

# SYRIZA, M5S AND PODEMOS: THE THREE CHAMPIONS OF THE ANGRY SOUTHERN EUROPEAN VOTER

SYRIZA, M5S Y PODEMOS: LOS TRES CAMPEONES DEL VOTANTE ENFADADO EN EL SUR DE EUROPA \*

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**Abstract:** The article examines the profile of the electoral basis of the three most successful examples of anti-establishment parties in Southern Europe, namely the Coalition of Radical Left (SYRIZA) in Greece, the Movimento Cinque Stelle (M5S) in Italy and Podemos in Spain. These parties share the implementation of a non-right populist discourse rooted in the social-protest movements in each country. Using data from the European Election Study 2014, our analysis reveals that despite the fact that these voters have been described as ‘euro-critical’ and ‘non-ideological’, our main finding is that their electoral support mostly rests on ideology and on the distrust and disapproval of the national establishment.

**Keywords:** economic crisis; anti-establishment parties; euroscepticism; populism; left-wing parties

**Resumen:** El artículo examina el perfil de las bases electorales de los tres ejemplos más exitosos de partidos “antiélite” de izquierda en el Sur de Europa: la Coalición de Izquierda Radical (SYRIZA) en Grecia, el Movimiento Cinco Estrellas (M5S) en Italia y Podemos en España. Estos partidos tienen en común la implementación de un discurso populista no de derechas con conexiones en los movimientos de protesta de cada uno de sus países. Utilizando datos de la European Elections Study 2014, nuestro análisis revela que a pesar del hecho de que estos votantes han sido descritos como “eurocríticos” y “desideologizados”, nuestro principal hallazgo es que su apoyo electoral descansa principalmente en la ideología y en la desconfianza y falta de apoyo a las élites nacionales.

**Palabras clave:** crisis económica; partidos “antiélite”; euroscepticismo; populismo; partidos de izquierda.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The sovereign debt crisis generated an ongoing transformation of the political and electoral landscape in some of the countries that had to implement harsh economic measures. Three of the most prominent examples are Greece, Italy and Spain. In these countries we can also observe increased political disaffection and disillusion with politics<sup>1</sup>.

Both the Greek and the Italian national elections of 2012 and 2013 could be considered as ‘earthquake’ elections<sup>2</sup>, while also in Spain we can observe signs pointing to dealignment in the General Elections of 2015 and 2016<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, a main common feature of the electoral contests in the last years in these three countries is the remarkable rise of a populist reaction to the Eurocrisis, linked to the movements of social protest and crystallized in non right-wing parties which have been able to become pivotal in their national political arenas. The Greek case is perhaps the most characteristic with the meteoric rise of the Coalition of the Radical Left (Συνασπισμός της Ριζοσπαστικής Αριστεράς; SYRIZA), which won the national election of 25 January 2015<sup>4</sup> confirming the complete collapse of the old two-party system between the centre-left PASOK (Πανελλήνιο Σοσιαλιστικό Κίνημα; Panhellenic Social Movement) and the centre-right ND (Νέα Δημοκρατία; New Democracy) that underpinned the Greek Third Republic since its establishment in 1974. SYRIZA became the major governmental party in coalition with the right-wing populist ANEL (Ανεξάρτητοι Έλληνες; Independent Greeks). In Italy, the Movimento Cinque Stelle (Movement Five Stars; M5S) obtained 25.5 per cent of the vote in the national elections of February 2013 and 32,2 per cent of the vote in 2018, while in Spain the party of Podemos (We Can), which was formed

<sup>1</sup> ARMINGEON, K. & GUTHMANN, K., ‘Democracy in crisis? The declining support for national democracy in European countries, 2007-2011’, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2013, pp. 423-442; CORDERO, G. & SIMÓN, P., ‘Economic crisis and support for democracy in Europe’, *West European politics*, 2015, published online, doi: 10.1080/01402382.2015.1075767.

<sup>2</sup> For Greece, see TEPEROGLOU, E. & TSATSANIS, E., ‘Dealignment, de-legitimation and the implosion of the two-party system in Greece: The Earthquake Election of 6 May 2012’, *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2014, pp. 222-242; VOULGARIS, Y. & NIKOLAKOPOULOS, I. (eds.) *2012 Ο Διπλός Εκλογικός Σεισμός* [2012 The Double Earthquake Elections], Athens (Themelio), 2014. For Italy, CHIARAMONTE, A. & EMANUELE, V., ‘Volatile e tripolare: il nuovo sistema politico Italiano’, in DE SIO, L., CATALDI, M. & DE LUCIA, F. (eds.), *Le Elezioni Politiche 2013*, Rome (Luiss University Press), 2013, pp. 95-100.

<sup>3</sup> ORRIOLS, L. & CORDERO, G., ‘The Breakdown of the Spanish Two-party System: The Upsurge of Podemos and Ciudadanos in the 2015 General Elections’, *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2017, pp. 469-492.

<sup>4</sup> This was a snap election after failing to elect the new president in the third round of voting.

just a few months before the 2014 European Parliament (EP) elections, managed to obtain 1.25 million votes. Its rise has continued in the municipal and regional elections held in 2015 and in the General Elections of 2015 and 2016 obtaining 20,7 and 21,1 percent of the vote (considering Podemos and and close left-wing regional platforms), challenging the duopoly of the conservative PP (Partido Popular; People's Party) and the Social Democratic PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español; Spanish Socialist Worker's Party).

Moreover, the important role that the European Union played in the economic and financial crisis in these three countries, has contributed to the fact that these parties emphasize in their discourse the EU dimension of political contestation<sup>5</sup>. However, we can observe some differences between the three parties as far as it regards their views about Europe. M5S belongs to the group of soft Eurosceptic parties and the EU membership of Italy is evaluated as negative<sup>6</sup>. SYRIZA could be also classified as a soft Eurosceptical party<sup>7</sup>, even though like Podemos did not develop clear Eurosceptic stances against the membership of the country in the EU. Both SYRIZA and Podemos adopt more eurocritic stances, linked with negative perceptions about the management of the EU. They have fiercely criticized the management of the crisis by the supranational –and also national– institutions<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> GABEL, M. & HIX S., 'Defining the EU political space: an empirical study of the European elections manifestos, 1979-1999', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 35, no. 8, 2002, pp. 934-964.

<sup>6</sup> TREIB, O., 'The voter says no, but nobody listens: causes and consequences of the eurosceptic vote in the 2014 European elections', *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 21, no. 10, 2014, pp. 1541-1554.

<sup>7</sup> VERNEY, S., 'Waking the 'sleeping giant' or expressing domestic dissent? mainstreaming euroscepticism in crisis-stricken Greece', *International Political Science Review*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2015, pp. 279-295.

<sup>8</sup> HÜBSCHER, E., KEMMERLING, A. & SATTLER, T. (2014) 'How does fiscal austerity affect political support for the government?' (unpublished manuscript), 2014. Available at: [http://www.nuffield.ox.ac.uk/Lists/Events/Attachments/448/HKS\\_Paper.pdf](http://www.nuffield.ox.ac.uk/Lists/Events/Attachments/448/HKS_Paper.pdf) [Last access: 3 June 2015]; STAVRAKAKIS, Y. & KATSAMBEKIS, G., 'Left-wing populism in the European periphery: the case of SYRIZA', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 2014, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 119-142; CORDERO, G. & MONTERO, J.R., 'Against bipartyism, towards dealignment? The 2014 European elections in Spain', *South European Society and Politics*, Special issue on the 2014 European Parliament Elections in Southern Europe (guest editors: H. Schmitt & E. Teperoglou), 2015, doi: 10.1080/13608746.2015.1053679; TORREBLANCA, J.I., *Asaltar los Cielos. Podemos o la Política de después de la Crisis*, Madrid (Debate), 2015. SYRIZA could be also classified as a soft Eurosceptical party (see VERNEY, 'Waking the 'sleeping giant' or expressing domestic dissent? mainstreaming euroscepticism in crisis-stricken Greece', n. 7) even though the party is not against the participation of the country in the Eurozone. Within the party the so-called 'Left Platform' which secured 30 per cent of the seats on SYRIZA's central committee adopts hard Eurosceptical stances, close enough to those of the Communist Party of Greece. For Spain, as Torcal and Muñoz demonstrate, the Eurosceptics showed higher probabilities to vote for IU (originally mainly conformed by the Spanish Communist Party). TORCAL, M. & MUÑOZ, J., 'Actitudes hacia la Unión Europea y elecciones al Parlamento Europeo', in TORCAL, M. & FONT, J. (eds.), *Elecciones europeas 2009*, Madrid (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas), 2012. However, Podemos has virtually occupied the electoral location of IU. Although the party is not against the participation of Spain in the EU, from the supply-side being critical with the Spanish membership of the EU has a positive impact on the vote for Podemos. FERNÁNDEZ-ALBERTOS, J., *Los votantes de Podemos. Del partidos de los indignados al partido de los excluidos*, Madrid (Catarata), 2015.

These parties share also their capacity to successfully give voice to the protest movements. Both M5S and Podemos find their origin in the new forms of social protest (the ‘V-day’ in Italy, and the ‘*Indignados*’ in Spain) in which, canalising political discontent and distrust, creating institutionalised channels and discourses ‘from the people’ and ‘against the elite’<sup>9</sup>. SYRIZA also draws strength from the Greek protest movement of the Indignants (‘*Aganaktismenoi*’). From the onset of the economic crisis in Greece, in contrast to the Communist Party of Greece (Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας; KKE), SYRIZA promoted the openness to the civic society and supported the new forms of social protest in relation to the crisis. Even though the roots of the Greek movement of the Indignants are not linked directly to SYRIZA, the party tried to claim leadership of the movement<sup>10</sup>.

The main aim of this paper is to analyse the profile of the voters of SYRIZA, M5S and Podemos in 2014, right after the European Parliament elections, focusing in their differences and similarities. Our analysis represents a case study of the three most prominent examples –all being able to quickly become one of the most voted parties in their countries– with a non-right anti-establishment discourse in Southern Europe. The economic difficulties in the three countries rapidly derived to a slump in citizens’ trust in the main political actors and institutions. Hence, the initial economic crisis led to a deep political one. We argue that both crises may have had important consequences in citizens’ voting decisions. We are using two –partially– complementary explanations. The first one is that of economic voting, given the negative consequences of the crisis and the pessimistic evaluations of its management. The second one is related to the political crisis, considering the lack of confidence in the political institutions. These two explanations, however, are not necessarily mutually exclusive. This paper wants to shed some light on this very new and complex context, analysing the varying degrees of importance of these explanations in the support for SYRIZA, M5S and Podemos.

The next section is focused on a brief contextualization of the economic and political Eurocrisis in these countries, followed by a presentation of our arguments and hypotheses. The data and the method are presented in the fourth section, while the fifth one is focused on our findings. Finally, the paper ends with some concluding remarks.

## II. CONTEXTUALISATION

The collapse of *Lehman Brothers* in September 2008 marks the beginning of the well-known story about the Eurocrisis<sup>11</sup>. The subprime mortgage crisis and the subsequent

<sup>9</sup> BORRECA, R., ‘Political crisis in Greece and Italy: a comparative analysis of SYRIZA and 5 Stars Movement’, paper presented at the 2014 Conference of the Political Studies Association, Manchester, 14-16 April, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> TSAKATIKA, M., & ELEFThERIOU, C., ‘The radical left’s turn towards civil society in Greece: one strategy, two paths’, *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2013, pp. 81-99. SYRIZA also supported the ‘Won’t pay’ movement by citizens who refused to pay tolls in many Greek highways.

<sup>11</sup> RYAN, C., ‘The Euro crisis and crisis management: big lessons from a small island’, *International Economics and Economic Policy*, vol. 8, no.1, 2011, pp. 31-43, doi:10.1007/s10368-011-0189-9.

financial crash did not circumscribe to the United States<sup>12</sup>, raising the alarm bells in the EU when Greece's ability to refund its debt was questioned days later. The solution was provided by a joint collaboration between European Union governments and institutions together with the International Monetary Fund (IMF)<sup>13</sup>, agreeing to provide Greece with a loan of 110 billion euros signed in May 2010<sup>14</sup>. The risk of contagion and the debate about bailouts were already realities with evident consequences in 2011<sup>15</sup>. Ireland and Portugal signed bailout agreements, while Spain requested in December 2012 €40 billion from the EU to recapitalise its financial system.

Graph 1 shows the trends of some indicators, since the beginning of the crisis (2008) until the moment in which the fieldwork of the survey used in this article was carried out (2014). As shown in Graph 1 (a), Greece and Italy departed from high levels of sovereign debt (in terms of percentage of the GDP), which dramatically increased (especially in Greece) during the first years of the crisis<sup>16</sup>. The starting point of the story in Spain is quite different, as its public spending was much more limited during the years prior to the crisis, being below the EU average. Despite this, the collapse of its housing bubble caused a rapid increase in the levels of unemployment, resulting in a rapid increase in its debt. Graph 1(c) shows the evolution of the GDP *per capita*, an indicator associated to the previously shown trends<sup>17</sup> that fell dramatically in Greece, and more subtly in Spain and Italy, although all three in contrast with the general economic recovering since 2009 experienced in the EU<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> TZENG, K.Y. & TAY, C., 'Transmission of the US subprime mortgage and the European sovereign debt crisis to emerging markets', *Journal of Applied Finance and Banking*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2014, pp. 217-235.

<sup>13</sup> The so-called *Troika*, composed by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed overview of the main events in the period from 2009 to 2014 see ANDREADIS, I. *et al.*, 'Economic crisis and attitudes towards the European Union: are Italians and Greeks becoming Eurosceptic because of the crisis?', paper presented at the 64<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference of the Political Science Association, Manchester, 14-16 April, 2014, and TEPEROGLOU, E., TSATSANIS, E. & NICOLACOPOULOS, EL., 'Habituating to the new normal in a post-earthquake party system: the 2014 European election in Greece', *South European Society and Politics*, 2015, Special issue on the 2014 European Parliament Elections in Southern Europe (guest editors: H. Schmitt & E. Teperoglou), doi:10.1080/13608746.2015.1068377.

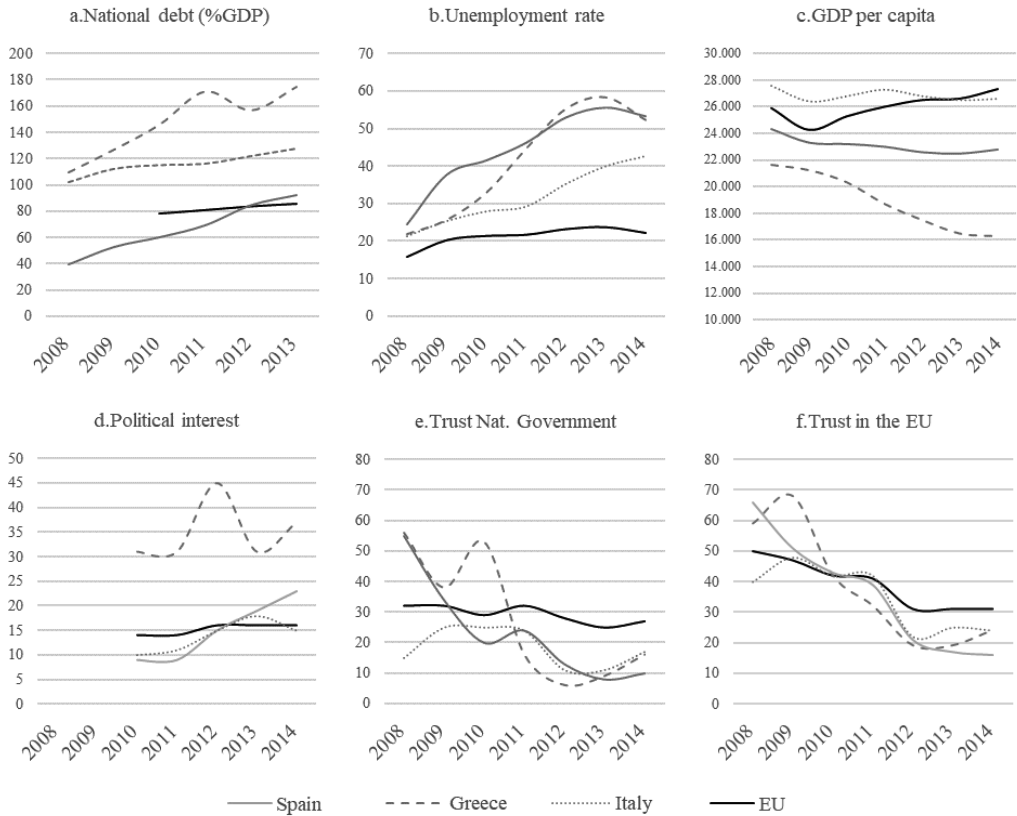
<sup>15</sup> MINK, M., & DE HAAN, J., 'Contagion during the Greek sovereign debt crisis', *Journal of International Money and Finance*, vol. 34, 2013, pp. 102-113.

<sup>16</sup> See also VERNEY, S. & BOSCO, A., 'Living parallel lives: Italy and Greece in an age of austerity', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 18, no. 4, 2013, pp. 397-426.

<sup>17</sup> CHECHERITA-WESTPHAL, C. & ROTHER, P., 'The impact of high government debt on economic growth and its channels: an empirical investigation for the Euro area', *European Economic Review*, vol. 56, no. 7, 2012, pp. 1392-1405, doi:10.1016/j.eurocorev.2012.06.007.

<sup>18</sup> DANIEL, J.M., 'Eurozone: light at the end of the tunnel?', in CHOPIN, T. & FOUCHER, M. (eds.), *Schuman Report on Europe*, Paris (Springer), 2013, pp. 53-56.

Graph 1. Some Contextual Indicators of the Crisis in Greece, Italy, Spain and the EU.



Source: Authors' own elaboration based, for indicators (a), (b) and (c) on the data of the World Bank (series); and for indicators (d), (e) and (f) on the Eurobarometer (series).

At the beginning of the crisis, the three governments<sup>19</sup> tried to implement economic stimulus measures. These attempts fail<sup>20</sup> and a series of austerity measures, such as social spending cuts<sup>21</sup> are implemented in order to cut the expansion of the national debt—with already extremely high levels of interest rates—. In the case of Greece and Italy, technocratic

<sup>19</sup> In Greece the government of PASOK with George Papandreou as Prime Minister; in Spain the government of the PSOE with José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero as Prime Minister and in Italy the government of Silvio Berlusconi.

<sup>20</sup> FISHMAN, R. M., 'Anomalies of Spain's economy and economic policy-making', *Contributions to Political Economy*, vol. 31, no.1, 2012, pp. 67–76, doi:10.1093/cpe/bzs009.

<sup>21</sup> CORDERO, G. & MONTERO, J.R., 'Against bipartyism, towards dealignment? The 2014 European elections in Spain', n. 8.

governments –Lucas Papademos and Mario Monti, respectively– led executives with low levels of popularity, after the resignation of the prime ministers<sup>22</sup>.

In the case of Spain, PP wins with absolute majority and PSOE obtained its worst electoral results in its recent history in 2011<sup>23</sup>. Also Greece (2012) and Italy (2013) hold general elections, were the second mainstream party –ND in Greece and the Democratic Party in Italy– won the contest, after which new austerity policies were implemented<sup>24</sup>. The implementation of unpopular measures by the two mainstream parties at both sides of the ideological spectrum profoundly deteriorate voters' confidence in the traditional parties and opened a window of opportunity for the rise of 'new' actors<sup>25</sup>.

These economic and political facts are reflected in the political distrust in the three countries<sup>26</sup>. Every indicator that is designed to capture attitudes toward the political system portrays in the three countries without fail a situation of massive delegitimation and growing resentment towards the members of the political class as well as political institutions, national (Graph 1, e) and supranational (f). Distrust and discontent were also expressed on the streets by critical citizens by non-conventional ways of political participation<sup>27</sup>. Beppe Grillo was already able to mobilize before the economic crisis thousands of people against corruption in 2007<sup>28</sup>. The 'Indignant' and 15-M movements in Spain during the spring of 2011 had enormous support. The Greek so-called movement of '*Aganaktismenoi*' was inspired by the '*Indignados*' Spanish movement and in the period starting from to during 2011 we can observe mass demonstrations and solidarity movements along with many national strikes<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> MCDONNELL, D. & VALBRUZZI, M., 'Defining and classifying technocrat-Led and technocratic governments', *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 53, no. 4, 2014, pp. 654–71, doi:10.1111/1475-6765.12054.

<sup>23</sup> ANDUIZA, E., BOSCH, A., ORRIOLS, L., & RICO, G., *Elecciones generales 2011*, Madrid (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas), 2014.

<sup>24</sup> POLAVIEJA, J. G., 'Economic crisis, political legitimacy and social cohesion', in GALLIE, D. (ed.), *Economic Crisis, Quality of Work and Social Integration: The European Experience*, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2013, pp. 256-278.

<sup>25</sup> MORGAN, J., *Bankrupt Representation and Party System Collapse*, Pennsylvania (The Pennsylvania State University Press), 2011.

<sup>26</sup> ARMINGEON, K. & GUTHMANN, K., 'Democracy in crisis? The declining support for national democracy in European countries, 2007-2011', n. 1.

<sup>27</sup> FOMINAYA, C.L. & COX, L., *Understanding European Movements: New Social Movements, Global Justice Struggles, Anti-Austerity Protest*, London (Routledge), 2013; CEKA, B. & MAGALHAES, P.C. 'The meaning of democracy and its determinants', 2015, in KRIESI, H. (ed.), *How Europeans View and Evaluate Democracy* (forthcoming).

<sup>28</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> September 2007, first 'V day'. 25 April 2008, second 'V day'. Despite these precedents the M5S is created in 2009, in the context of the Eurocrisis. BORDIGNON, F. & CECCARINI, L., 'Five Stars and a Cricket. Beppe Grillo Shakes Italian Politics', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 18, no. 4, 2013, pp. 427-449.

<sup>29</sup> KARAMIHAS, J., 'Square Politics, Key characteristics of the indignant mobilizations in Greece', paper presented at the 62<sup>nd</sup> PSA Annual International Conference, Belfast 3-5 April, 2012.

### III. THE EMERGENCE OF SYRIZA, M5S AND PODEMOS

The party of SYRIZA was initially founded as a coalition of radical left parties and other extra parliamentary organizations in 2004. It constitutes partly the successor of the older KKE-interior (Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας Εσωτερικού)– the Eurocommunist splinter party from the orthodox KKE). However, its main constituent SYNASPISMOS/ SYN (Συνασπισμός) was founded in 1992 and has long established ties with the traditional left in Greece. On the eve of the June 2012 national elections, SYRIZA was transformed into a unified party<sup>30</sup>. SYRIZA adopts to a large extent the agenda of New Left parties in other European countries. However, the main element of its programme after the onset of the economic crisis is the break with the so-called ‘*Memorandum*’ and the policies of austerity, while supporting the participation of Greece in the EU and in the Eurozone<sup>31</sup>.

The programme of SYRIZA encompassed most of the demands of the movements and the party was the only one in the Greek political system linked with these anti-austerity popular movements<sup>32</sup>. The effect of the implementation of the austerity measures imposed by Greece’s international lenders and implemented by five consecutive Greek governments<sup>33</sup> was a hotly debated topic and had dominated political discourse throughout the four-year period from the spring of 2010 to the spring of 2014. This debate gave rise to the neologisms ‘*mnemoniakoi*’ and ‘*anti-mnemoniakoi*’ (the Greek word for the Memorandum of Understanding is ‘*Mnemonio*’) to distinguish between those that viewed the ‘bailout’ and the MoU as a lifeline for the Greek economy and those that viewed them as the actual reason why the economic crisis has been so deep and protracted<sup>34</sup>. SYRIZA emerged as the main political voice in the second group.

Although created in 2009, the success of the M5S inserts its roots in the post-Second World War Italian party-system crisis, since the so-called ‘*Tangentopoli*’, in which most

<sup>30</sup> For the national elections of 17 June 2012, SYRIZA was transformed from a coalition into a unified party in order to be eligible to receive the ‘bonus’ of the 50 seats given to the first party under the Greek electoral system. The old parties of the coalition remain as factions within the unified party.

<sup>31</sup> See STAVRAKAKIS, Y. & KATSAMBEKIS, G., ‘Left-wing populism in the European periphery: the case of SYRIZA’, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 2014, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 119-142.

<sup>32</sup> STAVRAKAKIS, Y. & KATSAMBEKIS, G., ‘Left-wing populism in the European periphery: the case of SYRIZA’, n. 31, p. 126; TSAKATIKA, M., & ELEFThERIOU, C., ‘The radical left’s turn towards civil society in Greece: one strategy, two paths’, n. 10, pp. 14-15.

<sup>33</sup> PASOK government headed by George Papandreou; PASOK, ND and LAOS government headed by former European Bank VP Lucas Papademos; caretaker government headed by Greek judge Panagiotis Pikrammenos; ND, PASOK and DIMAR government headed by Antonis Samaras; and New Democracy and PASOK government headed by Antonis Samaras.

<sup>34</sup> TEPEROGLOU, E., TSATSANIS, E. & NICOLACOPOULOS, EL., ‘Habituating to the new normal in a post-earthquake party system: the 2014 European election in Greece’, *South European Society and Politics*, 2015, Special issue on the 2014 European Parliament Elections in Southern Europe (guest editors: H. Schmitt & E. Teperoglou), doi:10.1080/13608746.2015.1068377.



of the national parties were involved in corruption cases<sup>35</sup>. Beppe Grillo led a party –or a movement of the Italian people– which defends free internet connection, transparent politics, and traditional green precepts, although its success was essentially based on the criticism to the corruption and excesses of the Italian establishment<sup>36</sup>. Its main distinguishing feature was the use of new technologies and social network as a way of organisation and participation. With a populist discourse that highlights the dichotomization between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and a strong and personalised leadership<sup>37</sup>, the M5S claims to be ‘neither left nor right’, ideological labels that are employed ‘to fool the electorate’<sup>38</sup>.

With its profile of non-ideology party against the establishment<sup>39</sup>, M5S was also able to electorally mobilize the social protest linked to the ‘V-day’ movement, winning a remarkable number of municipalities in the 2012 regional and local elections, virtually becoming the third Italian party. M5S revalidated its position in the 2013 general elections, obtaining a quarter of the total share of votes. Although the M5S was able to obtain 21.2 per cent of the votes, its electoral results in the 2014 EP elections were far from the 41 per cent of the votes obtained by the ruling Democratic Party, and below the expectations for an eurosceptic party in a context of low levels of popularity of the EU institutions.

Podemos is the newest party of the three, owing its rapid success in the anti-establishment discourse rooted, in this case, in the social movements linked to the Indignant and 15-M movements in Spain<sup>40</sup>. Although his speech was also eurocritical, its main discursive lines have to do with the need for a participatory and transparent democracy, with the end of corruption, the traditional parties and politicians. When the Indignant Movement was accused of not being able to politically shape the crescent political discontent, a party emerged from these social movements broke into the Spanish electoral arena. Although its results continued growing after 2014, Podemos casted more than a million of votes in the EP elections, 8 per cent of the total share. This was a timid result if we compare it with those of SYRIZA (26.6) and M5S (21.2), but an impressive and unexpected result for a party created

<sup>35</sup> WATERS, S., ‘Tangentopoli’ and the emergence of a new political order in Italy’, *West European Politics*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1994, pp. 169-182; BORRECA, R., ‘Political crisis in Greece and Italy: a comparative analysis of SYRIZA and 5 Stars Movement’, n. 9.

<sup>36</sup> BORDIGNON, F. & CECCARINI, L., ‘Five Stars and a Cricket. Beppe Grillo Shakes Italian Politics’, *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 18, no. 4, 2013, pp. 427-449.

<sup>37</sup> TARCHI, M., *L’Italia Populista*, Bologna (Il Mulino), 2003; FELLA, S. & RUZZA, C., ‘Populism and the fall of the centre-right in Italy: the end of the Berlusconi model or a new beginning?’, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2013, pp. 38-52; BORRECA, R., ‘Political crisis in Greece and Italy: a comparative analysis of SYRIZA and 5 Stars Movement’, n. 9.

<sup>38</sup> VEGETTI, F., POLETTI, M. & SEGATTI, P., ‘When responsibility is blurred: Italian national elections in times of economic crisis, technocratic government, and ever-growing populism’, *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2013, p. 329.

<sup>39</sup> BORDIGNON, F. & CECCARINI, L., ‘Five Stars and a Cricket. Beppe Grillo Shakes Italian Politics’, n. 36.

<sup>40</sup> TORREBLANCA, J.I., *Asaltar los Cielos. Podemos o la Política de después de la Crisis*, n. 8; CORDERO, G. & MONTERO, J.R., ‘Against bipartyism, towards dealignment? The 2014 European elections in Spain’, n. 8.

only four months before the contest (Pavia, Bodoque & Martín 2014). As in the case of Beppe Grillo, the success of Podemos is related to the use of the media by its –in this case a political scientist– leader, a relatively popular talk show guest<sup>41</sup>. The fundamental and repeated discourse of Pablo Iglesias was based on the criticism to the national establishment (or ‘*la casta*’) and the austerity politics, developed by the two mainstream parties.

Table 1. National Elections and European Parliament Elections Results of SYRIZA, M5S and Podemos.

		General Elections*			2014 EP Elections		
		% Vote	Seats/Total	Position	% Vote	Seats/Total	Position
GREECE	SYRIZA	36.3	149/300	1 <sup>st</sup>	26.6	6/21	1st
ITALY	M5S	32.2	112/315	2 <sup>nd</sup>	21.2	17/73	2nd
SPAIN	Podemos	21.1	71/350	3 <sup>rd</sup>	8.0	5/54	4th

Source: Authors’ own elaboration based on data by the Greek ([www.ypes.gr](http://www.ypes.gr)), Italian (<http://elezionistorico.interno.it>) and Spanish Ministry of Interior (<http://www.mir.es>)

\* National elections held in Greece in 27 January 2015; Italy, 4 March 2018; Spain 26 June 2016.

## IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

### 1. The Economic Crisis Hypothesis

The potential influence of the economic crisis on the vote for populist parties is related with the literature on economic voting<sup>42</sup>. In its simplest version, the economic voting theory postulates that voters support the party in government when the economic conditions are favourable and withdraw it when the economy is performing poorly. The literature has provided evidence that the economy is indeed a significant determinant of the vote in most democracies, including southern Europe<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> CORDERO, G. & MONTERO, J.R., ‘Against bipartyism, towards dealignment? The 2014 European elections in Spain’, n. 8.

<sup>42</sup> See e.g. LEWIS-BECK, M. & STEGMAIER, M. (2007) ‘Economic models of voting’, in DALTON, R. & KLINGEMANN, H.-D. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behaviour*, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2007, pp. 518-537; LEWIS-BECK, M.S. & STEGMAIER, M., ‘Economic determinants of electoral outcome’, *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2000, pp. 183-219.

<sup>43</sup> FREIRE, A. & LOBO, M.C., ‘Economics, ideology and vote: Southern Europe, 1985-2000’, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2005, pp.493-518; FRAILE, M. & LEWIS-BECK M.S., ‘Economic voting in Spain: a 2000 panel test’, *Electoral Studies*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2010, pp. 210-220; BELLUCCI, P., COSTA LOBO, M., & LEWIS-BECK, M.S., ‘Economic crisis and elections: the European periphery’, *Electoral Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2012, pp. 469-71.

The interest on the economic voting has increased since the beginning of the Great Recession<sup>44</sup>. In a comparative study of 31 democracies, Bartels show that during the economic crisis, voters punished the incumbent parties regardless of their ideology when the economic performance was poor<sup>45</sup>. The countries of south Europe have not been an exception. Recent research confirms that indeed both the crisis and the austerity measures have had a significant impact on the incumbents' electoral prospects in these countries<sup>46</sup>.

In sum, according to the classical reward-punishment retrospective economic voting model, voters link their support for the government to the economic conditions. However, it is less clear where the votes go when the incumbent party is punished in the elections. Hernández and Kriesi try to provide an answer of which parties in particular were more likely to gain support during the economic crisis. Their results show that the economic crisis was especially harmful to mainstream parties regardless they were in government or not<sup>47</sup>. As Kriesi puts it: "increasing unemployment and stagnation or even diminishing incomes as a result of the austerity measures taken in the aftermath of the crisis, discontented voters may nurture resentment against all the mainstream parties, the established political elites or the "political class"<sup>48</sup>. Moreover, such political disaffection against mainstream parties may have been particularly intense in those countries such as Greece, Spain and Italy where the traditional parties of both sides of the ideological spectrum have failed to implement alternative policies to the extremely unpopular austerity measures once they were in office. From this perspective, the success of SYRIZA, M5S and Podemos may be explained by the economic crisis and the incapacity of mainstream parties to tackle with it. We thus expect the electoral profile of these three parties to be especially conditioned by the economic voting logic. Indeed, they may be especially attractive among economic losers and those voters discontent with the economic situation and government performance. In sum, our first hypothesis is the following: *H1a: Individuals particularly hard hit by the economic crisis were more likely to vote for SYRIZA, M5S and Podemos*. This hypothesis responds to the pocketbook version of the economic voting. However, according to the existing evidence, voters are not as much concerned about their personal financial situation as in the general

<sup>44</sup> LINDVALL, J., 'The electoral consequences of two great crisis', *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 53, no. 4, 2014, pp. 747-765; BERMEO, N. & BARTELS, L.M. (eds.), *Mass Politics in Tough Times*, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2014.

<sup>45</sup> BARTELS, L.M., 'Ideology and retrospection in electoral responses to the great recession', in BERMEO, N. & BARTELS, L.M. (eds.), *Mass Politics in Tough Times*, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2014, pp. 185-223.

<sup>46</sup> KARYOTIS, G. & RÜDIG, W., 'Blame and punishment? The electoral politics of extreme austerity in Greece', *Political Studies*, vol. 63, no. 1, 2013, pp. 2-24; FRAILE, M. & LEWIS-BECK, M.S., 'Economic vote instability: endogeneity or restricted variance? Spanish panel evidence from 2008 and 2011', *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2014, pp. 160-179.

<sup>47</sup> HERNÁNDEZ, E. & KRIESI H., 'The electoral consequences of the financial and economic crisis in Europe', *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 55, no 2, 2015, 203-224.

<sup>48</sup> HERNÁNDEZ, E. & KRIESI H., 'The electoral consequences of the financial and economic crisis in Europe', n. 47.

economic well-being of the nation<sup>49</sup>. Hence we also posit a second hypothesis related with a sociotropic perspective of the economic voting: *H1b: Individuals who perceive the national economy to be weaker are more likely to vote for SYRIZA, M5S and Podemos.*

In multilevel governance settings such as EU member states, we should take into account voters' perception of both the national and the EU level. Following the economic (or performance) voting literature, we expect that SYRIZA, M5S and Podemos will be more attractive among those voters less satisfied with the national government performance. Indeed, as we have just argued, these three parties may become the alternative among those who intend to punish the incumbent party of its policy outcomes. Yet, what about the perceptions of EU performance? Which party benefits from those who are critical with the EU management?

The existence of performance voting in the EU level is more problematic as Europe does not have a clear incumbent party that voters can punish in the elections<sup>50</sup>. Hence, voters dissatisfied with the EU performance cannot easily follow the 'incumbent vs. opposition' logic as in the national level. Instead, they may decide to vote for those parties more critical with the management of the EU (regardless of being incumbent parties at the national level or not). SYRIZA based its campaign and rooted its success in *antitroika* and anti-memorandum statements, while Podemos showed a clear opposition to the austerity measures imposed from the EU and implemented by the national governments. For all these reasons, we expect eurocritical citizens to show a higher propensity to vote for SYRIZA and Podemos: *H1c: Critical citizens of the management of the national and supranational institutions will be more likely to vote for SYRIZA, M5S and Podemos.*

## 2. The Political Crisis Hypothesis

The second hypothesis that may explain why Podemos, M5E and SYRIZA become attractive among the electorate is a political one: the decline of political trust. Confidence in political institutions had already been decreasing in many developed democracies during the decades previous to the economic crisis<sup>51</sup>. Still, this phenomenon has become particularly intense in the European countries severely affected by both the economic crisis and the austerity policies<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> KINDER, D. R. & KIEWIET, D.R., 'Sociotropic politics: the American case', *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1981, pp. 129-161.

<sup>50</sup> HOBOLT, S. & TILLEY, J., *Blaming Europe? Responsibility Without Accountability in the European Union*, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2014.

<sup>51</sup> PHARR, S. J. & PUTNAM, R. D., *Disaffected democracies: what's troubling the trilateral countries?*, Princeton (Princeton University Press), 2000; TORCAL, M. & MONTERO, J.R., *Political Disaffection in Contemporary Democracies: Social Capital, Institutions and Politics*, Abingdon (Routledge), 2006.

<sup>52</sup> ARMINGEON, K. & GUTHMANN, K., 'Democracy in crisis? The declining support for national democracy in European countries, 2007-2011', n. 1.

The literature has provided two arguments to account for the increase of political distrust during the Great Recession. The first is the one related with the economic crisis. According to this first explanation, the countries hardest-hit by the global economic crisis were also those whose levels of political trust deteriorated more<sup>53</sup>. The second argument is related with capacity of the democratic institutions to be responsive to citizens' preferences. Indeed, European democracies have been hollowing out by globalization and EU integration. Governments' capacity to follow the demands of their population has been particularly profound in some countries of the Eurozone during the debt crisis. This is precisely the conclusion of Torcal in his comparative study of Spain and Portugal: 'the increasing perception that political authorities are not responsive to citizens' demands is negatively affecting individual institutional trust'<sup>54</sup>.

Political distrust has been identified as one of the main causes behind support for non-mainstream parties<sup>55</sup>. Voters who are largely unsatisfied with how political process is functioning may use their vote to extreme parties as a way to voice their political discontent. The emergence of Podemos, M5S and Syriza took place in parallel with the deep decrease in political trust in these countries. The literature provides support to the hypothesis that there is indeed a causal relationship behind the correlation between these two phenomena. Hence, our second main hypothesis is the following: *H2: Citizens with low levels of trust towards the institutions (both national and supranational) will be more likely to vote for SYRIZA, M5S and Podemos.*

## V. DATA AND METHODS

The empirical analysis of this paper rests upon the European Elections Study 2014<sup>56</sup>, which fieldwork was completed in June 2014, one month after the EP elections.<sup>57</sup> Its common questionnaire allows an analysis of the voting patterns in the three countries. Our dependent variable is not voting choice, but electoral utilities –the Propensity to Vote (hereafter: PTV) for SYRIZA, M5S and Podemos. The PTV is a non-ipsative preference

<sup>53</sup> ORRIOLS, L. & RICO, G., 'El Clima de Opinión', in ANDUIZA, E. *et al.* (eds.), *Elecciones Generales 2011*, Madrid (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas), 2014.

<sup>54</sup> TORCAL, M., 'The decline of political trust in Spain and Portugal. Economic performance or political responsiveness', *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 58, no. 12, 2014, p. 1553.

<sup>55</sup> DENEMARK, D. & BOWLER, S., 'Minor parties and protest voters in Australia and New Zealand: locating populist politics', *Electoral Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2002, pp. 47-67; BÉLANGER, E., 'Antipartyism and third-party vote choice: a comparison of Canada, Britain and Australia', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 37, no. 9, 2004, pp. 1054-1078.

<sup>56</sup> SCHMITT, H. *et al.*, *European Parliament Election Study 2014, Voter Study*, GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, 2015. ZA5160 Data file Version 1.0.0, doi:10.4232/1.5160.

<sup>57</sup> For this reason we may expect an overrepresentation of the voting factors related to the EU and the Eurocrisis.

rating, measuring what Downs<sup>58</sup> called ‘electoral utilities’<sup>59</sup>. The questions were formulated as following: ‘If you think of (SYRIZA/M5S/Podemos), what mark out of ten best describes how probable it is that you will ever vote for this party? 0. Not at all probable; 10. Very likely’. The choice of this dependent variable is suitable as it allows the analysis of the future intentions of the respondents.

In order to test the first set of hypothesis –the economic crisis hypothesis, we have implemented two OLS models. In addition to the basic set of control variables –gender, age, education and ideology (our set of independent and control variables is described in the online Appendix, Table A.1), the first model captures the egotropic side of the economic voting (H1a) with the four following variables: first, three dummy variables that take value 1 when someone in household has lost job/ has suffered a decrease in their income/ the respondent is concerned about being able to pay the bills, and value 0 otherwise; we also add working status, including the category ‘unemployed’. In the second model, the sociotropic explanation is measured with the perception of the national economic situation (H1b). Lastly, we test the hypotheses H1c by including two dummy variables about whether respondents approved the national government and EU institutions recent performance (value 1) or not (value 0).

Our second hypothesis –the political crisis one– is tested with two additional OLS models. The voters of SYRIZA, M5S and Podemos are usually described as well informed, interested in the EU, and ‘digital citizens’, active members of the protest movements that have crystallized in the vote for anti-establishment parties<sup>60</sup>. In order to test this, we have inserted two variables: reading news on the EP elections-on internet and the participation in a demonstration during the last 12 months. The second model focuses on institutional confidence, adding the degree of trustiness in the EU and the national parliament. Additionally, the accordance with the statement ‘The EU is a good thing for my country’ has been inserted as a control for Euroscepticism.

## VI. RESULTS

Comparing the two OLS models for the economic voting hypotheses (Table 2), we can conclude that by including in our analysis the macro evaluations of the economic situation –the sociotropic economic voting variables and the agreement with the recent EU

<sup>58</sup> DOWNS, A., *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, New York (Harper), 1957.

<sup>59</sup> VAN DER EIJK, C. *et al.*, ‘Rethinking the dependent variable in voting behaviour: On the measurement and analysis of electoral utilities’, *Electoral Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2006, pp. 424-447; VAN DER EIJK, C. & FRANKLIN, M. (eds.) (1996) *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate And National Politics In The Face Of Union*, Ann Arbor (University of Michigan Press), 1996.

<sup>60</sup> BORDIGNON, F. & CECCARINI, L., ‘Five Stars and a Cricket. Beppe Grillo Shakes Italian Politics’, n. 36; BORRECA, R., ‘Political crisis in Greece and Italy: a comparative analysis of SYRIZA and 5 Stars Movement’, n. 9; CORDERO, G. & MONTERO, J.R., ‘Against bipartyism, towards dealignment? The 2014 European elections in Spain’, n. 8.

actions, the model explains only marginally better the probability to vote for any of these three parties. The analysis of the sociodemographic characteristics of the citizens on the propensity to vote for these three parties shows that women and those with higher education were more likely to vote for SYRIZA. Housekeepers and pensioners were less likely to vote for Podemos. As previous works have shown, during the recent elections these profiles have tended to vote for the PP and not for the centre-left and left parties<sup>61</sup>.

Moving to the egotropic hypothesis (H1a) of economic voting of our study, the evidence does not support the hypothesis for SYRIZA and M5S. On the contrary, we find a correlation between having an unemployed person in the household and the probability to cast a vote for the party of Podemos. Overall, the individuals who were concerned about their personal financial situation were more likely to vote for Podemos<sup>62</sup>. For those who expressed a high probability to vote for M5S we can see that only in the first model one of the micro variables ('Most of the time worried about paying bills') of the evaluation of the economic situation plays a role. Its impact is cancelled out when including in the model the indicators of the macro-economic evaluation.

Findings related to the sociotropic hypothesis (H1b) are also surprising. The analysis reveals that the evaluation of the national economy does not seem to play a role towards the propensity to vote for SYRIZA. This finding could be grounded on the fact that in such an extreme economic downturn like the Greek one, the power of sociotropic evaluations of the economy is reduced due to lack of variation<sup>63</sup>. Another clear finding from our analysis is that the bad economic situation in Italy is not significant for people who declare a high propensity to vote for M5S. This is in line with findings that the success of the anti-party movement of Beppe Grillo in the national elections of 2013 is not linked to retrospective economic discontent<sup>64</sup>. On the other hand, a possible vote for Podemos might be grounded on a negative evaluation of the Spanish economy, as in the case of egotropic evaluation of the economy. Therefore, we can conclude that the economic grievances in Greece and Italy did not exert a possible vote for SYRIZA and M5S, while on the contrary for the Spanish electorate economic considerations appear increased the probability for a vote for Podemos.

Our hypothesis on the evaluations of the national government and EU institutions' performance (H1c) is confirmed only for the national level. Even though SYRIZA, M5S

<sup>61</sup> CALVO, K., MARTÍNEZ, A. & MONTERO, J.R., 'Devotos y votantes: el peso del voto religioso en las elecciones generales', in MONTERO, J.R. & LAGO, I. (eds.), *Elecciones Generales 2008*, Madrid (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas), 2011.

<sup>62</sup> For similar findings see FERNÁNDEZ-ALBERTOS, J., *Los votantes de Podemos. Del partidos de los indignados al partido de los excluidos*, n. 8.

<sup>63</sup> See also TEPEROGLOU, E. & TSATSANIS, E., 'Dealignment, de-legitimation and the implosion of the two-party system in Greece: The Earthquake Election of 6 May 2012', n. 2, p. 235.

<sup>64</sup> BELLUCCI, P., 'The political consequences of blame attribution for the economic crisis in the 2013 Italian national election', *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2014, p. 260.

and Podemos adopt eurocritical stances<sup>65</sup>, negative evaluations towards the EU management do not appear to be related with the propensity to cast a vote for these parties<sup>66</sup>. For the case of SYRIZA we should also note the fact that at the time of the 2014 European election its main success was built around the strategy of a possible ‘break’ with the so-called Troika.

On the contrary, the results follow our expectations regarding the high propensity score for the three parties and the (dis)approval of the national government performance. Potential voters of the three parties seem to place the blame square on the policies pursued by their respective national governments. Approval of the management of the domestic actors and the citizens’ self-location on the ideological scale are by far those which explain better the probability to vote one of the three parties. Interestingly, even though Podemos and M5S are two parties that are reluctant to be classified on the left-right spectrum, we can nevertheless detect the importance of ideology in the decision to vote these parties. The findings about the self-placement on the left-right scale reveal that the party of Podemos seemed to attract more leftist voters compared to SYRIZA, which occupied the centre-left spectrum of the political offer. On the other hand, the more centrist voters indicated support for M5S. Finally, self-placement on the centre-right prohibited casting a vote for SYRIZA and Podemos more than for M5S.

	Probability to vote... M5S	Probability to vote... SYRIZA	Probability to vote... PODEMOS	Probability to vote... M5S	Probability to vote... SYRIZA	Probability to vote... PODEMOS
Male	0.39+ (0.22)	-0.50* (0.21)	0.03 (0.24)	0.14 (0.27)	-0.60** (0.22)	-0.09 (0.26)
Age	-0.02 (0.05)	0.04 (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.06)	0.05 (0.04)	0.02 (0.05)
Age Squared	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Secondary Education (ref: Primary)	0.07 (0.27)	0.14 (0.30)	0.15 (0.31)	-0.08 (0.32)	0.10 (0.31)	0.09 (0.33)
University	-0.61* (0.30)	0.97** (0.32)	-0.16 (0.33)	-0.63+ (0.35)	1.01** (0.32)	-0.13 (0.35)
Housekeeper (ref: Working)	0.09 (0.39)	-0.35 (0.43)	-1.41** (0.47)	-0.27 (0.46)	-0.29 (0.44)	-1.36** (0.51)
Student	0.56 (0.59)	0.05 (0.48)	0.16 (0.59)	1.14 (0.72)	0.06 (0.48)	-0.34 (0.63)

<sup>65</sup> STAVRAKAKIS, Y. & KATSAMBEKIS, G., ‘Left-wing populism in the European periphery: the case of SYRIZA’, n. 31; TORREBLANCA, J.I., *Asaltar los Cielos. Podemos o la Política de después de la Crisis*, n. 8.

<sup>66</sup> For a similar conclusion for voting choice, see BELLUCCI, P., ‘The political consequences of blame attribution for the economic crisis in the 2013 Italian national election’, n. 64; CORDERO, G. & MONTERO, J.R., ‘Against bipartyism, towards dealignment? The 2014 European elections in Spain’, n. 8.



	Probability to vote...	Probability to vote...	Probability to vote...	Probability to vote...	Probability to vote...	Probability to vote...
	M5S	SYRIZA	PODEMOS	M5S	SYRIZA	PODEMOS
Retired	-0.20 (0.42)	-0.39 (0.38)	-0.99* (0.45)	-0.63 (0.51)	-0.28 (0.39)	-1.01* (0.47)
Unemployed	-0.84* (0.42)	-0.25 (0.33)	-0.40 (0.32)	-0.82 (0.52)	-0.33 (0.33)	-0.42 (0.33)
Self Ideology Center-Left (3-4; ref: 1-2)	0.91** (0.31)	3.00*** (0.30)	-0.10 (0.31)	0.79* (0.37)	2.95*** (0.31)	-0.31 (0.33)
Self Ideology Center (5)	1.82*** (0.31)	0.32 (0.28)	-2.02*** (0.28)	1.77*** (0.36)	0.29 (0.29)	-2.13*** (0.31)
Self Ideology Center Right (6-7)	0.69* (0.30)	-1.46*** (0.35)	-3.38*** (0.42)	0.49 (0.36)	-1.23*** (0.36)	-2.65*** (0.49)
Self Ideology Right (8-10)	-0.80* (0.36)	-2.46*** (0.34)	-3.49*** (0.52)	-1.39** (0.43)	-2.14*** (0.35)	-2.43*** (0.59)
Someone lost job in household	0.11 (0.28)	0.01 (0.22)	0.78** (0.27)	-0.00 (0.33)	0.09 (0.22)	0.80** (0.29)
Household decrease in income	0.03 (0.24)	-0.36 (0.48)	-0.53+ (0.30)	0.20 (0.29)	-0.70 (0.51)	-0.58+ (0.32)
Most of the time worried about paying bills	1.01** (0.32)	0.33 (0.22)	-0.69* (0.34)	0.64 (0.39)	0.25 (0.23)	-0.72* (0.36)
Perceived Eco Nat Present Positive				0.09 (0.17)	0.11 (0.12)	-0.28* (0.14)
Approve the National Government's				-1.20** (0.36)	-1.27*** (0.38)	-1.61*** (0.44)
Approve the actions of the EU during the last 12 months				-0.04 (0.36)	-0.29 (0.38)	0.10 (0.38)
Constant	4.10*** (1.20)	3.06** (1.05)	4.88*** (1.09)	3.77** (1.43)	3.11** (1.11)	6.74*** (1.21)
Observations	906	1042	926	659	991	787
R <sup>2</sup>	0.122	0.243	0.182	0.146	0.264	0.223

The first model for the analysis of the political crisis hypothesis (see Table 3) includes the sociodemographic characteristics of the voters on the propensity to vote for SYRIZA, M5S and Podemos (gender, age and education), self-ideological location of the respondents, the variable of the participation in a demonstration and the one about reading news on the EP campaign on internet. Including in our second model the two variables on trust (towards the EU institutions and the national parliament) and the evaluation of the EU membership, again we can conclude that there is only a modest improvement of the explanatory power of the model.

One of the main conclusions is that distrust towards the national parliament has an impact on the propensity to vote for Podemos and SYRIZA, while it is not significant for M5S. Distrust towards the EU institutions does not have any impact for any of the three parties. Much clearer Eurosceptic indicators are related to those who expressed a likelihood to vote the party of Beppe Grillo, confirming the eurosceptic profile of the party. In fact, the evaluation of the EU membership is the most important indicator for the potential voters of M5S. This finding is in line with the fact that the anti-EU rhetoric of SYRIZA and Podemos is grounded more on an anti-Memorandum wave and against the implementation of austerity measures and not against the EU itself.

The active involvement in demonstrations emerges (in both models) as the strongest determinant of to the propensity to vote for Podemos. This finding is in line with the grass root origins of the party. The participation in demonstration has also an impact to cast a vote for M5S. On the contrary, it does not seem to have an impact for SYRIZA. This finding confirms both the gradual transformation of the party from a small radical left party of the Greek political arena to a catch-all party and also the indirect-compared to the other two parties– linkage of the party with the protest movements. Some signs of this shift have already been documented in the 2012 double elections, but have been intensified in the period up to the 2015 national elections. Finally, gathering information about the EP elections on internet contributes to a higher propensity to vote for SYRIZA and M5S. Contrary to what we expected, a similar conclusion does not come out for Podemos. This counterintuitive finding follows the one made by Cordero and Montero<sup>67</sup> on Podemos voters' interest in politics in general, but not in the EU or the EP elections in particular. The hypothesis that voters less satisfied with the political system will be more likely to vote for these three parties (H2) is mainly confirmed for the party of Podemos, considering only the disaffection with the national parliament. Like in the models of economic voting, ideology again explains mainly the propensity to vote for these parties.

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<sup>67</sup> CORDERO, G. & MONTERO, J.R., 'Against bipartyism, towards dealignment? The 2014 European elections in Spain', n. 8.

	Probability to vote... M5S	Probability to vote... SYRIZA	Probability to vote... PODEMOS	Probability to vote... M5S	Probability to vote... SYRIZA	Probability to vote... PODEMOS
Male	0.18 (0.21)	-0.58** (0.20)	0.14 (0.22)	0.19 (0.22)	-0.61** (0.21)	0.08 (0.23)
Age	-0.03 (0.04)	0.04 (0.03)	0.06 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.05 (0.03)	0.04 (0.04)
Age Squared	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00* (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Secondary Education (ref: Primary)	-0.10 (0.27)	-0.07 (0.30)	0.09 (0.30)	0.02 (0.28)	-0.07 (0.30)	0.22 (0.31)
University	-1.00*** (0.29)	0.56+ (0.31)	-0.30 (0.34)	-0.70* (0.31)	0.52 (0.32)	-0.17 (0.34)
Self Ideology Center- Left (3-4; ref: 1-2)	0.81** (0.30)	2.98*** (0.30)	-0.08 (0.31)	0.75* (0.32)	2.93*** (0.31)	-0.26 (0.31)
Self Ideology Center (5)	1.77*** (0.31)	0.31 (0.28)	-1.67*** (0.28)	1.77*** (0.32)	0.22 (0.28)	-1.82*** (0.29)
Self Ideology Center Right (6-7)	0.67* (0.29)	-1.45*** (0.35)	-2.86*** (0.42)	0.66* (0.31)	-1.48*** (0.36)	-2.83*** (0.44)
Self Ideology Right (8-10)	-0.68+ (0.35)	-2.52*** (0.33)	-2.85*** (0.51)	-0.98** (0.37)	-2.51*** (0.34)	-2.85*** (0.55)
During last 12 months, demonstrations	0.77* (0.34)	0.29 (0.32)	2.06*** (0.30)	0.81* (0.36)	0.27 (0.32)	1.87*** (0.31)
I read news about the EU on internet	0.48** (0.18)	0.48** (0.16)	0.13 (0.18)	0.61** (0.19)	0.48** (0.16)	0.12 (0.18)
Trust in the EU Institutions				-0.09 (0.17)	0.09 (0.14)	0.13 (0.15)
Trust in National Parliament				-0.19 (0.17)	-0.23+ (0.14)	-0.40** (0.15)
EU membership Good thing for country				-0.59* (0.26)	0.17 (0.24)	0.04 (0.25)
Constant	3.84*** (0.91)	2.31** (0.80)	3.81*** (0.94)	3.82*** (1.01)	2.39** (0.82)	4.70*** (0.99)
Observations	919	1039	928	827	1032	890
R <sup>2</sup>	0.125	0.249	0.204	0.136	0.251	0.211

## VII. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper, we have tried to investigate the profile of the voters of the three most important Southern European non-right anti-establishment parties, namely SYRIZA, M5S and Podemos in 2014, one month after the European Parliament elections. Our dependent variable is the propensity to vote these parties, using the PTV variables of the European Election Study 2014. The central question of our study was to explore whether the electoral basis of these parties could be analysed by two complementary explanations. The first one is that of the economic voting. The experience of the deep recession, the austerity measures, the drop in living standards posits several research questions from the economic voting perspective. These circumstances raise the question of whether the electoral success of these parties is related to the assumptions of the economic voting theory.

The answer is affirmative only for the case of the party of Podemos. Both the egocentric and sociotropic hypotheses of economic voting are confirmed for those who expressed the possibility to cast a vote for the Spanish party in 2014. Moreover, the potential voters of these three parties do not link the economic crisis to the EU management. Even if the three parties are eurocritical and the programme of SYRIZA is focused on its anti-bailout profile, for the electorate economic considerations do not increase the probability of voting for these parties. At first glance this finding might be surprising, but it shows the weakness of sociotropic evaluations of the economy in the context of a deep recession. This is the case especially for the Greek economy and the reaction by a citizenry which has been experiencing one of the most rapid declines in the standards of living of a country in the postwar era. In other words, due to the extreme bad economic conditions the Greek voters do not link their support for a party on the calculation of classical reward-punishment logic of the economic voting. The results on the hypotheses of the economic voting are not significant for the potential voters of M5S too. For this case, we have to take into account the other indicators from the political trust model of our analysis that are significant in order to cast a vote for the party of Beppe Grillo, which play down the importance of the economic conditions in Italy. Overall, the first model of our study, the one of economic voting explained better the propensity to vote for the party of Podemos and not for the other two.

The second set of explanations for the electoral success of these parties could be linked to eurocritical and eurosceptical stances and levels of distrust in national and European institutions. Since the onset of the debt crisis the pro-European profile of public opinion in Greece, Italy and Spain rapidly overturned. Our findings reveal that the party of Beppe Grillo emerged as one of the main political forces in the Italian political arena for those voters who wish to link their vote to a negative evaluation of the EU membership. On the other hand, eurosceptical stances did not appear to have an impact on the propensity to vote for Podemos and SYRIZA. Our second main set of explanations for the institutional crisis is also linked to the fact that in the three countries, we observe after the onset of the sovereign debt crisis an unprecedented image of extreme and rapid delegitimation for institutions

both at the national and European level. Especially the rhetoric of Podemos and M5S was built upon these anti-party sentiments, while the disenchantment with the major parties of each political arena constitute a central feature of their strategy (including also SYRIZA). On the other hand, our analysis shows that support mainly for the party of Podemos and to a lesser extent for SYRIZA is associated with distrust towards the national parliament. Even if Beppe Grillo highlights the ‘anti-politics’ character of his movement, the potential voters play down its importance.

Nevertheless, in our models the most important factor that determines the propensity to support any of the parties, surprisingly enough, is the placement on the left-right axis. Contrary to conventional wisdom and the principles of these parties (especially for M5S and Podemos), the potential voters of these three parties can be defined by their ideological profile. Those of Podemos appear to be the more leftist than the others and those of M5S the more centrist. The ideological profile of the potential voter of SYRIZA (mainly belonging to the centre-left) shows a gradual transformation of this radical left party to a catch –all one, occupying the centre-left locations of the ideological scale in Greece, after the debacle of PASOK. The fact that ideology not only seems to enter into voters’ calculus to support one of these anti-establishment southern European parties in times of economic recession, but also the fact that the evaluation of the national actors plays a role in voters choices reveal the limitations of interpretative frameworks that seek to bundle all these challengers together as eurocritical undifferentiated post-ideological ‘populist’ actors.

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Table A.1. Summary of the Variables Included in the Models.

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Propensity to vote for SYRIZA	1,043	4.08	3.71	0	10
Propensity to vote for M5S	928	3.28	3.28	0	10
Propensity to vote for Podemos	930	4.10	3.75	0	10
Male	3,282	0.47	0.50	0	1
Age	3,282	48.67	17.14	18	95
Age Squared	3,282	2662	17.32	324	9,025
Primary School	3,282	0.31	0.46	0	1
Secondary School	3,282	0.37	0.48	0	1
University	3,282	0.31	0.46	0	1
Working	2,282	0.43	0.49	0	1
Housekeeper	3,282	0.11	0.32	0	1
Student	3,282	0.06	0.24	0	1
Unemployed	3,282	0.15	0.35	0	1
Retired	3,282	0.22	0.41	0	1
Read News EU Internet	3,261	1.51	0.69	1	3
Demonstrations 12 months	3,282	0.14	0.34	0	1
Left (0-2)					
Center-Left (3-4)	3,282	0.19	0.39	0	1
Center (5)	3,282	0.24	0.43	0	1
Center-Right (6-7)	3,282	0.13	0.33	0	1
Right (8-10)	3,282	0.10	0.31	0	1
DK/NA Ideology	3,282	0.18	0.39	0	1
Someone lost job in household	3,248	0.39	0.49	0	1
Income decrease in household	3,237	0.74	0.44	0	1
Worried about paying bills	3,282	0.25	0.43	0	1
Sociotropic economic present	3,245	2.26	0.97	1	5
Approve Government	3,029	0.21	0.41	0	1
Approve EU	2,755	0.19	0.39	0	1
Trust National Parliament	3,231	1.92	0.83	1	4
Trust EU	3,205	2.19	0.87	1	4
EU Good thing for the country	3,147	0.49	0.50	0	1

Source: European Election Studies (Voter Study EES 2014)