Lopapa, C. (2020) '2 Giugno, centrodestra in piazza senza regole: saltano i distanziamenti, il flash mob degenera in ressa', *La Repubblica*, 2 June, available online at: [https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2020/06/02/news/2\\_giugno\\_manifestazione\\_centrodestra-258244031/](https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2020/06/02/news/2_giugno_manifestazione_centrodestra-258244031/)
- Machado, A. (2020) 'Chega passa a terceira força com PS mais distante do PSD', *Jornal de Negócios*, 21 December, available online at: <https://www.jornaldenegocios.pt/economia/detalhe/chega-passa-a-terceira-forca-com-ps-mais-distante-do-psd>
- Magalhães, P. C. (2012) 'After the bailout: responsibility, policy, and valence in the Portuguese legislative election of June 2011', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 309–327.
- Martín, I. & Urquiza-Sancho, I. (2012) 'The 2011 general election in Spain: the collapse of the Socialist Party', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 347–363.
- Moitinho Oliveira, M. (2020) 'É possível fazer oposição em “tempo de guerra”?', *Público*, 23 March, available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/03/23/politica/noticia/possivel-oposicao-tempo-guerra-1908934>
- Moury, C. & De Giorgi, E. (2015) 'Introduction: conflict and consensus in parliament during the economic crisis', *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 1–13.
- Moury, C., De Giorgi, E. & Barros, P. P. (2020). 'How to combine public spending with fiscal rigour? “Austerity by stealth” in post-bailout Portugal (2015–2019)', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 151–180.
- Mudde, C. (2004) 'The populist zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition*, vol. 39, no. 4, pp. 541–563.
- Muro, D. & Vidal, G. (2017) 'Political mistrust in southern Europe since the Great Recession', *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 197–217.
- Orriols, L. & Cordero, G. (2016) 'The breakdown of the Spanish two-party system: the upsurge of Podemos and Ciudadanos in the 2015 general election', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 339–357.
- Paparo, A. (2018) 'Challenger's delight: the success of M5S and Lega in the 2018 Italian general election', *Italian Political Science*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 63–81.
- Perrigo, B. & Hincks, J. (2020) 'Greece has an elderly population and a fragile economy. How has it escaped the worst of the coronavirus so far?', *TIME*, 23 April, available online at: <https://time.com/5824836/greece-coronavirus/>
- Quaranta, M. & Martini, S. (2017) 'Easy come, easy go? Economic performance and satisfaction with democracy in Southern Europe in the last three decades', *Social Indicators Research*, vol. 131, no. 2, pp. 659–680.
- Rico, G. & Anduiza, E. (2019) 'Economic correlates of populist attitudes: an analysis of nine European countries in the aftermath of the Great Recession', *Acta Politica*, vol. 54, no. 3, pp. 371–397.
- Rori, L. (2016) 'The 2015 Greek parliamentary elections: from great expectations to no expectations', *West European Politics*, vol. 39, no. 6, pp. 1323–1343.
- Rose, R. (1984) *Do Parties Make a Difference?* Macmillan Press, London.

- Sanches, E., Santana-Pereira, J. & Razzuoli, I. (2018) 'In welfare we trust? Political trust in Portugal and Spain, 2008-2014', in *Changing Societies: Legacies and Challenges – Citizenship in Crisis*, eds M. Costa Lobo, F. Carreira da Silva & J. P. Zúquete, ICS, Lisbon, pp. 269–294.
- Santana-Pereira, J. (2016) 'A esquerda radical no período pós-2009: nada de (muito) novo em Portugal?', *Oficina do Historiador*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 58–77.
- Santana-Pereira, J. & Cancela, J. (2020). 'Demand without supply? Populist attitudes and voting behaviour in post-bailout Portugal', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 207–230.
- Silveira, P., Nina, S. R. & Teixeira, L. H. (2019) *Breve História do Partido Ecologista "Os Verdes" e do Pessoas-Animais-Natureza*, Público and 100Folhas, Lisbon.
- Teperoglou, E. & Tsatsanis, E. (2014) 'Dealignment, de-legitimation and the implosion of the two-party system in Greece: the earthquake election of 6 May 2012', *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 222–242.
- Tsatsanis, E., Freire, A. & Tsirbas, Y. (2014) 'The impact of the economic crisis on the ideological space in Portugal and Greece: a comparison of elites and voters', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 519–540.
- Tsatsanis, E. & Teperoglou, E. (2016) 'Realignment under stress: the July 2015 referendum and the September parliamentary election in Greece', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 427–450.
- Tsirbas, Y. (2016) 'The January 2015 parliamentary election in Greece: government change, partial punishment and hesitant stabilisation', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 407–426.
- Verney, S. & Bosco, A. (2013) 'Living parallel lives: Italy and Greece in an age of austerity', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 397–426.
- Vidal, G. (2018) 'Challenging business as usual? The rise of new parties in Spain in times of crisis', *West European Politics*, vol. 41, no. 2, pp. 261–286.
- World Health Organisation (2020) 'WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on covid-19-11 March 2020', available online at: <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19—11-march-2020>