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Scattered Clouds in the Horizon of Consensus: Attitudes of Portuguese Parliamentary Elites Towards Europe Before and After the Crisis

*Pedro T. Magalhães, João Cancela & Catherine Moury**

Abstract: »*Leichte Wolken am Konsens-Horizont. Einstellungen der portugiesischen parlamentarischen Eliten gegenüber Europa vor und nach der Krise.* In this article we analyze the evolution of the attitudes towards Europe of Portuguese parliamentary elites in the context of the sovereign debt crisis. Our analysis relies on interviews to a total of 227 MPs in the context of the ENEC project in 2014 and of the Intune Project in 2009 and 2007. Our principal finding is that an important gap has risen between the attitudes of the MPs and of the masses. Indeed, while the Portuguese are becoming increasingly less pro-European, this is not the case of their deputies. We show that, in 2014, the percentage of deputies that believed that EU membership benefited the country has decreased a little, but it stays as high as 89%. Our data, however, show that MPs now exhibit lower levels of trust towards the European institutions. Interestingly, the drop in the levels of trust towards EU institutions does not affect all institutions equally: trust towards the European Parliament remains constant regarding 2007, whereas the levels of trust in the remaining two institutions decrease. Finally, we show that it is in the Socialist Party (PS) that there is the steepest decline in the level of overall trust, which is rooted in declining levels of confidence in the European Commission. Given that PS has traditionally portrayed itself as the most pro-Europe of the Portuguese parties, this is solid evidence of a growing discontent with the European Commission.

Keywords: Europe, Portugal, political elites, Europeanness, attitudes towards Europe.

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1. Introduction¹

This article aims to analyze the effects of the sovereign debt crisis on the attitudes of Portuguese parliamentary elites towards the European Union (EU). It will do so by comparing the data from the IntUne surveys – whose latest set was gathered in 2009, before the full effects of the sovereign debt crisis were felt – with the more recent data from the ENEC² 2014 surveys (2014).

Whilst large-scale public opinion surveys on the attitudes of European citizens to the multiple aspects of European integration have been regularly conducted since the 1970s (notably through the Eurobarometer surveys), data on the perceptions of national political elites is much scarcer. The IntUne project (2005-2009) filled such a gap to a certain extent. However, even if it conducted two waves of surveys among national political elites (in 2007 and in 2009), the data obviously could not elicit a meaningful longitudinal analysis. The ENEC surveys, in turn, provide the basis for answering pressing research questions: How did the perceptions of Portuguese MPs respond to the Eurozone crisis? Are seeds of Euroscepticism growing where an apparently robust consensus used to reign (Moreira et al. 2010)? Are parliamentarians following the general trend of public opinion, which, as the data from the Eurobarometer shows since November 2012 (European Commission 2012), is marked by a substantial drop in the indicators of citizen support for the EU? Or, on the contrary, are political elites functioning as a bulwark of pro-European sentiment in an unfavorable, but presumably transitory, context?

These are the main questions this paper intends to answer. The Portuguese case is particularly relevant for an assessment of the Eurozone crisis as a potential critical juncture in the attitudes of national political elites towards European integration. Portugal belongs to a Southern European region which, on the one hand, has traditionally been described as strongly pro-European (Conti et al. 2010) and, on the other, was most severely hit by the sovereign debt crises. Along with Greece (and Ireland), Portugal requested financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund and the EU, which was granted on the condition of agreeing to implement unpopular and far-reaching austerity measures (as defined in the so-called Memorandum of Understanding). Unlike Greece, however, Portugal did not experience an electoral earthquake between 2009

¹ We would like to thank Pedro Tavares de Almeida and João Pedro Ruivo for comments and suggestions. Any errors or omissions are our sole responsibility.

² Acronym of the international research project 'European National Elites and the Crisis' that aims to evaluate the effects of the economic and political crisis European countries have been experiencing since 2008 upon the attitudes of national political elites towards the EU. In Portugal, the ENEC surveys were conducted under the supervision of Professor Pedro Tavares de Almeida and João Pedro Ruivo, with the financial support of the Portuguese Institute of International Relations – Nova University of Lisbon.

and 2014. The parliamentary landscape suffered no extraordinary changes in that period, as the center-left (PS) was replaced in government by a coalition of the center-right (PSD, CDS-PP). Attitudinal fluctuations of the Portuguese parliamentary elite can, thus, not be traced back to a major re-configuration of the parliamentary scenario – they must be analyzed within the frame of pre-existing, well-established parliamentary groups.

Our approach is fourfold. Section 2 outlines, through a comparative-historical overview, the more precise contours of the type of pro-Europeanism that characterized the Portuguese parliamentary elite until 2009. Section 3 deals with theories and hypotheses on the effects of the economic crisis on the perceptions of Europe. Sections 4 and 5 present the data and our findings. And section 5 concludes, discussing some of the potential implications of the findings in light of the aftermath of the parliamentary elections of 2015.

2. “Europe with Us”³ and We with Europe: Elite Consensus on European Integration as a Constitutive Feature of Portuguese Democracy

If European integration is frequently described as an elite-driven process (Haller 2008), the history of Portugal’s accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1986 provides a perfect illustration of this. When, in the late 1970s, Portugal formally applied to become a member of the EEC, most Portuguese citizens had little information on Europe, much less a consolidated opinion on the issue of EEC membership. Accession to the EEC was a wager of the political elite. In the turbulent revolutionary context of 1974-75, leaders of the moderate parties on the left (PS) and on the right (PSD and CDS) quickly became convinced that European integration was essential for the survival and consolidation of democracy. The European option was rooted in different motivations and logics, and not all of them overlapped. First, it implied a rupture with the recent authoritarian past and an alternative to the disastrous colonialist policies of the old regime. Second, as a club of Western liberal democracies, the EEC appeared to provide a safe haven from the dangers of communist revolution. Third, being by and large composed of advanced industrial societies, the EEC offered a clear promise of economic development and material well-being. To be sure, there were slight differences between the pro-European strategies of the two main political parties. Initially at least, the Socialist Party (PS) was more enthusiastic about the prospect of accession than the center-right Social Democratic Party (PSD). However, amongst the parties with sig-

³ Main campaign slogan of the center-left Socialist Party (PS) in the 1976 elections (Moreira et al. 2010, 58).

nificant parliamentary representation, only the communists (PCP) opposed accession, and they have remained very critical of European policies ever since – an attitude shared by their new competitor, the Left Bloc (BE), which emerged in the late 1990s (Moreira et al. 2010, 58-59).

The elite's wager proved to be largely successful, as the European option steadily gained the support of public opinion. If, in the early 1980s, only around 25 per cent of the population believed EEC membership to be “a good thing”, after accession – which occurred in 1986 – the proportion rose up to above 70 per cent in the early 1990s (Moreira et al. 2010, 59). The decade and a half standing in-between accession to the EEC and the adoption of the common European currency was, indeed, a period of pervasive Euro-optimism. European structural and cohesion funds helped boost economic growth, and the country witnessed unprecedented social change (Barreto 2003). As a consequence, European integration almost disappeared as a primary topic of political competition at both the electoral and the parliamentary levels.⁴ The first decade of the Twenty-first century, in turn, revealed signs of a slight erosion of the optimism on Europe. As European financial aid was reallocated following the enlargement of the EU to the East, the benefits of membership became less palpable, and this seems to have had an impact on public opinion perceptions. For sure, Portuguese views on Europe remained, as a whole, very positive, but there are good reasons to believe that they are based upon a strictly utilitarian evaluation of the benefits derived from EU membership rather than on either strong feelings of attachment to the supranational European polity or an overall positive assessment of the EU's institutional performance (Costa Pinto and Costa Lobo 2004).

The 2007 IntUne surveys have, as expected, shown that the attitudes of the political (and economic) elites toward Europe remain also overwhelmingly positive, in Portugal (Moreira et al. 2010; Ruivo and Tavares de Almeida 2015) as well as in the other three Southern European countries included (Greece, Italy and Spain). The shared legacy of a relatively recent authoritarian past and of economic backwardness, which one sought to definitely leave behind, together with a positive perception of the experience as net beneficiaries of European funds, appeared to have led to the formation of a distinctively pro-European region in terms of elite attitudes. As Conti et al. (Conti et al. 2010, 112-13) have noted, “both political and economic elites in Southern Europe display a somewhat greater frequency of positions congruent with a strong pro-Europeanism” and “show significantly lower frequencies on all Eurosceptical

⁴ After accession, even the communists tempered their stance. The radical demand of withdrawal from the EEC was soon dropped, in favor of a call for “another”, more socially-oriented Europe – a vision also shared by the emergent Left Bloc (Sanches and Pereira 2010). On the opposite side of the political spectrum, the Eurosceptic turn of the Social Democratic Center (CDS) – renamed Popular Party (PP) – in the early 1990s lasted only for a brief period.

positions”. Still, there were some nuances within this group of countries. In fact, Spain stood out as the most consistent case of pro-Europeanism, whilst in the other three countries there arose some ambiguities. Portuguese parliamentarians, in particular, were less enthusiastic – closer to the European-wide mean – about the prospect of further integration than their Southern European peers, and they shared with their Italian counterparts some doubts concerning the performance of EU institutions (Conti et al. 2010, 110, 114).

Has – and if so, to what extent? – this picture changed as a result of the sovereign debt crises in the Eurozone and the bail out? If, indeed, Portuguese attitudes on Europe are essentially based on a utilitarian assessment of the benefits of integration, one should expect a substantial drop in the indicators of pro-Europeanism after the crisis, since the latter has hit Portugal – and, for that matter, Southern Europe as a whole – much more severely than most European countries. Public opinion surveys point precisely in that direction. But do political elites follow the lead of public opinion? Or does a gap arise between their attitudes and the masses’? Before we begin to tackle such questions, some theoretical remarks on the effects of the crisis on EU perceptions are in order.

3. Effects of the Crisis on the Perceptions of Europe: Theories and Hypotheses

The collapse of Lehman Brothers in September 2008 was followed by a global financial crisis with particularly acute effects in the peripheries – and especially in the Southern periphery – of the Eurozone. As interest rates on government bonds skyrocketed between 2009 and 2011, Ireland, Greece and Portugal were eventually obliged to request loans from the IMF and the EU. Attached to such financial assistance came a set of tough requirements, involving drastic cuts on public expenditure and a radical reform of the role of the state in the economy. Countries like Italy and Spain, in turn, were not formally “intervened”. However, since they were spotted as risking contagion, their governments also caved in to the pressure to swiftly reduce debts and deficits through austerity measures. These events have challenged – and they still challenge – the legitimacy of the European Union.

On the one hand, citizens see their national – and, in many cases, individual – economic conditions deteriorate as a result of the crisis. This poses a threat to the so-called “output legitimacy” of the EU, i. e. the delivery by the Union of what people most expect from it, namely economic growth. If mass support for the EU is indeed essentially utilitarian in nature – as it appears to be in Portugal –, then economic depression bears the potential to negatively affect it. And the broader question arises: can a supranational polity such as the EU, with well-known unresolved problems concerning the democratic “inputs” to its complex

political system, afford to see the positive “outputs” it was perceived to generate regress dramatically (Bellamy 2010)?

On the other hand, the economic crisis has also exposed the shrinking room of maneuver of national policy-makers. In the formally “intervened” countries, conditionality requirements included reforms of all branches of the public sector. These policies are perceived by the public opinion – and frequently presented as such both by the political elites and the media – as “dictated” by the IMF and the EU. In the countries that have not been officially bailed out, the pressure exerted upon decision-makers had very similar effects. Moreover, the EU adopted legislation and a new treaty to ensure debt and deficit reduction. Issues such as wages, corporate taxes and indexation of pensions have suddenly become central topics at the European level. This is quite remarkable, given the initial resistance from many Member States to discuss these topics in the past. There is, hence, a clear tendency driven by the Euro-crisis: a shift from the national to the EU level – a Europeanization – of many controversial areas of social and economic policy. Thus, austerity measures, unpopular by nature, are now associated in the public opinion’s mind to the European Union.

Furthermore, as some governments find themselves in the position of agreeing to radical policy reforms with little reference to national parliaments or to citizens, there is also a clear transfer of decision-making power at the EU level away from the Commission and the European Parliament to the European Council – or, more precisely, to its larger, richer and more powerful members. This challenges the unity of Europe, which threatens to become fragmented along the lines of a simplistic divide between “good”, treaty-abiding countries and “bad”, financially irresponsible.

Two distinct streams of research are helpful in determining which changes in attitudes towards Europe to expect in the aftermath of the crisis: literature which analyzes how economic conditions influence government support and research focusing on the determinants of Euroscepticism. They converge in expecting a decrease of support for the EU associated with the financial crisis.

Economic voting theory argues that in bad economic times voters are much more likely to withdraw their support for the government (Lewis-Beck 1988). While some authors, in line with Easton’s (1965) argument, advocate that economic slowdown affects support for incumbents, but not for the political system as such, others stress that a “deep-seated lack of confidence in the institutions” might jeopardize “the very foundations of the system of government” (Newton 2008, 243). Analyzing the effects of the current crisis, Roth (2009) finds that net trust in the national governments and parliaments actually increased in the direct aftermath of the financial crisis – a phenomenon that resembles the so-called “rally around the flag” effect (Hetherington and Nelson, 2003). Yet this effect seems to be only temporary. As Roth (2009) notes, the medium-term effects of the crisis are significant losses of citizens’ trust in the national parliament and

government in the four periphery countries more severely hit by the financial turmoil in Europe (Greece, Spain, Ireland and Portugal).

The implications of such findings for the problem of the impact of the crisis on attitudes towards Europe are, however, not straightforward. Many authors argue that support for national government is a good proxy of support for the EU. The idea is that citizens, because of limited information on politics at the European level, use their opinions based on domestic information as a proxy for support at the European level (Anderson and Reichert 1995; Hix 1999). In the context of the financial crisis, however, the assumption that citizens do not know much about European policies and their influence is quite hazardous: newspapers constantly report on decisions taken by the European Council and policy-makers directly associate austerity measures with conditions imposed by the European Union (and, in the case of “intervened” countries, by the IMF). It could then be argued that citizens are now more likely than ever to hold the EU responsible for deteriorating – national and individual – economic conditions, and that the economic crisis has now a direct effect on citizens’ attitudes towards the EU. In other words, if as a rule citizens hold their government responsible for economic slowdown, then they might directly hold the EU – as a supranational government taking economic decisions – responsible, too.

Although there is not much dialogue between this literature and the research dealing specifically with support for the EU, many findings of the latter converge with the argument mentioned above. Let us recall Matthew Gabel’s (1998) seminal work, which tests five theories of public support for European integration. Gabel shows that the utilitarian theory, which posits that citizens’ support is positively related to their perceived welfare gains from integration policies, furnishes by far the strongest set of predictors of public support Europe – a finding later confirmed in the Portuguese case (Costa Pinto and Costa Lobo 2004). The logical argument for explaining (perceived) economic gains and EU support has been laid out by Fritz Scharpf (1999), and later on problematized by Richard Bellamy (2010). The point is that the EU appears to depend upon a type of “output-oriented legitimacy”, which is to say, a legitimacy based on interests rather than on identities. Hooghe and Marks (2005) used Eurobarometer data to measure the relative impact of economic aspects and of community identity on European public opinion, and found that both factors are important. Whilst identity has a more profound impact on the levels of trust in the EU than economic self-interest, the latter might be stronger in some particular conditions: “The economic approach to public opinion is likely to be most valid when economic consequences are perceived with some accuracy, when they are large enough to matter, and when the choice a person makes actually affects the outcome” (Hooghe and Marks 2005, 422). Two of these three conditions – accuracy of perception and saliency – are certainly present in the current crisis. Hence both theories – on government support and

support for the EU – converge into expecting a decrease of public opinion support as a consequence of the crisis.

But can we expect MPs to respond to the financial crisis the same way the citizens they represent? Probably not, since the cognitive levels of voters and deputies concerning the structure and the political processes of the EU remain substantially different (Moury and de Sousa 2011). Public opinion perceptions are exogenous to the EU political system. Citizens organize their knowledge about Europe on the basis of abstract mental frames, fed by a variety of sources, with different degrees of sophistication and consistency (Kufer 2009). In contrast, deputies' perceptions (institutional representations) are endogenous to the European political system, and for that reason they tend to express a more elaborate and informed vision of its *modus operandi*.

Saying that, the literature does not offer clear answers as regards elites' reaction to the changes brought upon by the sovereign debt crisis. We know that elites are generally more pro-integration than their voters (Moury and De Sousa 2011, Sanders and Toka 2013). Moreover, the cognitive – and less mutable – support for European integration, which fared poorly in Gabel's (1998) study of public opinion, is likely to be stronger for MPs, and for the political elite as a whole, especially if deputies have been “socialized” in the European political circles (Scully 2005).

On the other hand, MPs might also be sympathetic to the growing Euroscepticism of their voters. Research has shown, indeed, that the positions held by elites and masses tend to influence each other (Sanders and Toka 2013). As Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks argue for populist parties: “Most mainstream parties continued to resist politicizing the issue. But a number of populist, non-governing parties smelt blood. Their instinctive Euroscepticism was closer to the pulse of public opinion.” (2009, 21). However, important popular discontent might also affect mainstream elites. As Marangoni and Russo noted (2016, 1), this can happen in two ways. First, because members of the traditional elite may have changed their opinion under the influence of the recent events and popular discontent; or second, because representatives of traditional parties might have been replaced by an influx of more Eurosceptic colleagues.

Finally, many authors have noted how southern European countries have seen their room of maneuver decreasing since the outbreak of the sovereign debt crisis. In a context of rapid changes in the yields of their national bonds, the ECB requested structural reforms in exchange for the purchase of public bonds or for the re-capitalization of national banks (see Sacchi 2015 for Italy; Zapatero 2013 for Spain; Sandbu 2015 for Ireland). With the new economic governance rules of 2010-13, moreover, the European Commission now supervises a large variety of national macroeconomic indicators, so its recommendations influence government medium-term spending plans, wages, taxes and labour code reforms (Bauer and Becker 2014). For Eurozone members, failure to comply with those recommendations risks sanctions that can only be averted

by a qualified majority vote in the Council. Even without such punishment, disapproving feedback from the Commission is allegedly taken into account by investors and hence increases the costs of non-compliance. In bailed out countries, finally, loans are conditional on reforms included in Memoranda of Understanding – which are drafted to the advantage of (the banking sector of) creditors' countries (Sandbu 2015; Schimmelfennig 2015; Stiglitz 2016; Tsebelis 2015). Given the changing environment in which MPs operate, thus, we do expect new cost-benefit calculation in their decision to support or not the EU.

Thus, we should expect MPs in general, and especially those from the largest governmental and pro-European parties, to show lower degree of commitment towards EU integration than before the sovereign debt crisis. However, we also expect to find a large difference between mainstream and more radical parties, with the first showing a small decrease only of positive attitudes towards the EU. The opposite might be true for MPs in the fringes of the political spectrum – in the Portuguese case, since there is no far-right populist party with parliamentary representation, particularly on the left.

3. Data and the Portuguese Case

Our analysis relies on the data collected in the context of the ENEC project. In total, 81 MPs were surveyed in 2014, providing a comparable sample to the Intune rounds of 2007 (78) and 2009 (68). Some descriptive statistics of the surveyed MPs are in order. First, as Table 1 documents, the sample essentially mirrors the weight of each party in parliament. With 35 respondents, MPs elected in the lists of PSD (center-right) – the winner of 2011 legislative election – are the most represented group (43%), followed by those from the center-left PS (26 respondents, 32%). The four smaller parties represented in parliament are all represented in the sample: 9 respondents represent the conservative CDS (11%), 6 respondents from the PCP (communist) MPs, four respondents from the new left party BE (5%), and one respondent (1%) from the Green PEV, which typically runs for office in coalition with the PCP. Second, our sample is composed of 57 (70%) male respondents and 24 (30%) female respondents. Only one of our respondents had not attained a college degree. Of the remaining 80, seven had completed a PhD. The most frequent field of study is Law, corresponding to nearly half (40) of the respondents, followed at distance by majors in social sciences (16) and economics (10). Information about the sector of occupation prior to holding office is available for 68 respondents: 34 worked in the public sector, whereas the remaining half were overwhelmingly working in private services (32), and only two in private industry.

Table 1: Sample of Respondents to the 2014 ENEC Survey and Composition of Parliament by the Time of Data Collection

Party name	In sample		In Parliament		Political bloc
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Centro Democrático Social (CDS)	9	11%	24	10%	Conservatives
Partido Social Democrata (PSD)	35	43%	108	47%	Conservatives
Bloco de Esquerda (BE)	4	5%	8	3%	Left wing
Partido Comunista Português (PCP)	6	7%	14	6%	Left wing
Partido Ecologista 'Os Verdes' (PEV)	1	1%	2	1%	Left wing
Partido Socialista (PS)	26	32%	74	32%	Socialists
Total	81	100	230	100	

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

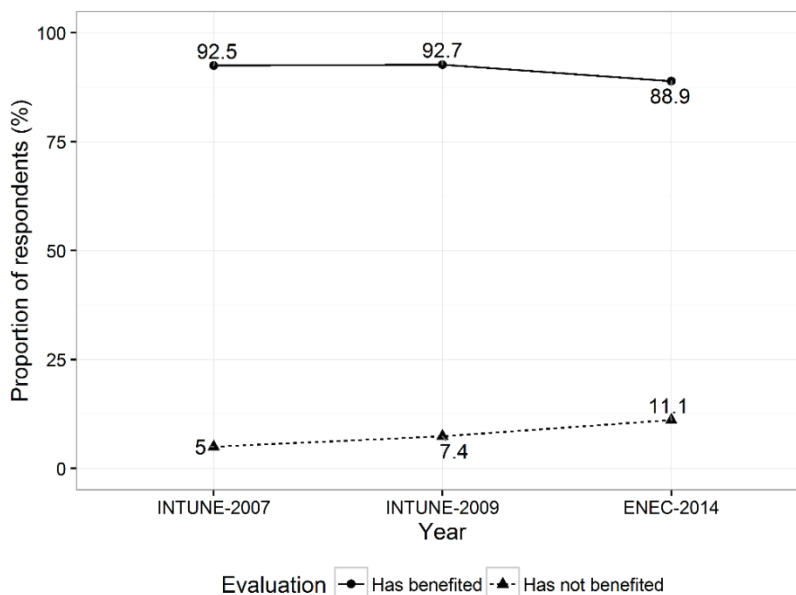
The relative low number of MPs from parties other than the PS and PSD leads us to aggregate survey responses in terms of “political bloc”. These political blocs are not actual formal entities, but instead categories that we use for the purpose of making the most of our data. Specifically, through the analysis we group responses of MPs of PSD and CDS as “Conservatives”, on the one hand, and of PCP, PEV and BE as “Left wing”, on the other, whilst treating the data from the PS MPs separately (“Socialists”). In addition to increasing the number of respondents by category, there are two further reasons for proceeding in this fashion. First, despite the persistence of some historical issues between parties of each of these “political blocs”, a fine-grained assessment of the responses by each party encourages this approach, as throughout the analysis we find evidence of robust intragroup coherence. Second, in recent years Portuguese politics has been structured as an interplay between these three groups.⁵ By the time of data collection, the country was governed by a majority conservative PSD/CDS coalition, which succeeded six years of socialist government – first with a parliamentary majority (2005-2009), and then as a minority government (2009-2011). Last but not least, given our interest in attitudes towards Europe, our scheme mirrors the distribution of representatives from each party in the European Parliament groups. Concretely, PSD and CDS are part of the European People’s Party, the PS is a member of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, and PCP and BE are both part of the European United Left-Nordic Green Left (PEV is not represented in the European Parliament).

⁵ This deserves some reflection in the aftermath of the 2015 election, which was followed by the negotiation and signing of a set of unprecedented parliamentary agreements between the PS and the parties to its left, resulting in the nomination of a PS-led government. In the final section, we discuss some of the implications of our findings for the prospects of these agreements as of early 2016.

4. Findings

This section reports the results of the empirical analysis. Although we focus mostly on the responses to the 2014 survey, we engage in a longitudinal inquiry by taking into account data from 2007 and 2009. We assess the evolution of attitudes of Portuguese parliamentarians towards the EU by proceeding in four steps. First, from a general perspective, we check whether there has been an evolution in the proportion of MPs according to whom EU membership has benefited Portugal. Second, we assess the extent to which MPs trust in EU institutions. We then move to the perceptions about the crisis and the evaluation of the role played by the EU in its management. Finally, we analyze how respondents look towards the future of the EU, in terms of the general dichotomy between deepening and reversing integration, on the one hand, and regarding specific policy sectors and the future of the EU, on the other.

Figure 1: Evaluation of EU Membership Overall Effects:
"Has Portugal benefited from EU membership?"



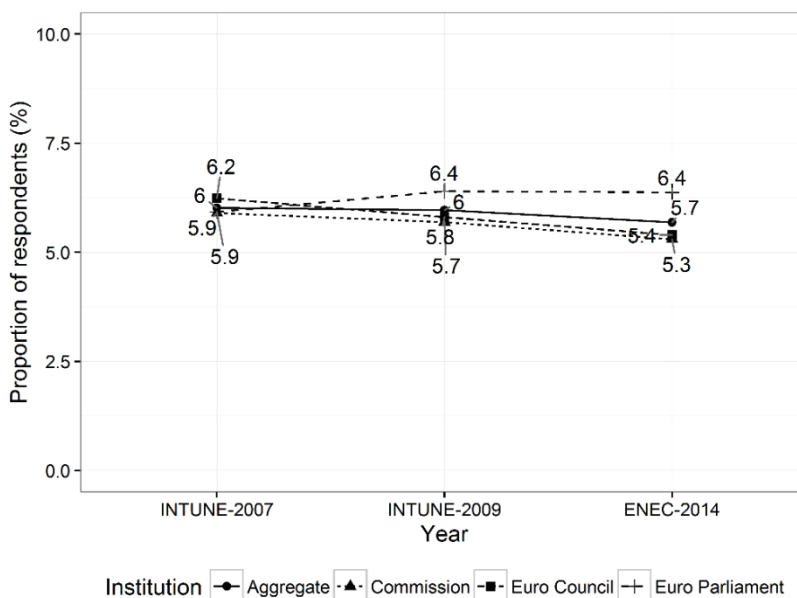
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to "Don't know/Don't Answer" and rounding.

From a dichotomous and arguably crude point of view, a critical variable of interest for the purposes of our analysis is whether MPs consider that Portugal has benefited overall from its EU membership. In past surveys, this variable clearly showed the general enthusiasm of the Portuguese parliamentary elite with

the European project: in 2007 and 2009, around 93% of interviewed MPs agreed that membership benefited the country. In 2014, although slightly decreasing, the proportion was still overwhelmingly high: 89%. Figure 1 depicts this evolution.

While the evaluation of the impact of the EU is one of several variables of interest, and although we deepen the analysis in the remainder of this section, it nevertheless bears stressing that despite the economic crisis and all the political and social controversy regarding the role of EU institutions in dealing with it, as much as nine out of ten MPs in the Portuguese parliament consider the EU to be overall positive to Portugal. From this perspective, the Portuguese parliamentary elite is still strongly “pro-Europe”, as it had clearly shown before (Moreira et al. 2010).

Figure 2: Trust in three EU Institutions and Aggregate Score



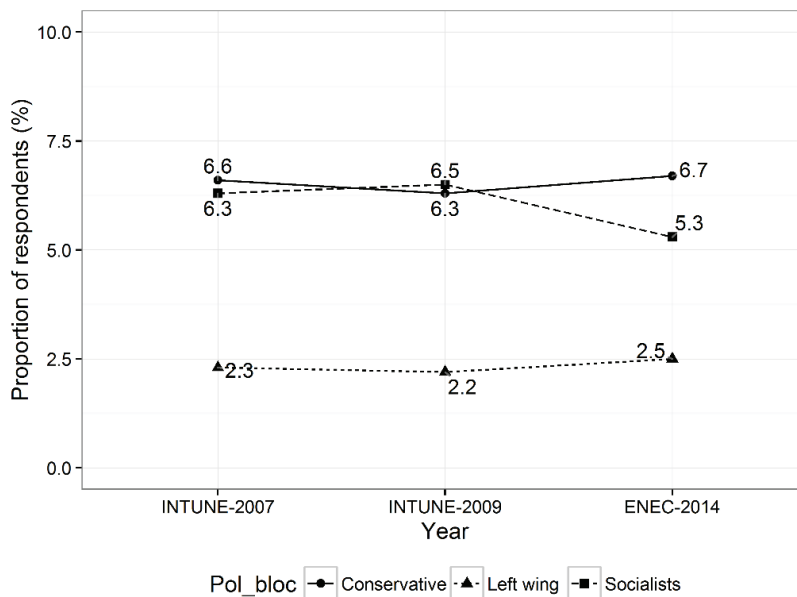
Note: The “Aggregate” time series is the product of a Principal Components Analysis, rescaled for a [0:10] interval, in order to allow comparisons with the original variables (see text for details).

A second set of variables of interest is the extent to which MPs nurture a sentiment of trust *vis-à-vis* the EU institutions. As in the Intune surveys of 2007 and 2009, respondents were asked about their level of trust towards three specific institutions: the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the European Council of Ministers. In order to extract a common trend among these variables we performed a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) which confirmed that levels of trust towards these three institutions are indeed jointly

correlated. A single component accounting for 78% of the variance (with an eigenvalue of 2.3) was extracted and labelled “Aggregate trust in EU institutions”. As Figure 2 shows, the average value of this composite measure has decreased slightly from 6 in the two previous rounds to 5.7 in 2014. Interestingly, the drop in the levels of trust towards EU institutions does not affect the three equally: trust towards the European Parliament remains constant regarding 2007, whereas the levels of trust of the remaining two institutions decrease.

This leads us to try to disentangle the sources of this evolution: does the decline in trust towards (part of) the EU institutions originate in all the political spectrum? Or do MPs from different parties have different stances towards the European institutions? With Figure 3 we try to answer this question. We can see that it is in the Socialist Party (PS) that there is the steepest decline in the levels of overall trust, almost reaching the bottom half of the scale (5.3), down from 6.5 in 2007. A further look into the origins of this decline shows that it is caused mostly by the declining levels of confidence in the European Commission, which have a mean value of 4.7 within the surveyed Socialist MPs. We thus have evidence that within the PS, which has traditionally portrayed itself as the most pro-Europe of the Portuguese parties, there are signs of increasing discontent with the European Commission.

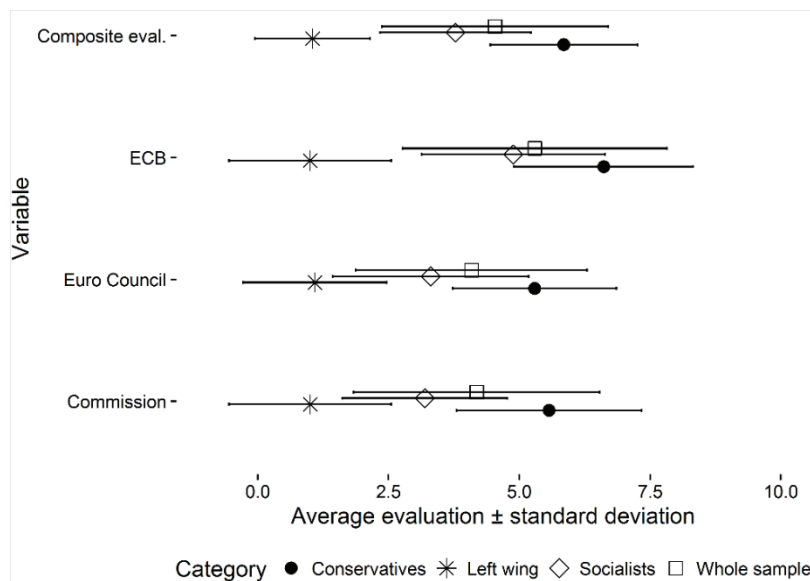
Figure 3: Trust in EU Institutions (Aggregate Dimension), by Political Bloc



So far, we have looked at general dispositions towards the EU. However, in 2014, an assessment of European integration and its institution was inextricable

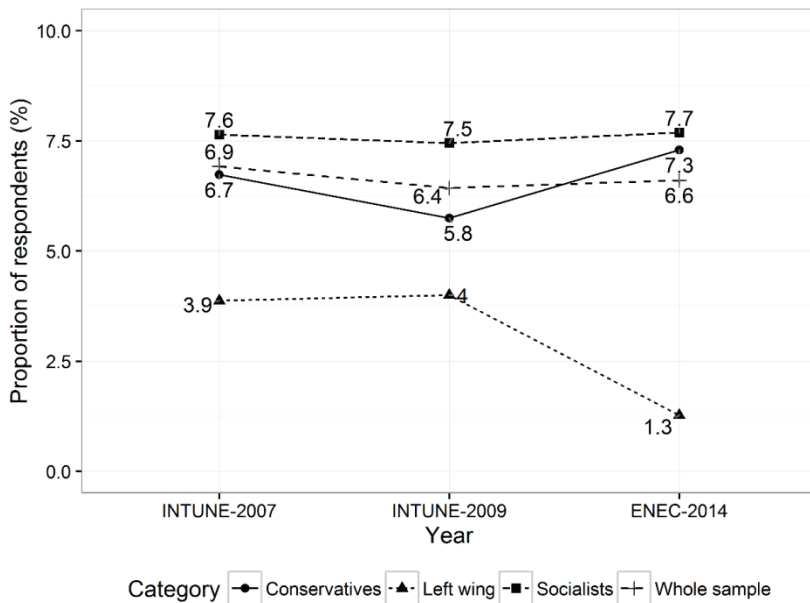
from the scenario described in section 3. By then, the European Commission and the European Central Bank were joining efforts along with the International Monetary Fund to supervise the implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding which allowed for financial relief in exchange for the adoption of impacting austerity measures. How did Portuguese MPs evaluate the role played by the different European institutions in the management of the crisis? ENEC asked about the level of satisfaction in a [0:10] scale regarding the performance of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the Council of Ministers. A principal component analysis shows how mutually related are the levels of appreciation for the performance of the three institutions during the crisis. Extracting the resulting first component allows us to explain 82% of the variance (eigenvalue of 2.46). After rescaling this composite variable into the original [0:10] interval we get an average evaluation of 4.5 and a relatively high standard deviation of 2.1, showing considerable variance of evaluations. As expected, MPs from the parties in government show a higher appreciation of the management by the three institutions (mean evaluation of 5.9), whilst the socialists (3.8) and especially the left wing (1) MPs are more critical. The composite indicator of trust in the EU institutions and the evaluation of management during the crisis are highly correlated, with a Pearson's r of 0.75.

Figure 4: Evaluation of EU Institutions, by Political Group



By now we have detected a consistent pattern in the 2014 data: MPs from the two parties in government tend to deposit higher levels of trust and appraisal of the EU in managing the economic crisis than their counterparts in opposition. Among the latter, MPs from left wing parties are more critical than those from the PS. But what future do individuals from these different groups envision for Europe? More specifically, do the different assessments among representatives from different parties regarding Europe translate into different approaches towards future European policy?

Figure 5: Support for Further European Integration
 "EU ... has gone too far (0) / should be strengthened (10)"



We try to answer these questions in two steps. First we evaluate the extent to which respondents believe European integration should evolve in the future. In 2007, 2009 and 2014, respondents were asked where they located themselves in a 0-10 scale, in which 0 implied that EU integration had gone too far and 10 that it should be strengthened in the future. The mean response value evolved from 6.9 in 2007 to 6.4 in 2009, and reaches 6.6 in 2014. Overall, the slightly decreasing levels of trust in the EU do not coincide with a less enthusiastic approach towards European integration. In addition to showing this general trend, Figure 5 disentangles it into variations within the three political blocs. We thus observe that the steepest fall in support comes from the left wing parties, from a 4 in 2009 to a considerably lower 1.3. Conversely, MPs from the

conservative parties are now more likely (7.3) than in 2009 (5.8) to consider that Europe should be strengthened, while the PS remains practically constant (from 7.5 to 7.7). Interestingly, MPs from the parties in government as well as those from the opposition PS – unlike MPs from left wing parties – converge in signaling that Europe should be strengthened.

The next logical step is to ask what such deepening of European integration should look like. The Intune and ENEC surveys contain several questions assessing the preferences of the elite members in this respect, which can be divided in two groups. The first set of questions deals with the distribution of competences regarding different policy sectors: unemployment, immigration, environment, crime, health care and banking/finance regulation. For each of these sectors, MPs were asked about the level of government that should ideally be involved in managing it: whether the EU, national or regional authorities, or a combination of European and national/regional actors. The second group of questions concerns preferences regarding the delegation of policy attributions to the EU within a medium/long timespan. Concretely, respondents were asked to evaluate how in favour they would be regarding a set of hypothetical outcomes in a 10 year horizon: a unified tax system, common social security, a single foreign policy, larger support towards regions and the issuance of Eurobonds.

Table 2 reproduces the answers to these questions in the context of the 2014 wave. The most striking difference in policy preferences is between the left wing opposition, on the one hand, and the conservatives and socialists, on the other. Again, we can see that differences are wider between representatives of the left wing parties, on the one hand, and the two remaining blocs, on the other. The former tend to be more critical of attributing wider competences to the EU than the latter, regardless of the sector at stake: environment, health care, banking regulation, or immigration, for instance. Given the focus of this paper on the response to the crisis, one question seems particularly relevant. During the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding in Portugal, the virtues and perils of Eurobonds were often mentioned in public discourses and political discussions about the role of the EU and on how to deal with the coexistence between robust and fragile economies in the Eurozone. In such context, it is interesting to see that the issuance of Eurobonds is completely consensual among socialists, whereas about one quarter of MPs of the parties supporting the government did not endorse them; on the other hand, the left wing MPs are divided in half regarding their agreement with this policy.

Table 2: Policy Preferences of MPs from Different Political Groups

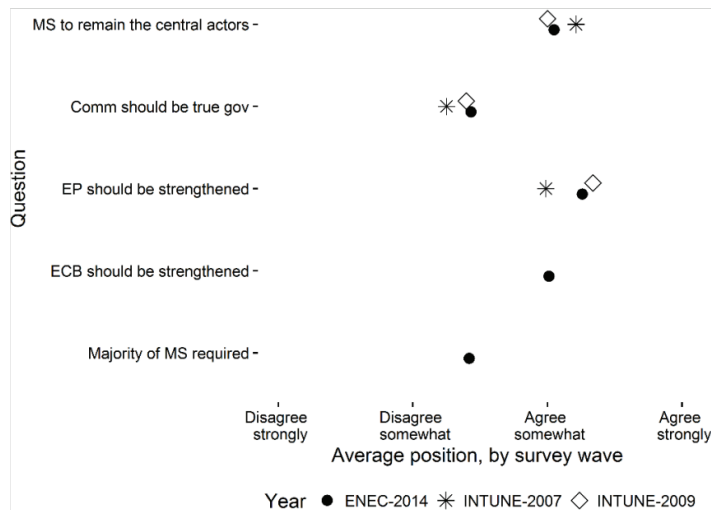
	Conservatives	Socialists	Left wing	Whole sample
Unemployment policy should be mainly dealt at what level?				
EU	41%	65%	18%	46%
EU and national/regional	34%	35%	27%	33%
National / regional	23%	0%	55%	20%
Immigration policy should be mainly dealt at what level?				
EU	75%	65%	18%	64%
EU and national/regional	18%	23%	9%	19%
National / regional	7%	12%	73%	17%
Environment policy should be mainly dealt at what level?				
EU	66%	62%	36%	60%
EU and national/regional	23%	31%	36%	27%
National / regional	11%	8%	27%	12%
Fighting against crime should be mainly dealt at what level?				
EU	41%	38%	9%	36%
EU and national/regional	25%	38%	27%	30%
National / regional	34%	23%	64%	35%
Health care policy should be mainly dealt at what level?				
EU	14%	23%	0%	15%
EU and national/regional	20%	31%	18%	23%
National / regional	66%	46%	82%	62%
Banking/finance sector regulation should be mainly dealt at what level?				
EU	80%	73%	27%	70%
EU and national/regional	18%	27%	0%	19%
National / regional	2%	0%	73%	11%
In ten years there should be a unified tax system				
Agree somewhat/strongly	45%	23%	100%	46%
Disagree somewhat/strongly	55%	77%	0%	54%
In ten years there should be common social security				
Disagree somewhat/strongly	39%	19%	73%	37%
Agree somewhat/strongly	59%	81%	27%	62%
In ten years there should be a single foreign policy				
Disagree somewhat/strongly	5%	12%	82%	17%
Agree somewhat/strongly	95%	88%	18%	83%
In ten years there should be more help for regions				
Disagree somewhat/strongly	2%	0%	0%	1%
Agree somewhat/strongly	98%	100%	100%	99%
In ten years Eurobonds should be issued				
Disagree somewhat/strongly	23%	0%	45%	19%
Agree somewhat/strongly	73%	100%	45%	78%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to "Don't know"/Non-answers.

From a longitudinal perspective, there are also some noteworthy developments regarding policy preferences, as Figure 6 documents. One of them should bear stressing: the Socialists were in 2014 much more prone to accepting that unemployment should be addressed at the European level than they were in 2007 and 2009. This contrasts with the MPs from the conservative parties in government, who show a divided stance regarding this issue, and the representatives of the left wing parties, which tend to favor a national approach. In the course of the

crisis and while the financial rescue package was in force, unemployment rose to record levels (Carneiro et al. 2014); as this happened, wide discussions were held not only regarding alternative routes towards job creation, but also about coping with the budgetary implications of unemployment. Discussions about sharing the burden of unemployment benefits in the context of the European Union were held during this period, which might explain the evolution of this trend.

Figure 6: Preferences Regarding the Future of the EU



6. Conclusions

In this article we have framed and analyzed the evolution of the attitudes of Portuguese parliamentary elites towards the EU in the context of the global economic crisis and its intense effects in Southern Europe. Four final considerations are in order.

First, taking as points of comparison the previous data collections of 2007 and 2009 (Moreira et al. 2010), political elite attitudes towards the EU did not change in a profound way with the crisis. While the data show that a higher proportion of MPs now exhibit lower levels of trust towards the European institutions, they also show that this fact does not correspond to a lower engagement with the European project writ large. In other words, while distrust in the institutions has risen, attachment towards the European project has substantively not. Therefore, as of 2014 the Portuguese parliamentary elite was still pro-Europe. While parliamentarians from the left wing parties constitute the

exception, it should be noted that they were already more critical towards the EU institutions in the previous rounds.

It must be noted, however, that the questionnaires did not include views about the types of policy that should be undertaken at the EU level. What could be observed today, especially in the Socialist Party, is support to the EU combined with critics of the way it works and the political choices it embraces – such as a strict definition of the structural deficit or the weakening of the social Europe⁶.

A third remark links our analysis with the resilience of the party system in the aftermath of the crisis. While this article deals with opinions at the elite level, we should not overlook the fact that a legislative election was held after data collection (October 4, 2015). Therefore, an external observer may wonder whether Eurosceptic political actors and organizations emerged and were successful challengers to the still relatively pro-European Portuguese elite. As a matter of fact, they did not. Indeed, the Portuguese election of 2015 was remarkable in the Southern European context inasmuch as it produced minor changes in the distribution of power within Parliament (Giorgi and Santana-Pereira 2016). The relative weight of each party in Parliament did not suffer profound changes, and the only party that was able to get into Parliament for the first time with a single MP was PAN, which hails the protection of animals as its main cause.

Finally, the ENEC survey also provides stimulating evidence in light of the developments in Portuguese politics immediately following the elections of 2015. While the PSD/CDS coalition, which ruled from 2011 to 2015, managed to obtain a plurality of the votes in the election, it was not able to retain a majority of MPs. In an unprecedented political move, the PS leader, António Costa, was able to coalesce with the left wing parties BE, PCP and PEV, therefore achieving a majority of votes in Parliament to support a new PS-led executive. The left wing parties do not take part in government, but agreed to sustain the cabinet in exchange for important policy compromises. As of early 2016, this unprecedented “coalition” seems to be holding, having been able to approve its first fiscal budget. In this context, our analysis of the ENEC data reinforces a point that has been stressed by observers of Portuguese politics: a potential tension between the Socialists and the left wing parties supporting their government can be the divergent perspectives towards Europe. Concretely, a test to the resilience of this coalition can be expected should the EU institutions, as well as individual Member States, intensify the pressure for the executive to pursue austerity policies analogous to those from the PSD/CDS cabinet of 2011-2015, which were so heavily criticized by all the parties supporting the current executive.

⁶ 'Europeístas, mas críticos e reformistas', Público, 22th May 2016, <<https://www.publico.pt/politica/noticia/europeistas-mas-criticos-e-reformistas-1732595>>.

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