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MASTER THESIS

Euroscepticism and populist parties in Spain after the Euro crisis.

Have the new political parties influenced citizens' negative attitudes towards the EU?

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July 2017

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CHAPTER - Introduction

The recession of 2008 led to a deep economic, political and social crisis that caused social protests against the European establishment, affecting the course of European integration and enabling the rise of Eurosceptic and Europhobe parties across the continent. This social discontent, along with other variables brought about a new political scenario, modified European party competition and encouraged the emergence of new political parties capable of capitalising electoral results around new issues in different Member States (MS).

In addition, the progressive Europeanization of the economic policy and the dramatic social consequences of the European political decisions taken by the national governments at European level during the recession, have been accompanied by an overall drop of the public support of the European institutions and its capability to positively solve the situation, leading the EU to serious political and legitimacy crises.

A priori, the data from the last European elections and many national elections seems to point out in one direction: political mutation and polarization. Moreover, extreme populisms (both right and left-wing) appear to be in a boom phase. These new populist parties are often Eurosceptic or even Europhobe, and have emerged in many MS, including traditional pro-European countries such as Spain, where public support for the EU has suffered a considerable decline in the last years. Spain has seen an authentic earthquake in its political landscape with the irruption of two new political forces, *Podemos* (en. for “We can”) and *Ciudadanos* (en. for “Citizens”). However, we still do not know much about the nature of these new political parties and their positions regarding the EU, due their recent institutionalization and the difficulty of classifying them into the traditional party typologies. Recent studies have revised the scepticism in Spanish parties and citizens, but they were carried out previous to the emergence of the new political parties and to the crisis. The ENEC report¹ is already a good attempt to assess the impact the crisis has had in domestic political elite attitudes towards the EU, but it is before the elections where *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos* gained parliamentary representation.

¹ A research project which main goal is to assess the effects of the political and economic crisis over the elites in eleven MS, among them Spain.

Furthermore, it is crucial to study this phenomenon because these parties might play an important role in the future of European integration in the country, since in Spain there is a large percentage of the population that is not very well informed about EU politics, and public opinion on EU issues largely depends on the ideological preferences for domestic elites. In fact, many studies and surveys, such as the Eurobarometer, have overestimated the Europeanism of the Spanish citizens. Nonetheless, some authors like Barreiro and Sanchez-Cuenta (2001) have already pointed this ‘faulty Europeanism’, given that there is a high percentage of people that lack interest and knowledge about the EU and could be mobilized through political competition. Besides, it is also important to examine the attitudes of domestic elites towards the EU project and compare them to those of the citizens, because political elites are part of the EU political elite and its study can provide an insight about the prospects of the gap between political elite and the general population, and more broadly about the future of EU integration in Spain. Domestic elites, together with media and other social elites, are one of the main mediators between the European institutions and the citizens from the MS. During years, they were the bases of the ‘permissive consensus’ that helped to build the EU (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1971, Haller, 2008). Nowadays, they are also at the centre of the politicization process of European affairs and in the development of what some authors have called the ‘constraining dissensus’ (Hooghe and Marks, 2009) that constrains the integration process in the last years. Therefore, the analysis of the opinions of the national elites towards the EU is fundamental to understand the process of legitimation of European integration, as well as its future.

This study aims to analyse to what extent the appearance of populist parties in Spain, namely their positions and attitudes towards the EU, have favoured the rise of Euroscepticism, and to see whether there is a link between their appearance of these parties and the highest peaks of Euroscepticism. The literature review will focus firstly on a brief discussion of the democratic deficit of the EU to understand the roots of Euroscepticism and party scepticism, and secondly, on the theory regarding new political parties and their typologies. This chapter will be followed by a presentation on the methodology used for the study and by an analysis of the evolution of the public opinion and the attitudes of traditional political elite attitudes towards the EU in order to have a picture of the Euroscepticism and party scepticism in Spain before the appearance of the new parties. The study will then continue with the assessment of the voting patterns of the new political parties in the European Parliament (EP) and their discourse towards the EU.

Finally, we will conclude with a reflection of the impact of these parties on citizens' support to the EU in Spain.

CHAPTER II: Methodology

This research will try to assess whether the appearance of new political parties in Spain has had an influence or modified somehow citizens' negative attitudes towards the EU in the last few years. To that end, the following hypothesis, *the new political parties have not favoured substantially the rise of Euroscepticism among public opinion in Spain* is laid out to drive the assessment and narrow the study.

Building upon quantitative and qualitative research to demonstrate the hypothesis, the investigation firstly develops a theoretical framework of reference that includes relevant aspects for the study: the main reasons behind the so-called democratic deficit of the EU and the Eurosceptic attitudes of citizens and political parties, as well as the theories on the emergence of new parties. Secondly, a brief overview of the Spanish party competition will be presented to explore the changes of the Spanish party system after the euro crisis. This chapter will also contain an assessment of the evolution of the attitudes of the citizens and the traditional political elites of the EU. Thirdly, the following chapter will provide a brief content analysis of some leaders' speeches and political manifestos of the two biggest new political parties in Spain, *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos*, to see whether they contain Eurosceptic attitudes. Through a content analysis of their electoral programs for the General Spanish elections of December 2015 and June 2016, as well as their manifestos for the European elections of 2014 the study will identify and examine their positions towards the EU. Furthermore, the voting behaviour of the new political parties in the EP in these three years of mandate will be analysed in order to see whether their visions and claims on the EU match their positions on a number of issues.

The methodology will use both, quantitative and qualitative techniques, quantitative to assess the evolution of the opinion of the citizens and the traditional political elites on the European project since the beginning of the crisis, and qualitative to analyse the content of the political manifestos and positions of the new political parties towards the EU. For the first purpose, public opinion surveys and the ENEC report, will be used. Namely, various primary sources of quantitative data will be used for the study; the Standard Eurobarometer's from the

years 2007 to 2016 from Eurostat, the Statistical Agency of the European Commission, national surveys made by the Spanish research company Metroscopia, data from the Spanish Ministry of Home Affairs and the Pew Research Survey on Euroscepticism beyond the Brexit. As for the content analysis, the study aims to identify which are the most relevant issues addressed in the electoral programs of *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos* and whether the proposals contained in them show political party commitment to approach the EU through existing structures (status quo position), through the need for fundamental reforms but not a complete break with the current structures (reformist position) or to through a radical transformation of the structures and power (transforming position) (Hopwood, Mellor and O'Brien, 2005) to determine to what extent they can be considered Eurosceptic. Therefore, the content analysis in the current research is established as a systematic process of interpretation of the meaning of the proposals of the political manifestos in the framework of the political communication. The analysis is carried out through a qualitative assessment that allows to draw conclusions about the positions defended by the two political parties in relation to the EU and its terms.

Lastly, some conclusions will be drawn in the light of the research question and hypothesis. It is worth mentioning that the answer to the research question will not aim at giving an affirmative or negative answer but at elaborating on a reflection of the current and future influence of *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos* on the Spanish public opinion on the European project in Spain.

CHAPTER III- Literature review

Spain celebrated last year the 30th anniversary of the accession of the country to the European Economic Community (EEC) in a context of an overall drop of the Spanish public support to the EU and the trust in its capability to positively solve the economic and political crisis. At the same time, in line with other MS, there has been a rise of populist parties in Spain that challenge the current functioning of the EU. To understand the causes of popular and party Euroscepticism, this is, the distrust and discontent in the EU and its institutions, we will briefly revise the literature regarding the democratic deficit of the EU and the debate on their motives.

In second place, since these new political actors have been able to enter and succeed in the electoral competition and its stances could be influencing and modifying Spanish public

opinion with regard to the EU, as it is laid out in the research question, the Spanish case should be framed in a broader theoretical framework in order to understand the circumstances that have enabled the appearance of new political parties and a new political scenario of political competition, as well as identify its particularities and common grounds with the existing literature regarding new political parties and their typologies. In this sense, the conceptualization of the theory regarding new political parties will also try to identify potential causes of Eurosceptic and anti-establishment attitudes since the rise of Euroscepticism could be linked to the appearance of new issues that enable new dimensions of party competition.

The debate of the democratic deficit of the EU: Euroscepticism and party skepticism

The debate of the so-called democratic deficit of the EU is not new, the longstanding discussions upon the motives of the problem started already with the signature of the Treaty of Maastricht. However, the alarming decline of trust in European institutions and the rise of Euroscepticism, aggravated by the crises of 2008, the return to nationalist politics that has had its maximum expression and in the referendum over British membership y in Brexit revives the discussion of the legitimacy of the EU.

A first school of thought trying to explain the causes of democratic deficit was born after the ratification of the Treaty of Maastricht, which considered that the EU had a problem of *input legitimacy*: the EU would not be democratic because the decision-making processes are not open to the participation of the citizens through democratic institutions such as the ones at national level. However, this deficit could be solved by strengthening the powers of the EP and by politicizing European elections to create a true debate between European parties like the ones taking place in the national elections of the MS (Hix, 2008). This approach has been proven to be weak since successive treaty changes have strengthened the powers of the EP in significance and scope and European citizens still do not seem to see the EP as they see their national Parliaments.

A second school of thought developed in the 90s considers that the EU has a problem of *output legitimacy*. This approach based on the efficiency of the policies delivered by the EU argues that the EU would be legitimized if the institutions solved the economic problems of the European citizens producing tangible results, that is, in terms of its ability to provide public goods and resolve people's problems (Moravscik, 2002; Scharpf, 1999). This utilitarian approach has gained relevance and weight during the crisis, since the recession has been accompanied by

an overall fall of the public opinion in favor of the EU. Looking at the evolution of the European public opinion until now, it seems that during times of economic prosperity Europeans tend to increase their support to the European project, as opposed to over difficult economic times. Nevertheless, this has not been always the case and therefore the theory does not apply entirely to the Spanish case since at the beginning of 2000s, when practically all European economies lived years of prosperity, the figures of support to the EU were substantially different from those achieved in the past. For instance, only 57% of the citizens considered the membership of the EU as positive for their country in the 2000s, as opposed to 71% in 1991 (Eurobarometer, 2007:80), revealing that besides the utilitarian support the so-called “affective or diffuse support” according to which citizens will provide support to the EU “as an emotional response to some of the vague ideals embodied in the notion of European unity” is also relevant (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970: 40).

This idea is directly related to the third school of thought explaining the causes of the democratic deficit suffered by the EU, the communitarian, which advocates that the problem of legitimacy stems from the absence of a “European *demos*”. A *demos* is “a group of people, the majority of whom feel sufficiently connected to each other to voluntarily commit to a democratic discourse and to a related decision-making process” (Cederman 2001: 224). Therefore, the lack of social European identity prevents EU citizens from identifying themselves with a European political system. In this sense, without the previous existence of this *demos*, democracy cannot exist (Weiler, 1999: 337; Weiler, Haltern and Mayer, 1995).

AN area of literature regarding the causes of the democratic deficit of the EU that gained popularity several years ago and that authors like Follesdal and Hix (2006) have well summarized in five main claims, affirms that firstly, the decisions of the EU are taken mainly by executive actors (the Ministers of the MS in the Council and the Commissioners) that are not scrutinized by parliamentary national control. In addition, the executive cannot be chosen by citizens, lacking an explicit electoral mandate. This system has been appropriately labelled as ‘executive elitism’ (Ruivo et al., 2012). Secondly, the EP is too weak. The increase of its powers has not sufficiently compensated for the loss of parliamentary national control and the citizens are not as well connected to the EP as they are to their national parliaments. Thirdly, there are no real "European elections" because citizens cannot vote about EU policies, except in referenda on

EU accession or the reform of the agreements. Fourthly, the EU is too distant and technocratic and not very understandable for EU citizens. Lastly, the EU has suffered a 'policy drift', adopting policies that lack the support of most the citizens in many MS or even in most of them. Furthermore, it seems that the EU is biased towards neoliberal policies that only seek to develop and consolidate the single market (Scharpf, 1999), whereas the social policies are in the hands of national authorities constrained by an increasing budgetary control in the Eurozone (Ruivo & De Almeida, 2012). The EU project would be a project of the center-right and the European business elites to expand their markets (Bellamy, 2010).

Vivien A. Schmidt (2013) has rightly conceptualized the problem by opposing the existence of a system of "politics without policies" at national level to another of "policies without politics" at the European level. Schmidt defines the European political system as a system of "policies without politics" in the sense that it is a system that produces a big amount of outputs without an ex-ante political debate. Important political decisions, especially economic decisions, are taken without a previous political deliberation beyond national interests. On the other hand, at the national level, the opposite phenomenon takes place: the system has long political debates but does not have the tools to turn this debate into effective public policies since it is constrained by European structures.

Whatever the causes of the democratic deficit are, what is relevant for this study is its outcome, the rise of Euroscepticism among citizens and political parties can be understood as a group of political attitudes expressing contingent or absolute opposition to the process of European integration (Taggart, 1998: 365). Depending on the level of opposition to the European project, this Euroscepticism can be classified as *hard Euroscepticism* – when these attitudes are totally contrary to the membership of the EU – and *soft Euroscepticism* – when it does not reject the existence of the EU but it is contrary to the transference of further competences or certain aspects of the integration process (Szczerbiak y Taggart, 2008).

The nature of the EU political system has favored mainstream parties to the detriment of political competition like the one that takes place at a national level, since the system is based on consensual decision-making (Bellamy, 2010). The result of squeezing the opposition is that it is eventually balanced by an enhanced rejection to the polity (Mair 2007: 7-12). Thus, the rise of radical parties with a strong anti-European stance since the beginning of the financial crisis

might be an indicator of Mair's prediction. One could argue that this growing Euroscepticism is the expression of a deep general malaise with European democracies. Peter Mair (2006), for instance links the rise of Euroscepticism with a movement of a deeper political skepticism in Europe that affects national politics, making it difficult to distinguish between the causes that relate to the European integration and those of a national nature.

The European political landscape and the national political scene are intrinsically linked, so when we analyze the growing Euroscepticism, we must take into account that the current democratic crisis not only affects the EU, but also national democracies that undergo deep transformations in their respective political situations. The democratic crisis of the EU is the reflection of the internal democratic crisis in the different MSs. Despite the fact that the consequences might be different, the causes of the discontent with European democracies are the same or very similar and are related to the loss of power of the democratic institutions before the political and economic globalization (Mair, 2013). Hence, to get a better understanding of these dynamics and the rise of Euroscepticism, we should analyze changes in national political arenas. For this purpose, the study will engage with the literature regarding political parties, namely regarding party competition and the emergence of the new political parties.

CHAPTER IV Changes in the European party systems and emergence of new parties.

Political parties are at the very heart of our democracies. They are considered by scholars as necessary tools of modern political representation and described as essential agents of mobilization (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967) and channels of expression whose main duty is, above all, to represent the people and express their demands (Sartori, 2005:64). They enable citizens' voices to be listened to during policy-making processes. Political parties recruit candidates, mobilize electoral support, set the political agendas and form the governments, among other functions (Montero y Gunther, 2007: 21).

With regard to their typologies, the one presented by Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond (2003) is very useful since their classification gathers all the previous classifications, from classics like Duverger (1954) or Neuman (1956) to more contemporary ones like Kirchheimer (1966), Panebianco (1988) and Katz & Mair (1995).

According to Gunther and Diamond (2003) we can classify political parties in five

different categories from which three are relevant for the study: mass-based parties, electoralist parties or catch-all. *Mass-based parties* were relevant over the XX century and characterized by a solid militant base that makes economic contributions to the party, and which is united by a group of beliefs that are often extended to other areas of their social life. They usually maintain strong links with external organizations such as trade unions, religious institutions and the media. This type of parties gave progressively way to *electoralist parties* or *catch-all*, parties without a marked ideological tendency because they seek to increase their votes as much as possible. They have a central position because they try to maximize their possibilities to win the elections, making them simple electoral ‘machines’. The emergence and success of this type of parties especially over mass-based parties can be framed in what some scholars have called ‘the end of the ideology (Bell, 1960). The ideology as a group of ideas and beliefs is inefficient in a moment when the global hegemony of an economic, political and cultural model makes daily problems immune to the left-right cleavage. Ideology works as a mere ‘cash machine’ (Bell, 1960: 85) and as an instrument of canalization of citizens demands and political mobilization. The last category, called a *movement party*, lacks a clearly defined programmatic line despite having a notable ideological component. They are purely contemporary and are framed in anti-establishment tendencies from both the right and the left wing. They advocate for cross-cutting policies and horizontal relations without hierarchies and without a powerful decision center. They are inserted in a post-materialist context that explains the elimination of the figure of the militant in the traditional sense, given that they are open parties where everyone who wishes to participate is welcomed (Gunther and Diamond, 2003: 188-189).

Regarding the party system, it can be described as the result of the interaction (political competition) of the political units that make it up. The system is influenced and determined by the nature of the parties that participate in it and, at the same time, the model of party system influences the nature and behavior of the political units (Bartolini; 1988: 218-219). Bartolini proposes three different approaches when analysing party systems, the genetic, the morphologic and the competitive approach (Bartolini, 1988: 219).

In the genetic approach, based on cleavages, Rokkan and Lipset (1967) identified four historic fractures around which political parties have traditionally positioned themselves and that still play a relevant role nowadays. These cleavages that structure European party systems are

centre/periphery (nationalisms), State/Church, urban/rural and land/industry. Today, we can include new cleavages such as European integration (intergovernmentalism vs. supranationalism). In fact, when analyzing why some political parties hold Eurosceptic attitudes, while some authors have highlighted the importance of the historic left-right axis (Hooge & Marks, 2002; Gabel & Hix, 2002), others have suggested that ideology does not play a relevant role (Szmolka, 1999). Nonetheless, for authors such as Szczerbiak and Taggart, the parties' positions within their party systems would condition their attitudes towards the EU. Mainstream parties tend to be less skeptical than peripheral parties. Moreover, national contexts would also have a relevant role in the expression of Euroscepticism (Brinegar, Jolly & Kitschelt, 2004; Ruiz Jiménez and Egea de Haro (2007).

The morphological approach focuses on the shape and size to analyze the competitive interaction of the political parties. According to the dispersion and concentration of power in the system we can classify political party systems as a single party system, bipartisan or multiparty. (Bartolini, 1988: 224). This is a very useful and extended model that has been further developed by Sartori (2005), who included multiparty subtypes according to the number of parties and distance between them: moderate multiparty system, polarized and prevailing party.

There are three major theoretical approaches that aim to explain the variation of the support of the political elites to the EU at both the collective and the individual level: the cultural, the institutional and the ideological approach. The cultural approach, which can be split into macro and micro-cultural theories, puts the emphasis on the exogenous factors. In this sense, attitudes would be driven by deeply stable rooted beliefs (Mishler and Rose, 2001). On the contrary, the institutional approach, which can also be broken down into micro and macro institutional theories, highlights that support is endogenous to the political process, meaning that this support will depend on the institutional action. Thus, support for the EU would be unstable and variable compared to the previous approach (Thomassen and Schmitt, 1999). Finally, the ideological approach claims that support for the EU's political system will be based on self-positioning on the ideological scale. According to Steenbergen and Marks (2004), the left-right cleavage divided into free/regulated market issues spills over into support for the EU political system. However, mainstream literature, advocates that this divide would be mainly a divide between radical and mainstream ideological positions. Mainstream parties would tend to be more

supportive of the EU whereas radical parties will be more likely to hold Eurosceptic stances (Conti, 2013:175)

The current political and democratic crisis has had a great impact on European political party systems, but are the causes of this phenomenon exogenous or endogenous? Mair (2015) focuses on the endogenous factors. As democratic systems consolidated after World War II, the social gap that appeared between the elite and the rest of the population implied a new “abyss” or “vacuum” between the political class and the citizens, increasingly deprived of their sovereignty. Mair tries to explain the motives of disaffection or the high degree of indifference for politics in general and for political parties in particular. The ‘vacuum’ of western democracies will respond to the progressive weakening of the experiences of the third democratic wave: the ruling elites will distance themselves while voters abstain from politics. All this is a result of a new phenomenon, the progressive delegitimization of the democratic systems.

New political parties come up, as well as other parties rebranding themselves, to respond to the need of rescuing “issues” that are claims emerged from the problems experienced by the society in a particular moment. Before the distancing of the political establishment, various authors consider how these negative attitudes towards political parties and elites caused the emergence of new political party systems.

Lago and Martinez, in a study carried out specifically in respect of the Spanish experience, note that the conditions for the emergence of new parties require new incentives that compensate the electoral costs. The appearance of new parties will depend on two sets of variables: institutional (electoral system, number of seats in the parliament and sociological (cleavages) and the electoral market (market failures in the electoral market). Moreover, when the political parties exhibit behavior contrary to what was expected from them, the voter might react in two different ways, abstaining or voting for “non-established parties”, which can benefit from this disaffection, especially if they use anti-establishment discourses and offer a “different way of doing politics” (Lago y Martínez, 2011: 7). In this context, a new party can emerge when citizens’ demands are not being fulfilled by the usual political parties and be successful in the electoral competition when their proposals address these demands. On the contrary, ideology would not allow fast changes in the traditional political parties benefiting and ballasting them at the same time: benefiting from this situation thanks to cognitive “shortcuts” but harming them

due to their inability to adapt to the new situation until they have lost various elections (Lago & Martínez, 2011: 8). The fewer years since their founding election, the greater the chances of a successful entrance into the party system (Lago & Martínez; 2011: 16-17).

CHAPTER IV - Euroscepticism in a pro-European country: from the enthusiasm of accession to populism.

Since Spain's return to democracy in 1978, the European integration process has gone hand in hand with the national project itself. However, the traditional pro-European attitudes can no longer be taken for granted. Although support to the EU by the mainstream parties has remained unchanged after the crisis, the decline of citizens' support to the European institutions has experienced a significant drop. The EU was blamed for austerity and badly seen by the northern stereotypes regarding peripheral and debtor countries and not as an instrument to provide greater prosperity and security. At the same time, two new political parties have emerged in Spain changing the Spanish political party system significantly which might have important political implications for the EU.

Party competition in Spain

The general elections of 2015 put an end to the two-party system that had governed Spain for the last three decades. Two new parties broke into scene, challenging the dominant position of the two traditional mainstream parties *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE, en. for Spanish Socialist Workers' party) and *Partido Popular* (PP, en. for People's party).

Since the launch of democracy in 1977, Spain has had different political party systems. The first model did not have any predominant party, responding to a morphologic structure with a limited pluralism or moderate multi-party system upon the classic left-right axis. However, from 1982 to 1993 PSOE managed to win three consecutive elections with absolute majority and controlled the executive for 21 years. The PP only started challenging PSOE in the 1990s, when the new leader José María Aznar changed the ideological profile of the party by shifting it to the centre (Orriols & Lavezzolo 2008). Therefore, giving way to a prevailing party system. In 1993, the country consolidates an imperfect bipartisan model with the alternation of PSOE and PP. Traditionally, these parties were the outcome of left-right divisions but in the recent years both

parties are close to the definition of *Catch all* parties because they have blurred and softened their ideological and programmatic differences to maximize their possibilities to win the elections.

The Spanish two-party system was defined as imperfect because it had other state-wide and the non-statewide parties such as *Izquierda Unida* (IU), the former communist party with national presence that stands to the left of PSOE, and other regional parties organized around the cleavage centre/periphery, such as *Convergencia i Unio* (CIU) and *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (PNV) that completed the party system. In the last few years also another party founded by the former socialist Rosa Díez and which refused to locate itself within the traditional left-right divide, had appeared in the national scene, *Unión, Progreso y Democracia* (UPyD)². The aforementioned regional parties do not have a relevant parliamentary presence but act as hinge parties in the bipartisan model, since due to their key strategic position have supported the large political parties in punctual moments. During the two-party system period, the nationalist parties supported the formation of the governments of PSOE in 1993 and 2004 and PP's in 1996 governments.

This system was in place for more than two decades, until the elections of 2015 when Spain underwent an authentic political earthquake with the irruption of two new political parties, *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos*. For the first time in democracy the most voted party was not able to form a government. Thus far, the two largest political parties, PSOE and PP, were able to govern without the need of coalitions thanks to the absolute majority or the simple majority achieved in the second round of the investiture vote. PP and PSOE used to concentrate an average of 80% of the votes. The highest peak of concentration of the two parties took place in 2008 with 83% of the votes, far away of the current 55,69%³. The Spanish political party system was now subject of a

Source: newspaper *El País*

high volatility. This election was also the end of four years of absolute majority. The elections of 2015 gave birth to a totally different political scenario with the significant loss of

² UPyD was national party that obtained representation in the general elections of 2008 and 2011 with one and five seats respectively, disappearing from the Parliament in the elections of 2015.

³ According to the data provided by the Spanish Ministry of Home Affairs <http://www.infoelectoral.mir.es/infoelectoral/min/busquedaAvanzadaAction.html?codTipoEleccion=2&vuelta=1&isHome=1&codPeriodo=200803>



votes of the mainstream parties, the disappearance of IU, and CIU of the parliament, and the emergence of two new parties, *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos* which shared a democratic regeneration agenda, but had a radically different ideological profile. The political party system had turned into a moderate multiparty one. Before there were two big political parties and now there are four, 5 parties with electoral relevance and four with parliamentary weight

Due to the incapacity to reach an agreement and form a coalition, elections were held again six months after, in June 2016, where one of the biggest parties, PP, recovered some support. This recovery, was to a large extent, the result of the tiredness of the citizens of the political situation and their fear of the consequences of ungovernability for the country. The political blockage also had an impact in the turnout that was slightly lower in June of 2016. *Podemos* obtained 69 seats in the general elections of December 2015, adding two more seats in 2016. On the contrary, *Ciudadanos* suffered a significant decline considering its size, passing from the 40 seats to 32. PSOE underwent a similar trend and lost 5 deputies, whereas PP recovered increasing its number of seats from 123 to 137, although the party was still far from the absolute majority.

Podemos formed a coalition with IU, *Unidos Podemos* (UP) to run for this general election to try to advance PSOE from the its left side, catching the most volatile voters in favour of the so-called “government of the change”. However, this attempt did to materialized and as already pointed, the electorate voted for the PP, making the coalition to lose some votes.

Since then, and after a failed investiture of the President Mariano Rajoy, the PP governs with a tight majority in the national Parliament thanks to the votes in favour of PP, *Ciudadanos*

and *Coalición Canaria* and to the abstention of PSOE which recently elected Pedro Sanchez as its leader after troubled discussions and great divisions within the party. Spanish politics are in shambles and likely to enhance polarization. Podemos has called for a no-confidence vote against President Rajoy due to the party's accusations in numerous corruption scandals. Meanwhile Catalan independentists are trying to hold a referendum on Cataluña's independence in October while Spain is claiming Gibraltar back, redline on the Brexit negotiations.

Party Euroscepticism

Spain has been considered as a pro-European country since its accession to the European Community (EC) in 1985. In fact, it has been the only country where all political parties supported the accession, including the Communist party (Sanchez-Cuenca 2001; Richards 1999, pp. 178–179; Alvarez Miranda 1996). The demise of Franco that ruled the country under a dictatorship during more than 40 years, was followed by an overall agreement of all political forces to join the community, result of the desire of freedom, democracy and modernity associated to the EC. EC membership was perceived by the political elites as necessary step for socioeconomic modernization to succeed in the transition to a new political regime and overcome the ghosts of dictatorship. All the political parties involved in the Spanish transition considered the accession as a must to overcome international isolation and undergo the required economic reforms to consolidate democracy in the country.

Spain finally joined the EC the 12th of June of 1985 after several attempts. The first approach was already made in 1962 to access the European Economic Community (EEC). Nonetheless, this request was rejected due to the authoritarian regime in power. A preferential tariff agreement was reached with the EEC in 1970 but until Franco's death, the way for accession was closed. The first democratic government lead by the socialist party submitted the request for accession in 1977, process that finished in 1985, when the accession treaty was ratified after years of arduous negotiations, mostly related to agriculture and fishery policies. The difficulty of the negotiations caused criticism from some political parties but was with the launch of the single market and European Monetary Union (EMU), accompanied by serious economic problems in the early 90s, when some negative attitudes appeared among national elites. Nonetheless, the economic costs of the membership were perceived as unavoidable in the short run and the benefits in the future were expected to be higher than the costs. Moreover, Spanish

parties have exhibit strong and stable positive attitudes towards the EU over time, only IU among nation-wide parties, has shown some negative attitudes due to the lack of the social dimension in the integration process.

The findings of the ENEC report, have pointed that traditional domestic elites' attitudes towards the EU barely vary with the crisis. The study, that carried out interviews to 81 deputies of the mandate between 2011 and 2015 but it is presented in comparative perspective with the data of the IntUNE⁴ Elites Survey of 2007 and 2009, shows that Spain is the second country where its elites express higher levels of identification with the EU (95,1 %). The crisis has not involved significant changes in this pattern. Furthermore, the overall support for the integration process of the Spanish elites in a scale of 10 points is 8 points, higher than the average of the sample (6.9 points) and 97,9% of the deputies think that Spain has benefited from EU's membership. It is worth noting that only half of the members of the parliament consider that EU decisions do not take enough into account Spanish interests, although this figure is still higher than the average and it has been modified significantly over the crisis.

The deputies' trust in the institutions is also higher than the average of the European countries that participated in the survey. Such trust is 7 points for the EP, 6.6 points for the Commission and 6.1 points for the Council. The support for the EP has been strengthened since 2007 and remained stable for the other two institutions. In addition, 63,8 % of the deputies are 'satisfied or very satisfied' with the functioning of the democracy at the European level, again above the average of the sample. Lastly, it is interesting to note that when asked about how better address the effects of the crisis the Spanish deputies prefer EU intervention than a coordinated action of the national government's (37,5 % and 34 ,2 % respectively). Overall, it can be said that Spanish traditional elites are optimistic regarding the future of the EU since 85% thought that in 10 years the EU will be more politically integrated.

In addition, according to a study of Votewatch after the Brexit on the positions MEPs on the future of Europe "Spanish politicians have a common position in regard to the future of the European Union, despite the internal disagreements on national politics. In fact, there are no

⁴ The survey IntUNE was a European study carried out in 18 countries, among them Spain, that aimed at exploring the factors that determine the European and national identity. It also investigated how citizens and political elites perceived the EU and the benefits of membership.

parties advocating for the exit of the EU and they all supported Juncker to continue as the president of the Commission". The study highlights that all the Spanish parties voted for relaunching the European project. What is more, *Podemos* was the only far left party that voted in favour of the resolution. Nonetheless, its support was mild regarding the vote on the revision of the treaties. The party was the only party among those which make up the European United Left/Nordic Green left (GUE/NGL) group and which emitted a negative vote, that abstained. It is worth mentioning that although *Podemos* and IU united forces and candidatures in the last General Elections and integrate the same parliamentary group in the EP, the usually vote very differently in the EP. IU, in line with the rest of the group, disapproved the lack of self-criticism of the institution voting against the resolution.

PP, PSOE and *Ciudadanos* supported the resolution mainly focused on the revision of the treaties and the need to respect the will of the UK citizens but against the permanence of Scotland and Northern Ireland in the EU. In fact, the differences between Spanish parties were more accentuated regarding this issue. *Podemos*, United Left, Basque Nationalist Party, Catalan Left, Initiative for Catalonia-Greens and other nationalist parties emitted a positive vote on the permanence of Northern Ireland in the EU.

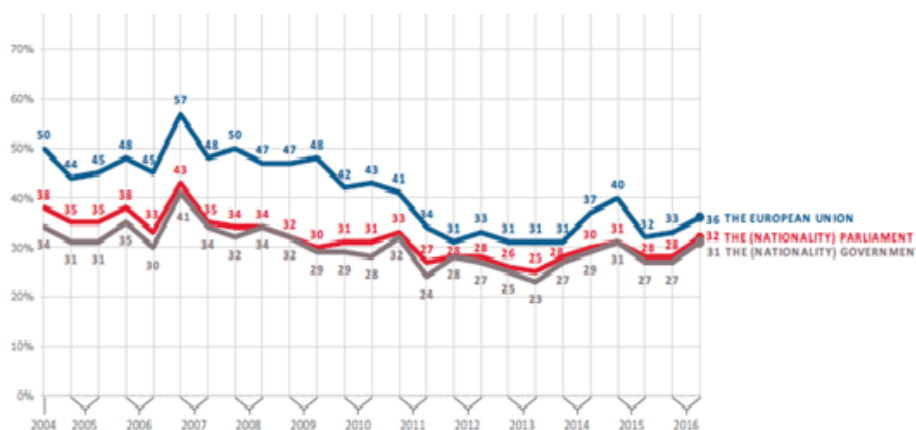
Public opinion

Citizens attitudes, however, followed a different trend. The crisis of legitimacy has been particularly serious in Spain. The country went from being in April 2008, together with Slovenia, the MS where more people supported and trusted the EU (66 per cent of the people interviewed), to be the most Eurosceptic country in June 2014, where only 16% demonstrated trust in the EU against a percentage of 79% that was affirming that tended to distrust it, overcoming even Greece, which was leading the ranking of Euroscepticism from May 2011.

The positive opinion about the EU plunged to 32 % in autumn 2010 after the European intervention that took place in May, and despite the slight recovery in the spring of 2011, fell again in November after the constitutional reform to adapt the Spanish Constitution to the deficit and public debt limits established by the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Economic governance of the EMU. In the Eurobarometer of Autumn 2011, the image of the EU drops for the first time under 30% and in the spring of 2012, the number of Spanish with a negative

opinion of the EU surpassed for the first time those with a positive view since the accession. Since then, the positive image has progressively deteriorated up to 20% in the spring of 2013 and reaching its lower peak in June 2014 with a drop of 26 points in seven years. According to the Eurobarometer, at the beginning of 2007, 57% of the Spanish citizens trusted the EU and in autumn 2016 only 34% did it. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that also the image of national institutions followed the same trend, steadily falling from 2007 to 2014.

Pregunta: "Dígame, por favor, si usted tiende a confiar o no en cada una de las siguientes instituciones..."



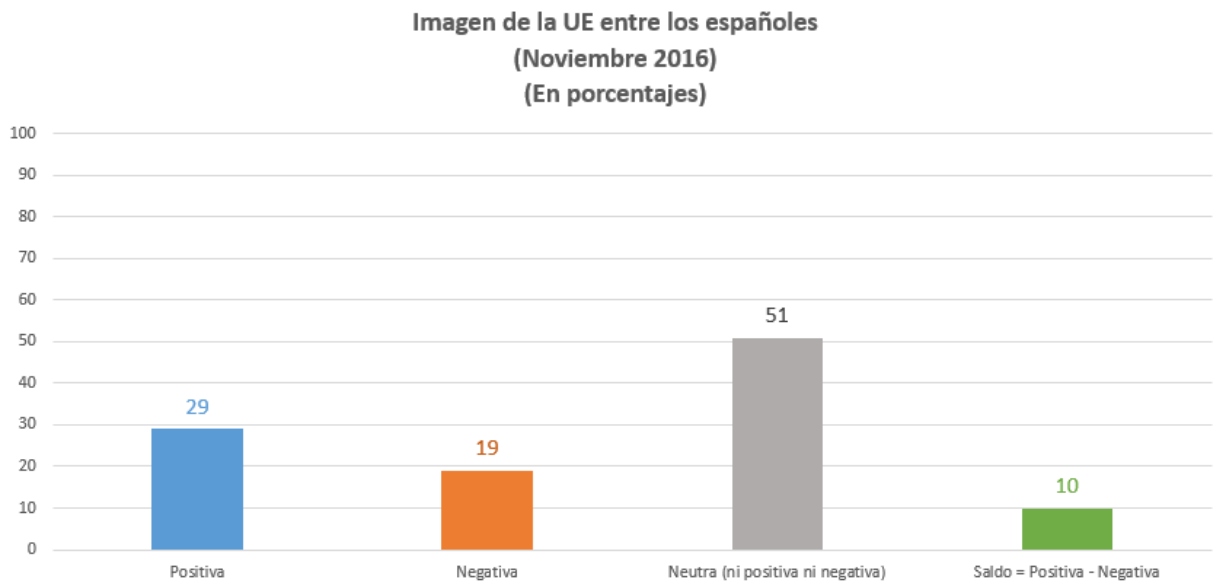
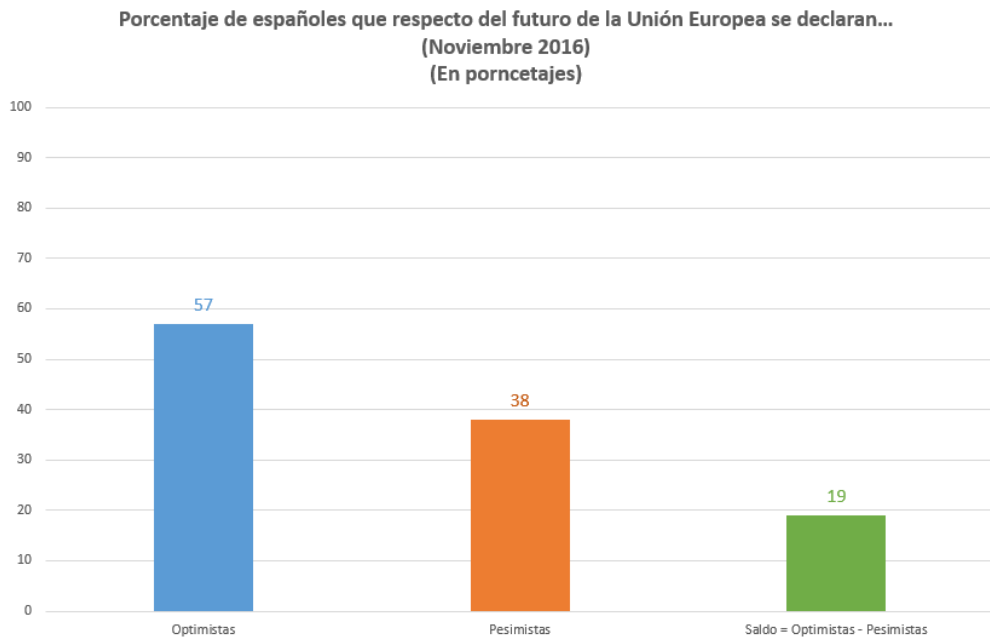
Source:

Standard Eurobarometer no86, 2016

From 2014, and according to the last available Eurobarometer of November 2016, the information seems to indicate a certain trend of recovery. Although both, the European Union and the national parliaments of every MS continue generating more distrust than confidence between European citizens. The data of the last two years only improves the historical minimums reached in 2014 and the last Eurobarometer indicates that respondents are dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Spain and the EU with 66% and 54% respectively.

Nowadays, according to the last Eurobarometer positive opinions of the EU's image outweigh negative opinions (+10 points). Although, it is remarkable that Spain has the highest percentage of neutral opinions (51%) among the rest of MS. In fact, when asked how the EU works, a majority of respondents in Spain (52%) say that they do not know. These figures are very significant since it has been claimed that Spaniards have been among the Europeans that have shown more levels of support to the EU, above EU averages. Nonetheless, as we already

pointed, these percentages are exaggerated since support has been overestimated and there is also a large percentage of citizens that lack knowledge and defined ideas about the EU due to disinterest or ignorance. Although, this cannot be automatically defined as Euroscepticism.



In any case, 57% of the Spaniards feel optimistic with regard to the future of the EU, 7 points above that the rest of European citizens. Furthermore, despite the deterioration of the image of the EU, as well as the trust in its institutions in Spain in the last years, the percentage of those who think that EU membership has been beneficial for the country is still majority according to a survey carried out by Metroscopia. From 80% in 2009 in the beginning of the crisis to a 65% in 2014 (the worst year for institutional trust in general) and 70% in 2015. This opinion was shared by the electorate of the four main parties. The lowest percentage belonged to the potential voters of Podemos (58%), the only electorate for which, to a large extent, being part of the EU had not involved a great help for Spain to face the economic crisis.

An interesting study of the Pew Research Centre carried out in 10 countries that account for 80% of the EU-28 population and 82% of the EU's GDP, before the vote on the referendum on Brexit about the recovery of citizens trust in the EU pointed that European public opinions are sharply divided along partisan lines on many European issues. Furthermore, this division is not a simple matter of left versus right in each society. In Spain people on the right (59%) are less likely than those on the left (35%) to distrust the EU by a margin of 24 percentage points. These ideological differences spill over large partisan divides on various issues, only 32% of *Podemos* party adherents favour the EU. The EU's management of the economic crisis is a huge source of disaffection with the institution in Spain. About 65% of the Spanish citizens disapprove the way the Brussels has handle the economic crisis.

Looking at the data of the evolution of the Spanish public opinion on the EU from 2007 to 2016 we can affirm that the utilitarian support in Spain is a strong determinant of the citizens grating support for the European project. Nonetheless, the 'affective support' also plays an important role in Spaniards attitudes towards the EU. The management of the economic crisis has caused a notable decrease of the affective and utilitarian support. Spanish citizens have now a much less positive image of the Union than 7 years ago, they trust less its institutions.

It must be taken into account that Spain plunged in recession from 2009, with a financial national system with serious problems and with levels of unemployment that had grown from 8,2 % in 2007 to 24,6% in 2012, year when the country accepted a program of financial assistance to

rescue part of his bank sector, ballasted by the consequences of the crisis but mostly due to the real-estate bubble that had taken place during the decade of 2000. In addition, as in other European countries, a series of harsh austerity measures were implemented under the flag of ‘recommendation’ by the Troika as preconditions for emergency loans and other forms of assistance (Fominaya & Cox 2013). This situation led to public protests emerged before and after the announcement of the constitutional reform that introduced a cap on the deficit in August. A number of corruption scandals that affected mainly PP, as well as other parties and institutions, fuelled the public protests and between January and February 2013 public concern about corruption doubled (CIS, 2013). The percentage of citizens that considered ‘corruption and fraud’ to be one of the most significant problems moved from 18 to 40 per cent in just one month. Citizens’ concerns about corruption peaked in November 2014 with 64% of respondents placing ‘corruption and fraud’ as one of the main problems of the country.

The combination of these factors caused a political crisis. The lack of confidence and trust in political actors and institutions increased among citizens. Political disaffection had already started rising during the last years of Zapatero’s government but reached its peak in 2013 with 40% (0 value in a scale of 10) of the electorate distrusting political parties and one third of the respondents considering them and politicians two of the main problems of the country (CIS, 2013). This discontent had an impact on the EP elections, where the PP and PSOE obtained the worst results since the first European elections, 26% and 23% respectively whereas the newcomers had significant results.

CHAPTER V- Filling the vacuum, *Podemos* and *ciudadanos*.

Podemos was born as a party in 2014, a few months before the European elections, where it obtained 1.3 million votes (8% of the vote share) and five MEPs. *Ciudadanos*, launched in 2006 to fight against the “mandatory nationalism” imposed by the independentist catalan parties, also ran for the European elections, getting two MEPs. *Podemos* integrates the European Parliamentary group of the European United left/ Nordic Green left (GUE/NGL) whereas *Ciudadanos* joined the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE). Their ideological differences are clear. *Podemos* holds a firm criticism of the European establishment and their austerity policies. They are reformists since they believe in Europe but not as it stands today. Therefore, they can be framed as soft Eurosceptic since they do not wish to withdraw

from the EU but they want to change certain aspects, such as the focus on the neoliberal model and the single market in favour of a Europe with greater focus on social policies. On the contrary, *Ciudadanos* do not question the terms of the integration process. In fact, the party defines itself as pro-European. For them '*the main goal of European integration is the achievement of the United States of Europe*'⁵.

Ciudadanos decided to run in other regions in the local elections of 2007, and after the party presented a political manifesto for the general elections of 2008 where they barely reached 0'18% of the votes. In 2009, the party tried to form an unsuccessful coalition with the party UPyD to run for the European elections. Moreover, the party presented its candidature to the EP with the Eurosceptic platform *Libertas*, an act that has been recognised as a mistake by its leader Albert Rivera. With the Catalan referendum on independence entering the political agenda, the party managed to get an remarkable result in the regional elections of September 2015 (17.9 % of the vote and 25 seats), becoming the main opposition party in the Catalan parliament. Since 2015, the party, born to fill the vacuum of those that reject identarian nationalist policies in Cataluña, has developed a strategy to expand nationally through the alliance with various political parties and independent candidates, changing its initial name in Catalan, *Ciutadans*, for the current *Ciudadanos*. A decade ago, the party was launched to fill a political space that did not respond to nationalist divisions but the evolution of the political framework enabled it to jump to the national competition under the flag of the political regeneration.

Podemos was founded in January 2014 by a group of left-wing university lecturers from Madrid's Complutense university, with the aim of '*converting indignation into political change*' (Pavía, Bodoque & Martín, 2015: 1) and is a party that is built around the main claims of the movement 15-M⁶. *Podemos* "*managed to pick up on a widespread social unease with a simple and effective message against corruption, the privileges of traditional politicians, precarious*

⁵ Retrieved from the official website of the party <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/nuestros-valores>

⁶ Also called *Movimiento de los indignados* (en. for outraged ones), was a civil movement that arose immediately after the demonstrations of May 15, 2011, summoned by diverse groups such as *Democracia Real YA* (en. for Real Democracy NOW) or *Juventud Sin Futuro* (en. for Youth Without a Future), after forty persons decided to camp spontaneously in the square of *Puerta del Sol* (Madrid). This event led to a series of pacific protests across the country, aiming at promoting a more participative democracy far from the bipartisanship make up by PSOE-PP and of the control of banks and corporations. Among their demands there were also " an authentic division of power " and other measures with the intention of improving the democratic system. The movement protested about welfare cuts, the high rate of unemployment and political corruption.
<http://www.movimiento15m.org/2013/07/como-surgio-el-movimiento-15m.html>

work conditions and unemployment” (Rodríguez-Aguilera de Prat, 2015: 57). In fact, the motto ‘they do not represent us’ and ‘Real Democracy Now’ is understood by their leaders as an opportunity to win citizens over and respond to the social demands claiming democratic regeneration. This demand goes beyond the left-right cleavage. In fact, *Podemos* called for a new cleavage, people/establishment. This is the reason why the party can be classified as a *movement party* and inserted in a postmaterialist framework since, as Inglehart (1977) stated, they are characterized for a strong transversal anti-elite discourse linked to the discourse of social movements, mainly portrayed as in opposition to the economic-political elites, reinterpreting of the traditional cleavage capital/work. However, the replacement of the left/right cleavage for above/below axis in an attempt to escape ideological labels, distance the party from the *movement party* typology and brings it closer to the *catch all* category. *Podemos* is today an institutionalized party that tries to maximize its possibilities in the polls. Therefore, the party can be classified as a hybrid of both types since it has elements of each category.

Ciudadanos, more prone to facilitate coalitions first with PSOE in 2015 and with PP after the last elections also managed to be institutionalized and win a relevant area of the electoral market. The party jumped to the national level once it verified that the electoral market presented the same vacuums as the regional level. The content of its discourse focuses more on the democratic regeneration and the battle against corruption than in anti-austerity claims. The pro-European nature and the respect for the national and European establishment has made them ‘*firmly committed with fiscal stability and deficit goals set up by the European institutions*’⁷. The ambiguity of their ideological positions and discourse aims to present the party as moderated, pragmatic and in a central position so as to get as many votes as possible. In this sense, *Ciudadanos* can be clearly classified as a *catch-all party*.

The corruption is one of the most used terms by both *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos*. They are against the “traditional or conventional way of doing politics”. Nevertheless, this cannot be taken as the only explanation of the emergence and success of the new parties since, for instance, UPyD would have followed the same growing trend of the analysed parties. The appearance of new competitors in the party system was closed and stable before the crisis and it was only

⁷ Proposal no.34. *350 soluciones para cambiar España a mejor*. Electoral Programme of *Ciudadanos* for the General Elections 26th June 2016.

viable when a vacuum opened up in the electoral market. The macroeconomic and social indicators also contributed to the necessary conditions for the emergence and success of the new parties. The disastrous unemployment figures, the austerity measures, the reduction of social rights, and the perception of a corrupted system facilitated the irruption of *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos*, parties that neglected left-right divisions in favour of a new dimension, the fracture between the people and the establishment.

The populist discourse

Podemos tends to use ‘plain and direct’ language, characterised by clear, blunt sentences and a limited vocabulary (Rodríguez-Aguilera de Prat, 2015: 58) (Fernández Riquelme 2015: 26). In this context, one of the most notable features of *Podemos*’ discourse is the dichotomy between the ‘people’ and the so-called ‘casta’ used to refer to the corrupt minority which occupies positions of power without taking into account the interests of the ‘people’. A majority who, therefore, find themselves without adequate representation (Bayon, 2015). For Iglesias, the ‘casta’ also includes the worldwide financial elite, which in his view, are the real rulers of the world, and which he refers to as the ‘Wall Street Party’(Iglesias, 2014: 115-141). According to Iglesias, the so-called ‘Wall Street Party’ increasingly dominates both Spain and the European Union. The EU is depicted as dominated by the international ‘casta’, and is therefore portrayed as a corrupt entity which is no longer at the service of its citizens, but rather at the service of an international capitalist elite. *Podemos* has tended to describe the EU as dominated by a corrupt ruling class of Eurocrats and politicians, themselves forming part of the worldwide financial elite, which in Iglesias’ view are the real rulers of the world (Iglesias, 2014:115-141). According to Iglesias, ‘*a Europe has been constructed which is not at the service of the citizens but at the service of the banks, including the German banks*’ (Berlunes 2014).

Ciudadanos, as mentioned before, holds an anti-independentist and Europeanist discourse. Their language moderated and pragmatic, yet ambiguous, while retaining a focus on democratic regeneration and the battle against corruption. Their rhetoric appeals to a rational change in contrast to the radical change proposed by *Podemos*. The party uses a liberal discourse based on the neoliberal formula of the ‘workfare’⁸. Like the welfare but mainly linked to two

⁸ According to Lodemel and Trickey (2001), the workfare would be based on a series of measures that require re-entering the labor market for the person in order to able to get social benefits. In this sense, it is emphasized the

elements: employment and the nation. Nonetheless, we can also find some common features in the discourse of both parties. The discourse of one as much as the other has been focused in solving the social problems and demands of the citizens. The Populist formula comes from the distinction between dignified people and corrupted elites. Both *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos* call for a democratic regeneration of the political institutions and elites.

While *Podemos* does not advocate a Spanish exit from the EU, it supports significant reform of the EU. Its position, thus, is very different from that put forward by ‘hard’ Eurosceptic parties such as UKIP or the Front National, which have supported their country's exit from the EU and tend to favour the collapse of the European integration project altogether. In fact, *Podemos* was the only Spanish party to actively take part in the Brexit campaign in the UK, with the participation of Pablo Bustinduy, the party’s international secretary, in the Labour Party’s pro-Remain campaign in Manchester (Riveiro, 2016). The party has argued that the Brexit decision should be a ‘wake-up’ call for the EU, and calls for significant democratisation of its institutions along with abandonment of austerity policies in favour of a social Europe.

A brief content analysis of the political manifestos of both Spanish General elections of 2015 and 2016, as well as the manifesto used for the European elections of 2014 confirms the features described above. The motto for the European campaign of *Ciudadanos* ‘The Union is the strength’ seemed designed specifically for the regional campaign to present the party as an alternative to Catalan nationalism, since at the beginning of the manifesto there is a statement directly related to it: ‘*The Europeans and the Spanish are stronger together and we need to recover the eagerness to share a common project*’. The manifesto contains a letter which is ambiguous and uses a vague language but that has a clear federalist orientation since it speaks about a ‘United States of Europe’ and affirms that ‘*Joined economic, political and socially, the European Union would occupy the seventh position in the list of major countries, would be the third country for population and the first economy of the world*’. The manifesto is 16 pages long and divided in 6 chapters, all starting with the word ‘Europe’. The chapters refer to a more democratic Europe, political and economic integration, a space of freedom, equality, security and justice, education and R&I, energy and the fight against poverty. The party wants a more

mandatory nature to obtain an employment to be able to perceive some type of social benefit. The leitmotiv of these policies of the welfare to work advocates that the employment is the best and probably the only route to achieve the social insertion, and prevent poverty.

politically and economically integrated Europe. In fact in the manifesto they mention again a ‘United States of Europe’, a Ministry for finance of the EU, a bigger EU budget, a reform of the institutions (including the unification of President of the Commission and the President of the Council) and a less bureaucratic Europe, among other proposals.

Podemos does not have an introductory speech in its 36 pages long manifesto which is split in 6 chapters. All chapters start with the word ‘recover’ or ‘conquer’ and refer to the economy, freedom, equality, fraternity, sovereignty and the environment. One of the main points of the manifesto called for the deletion of the constitutional reform to introduce a cap on the public debt and deficit that was agreed by PP and PSOE and pushed from Europe. The party also claims the recovery of strategic sectors of the economy such as energy, the transformation of the ECB, the creation of a European agency of rating that avoids fluctuations and persecutes fiscal fraud, a fiscal system adapted to the needs of the MSs, a bigger investment in R&D and a reduction of the military costs. It is worth mentioning that many of the claims of the movement 15M were taken on board, such as the limitation of the expenses of the electoral campaigns, the defence of the rights of expression and association, as well as legislation that gathers LGBT rights. Finally, there are a set of European measures addressed to the protection and solidarity of the member states, through the defence of the language, the development of the rural world and the protection of the environment and species.

Podemos states in the manifesto for the general elections of 2015 that ‘*Spain does not need more cuts but to abandon definitely austerity policies to reduce the unemployment and the inequality and transform the economy*’⁹. This argument affirms that ‘*the main problem is the inadequate fiscal framework of the Eurozone that has aggravated the crisis and its consequences for the population, delaying the recovery and prioritizing unrealistic deficit goals that submit the whole European economy to deflation*’¹⁰.

As it can be seen in the tables below, gathering the electoral proposals of the General Elections of 2015 and 2016, the electoral program of *Ciudadanos* changed substantially between elections, from having four proposals regarding the EU to twelve. Moreover, these proposals

⁹ Retrieved from the website of the party in <https://podemos.info/espan%CC%83a-no-necesita-mas-recortes-sino-abandonar-definitivamente-la-austeridad-para-reducir-el-desempleo-y-la-desigualdad-y-trasformar-la-economia/>

¹⁰ Ibid.

have now their own chapter which is called ‘more and a better Europe’. The topics of the electoral programme of June 2016 are completely different from those elaborated for the elections of 2015 and address ‘hot’ issues such as the refugee crisis, the signature of TTIP or the fight of terrorism. The proposals are quite ambiguous and mainly focus on the reinforcement of defence and foreign policies and its institutions. The push for deeper integration is also present among their proposals. *Podemos*, however, maintained the number of proposals and topics between elections. Both electoral programs are centred in economic and social reforms, particularly economic reforms. Nonetheless, it is also worth noting the inclusion of proposals to democratize decision-making in the EU and a proposal on the energy field on the electoral program prepared for the elections of 2016. According to the classification described before, *Podemos*’ proposals contain reformist and transformational positions whereas the proposals of *Ciudadanos* show the party's commitment to approach the EU through existing structures (status quo position).

As for the manifesto for the General elections of 2016, among other measures, *Podemos* wanted to drive the reform of the European institutions to make political and economic decisions more democratic in the Eurozone¹¹. For Iglesias, ‘all the important decisions should be taken by institutions with democratic legitimacy’, implying ‘a simultaneous process of democratising European institutions but also of recovering sovereignty’ (Infolibre, 2016). In practice, the ‘European United Left’ group in the EP, of which *Podemos* forms part, presented and voted for a series of amendments to the Commission’s 2017 work programme which would be in favour of abolishing the Lisbon Treaty and the Stability and Growth Pact. Literally, amendment 22 requests ‘the convocation on the part of the European Council of an intergovernmental conference on the reversibility and repeal of the Treaties’ (El Chivato, 2016). The party has also expressed its wish to call for a European conference to restructure the public debt of the economies of the Eurozone¹², the creation of a ‘Social Eurogroup’ to monitor social imbalances¹³, to increase funding for healthcare and education¹⁴ and the design of an alternative energy strategy of the European Commission¹⁵.

¹¹ Proposal no.85. *La sonrisa de un país*. Electoral Programme of *Podemos* for the General Elections 26th June 2016.

¹² Ibid., Proposal no. 86

¹³ Ibid., Proposal no.89

Proposals referring to the EU in the electoral program for the General Elections December 2015.

PODEMOS	CIUDADANOS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reform substantially the Agreement of Stability and Growth and the Fiscal Agreement, eliminating the aim of budgetary balance and adapting the aims of debt and deficit. • Emission of Eurobonds. • Design of a European plan to eradicate poverty and exclusion; European unemployment benefits that complement the national one. • Reform of the statutes of the European Central Bank in order to include the objective of job creation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unification of the figures of the president of the Commission and of the European Council. • To reduce the number of commissioners (from the 28 current ones to about 15). • To eradicate tax havens that still exist in Europe and tributary dumping. • Creation a European Treasury.

Proposals referring to the EU in the electoral program for the General Elections June 2016.

PODEMOS	CIUDADANOS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design of an alternative proposal to the Energetic Strategy of the European Commission. • Creation of a European agency of independent and public rating. • Impulse of a reform of the European institutions that democratizes political and economic decision-making in the Eurozone. • Call for a European conference of debt to discuss the coordinated restructuring of the national debts in the frame of the euro-zone. • Promotion of the reform of the statutes of the European Central Bank. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support a deeper European integration at all levels: political, military, fiscal, monetary and social. • Defence of stronger European institution to carry out a true Foreign and Security Policy for the benefit of all. • Boosting intelligence and judicial cooperation with clear rules for the exchange of information and data protection to reinforce European agencies that fight against terrorism and organized crime. • Support of the High Representative for foreign affairs and security policy and the External Action Service as only representatives for the European foreign policy and accountable to the EP. • Creation of a Common, coherent and integrated European Defence and a common European defence army. • Support of a more ambitious Schengen space.

¹⁴ Ibid., Proposal 104

¹⁵ Ibid., Proposal no.12

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of an immediate plan to eradicate poverty and children exclusion in the whole European territory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work for an authentic and transparent single labour market that favours quality employment and labour mobility. • Promote European initiatives against poverty and inequality. • Defence of a fair and solidary European solution to the refugee tragedy. • Foster a European migration policy that includes a common frontier control and reinforced FRONTEX to face irregular migration. • Reform of the regulation of the Spanish Parliament to make compulsory the report of the government before and after European councils. • Support the signature of the Transatlantic Trade Investment Partnership (TTIP) as long as it respects European legislation regarding social, labour and consumer protection, as well as the protection of the environment.
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Vote patterns of in the European Parliament

Finally, in order to see what the implications of the ever-inconsistent Spanish political scene will be on the EU, we have examined how *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos* have behaved when being part of the EU decision-making since May 2014 to see where they really stand for. The Votewatch in-depth study on the voting and behaviour of the representatives of the Spanish parties in the EP from the European elections to the beginning of 2016 have shown that *Podemos* casted negative votes with regard to the finalisation of an economic and political union, EU economic policy coordination, grant powers to the ECB to impose sanctions, restoring monetary sovereignty, on the EU capital market union, cutting red tape, TTIP, reform of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), greater EU support to Ukraine, consider sending arms to Ukraine, support of security over privacy and approval of Juncker's Commission. On the other hand, the party voted in favour of public spending over austerity, reshaping EU company law, food from cloned animals, refugee's quotas, recognition of Palestine statehood and easy access to contraception and abortion. Lastly, abstained regarding a stronger EU tax policy and a bigger EU budget. Thus, the party emitted negative votes against mainly economic measures and the current European economic model whereas the positive votes revolved around various issues.

Ciudadanos voted in favour of all aforementioned measures except for restoring monetary sovereignty, supporting of public spending over budget discipline, and easy access to Contraceptives and abortion procedures. Interestingly, another recent survey of Votewatch pointed out that *Ciudadanos* has shifted to the right during the last months. There is an increased cooperation between the party and PP since they allied after the outcome of the general elections of 2016. Furthermore, *Ciudadanos* votes more often in line with PP than in line with its parliamentary group, ALDE. The matching rate between the two parties is 82%. The same trend is followed by the party at a national level. Differences with *Podemos* and PSOE are wide, though. *Podemos* is also far from PP's voter patterns (38%) and has the highest matching rate with IU (88%) and to a lesser extent with PSOE (57%).

In summary, the study has revealed that *Ciudadanos* can be classified as a pro-european party since neither its proposals nor its voter behaviour at the EP show anti-European features. In fact, the majority of its proposals fall under the status quo category. Thus, without questioning the european establishment whereas many proposals of *Podemos* contain reformist and transformational positions. Moreover, the votes emitted by the party at EP match their approach to EU, framing it as a soft Eurosceptic party with a firm criticism of the European establishment but committed to the EU's founding values.

CHAPTER VI - Conclusions

The traditional political parties are suffering a decline in Spain. Since few years ago, there has been a rise of populist parties that are winning space in the electoral arena and weight in the national parliament, as well as the European Parliament where Euroscepticism is progressively growing. Likewise, social movements are gaining relevance, boosted by political disaffection and the crisis of legitimacy. Many citizens have opted for new or reinvented parties that go beyond the classic left/right axis, proposing new dimensions of political competition. This is the case in Spain where the party system has experienced a transition from a bipartisan party system to a moderate, multiparty one with the appearance of new political parties that respond to new issues and challenge the dominant position of traditional parties. Furthermore, there has been an increase of the volatility and the political fragmentation in the party system without precedent.

The crisis of legitimacy of the EU has been particularly serious in Spain. Although there seems to be a trend of recovery and currently the positive opinions of the citizens outweigh the negative views on the EU, there is still a large percentage of neutral opinions compared to other MSs. Therefore, Spanish support cannot be taken for granted any longer since not only the image of the EU has suffered a deterioration among the Spanish citizenship, the consensus between political parties about the future of the European integration has also been broken. Traditional parties continue having a positive opinion of the EU but as the assessment on the opinions and stances of the new political parties on the EU has shown, *Podemos*, which has now a considerable political weight in the Spanish parliament and in domestic politics, disagrees with the way democracy works in the EU. Furthermore, it questions various of its basic elements, such as the predominance of neoliberal policies over social claims or the benefits of the Eurozone. Thus, the party can be classified as soft Eurosceptic since it wants to change certain aspects of the European integration, but does not question the EU membership. On the contrary, *Ciudadanos* fully supports the EU and would like to go deeper in the process of European integration. The study did not identify anti-European features in the discourse and electoral manifestos of *Ciudadanos*. It rather points out that the party's discourse aims at gaining ground to the traditional parties by blaming them for the corruption, while also claiming the need of democratic regeneration and of institutional reform to favour the unit and territorial integrity of Spain. As for *Podemos*, the study of the content of the political manifestos reveals that the anti-austerity discourse and criticism of the functioning of the EU has been a constant claim of the party. Nevertheless, the commitment of the party with Europe seems undeniable despite all the discrepancies in the way the EU works, especially regarding economic and fiscal policy.

Podemos and *Ciudadanos* might have had an influence in the negative attitudes of the Spanish citizens towards the EU, but their impact has not been substantial since they have not been the main reason driving the drop of the positive image of the EU among the public opinion. Other factors such as the power of the media and their treatment of the crisis might have contributed to frame the way citizens perceive Europe nowadays. Besides, the research undertaken seems to emphasise that the economic crisis and its consequences have contributed to aggravate the hidden problems that were already present in our democracies. As a matter of fact, the crisis intensified the feelings of disaffection and discontent with political parties as well as the functioning of democracy at EU and national levels, leading to claims for political

regeneration. It is interesting to note that *Podemos* appeared in 2014, the lowest peak of the citizens' trust in the EU, but this fall of support also coincided with a high rate of unemployment, several corruption scandals and other economic problems in the country. Moreover, the study has pointed out that the distrust in political parties and political elites, as well as dissatisfaction with democracy and national institutions, grew in parallel with the rise of Euroscepticism in Spain.

Last but not least, it could be argued that the appearance of *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos* is linked to the serious economic and political crisis that our country experienced since 2008. However, the extent and length of the crisis itself does not explain by itself the success of the parties, not even as a social and mediatic phenomenon without precedent in our recent democratic history. In forty years of democracy in Spain, there have been periods of economic and political crisis with various cases of corruption that barely altered the institutional stability nor modified substantially the structure of the party system. The new parties emerged to fill a vacuum in the electoral market that opened up during the crisis to respond to social claims that have been present for a while, but were accentuated by the crisis. Many have seen in this process of 'filling the vacuum' of the democratic space a mean to counteract the growing gap between citizens and political elites. Now, what remains to be seen is whether the new political parties will manage to narrow this gap.

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