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ON SOUTHERN EUROPEAN POLITICS
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7-9 SEPTEMBER 2015**

Panels on
**RESPONSES TO THE EUROZONE CRISIS IN SOUTHERN
EUROPE**

I: Parties, Populism and Parliamentarians
Panel Chair: Irene Martin, *Autonomous University of Madrid*
Monday 7 September 13:30-15:00

II: Disaffection, Mistrust and Apathy
Panel Chair: Susannah Verney, *University of Athens*
Monday 7 September 15:30-17:00

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A B S T R A C T S

Panel 1

Stress Test: Survival Strategies of Socialist Parties in Spain and Portugal

Anna Bosco, *University of Trieste*
Elisabetta De Giorgi, *NOVA University of Lisbon*

The severe financial and debt crisis that has hit the Eurozone since 2008 has had a destabilising impact on the political systems of Southern Europe. Governments have been ousted from power, critical elections have questioned the bipolar structure of many party systems, and new political actors have challenged the traditional political game. While these events have been addressed in several works, less attention has been devoted to the survival strategies adopted by former incumbent parties turned opposition, such as the socialist PSOE in Spain and PS in Portugal.

These parties have been facing multiple challenges. Held responsible for not responding efficaciously to the economic crisis, they lost government control, suffered dramatic decline in public support, struggled to defend their electoral base from new and old competitors, had their leadership called into question and underwent internal power conflicts.

The paper focuses on the ‘strategies’ chosen by the Spanish and Portuguese socialist parties to confront these challenges in three dimensions. First, in the parliamentary arena, how have the PSOE and PS carried out their new opposition role? Given their preceding experience in managing the economic crisis, are they inclined to consensual politics or do they try to exploit the government’s weaknesses to get back to power?

Second, in the organizational domain, how have they responded to the sharp drop of their leaders' popularity? How have they managed their internal conflicts? And finally, in the electoral sphere, how are the PSOE and PS preparing for the next general elections? Who do they consider as their main competitors, the incumbents or the new challengers?

Keywords: *PSOE, PS, end of bipolarism, opposition, Spain, Portugal*

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Resurgence of Populism in a Time of Crisis: Case of Italy and Greece

Martin Mejstrik, *Charles University in Prague*

The paper is based on the perspective of comparative politics and its aim is to analyze the resurgence of populist movements and parties in South and South-Eastern Europe during the current economic and Eurozone crisis. As a result of the economic crisis and subsequent structural changes in political and party system in both countries a new approach seems to be necessary when analyzing the newly emerged political entities and their programs, goals and impact on political situation in Europe. Such a new approach could be then used also in the case of "old" and established parties which have undergone a major radicalization towards populism in the time of crisis.

This paper aims to compare main political changes and mutations of party system regarding the development of populism which occurred in Italy and Greece during the economic and political crisis, since the comparison of these two countries reveals many similarities, as well as very important differences. Even though we observed a rise of populism in both countries, its impact on the political system and institutions differs in certain perspectives. The paper will compare these variables according to four principles of populism by Albertazzi and McDonnell. These principles consist of the role of the leader in the success of populist ideas, openness of the political environment to new populist movements, particular opportunity structures helping to the development of populism and strategies of mainstream parties in reaction to the populist rhetoric. This analysis could explain how and to what extent there exists a correlation between the depth of the crisis and the success of populist movements and how this success is connected with recession, unemployment and austerity measures which were adopted in both countries but with quite different impact on the development of populist parties and movements.

Keywords: *Populism, Italy, Greece, Political system, Economic crisis*

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Political Convergences of Extreme Right Movements in Italy and Greece

Cristiano Bee, *Istanbul Bilgi University*

Stavroula Chrona, *University of Surrey*

The article focuses on the effects of the crisis in developing cross-national forms of political resistance to European Integration, by taking into account a comparative analysis of extreme right discourses in Italy and in Greece. The growth, and in some

cases resurgence, of populist and anti systemic movements such as the Golden Dawn or Casa Pound has in fact brought to the fore new forms of open contestation towards the EU that resulted in the fostering of forms of hard euroscepticism. We argue that this is an expression of the social and political earthquake that hit both countries in the last few years and signified a radical reformulation of two extremely different political contexts that are now more and more assimilated in their political experiences. Evidence of the changing nature of the political arenas in both Greece and Italy is mirrored first and foremost by the unexpected electoral results that resulted in radical shifts in the public opinion preferences and political behaviour in both countries. In particular, the emergence of new anti systemic forces in Italy and in Greece, can be considered as a widespread reaction to the crisis, besides of other domestic factors. The scope of the paper is to compare the main discursive frames elaborated by extreme right political movements along the euro-crisis in order to map patterns of horizontal europeanisation in political discourses. The general underlining argument of the paper is that the euro-crisis has stimulated and provoked a number of convergences between these two extreme right movements, that is expressed by the development of a number of mutual observations, common political claims, similar radical views and in the mutual recognition and acceptance of extreme and violent political actions. The analytical sample that has been analysed consists of political speeches by key leaders of the two movements, manifestos, blogs and social media content collected in peak times in the period of time 2011-2015.

Keywords: *Extreme right, euroscepticism, europeanisation, radicalism, populism*

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A Privileged Life no More: Greek Parliamentarians after the Euro-crisis

Emmanuel Sigalas, *Carleton University, Ottawa*

By definition political representation implies a gap between represented and representatives. Identification between the two parties renders political representation not impossible but pointless. However, in a democracy that gap is supposed to stay as narrow as possible. In this light, privileges reserved for MPs, such as immunity from prosecution, entitlement to comparatively high financial compensation and expenses, tax breaks or state-sponsored transportation are a thorn in the eye of less privileged citizens. As a result, MPs are often criticised for living a pampered life and from being out of touch with the preoccupations of ordinary people.

Such privileges tend to persist not only because MPs have few incentives to curb their own prerogatives, but also because the latter serve practical functions. Under normal circumstances, therefore, the privileges-based discrimination between members of the parliament and members of the public will remain and possibly grow. However, when the legitimacy of representative democracy and its institutions is questioned, it becomes more difficult to sustain the distinction between two categories of citizens.

The paper tests empirically whether the post-2008 economic and political crisis in Greece led to a narrowing down of the gap between citizens and MPs. Drawing on archival research and personal interviews with the current and former presidents of the Greek parliament, the secretary general and with prominent MPs, I track the

development over the period 2004-2014 of the following: (1) the parliament's budget, (2) the MP financial compensation and other expenses, (3) the immunity waiving rates. In addition to the actual figures, the papers highlights also the practical difficulties associated in obtaining them, which is indicative of a culture of mutual mistrust between representatives and represented.

Keywords: *representative democracy, political elites, parliamentary privileges, Euro-crisis, Greece*

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Panel 2

**The Political Culture of Southern Europe Reassessed:
The Impact of the Economic Crisis**

Irene Martin, *Universidad Autonoma de Madrid*

Southern Europe - here understood as Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain -, has been well known for its high levels of political disaffection even before the economic crisis started. However, some national specificities have been overlooked. For example, while political trust, political efficacy and antiparty sentiments seemed to be rather low all over Southern Europe compared to other West European countries, interest in politics was high amongst Greeks during the eighties while it was especially low in both Portugal and Spain. Also, some changes had taken place over time even before the crisis started. Interest in politics in Greece started to drop dramatically around the mid-nineties while a slight rise has been observed in Spain since 2003. According to some recent research, the crisis in Spain has had a deep impact on political distrust but it has not diminished citizens' interest in politics. In fact, the group of "critical citizens" has grown bigger.

Since the economic crisis has affected to an important extent these four countries, and has contributed to the appearance – or the intensification, depending on the case – of a political crisis in all of them, there are reasons to expect a revival of the Southern Europe disaffection syndrome. However, previous national specificities, as well as differences in the gravity and nature of the crisis lead us to wonder whether the citizenry in each of these countries is finding different ways to react and to redefine citizens' relation to politics. The aim of this paper is to reassess the political culture of Southern Europe compared to the situation in the eighties and the nineties. Can we still talk about a similar "political culture of Southern Europe"? Is it still characterized mainly by "political disaffection"? Which are the specific patterns of political attitudes in each of the four countries?

Keywords: *political culture, disaffection, critical citizens, economic crisis, Southern Europe*

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**Who is to Blame? Political Mistrust
and the Great Recession in Southern Europe**
Diego Muro, IBEI, Barcelona
Guillem Vidal, *European University Institute*

The Southern periphery of the European Union has experienced a profound transformation since 2008. The rapid economic deterioration of Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain was accompanied by a substantial increase in citizens' mistrust towards national and European political institutions. This paper will combine existing models about the relationship between citizens and government in democracies to provide an explanation for the increasing mistrust in Southern Europe. On the basis of the responsibility-responsiveness dilemma we argue that the governments of these countries were unable to reconcile public demands (responsiveness) with a set of pressures from international actors and past policy choices (responsibility) during the Great Recession. These growingly irreconcilable constraints on the supply-side of politics are reflected in the political parties' growing detachment from society and in the creation of new opportunities for 'challenger parties' to capitalise on the new political space. At the same time, we argue that the multi-level governance structure of the EU has blurred responsibility for policy outputs thus preventing citizens to reward or punish incumbent governments accordingly. The perception that accountability mechanisms were rendered ineffective, in addition to the widening gap between public demands and institutional and structural constraints, thus resulted in high levels of political mistrust.

Keywords: *Political trust, responsiveness, responsibility, political parties, economic crisis*

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**Explaining Citizens' Apathy and the Absence of Social Protest
in Times of Turbulence: the Case of Cyprus**
Yiannos Katsourides, *University of Cyprus*

In the period since the outbreak of the global economic crisis, there has been a marked upsurge in citizen-led activism across the globe; for example, the Occupy movements and the 'Indignados'. In many parts of the EU the scale of dissent was unprecedented in their respective post-authoritarian histories (e.g., Greece, Spain).

Cyprus is experiencing an unprecedented situation of public outburst against the entire political system. The attitudes of the people towards (national and European) political institutions are constantly negative and decreasing, and their trust is evaporating; all these within a short period of less than ten years. The economic crisis has accelerated the delegitimization of the political system but this was not the only reason. Failures intrinsic to the political and party systems are also to blame. However, Cypriots political behaviour has been confined in verbal schemes and it did not take any radical form.

Therefore, the aim of the paper is twofold. First, it examines the current political behaviour of the Cypriot citizens which is characterised by apathy and the (changing?) forms of political involvement and participation before, and during the

current economic crisis. Second, it purports to explain the absence of social protest and alternative forms of mobilization in the country. In doing so, I utilize the ‘demand and supply model’ (see for example Mudde 2007), which can be useful in the study of those factors pertinent to the rise of new actors and new social demands. The demand-side factors include the social, economic and demographic environment that creates (un)favourable conditions for one political action/actor or the other, while the supply-side focuses on the structure of political opportunities and the political actors themselves. The paper makes use of the results of the European Social Surveys (2006-2012) and the Eurobarometres (2004-2014).

Keywords: *Cyprus; Crisis; Protest; Dealignment; Demand and Supply; Political behaviour; Parties*

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The Web of Blame: Emotional Reactions, Political Accountability, and Public Opinion, in the Aftermath of the Greek Financial Crisis

Theofanis Exadaktylos, *University of Surrey*

Tereza Capelos, *University of Surrey*

This paper examines the affective content of Greek media representations of the debt crisis, from 2009 to 2012 and compares it with the post-2012 period. We analyze the content of opinion pieces from journalists, experts and public intellectuals published in Greek newspapers, and identify their affective content towards political actors and institutions. We focus on anger, fear and hope, and identify blame attribution frames, which underpin the public’s trust and confidence in domestic and EU institutions. This article contributes to the systematic understanding of the impact of the debt crisis as a traumatic event on public opinion, and considers its implications for attitudes towards European integration.

Keywords: *Public Opinion, Debt Crisis, Greece, Emotions, Blame Attribution, European Identity*