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**A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS OF PARTY COMPETITION:
EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF MULTIPLE SYSTEMIC CRISES ON
ELECTIONS AND ON THE PROCESS OF GOVERNMENT
FORMATION AND TERMINATION IN SOUTHERN EUROPE**

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ABSTRACT

Over the last two decades, two major events have harshly hit Europe, especially southern European member states: the 2008 European sovereign debt crisis and the ongoing refugee crisis. This study attempts to investigate how the interplay of these critical events influenced party competition dynamics especially in those countries that have been heavily exposed not only to the negative consequences of the economic crisis but also to increasing migratory flows. The thesis is cumulative, being comprised of four manuscripts, each one addressing a specific facet of party competition. Manuscript I traces the evolution of the changing structure of national party systems, highlighting the tendency towards an increased dimensionality of political spaces. Manuscript II focuses on parties' electoral strategies investigating the incentives that encourage political actors to engage in mobilization strategies over immigration vis-a-vis socio-economic issues. The third and fourth manuscripts focus on the process of government formation and termination, respectively. Manuscript III shows that, in a political context characterized by the intensified role exerted by European institutions in domestic affairs, political parties are more likely to engage in negotiations over coalition agreements with political actors sharing similar positions on the European integration process. Manuscript IV highlights an indirect mechanism through which exogenous non-economic shocks, such as the one represented by the refugee crisis, can undermine cabinet survival by means of deteriorating the inter-party bargaining environment within a government. The dissertation aims to make a relevant contribution to the literature of party competition by advancing our comprehension on parties' mutual interactions during critical circumstances. The study also contributes to the literature on government stability and demonstrates how parties' ideological proximity on emerging salient issues enhances the likelihood that a given coalition will form and remain stable during the constitutional mandate.

Keywords: dimensional analysis; mobilizing strategy; government formation; government termination; coalition durability

INTRODUCTION

The last decade can be aptly defined as *Revolutionszeitalters* (“Revolutionary Era”), drawing upon the expression employed by historian Jacob Burchard to denote the phase typified by a confluence of crises and profound transformations that permeated Europe in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Indeed, over the last ten years, European member states have been confronted with systemic crises and their implications. Two major events, in particular, influenced party competition dynamics. In 2008, the sovereign debt crisis highlighted the interdependence and vulnerability of those economies grappling with high levels of public debt and low growth rates. These countries encountered mounting challenges in financing current public spending by resorting to additional budget deficits. In addition, since 2010, a series of protests has created strong political instability in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, thereby leading to an escalating influx of refugees and migrants towards Europe. These exogenous events, although independent of each other, have had significant repercussions within national party systems influencing party strategies (Charalambous, Conti, Pedrazzani 2023), favouring the entry of new political actors with centrifugal tendencies (Hobolt, Tilley 2016), orienting the electoral choices of voters (Hernández, Kriesi 2016), and finally, altering the arithmetic of the processes of formation and termination of governments (Bergman, Bäck, Hellström 2021).

Whether the consequences of these critical events took on different connotations among southern European member states remains, however, an open question. Can we detect distinct patterns in party competition dynamics in those countries that were more exposed not only to the negative consequences of the Eurozone crisis but also to increasing migratory flows? In the peripheral countries of Southern Europe, has the interplay of multiple systemic crises altered the dimensionality of political spaces, the mobilization strategies of political parties and the durability of coalitions? The current dissertation intends to tackle these questions by investigating distinct facets of party competition.

The thesis is cumulative, being comprised of four studies. The first study traces the evolution of the changing structure of national party systems, highlighting the trend towards an increased dimensionality of political spaces. The second manuscript focuses on the electoral strategies of political parties. In particular, the incentives that lead political parties to engage in mobilization strategies over immigration vis-a-vis socio-economic issues are examined. The third and fourth manuscripts focus on the process of government formation and termination, respectively, by analysing the durability of coalitions in multi-party systems during turbulent times.

The dissertation is structured in five chapters. In the current introduction, I discuss the gaps identified in the literature followed by a comprehensive discussion of the main findings. Chapters 1 to 4 present the four manuscripts. Chapter 5 concludes and discusses the relevance and implications of the research to the discipline.

Dissertation outline

The economic left-right dimension is no longer the pivotal overarching issue to explain the dynamics of party competition. The configuration of political spaces cannot be exclusively ascribed to the conventional demarcation between economically left-liberal and economically right-conservative political actors. Furthermore, the issues around which political parties vie for support extend beyond the purely economic realm. Extending the analysis to the process of government formation and termination, the need to incorporate considerations on the ideological proximity of parties on dimensions beyond the traditional economic axis of conflict becomes apparent. The current dissertation starts from these considerations and tries to relate these developments to the multiple systemic crises that have occurred in Europe in the last decade.

I. Dimensional analysis of political spaces

The studies on the dimensionality of political spaces aim to identify the deep-seated societal divisions that constitute the cornerstones around which

political parties mobilize voters on the basis of shared values and interests (see Lipset, Rokkan 1967). Critical events or social changes can undermine the relative stability of the divisions that structure the spaces of competition (Rovny, Whitefield 2015). Following this perspective, exogenous shocks, such as those represented by the financial crisis, or the refugee crisis can trigger long-term changes in the structure of national political spaces. Over the last two decades, one of the most relevant changes in the spatial properties of party systems has been the gradual formation of a cultural axis of conflict orthogonal to economic policy (Bornschier 2010; Hooghe, Marks, Wilson 2002; Kriesi et al. 2006). However, significant differences exist between Northwestern and Southern Europe in the configuration and the content of an exclusively cultural political division. In the countries of Northwestern Europe, the emergence of a cultural axis was fuelled by two contingent phenomena. On the one hand, there was the gradual spread of cultural liberalism as the ideological reference of social democratic parties which have progressively abandoned their function as representatives of the working-class electorate (Kitschelt 1994). On the other hand, the electoral success of right-wing populist parties that have placed the defence of national identity and borders at the centre of their political agenda. These developments have pushed parties to politicize issues relating to the European integration process and immigration-related issues from an identity perspective.

Conversely, in Southern Europe, the outbreak of the financial crisis slowed down the process towards the emergence of a cultural axis of conflict, orienting party competition dynamics predominantly towards economic issues (Charalambous, Conti, Pedrazzani 2023). Furthermore, the extent to which socio-cultural issues are aligned with the economic dimension of conflict or manage to form a specific axis of competition remains an open question. In particular, in southern European countries, can we observe different patterns in the ideological spaces that do not align with what is observed in Northern Europe? How have the Eurozone and refugee crises influenced the content of a

cultural axis of conflict in those peripheral countries most affected by the outbreak of the two crises? The first manuscript aims to answer these questions.

In the first study, I conduct a systemic analysis of the structural changes that occurred in the configuration of the ideological spaces of both parties and voters in four southern European countries: Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. Relying on data reduction techniques, I identify the main axes that allow us to subsume the positions that parties and voters have adopted during a time interval that includes the political consequences of the financial crisis and the emergence of the refugee crisis. The advantages of this approach are twofold. On the one hand, by analysing correlation patterns within a fixed set of dimensions, I trace a reliable evolution of the changing shape and structure of political spaces over time. Past studies exploring the dimensional structure of political spaces have investigated how specific issues, such as those measuring parties' support towards the bail-out agreements that southern European governments negotiated with European institutions for financial assistance, influenced party competition dynamics during "crisis elections" (Katsanidou, Otjes 2016; Hutter, Kriesi, Vidal 2018; Tsatsanis, Freire, Tsirbas 2014). These issues can favour the formation of election-dependent political division but prevent a longitudinal analysis of the long-term changes in the spatial properties of political systems. On the other hand, exploring dimensionality from both the supply and the demand sides enables us to compare changes in the structure of party competition with those occurring within the ideological space of the electorate and to evaluate whether these changes allowed parties to benefit from an electoral perspective.

The results of the analysis provide evidence that, in Southern Europe, the process towards the emergence of a cultural axis of conflict is more nuanced compared to the one that led, in Northern Europe, to the formation of an independent political divide. At the party level, socio-cultural issues are aligned with economic issues since the onset financial crisis. Furthermore, issues relating to the European integration process managed to structure the political space favouring the emergence of a specific axis of political competition. This is in

line with the growing influence exerted by European institutions in orienting domestic affairs and parties' programmatic offer in the peripheral countries of Southern Europe. At the voter level, the formation of an axis that encompasses exclusively cultural issues appears more evident than what is observed at the party level. Furthermore, the issues relating to the European integration process shaped the electorate's ideological space to a greater extent during the years in which the negotiations over the bail-out agreements with the European institutions took place.

II. Parties' mobilization strategies

Over the last decade, immigration-related issues emerged as a crucial dimension for the analysis of party competition dynamics. Changes in the structure and in the dimensionality of political spaces represented a challenge for traditional parties and an opportunity for those political actors alternatively defined as populist radical right (Mudde 2015), niche (Adams et al. 2006; Meguid 2005), and radical parties (Hutter, Kriesi 2022). Studies in the comparative political science literature show that the electoral fortunes of anti-immigrant parties reached their peak among those voters who perceive European integration and globalization as potentially threatening processes (Kriesi et al. 2006). These citizens often advocate for the adoption of stringent policies to manage immigration inflows and safeguard their nation's sovereignty. Furthermore, exogenous events, such as increasing migratory flows, led political parties to exploit immigration-related issues for electoral purposes (Hutter, Kriesi 2022).

Following this perspective, the seminal work of Hobolt and De Vries (2015) aims to identify those factors that drive political parties to engage in long-term mobilization strategies over specific policy domains. According to the Theory of Issue Entrepreneurship (Hobolt, De Vries 2015), political parties that find themselves in a disadvantageous position within multi-party systems face major incentives to mobilize large portions of the electorate on specific political issues. This condition is strictly intertwined with the main outcomes that competing

political parties try to pursue within party competition. That is, obtaining government positions, implementing preferred policies, and increasing their electoral consensus. Hence, political actors who have no government positions, experience electoral defeat, or adopt a position distant from the mainstream status quo are more likely to act as issue entrepreneurs. However, I contend that the incentives that parties encounter to mobilize the electorate on specific issues need further scrutiny. The theory of issue entrepreneurship implicitly assumes that the presence of the aforementioned mobilizing incentives automatically triggers political parties to politicize an issue. But is being in a disadvantaged position within the system a sufficient condition to engage in mobilization strategies? Are there intra-party features, such as parties' ideology, that instead mediate this process?

The second manuscript of this dissertation aims to shed light on this mechanism. More specifically, I further investigate the validity of the issue entrepreneurship theory by examining the incentives that encourage political parties to politicize immigration vis-a-vis socio-economic issues. I contend that the parties' choice to strategically mobilize the electorate on specific issues because of occupying a losing position with respect to their office-, vote-, and policy-seeking objectives cannot be divorced from party features, first and foremost party ideology. I test this proposition by examining party competition dynamics in nine multi-party systems distributed across Northern and Southern Europe. These countries have been exposed not only to the negative consequences of the Eurozone crisis but also to repeated waves of mass migration. Furthermore, these countries differently perceived and managed the recent migratory crisis. The geographical position of southern European countries has made these countries more exposed to incoming migratory flows. Conversely, in northern European countries, the political debate mostly concerned integration policies and access to the labour market for asylum seekers in light of the comparatively more generous integration policies implemented by northern member states.

The results of my analysis show that being in a disadvantaged position within the political contestation effectively prompts political actors to adopt an entrepreneurial strategy towards immigration and socio-economic issues. Nevertheless, this effect is significantly mediated by the party's ideology and by the type of incentive being examined. Parties' ideology exerts a significant role in orienting parties' mobilizing efforts. More specifically, a right-wing political party will be more likely to act as an issue entrepreneur on immigration when it finds itself in a disadvantaged position within the political system. On the contrary, left-wing political parties will be more prone to engage in mobilizing strategies over economic issues.

III. The process of government formation

The growing complexity in the structure of political spaces makes it difficult to explain the dynamics of competition and the process of government formation using a single political dimension. It follows that considering parties' ideological proximity on the general left-right axis is not sufficient to explain the outcome of the government formation game. Following this perspective, policy-seeking parties need to find compromises on the multiple policy issues defining the space of competition when involved in the negotiations to form a new cabinet. Furthermore, exogenous shocks such as those represented by the Eurozone crisis and escalating waves of mass migration can alter the salience of specific issues which, in turn, influence the bargaining process over coalition formation. While studies with a focus on central and northwestern European countries show that parties with similar ideological profiles on socio-cultural issues, such as immigration, were more likely to enter into coalition agreement (Bräuninger et al. 2019; Debus 2009), scarce comparative interest has been given to whether these dynamics are reflected in the process of government formation in the peripheral countries of Southern Europe. To fill this gap, in Manuscript III, which I wrote in collaboration with Marc Debus, we analyse patterns of government formation in four southern European countries: Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. On the one hand, we investigate whether incorporating

socio-cultural issues and European integration policies into models of coalition formation enables us to better understand the outcomes of the government formation process in Southern Europe. On the other hand, we analyse whether the Eurozone and refugee crises have increased the role of the dimensions associated with the respective crises in orienting inter-party negotiations.

Over the last decade, the process of government formation in Southern Europe did not always reflect pre-electoral promises and dynamics as coalition governments formed between parties which had campaigned in strong opposition to one another. Furthermore, the increased role of EU institutions in domestic affairs and the implementation of austerity measures to counter the effect of the Eurozone crisis influenced not only the stability of incumbent governments but also the negotiations for the achievement of a governing partnership. In this political context, the electoral success of Euro-sceptic, anti-austerity, and anti-immigration political actors has positioned these parties as the main players in the coalition negotiations. Consequently, they have brought these issues into the bargaining environment in which the government formation process takes place. This resulted in the formation of governments whose coalition partners, rather than being driven by ideological proximity, showed a shared commitment to implement or dismiss austerity measures. Therefore, focusing on the distances between parties on a single ideological dimension which is mainly structured by differences on economic policy bears the risk of overlooking significant changes in the patterns of party competition, which are likely to affect the outcomes of the government formation process in countries that were strongly affected by the European financial crisis and by increasing waves of mass migration in the last years. Furthermore, recent exogenous shocks increased the salience of certain issues and altered parties' utility of forming a specific coalition. While the Eurozone crisis has made elections in Southern Europe characterized by a high EU impact (see Kriesi 2016), the refugee crisis has accentuated parties' long-term incentives to mobilize the electorate on immigration (see Hutter, Kriesi 2022) especially in those countries most exposed to the influence of migratory flows. Hence, parties can benefit from the increased

salience of EU- and socio-cultural issues to partner with distant competitors on other, less relevant, policy domains.

Under the assumption that parties' interaction takes place in a multi-dimensional political space, my co-author and I examined the factors that influenced the partisan composition of governments in southern European democracies. More specifically, we estimated the ideological heterogeneity of potential coalitions on three policy dimensions: the economic left-right axis, a socio-cultural dimension encompassing immigration-related issues, and a dimension covering the policy preferences regarding further steps in the European integration process. Results show that potential coalitions whose members have a low degree of heterogeneity on EU-related issues were more likely to form a multi-party government, especially in the aftermath of the Eurozone crisis. On the one hand, these findings align with the increased influence exerted by European institutions in the political dynamics of southern European countries over the last decade. On the other hand, they demonstrate the need for governing parties to hold a cohesive policy profile on the most salient issues that shaped the political conflict in recent times.

IV. The process of government termination

The analysis carried out in Manuscript IV is closely intertwined with the research conducted in the third chapter. More specifically, extending the analysis to the process of government termination, I examine whether socio-cultural exogenous shocks such as those represented by an increase in migratory flows undermine cabinet survival and their ability to reach the end of the constitutional mandate. The extant literature on the impact of exogenous shocks on government stability mainly focuses on critical events of an economic nature (Warwick 1994). These studies show that adverse economic conditions characterized by high rates of unemployment or inflation increase the risk of political instability during the inter-electoral period (Robertson 1983; Saalfeld 2013). However, European countries, especially southern European member states, have experienced not only the negative effects of the severe economic downturn

related to the 2008 financial crisis but have been exposed to increasing migratory flows. Therefore, it is worth examining how these dynamics are reflected in the process of government termination by exploring the potentially destabilizing effect of non-economic exogenous shocks.

In the analysis conducted in Manuscript IV, I proposed an indirect mechanism through which the ongoing refugee crisis can alter the trajectory of incumbent multi-party cabinets. Here, the focus is on four southern European countries: Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. I contend that, unlike disrupting macroeconomic shocks that influence the effective policy-making power of incumbent governments, socio-cultural critical events do not undermine the effective ability of governments to implement policy. However, the migrant crisis can influence the inter-party bargaining environment by exacerbating tensions between government partners. This becomes particularly evident when parties hold divergent positions on how to address the emergency and when they attach a high degree of importance to those issues associated with the refugee crisis. In this context, I argue that parties' positions on EU-related issues serve as a good proxy for their overall strategy of how to manage the migratory emergency. Some parties may call for greater involvement of European institutions to manage growing migratory flows, while others may advocate a tightening of national immigration policies in contrast to the European Union's agreements on migrants. In the event of inter-party ideological disagreements on how to address the political implications of increasing migratory flows, governments whose members attach a high degree of importance to EU-related issues will run a greater risk of early dissolution. When a party attaches a high degree of importance to a limited set of policy issues, which may have contributed to its electoral success, it will be less willing to compromise on these specific issues (see Greene 2017).

To examine the effect of the refugee crisis, operationalized using the number of asylum requests received on an annual basis by each country included in the analysis, I conduct a Cox proportional hazard regression analysis within a

multivariate setting. This statistical technique allows us to address prognostic hypotheses by estimating the probability that an event will occur at a particular point in time. The results highlight a significant linkage between governments' exposure to greater migratory pressure and cabinets' policy-seeking attributes. More specifically, increasing waves of mass migration undermine the stability of those governments that have divergent positions and that attribute a high degree of importance to EU-related issues. The salience attributed by governing parties to the issues related to the crisis amplifies the effect of internal divisions within governments and increases the incentives for parties to call for an early dissolution.

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CHAPTER 1

ADAPTING TO CHANGE: A DIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS OF PARTIES' AND VOTERS' IDEOLOGICAL SPACES

The analysis and the identification of the structural divide around which political parties compete and vie for electoral support constitute one of the central themes within the political science literature. In their seminal work, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) contend that the historical development of party systems in Europe can be explained by the interplay of deep-seated societal divisions. These enduring features of societies become the focal points around which political parties organize and compete for support, thus structuring the political landscape. Although this approach provides a stable basis for political parties to mutually interact over time, the theory acknowledges that social changes, but also systemic crises or exogenous shocks can represent the opportunity to trigger long-term radical changes in the structure of political spaces (Rovny, Whitefield 2019). Following this perspective, the salience and the content of political divisions can change as societies evolve and new issues might emerge.

Research on the changing structure of national party systems highlighted the tendency, emerging from the 1970s, towards an increased dimensionality of political spaces with two main dimensions shaping party competition: an economic dimension and a cultural dimension encompassing attitudes toward European integration, immigration, and cultural liberalism (Bornschieer 2010; Hooghe, Marks, Wilson 2002; Kriesi et al. 2006). However, these structural changes did not follow homogeneous patterns between Northwestern and Southern Europe. In northwestern European countries the economic and the cultural divide have become equally important for explaining party competition dynamics (see Bornschieer 2010; Hooghe, Marks 2018). Conversely, in Southern Europe, the onset of the Eurozone crisis slowed the emergence of a cultural axis

of conflict, orienting party competition primarily towards economic issues (Charalambous, Conti, Pedrazzani 2023). Furthermore, notable differences exist in the content of the newly emerging cultural axis of conflict. In northern European countries, political parties politicized European integration, and immigration issues, from an identitarian perspective. In contrast, in southern European countries, EU-related issues aligned with the economic dimension (Katsanidou, Otjes 2016) or managed to set up a specific axis of political competition (Giannetti; Pedrazzani, Pinto 2017).

Nevertheless, research on the dimensionality of political spaces often investigated whether specific issues, such as parties' attitudes towards the bail-out agreements that southern European governments negotiated with European institutions, shaped party competition during "crisis" elections. Specific issues favour the emergence of election-dependent dimensions (Kriesi 2016) and, therefore, they cannot be used to compare the dimensionality of political spaces across multiple elections. This study aims to offer a systematic analysis of the changes that have occurred in the ideological space of parties and voters in the last ten years of party competition in four southern European countries (Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal) by taking into account a fixed set of policy issues. First, I identify those fundamental axes that allow us to subsume the positions that parties and voters have adopted on a given set of political issues. Second, I evaluate whether there have been significant changes in the policy positions of political parties on the main axes of contestation.

The results highlight that whilst at the voter level, cross-country differences exist in the configuration and content of the emerging cultural axis of conflict, at the party level, socio-cultural issues are aligned in most elections held after the outbreak of the financial crisis to the economic axis of competition. Furthermore, European issues have profoundly influenced the structure of party competition, favouring the emergence of an independent axis of conflict, and correlated with issues relating to the delegation of powers and the deregulation of markets. In the next sections, I provide an overview of the political context

that characterized southern European party competition dynamics in the last decade, followed by a description of the data and the results of the dimensional analysis applied to southern European ideological spaces.

1.1. *The interplay of multiple crises*

The sovereign debt crisis and the refugee crisis have harshly hit Europe, with particularly pronounced effects on southern European countries, and have exerted a notable influence on party competition dynamics during the last decade of political representation within this regional context (see Conti, Hutter, Nanou 2018). Since 2009, southern European countries experienced severe fiscal challenges amid significant level of indebtedness, which in turn reflected into limited public spending capacity. In an economic context marked by increasingly severe tensions in international financial markets, countries like Greece, Portugal, and Spain turned to supranational institutions such as the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for financial assistance through bail-out programs, which progressively increased their influence in domestic affairs. In Italy, although the central government did not request a full bail-out like other countries, conflicts with European authorities over the need to cut public spending and implement structural reforms to counter the economic recession led to the premature end of the Berlusconi government and the formation of a technical cabinet led by Mario Monti (see Verney, Bosco 2013).

The implementation of austerity measures and structural reforms to foster fiscal stability and economic growth has frequently led to noteworthy social consequences. These include reductions in public spending, particularly in vital sectors like healthcare and education, as well as an increase in the retirement age. These policies have sparked public protests and social tensions, undermining trust in the political establishment and fuelling growing distrust towards European institutions. In this political context, economic- and European-related issues have played a central role in the formation of new political parties and orienting the voting choices of the electorate. The growing

dissatisfaction with traditional political establishments, seen as inadequate in addressing the consequences of the economic recession, has contributed to the growth of populist and anti-establishment movements. Parties such as Syriza in Greece (Stavrakakis, Katsambekis 2014), Podemos in Spain (Ramiro, Gomez 2017; Vidal 2017), and the Five Star Movement in Italy (Conti, Memoli 2015; Girardi 2023; Passarelli, Tuorto 2018) have gained support combining promises of radical change and socio-economic reforms to a harsh criticism towards the austerity measures promoted and encouraged by the European Union and other supranational institutions. Moreover, the elections conducted in Southern Europe over the past decade occurred within a political landscape marked by an increasing influence of European institutions in domestic affairs providing political parties with an opportunity to incorporate EU-related issues into their political discourse in innovative ways (Hobolt, De Vries, 2015; Grande, Hutter 2016; Kriesi 2016).

Running parallel to the economic crisis, the refugee crisis has introduced further complications. Beginning in 2014, the arrival of a growing number of migrants and asylum seekers has placed increasing pressure on reception systems and heightened the political divide on immigration issues. Far-right parties exploited concerns regarding immigration to inflame nationalist and anti-immigrant sentiments, thereby securing electoral support from large portions of the electorate (see *inter alia* Grande, Schwarzbözl, Fatke 2019; Hutter, Kriesi 2022). This trend is exemplified by parties like the League in Italy (D'Alimonte 2019), Golden Dawn in Greece (Ellinas 2013), Chega in Portugal (Mendes, Dennison 2021), and Vox in Spain (Payá, Martínez 2020).

Thus, the political space in Southern Europe has been inevitably influenced by the interplay of the above-mentioned crises. Moreover, the impact of the economic hardship and the increasing migratory flows took on different connotations in Southern Europe compared to other European member states. From an economic perspective, unlike their northern counterparts, whose more robust economies enabled them to maintain stronger public finances, southern

European economies have been challenged by severe financial tensions, being unable to mitigate the impact of high levels of public debt. Regarding immigration, southern European countries have been faced increasing migratory pressures due to their geographical location, which makes them the primary access points to Europe. These events caused different policy reactions and societal responses, providing an intriguing case study for examining the implications of multi-year crises on societies, and the overall party competition dynamics. In line with existing studies that highlight the importance of taking into consideration context-specific factors when studying the long-term effect of external policy shocks (see Hutter, Kriesi, Vidal 2018; Charalambous, Conti, Pedrazzani 2023), I traced the evolution of the changing structure of national policy spaces within a specific regional context. In fact, as cross-regional differences exist in the magnitude and in the effect of the Eurozone and refugee crises, it is crucial to account for context-dependent factors when investigating their impact on political processes, party competition, and voting behaviours.

1.2. Socio-cultural issues in northwestern and southern European party competition dynamics

Relevant studies in the comparative political science literature highlight that socio-cultural issues flanked economic issues in shaping the structure of party competition (Bornschiefer 2010; Hooghe, Marks, Wilson 2002; Kriesi et al. 2006). The historical influence of the class structure on political dynamics started to wane, paving the way for a more intricate political landscape shaped by evolving societal values, advancements in education, and enhancements in living conditions (see Inglehart 1990). Yet, over the last decade, the formation of a new cultural axis of contestation did not unfold uniformly in both Northwestern and Southern Europe.

In Northwestern Europe, two intertwined events have contributed to the increasing salience of socio-cultural issues. First, the evolution of social democratic parties from representatives of working-class demands to political agents dedicated to safeguarding middle-class concerns (Gingrich, Häusermann

2015). This ideological shift coincided with the establishment of cultural liberalism as the ideological foundation of this political group. Second, the electoral success of right-wing populist parties who mobilized large portions of the electorate positioning themselves as defenders of national identity and borders from the process of European integration and incoming migratory flows. These events positioned the debate over the process of EU integration, the safeguard of national identity, and the contrast between liberal and conservative perspectives on social policies as the cornerstone of the new axis of conflict. These developments paved the way for the electoral success of those political actors that mobilized the electorate sensitive to the growing interdependencies between economies and cultures resulting from both European integration and globalization processes (Bornschier 2010; Kriesi et al. 2006). In southern European countries, by contrast, the dimensionality of political spaces has been influenced by the impact of the financial debt crisis and the success of challenger parties, especially on the left of the ideological continuum. The harsh criticism directed at mainstream parties held accountable alongside European institutions for the implementation of severe austerity measures has indeed created opportunities for new political actors, notably those on the left end of the political spectrum, to thrive electorally (Kriesi 2016). Therefore, the consequences of the Eurozone crisis slowed down the process towards the emergence of a specific cultural axis of conflict by orienting party competition dynamics towards economic policy issues (Charalambous, Conti, Pedrazzani 2023).

Thus, while in northwestern European countries, socio-cultural issues, such as those relating to the European integration process and to immigration policy, have been politicized by political parties through an identitarian perspective, in southern European countries, these issues have often been considered in relation to economic factors. In Greece, after the outbreak of the financial crisis, issues related to European integration closely aligned with economic preferences (Katsanidou, Otjes 2016; Tsatsanis, Freire, Tsirbas 2014). Furthermore, in elections where the political agenda was influenced by adherence to the bail-out

conditions negotiated with European institutions, the traditional economic axis gave way to a “pro-/anti-bailout” political divide (Hutter, Kriesi, Vidal 2018). This conflict line cleaves pro-EU political parties from those seeking a renegotiation of the bailout loan agreements with European institutions. Also in Italy, during the elections that took place after the technocratic government called to implement structural reforms for fiscal consolidation, EU-related issues managed to set up a specific axis of conflict (Giannetti, Pedrazzani, Pinto 2017).

However, these studies analyse the configuration of political spaces at specific points in time, typically considering the elections held during or in the aftermath of the Eurozone crisis (Hutter, Kriesi, Vidal 2018). In addition, to examine how the economic crisis influenced the structure of ideological spaces, these studies examine how specific issues, such as those relating to the content of the agreements for the provision of financial support (commonly referred to as Memoranda of understanding), are covered by standard cleavages or contribute to the formation of new political divisions (Katsanidou, Otjes 2016; Tsatsanis, Freire, Tsirbas 2014). These issues might acquire a high degree of salience in certain elections but cannot be used to reconstruct the evolution of the dimensionality of political spaces over time. To this end, the analysis conducted in this study examines the changes that have occurred in the structure of political spaces, from both the supply and the demand sides, by taking into consideration a fixed set of dimensions in a time interval corresponding to the last decade of party competition. This strategy allows examining how the economic crisis and the subsequent refugee crisis influenced party systems in southern European countries, with particular reference to the content of the cultural axis of political contestation. I expect that that in southern European countries, the Eurozone crisis hindered the emergence of a cultural divide, orienting party competition dynamics towards economic issues. Nevertheless, the refugee crisis has triggered the emergence of a political divide, orthogonal to the conventional left-right economic axis, encompassing immigration-related and socio-cultural dimensions.

1.3. *Research design*

Under a spatial perspective, interactions between political actors can be thought of as occurring in a policy space structured by a number of relevant dimensions (see Benoit, Laver 2006). The number of policy dimensions is the result of an aprioristic decision of the researcher about the potential relevance each dimension might have in describing party competition dynamics in a given context. Moreover, each political party, considered as a unitary actor, can be assigned a specific location on each policy dimension according to their estimated preferences. For example, it is reasonable to expect a political party that calls for restrictive and migration containment measures to take a right-wing stance on the immigration dimension, whilst a party favouring a liberal policy on immigration can be considered as located on the left-wing of the same policy dimension. The application of this approach enables us not only to empirically evaluate the distance among political parties in relation to well-defined themes but also to determine their ideological evolution over time. Moreover, employing data reduction techniques enables us to infer the best representation of the political spaces by means of identifying the existence of underlying clusters of policy issues. For example, if parties' preferences on European issues such as attitudes towards European integration, EU security policy or orientations towards the free movement of goods between member states are highly correlated, we can assume the existence of an underlying EU axis of competition which cleaves pro-EU from anti-EU political parties.

To retrieve party policy positions, I rely on the Chapel Hill expert survey (CHES) (Jolly et al. 2022; Polk et al. 2017). The expert survey methodology employed by CHES implies political parties to be assigned a position over specific policy issues by country experts. While this approach offers the researcher the advantage of saving time and costs, a notable issue with expert surveys is the potential of registering a biased professional consensus, resulting in skewed estimates of party positions. This distortion can arise from multiple factors such as the homogeneity of expert opinions or the influence of dominant ideologies within professional circles. For instance, Benoit and Laver (2006)

warn about the risk that experts who lacked political sympathy towards a specific party may be more inclined to estimate that party's positions more extreme than neutral experts. Nevertheless, the presence of biased estimates can be ruled out by testing the validity of expert survey data. Following this perspective, the CHES estimates have been compared with data on party positions extracted from alternative sources, such as election manifestos. This analysis revealed a significant alignment between expert survey methodologies and other non-expert tools (see Hooghe et al. 2010).

The set of policy dimensions included in this analysis are¹: Civil liberties (position of parties on the trade-off between civil liberties and law and order), Decentralization (position on territorial decentralisation to regions and local authorities of state's functions and powers), Deregulation (position on the degree of governmental regulation of the economy and the market), Environment (position towards environmental sustainability and protection policy), EU integration (position on the process of European integration), EU security (position on the EU common security and foreign policy), Immigration (support for liberal versus restrictive policy on immigration), Redistribution (position on redistribution of wealth), Social policy (position on social lifestyle issues like gay rights, and gender equality), Taxes vs. Spending (support for improving public services versus reducing taxes). With the sole exception of the dimensions related to Decentralization, Environment (missing only in 2009), and EU security, the same set of policy issues is used to construct the ideological space of voters. Data are retrieved from the European Election Studies (EES), a post-election study conducted in all EU member states after the elections to the European Parliament. Respondents are asked to self-position themselves on the set of issues included in the analysis.

To assess the changes that have occurred in the structure of southern European political spaces, from both the supply and the demand sides, I consider

¹ See the online website for more details about the sample questionnaire: <https://www.chesdata.eu/>.

the EES Voter Studies (Schmitt et al. 2016, 2022; Van Egmond 2017) conducted after the 2009, 2014 and 2019 European parliamentary elections. From the party side, I consider the Chapel Hill expert surveys fielded in 2010, 2014 and 2019. To facilitate comparison, I thus consider the elections that were held in Greece in 2019, in 2015 (September) and in 2009; in Italy in 2018, in 2013, and in 2008; in Portugal in 2019, in 2015 and in 2009; in Spain in 2019, in 2015, and in 2008. Given that the multi-year European sovereign debt crisis took place from the late 2009 and reached its peak in 2010, the choice of these elections allows us to include a pre-crisis election and evaluate its long-term impact on party competition dynamics and on voters in the four countries under investigation. However, since the first CHES surveys and EES Voter Studies included in the analysis date back to 2010 and 2009, respectively, it cannot be ruled out that the estimations of party and voter positions in these editions may have been influenced by their occurrence after the onset of the financial crisis. Nevertheless, considering surveys prior to 2010 does not allow for the analysis of correlation patterns among the aforementioned set of policy dimensions, particularly at the voter level, as questions on the policy issues encompassed in this analysis were not included in the available pre-2010 questionnaires.

1.4. Dimensional analysis of the ideological spaces

The changing structure of the policy spaces in Southern Europe is addressed through dimensionality reduction techniques. I conduct principal component analysis² to assess whether policy dimensions are orthogonal to each other, or they are linked by probabilistic dependence to a latent factor. This statistical technique allows for the identification of the unobserved axes structuring the policy space (latent factors) starting from the observed parties' placements on the set of policy dimensions. The correlated policy dimensions will load to a

² Latent factors are extracted using varimax rotation. The observed variables (positions on the set of policy dimensions) with factor loadings larger than $|0.5|$ are considered correlated to one of the estimated latent factors (axes of competition). Principal component factor analysis applied to parties' ideological space is weighted by the vote share received by each party in the corresponding election.

single specific latent factor which can be interpreted as an underlying cluster of policy issues. Only factors with eigenvalues larger than one unit are considered as they contribute to describing larger proportions of the variability among the observed variables (Kaiser 1958). Tables 1 and 2 show the results of the analysis applied to parties' positions, whilst tables 3 and 4 show the main axes of competition emerging at the level of the electorate.

1.4.1. Political parties

The results of the dimensional analysis show that competition among Greek parties can be described in a two-dimensional political space. Issues related to the process of European integration, the deregulation of markets and the decentralization of state functions and powers formed a specific axis of conflict. The results of the factor analysis do not provide any evidence of the emergence of a political divide encompassing exclusively cultural issues. Non-economic issues linked to cultural liberalism, civil liberties, immigration, and the environment are perfectly aligned with economic issues relating to the redistribution of wealth, taxes and public spending. Conversely, the Eurozone crisis and the active role played by European institutions in domestic affairs have profoundly influenced party competition dynamics favouring the emergence of a specific axis of conflict. This conflict line cleaves parties promoting wider European integration, market deregulation and favouring the possibility of ceding authority to supranational institutions from Eurosceptic parties that oppose the intervention of EU authorities in domestic affairs. During the 2015 elections, parties' attitudes towards redistributive policies also load on the axis related to EU-related issues. This may suggest that European issues are politicized by the parties from an economic perspective. In a political context marked by the external influence of European institutions over the policy-making power of the executives in office, issues related to the process of European integration inevitably structured parties' economic preferences (see Katsanidou, Otjes 2016).

In Italy, the policy space exhibited a varying structure across different

elections, without adhering to a consistent pattern. Starting from 2008, following the outbreak of the debt crisis, EU-related issues alongside with issues related to the decentralization of state authority and powers load on the same factor. In 2013, during the elections held after the technocratic government led by Mario Monti, issues relating to the process of European integration and to EU foreign policy formed a specific axis of competition, orthogonal to the economic and socio-cultural policy dimensions (see Giannetti, Pedrazzani, Pinto 2017). The emergence of a cultural divide encompassing exclusively cultural issues seems to characterize the 2018 elections which took place in a political context also marked by the increasing number of forcibly displaced people requesting asylum in the country. Party positions on immigration and EU-related issues show a common trend of correlation and form a specific axis of competition in a two-dimensional political space. Issues relating to civil liberties and social liberalism loaded onto the cultural axis, albeit maintaining a certain degree of correlation with economic issues. The results are consistent with the political debate that characterized the electoral campaign before the 2018 national parliamentary elections (see D'Alimonte 2019). In fact, the main issues on which political parties focused their electoral propaganda, immigration and Euroscepticism, load on the same latent factor. The refugee crisis and Europe's inability to formulate a common and effective foreign policy have caused a widespread tightening of party positions on immigration and the formation of a general anti-immigration and anti-EU rhetoric, mainly used by radical right political parties.

In Portugal, economic and EU-related issues slowed the process towards the emergence of a cultural axis of conflict. In 2009, during the elections following the outbreak of the financial crisis, policy dimensions related to EU integration and EU security were highly correlated. The political space showed a high degree of uniformity during the 2015 elections, as the party competition's structure could still be simplified using two primary axes of conflict. The first one is associated with a wide range of issues, including socio-cultural issues. The second one captures parties' attitudes towards EU-related issues and towards decentralisation. During the 2019 elections, the issues that oppose social

liberalism to cultural conservatism show a high degree of correlation and can be interpreted as forming a cultural political divide. However, the most important factor emerging from the analysis is associated with exclusively economic issues. Even parties' position on European integration, which in previous elections managed to set up a specific axis of conflict, load on the economic latent factor. As in Greece, Portuguese parties seemed to politicize EU integration issues according to an economic perspective.

In Spain, the financial crisis and the active role played by EU institutions in domestic affairs radically affected party competition dynamics. The full set of policy dimensions can be reduced to two primary axes of competition between 2009 and 2019. The first one incorporates economic and socio-cultural issues and accounts for almost all the variability induced by parties' positions. The second one can be interpreted as capturing the attitudes of Spanish parties towards the EU. Other studies have highlighted how the structure of party competition in Spain has been affected by domestic issues such as the question of Catalan independence giving rise to exclusively domestic political conflict lines (see Palau et al. 2023). However, the data used in this study does not allow us to account for the effect of national issues on the changing structure of the Spanish ideological space.

Tables 1 and 2: Dimensional analysis of parties' placements in Southern Europe.

| | Greece | | | | | | Italy | | | | | |
|---|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| | Elections 2008 | | Elections 2015 | | Elections 2019 | | Elections 2008 | | Elections 2013 | | Elections 2019 | |
| Axes of competitions (Factors) | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 |
| Civil liberties | 0.916 | -0.190 | 0.908 | 0.194 | 0.948 | 0.097 | 0.822 | 0.130 | 0.946 | -0.078 | 0.551 | 0.723 |
| Decentralisation | 0.842 | 0.236 | 0.737 | 0.024 | 0.512 | 0.518 | 0.001 | -0.836 | -0.276 | -0.237 | -0.145 | 0.297 |
| Deregulation | 0.531 | -0.583 | 0.311 | 0.834 | 0.953 | -0.233 | 0.800 | 0.072 | 0.732 | -0.497 | 0.876 | 0.034 |
| Environment | 0.894 | 0.130 | 0.892 | 0.155 | 0.732 | 0.104 | 0.901 | -0.056 | 0.903 | -0.186 | 0.879 | 0.160 |
| EU integration | 0.071 | 0.937 | -0.174 | -0.914 | -0.555 | 0.732 | 0.634 | 0.647 | 0.061 | 0.956 | 0.080 | 0.933 |
| EU security | -0.116 | 0.919 | -0.058 | -0.818 | 0.095 | 0.898 | 0.043 | 0.836 | -0.176 | 0.943 | -0.107 | 0.814 |
| Immigration | 0.896 | -0.281 | 0.883 | 0.320 | 0.972 | 0.087 | 0.932 | 0.209 | 0.837 | 0.292 | 0.400 | 0.828 |
| Redistribution | 0.790 | -0.158 | 0.516 | 0.738 | 0.961 | -0.138 | 0.942 | -0.035 | 0.955 | -0.030 | 0.917 | 0.108 |
| Social policy | 0.793 | -0.079 | 0.862 | 0.336 | 0.910 | 0.228 | 0.894 | 0.073 | 0.940 | 0.030 | 0.587 | 0.545 |
| Taxes vs. spending | 0.699 | -0.164 | 0.487 | 0.443 | 0.937 | -0.145 | 0.922 | 0.267 | 0.837 | -0.266 | 0.817 | 0.287 |
| <i>Proportion of explained variance</i> | <i>0.538</i> | <i>0.212</i> | <i>0.581</i> | <i>0.173</i> | <i>0.650</i> | <i>0.178</i> | <i>0.619</i> | <i>0.171</i> | <i>0.567</i> | <i>0.219</i> | <i>0.510</i> | <i>0.204</i> |

| | Portugal | | | | | | Spain | | | | | |
|---|----------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| | Elections 2009 | | Elections 2015 | | Elections 2019 | | Elections 2008 | | Elections 2015 | | Elections 2019 | |
| Axes of competitions (Factors) | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 |
| Civil liberties | 0.792 | -0.235 | 0.904 | 0.154 | 0.703 | 0.527 | 0.915 | 0.091 | 0.936 | -0.215 | 0.941 | 0.103 |
| Decentralisation | 0.490 | 0.327 | 0.234 | 0.914 | 0.791 | -0.012 | 0.774 | -0.280 | 0.726 | -0.364 | 0.834 | 0.214 |
| Deregulation | 0.709 | -0.347 | 0.761 | 0.493 | 0.512 | 0.731 | 0.942 | 0.083 | 0.906 | -0.272 | 0.954 | -0.009 |
| Environment | 0.815 | -0.095 | 0.845 | 0.271 | 0.624 | 0.531 | 0.898 | -0.002 | 0.828 | 0.023 | 0.717 | 0.268 |
| EU integration | -0.145 | 0.885 | -0.274 | -0.878 | -0.557 | -0.205 | 0.160 | 0.811 | -0.163 | 0.900 | 0.183 | 0.879 |
| EU security | -0.319 | 0.854 | -0.049 | -0.960 | 0.156 | -0.685 | 0.044 | 0.830 | -0.232 | 0.897 | -0.004 | 0.915 |
| Immigration | 0.829 | -0.438 | 0.807 | 0.410 | 0.304 | 0.886 | 0.547 | 0.075 | 0.886 | -0.348 | 0.913 | 0.124 |
| Redistribution | 0.918 | -0.252 | 0.923 | 0.215 | 0.834 | 0.388 | 0.944 | 0.085 | 0.902 | -0.249 | 0.899 | -0.064 |
| Social policy | 0.890 | -0.037 | 0.847 | -0.041 | 0.363 | 0.814 | 0.949 | 0.162 | 0.891 | -0.061 | 0.915 | 0.244 |
| Taxes vs. spending | 0.923 | -0.218 | 0.863 | 0.146 | 0.739 | 0.588 | 0.934 | 0.120 | 0.855 | -0.292 | 0.950 | 0.070 |
| <i>Proportion of explained variance</i> | <i>0.597</i> | <i>0.146</i> | <i>0.630</i> | <i>0.202</i> | <i>0.596</i> | <i>0.116</i> | <i>0.617</i> | <i>0.144</i> | <i>0.686</i> | <i>0.139</i> | <i>0.661</i> | <i>0.163</i> |

1.4.2. Voters

At the voter level, a mixture of continuity and change is observed. In Greece, socio-cultural issues represent the primary ideological axis for the electorate between 2009 and 2014. In 2009, socio-cultural issues are orthogonal to voters' preferences on redistributive policies and market deregulation. In 2014, non-economic issues related to cultural liberalism and to immigration continued to be independent of the need to implement redistributive and environmental policies and of voters' stance on the process of European integration. Indeed, as the Athens government grappled with implementing austerity measures while negotiating the terms of Greece's debt restructuring plan with European authorities and global investors, EU-related issues managed to set up a specific axis, which cleaved Eurosceptic and anti-bailout positions from Europhile stances. In 2019, only two factors passed the threshold of unity. The first dimension encompasses economic issues. On one side are proponents of increased market deregulation and opposition to redistributive policies, while on the opposite pole are voters who support economic rebalancing measures aimed at assisting disadvantaged social groups. The second factor may be interpreted as a dimension expressing voters' cultural attitudes and deals with EU-related issues, immigration and social lifestyle issues.

In Italy, since the outbreak of the financial crisis, European related issues have profoundly affected the ideological space of the electorate. The results of the dimensional analysis applied to voters' positions show that issues relating to EU politics and immigration were highly correlated and gave rise to a specific conflict line. These findings might suggest that voters are increasingly linking immigration challenges with the ongoing process of EU integration. The Italian electorate perceives immigration as an issue that demands the active engagement and intervention of EU institutions. On the contrary, socio-cultural issues such as those relating to civil liberties and social liberalism were subsumed by the economic dimension of conflict and did not contribute to the formation of a specific political divide.

In Portugal, the results of the dimensional analysis applied to voters' positions offer a more nuanced picture. In 2009, voters' preferences on EU related issues are highly correlated with those relating to the role of financial markets in the economy. Whilst in 2009 a specific political divide cleaves pro-EU voters from Eurosceptic individuals, in 2014, EU-related issues did not load on any of the latent factor detected by the factor analysis. The issues of redistribution and deregulation constitute the main factor and contribute to explaining most of the variability in the positions of the electorate. The other two latent factors subsume the dimensions related to environment and civil liberties on the one hand, and to immigration and social liberalism on the other. In 2019, at the level of the electorate, the ideological space underwent a further change. A cultural axis of conflict, orthogonal to a dimension that subsumes both economic and socio-cultural issues, incorporates voters' preferences on immigration policy and on the process of EU integration.

In Spain, similarly to the structural changes observed at the party level, issues relating to EU politics shaped the ideological space of voters through the formation of a specific political division. In fact, in 2009, voters' attitudes on European integration are correlated with voters' preferences towards social liberalism, whilst in 2019 they are aligned with immigration related issues. In 2009 and 2014, voters' ideological space can be represented by three independent axes of competition. The first one primarily revolves around economic issues; the second dealing with dimensions related to cultural liberalism, and the third one associated with EU-related issues.

Tables 3 and 4: Dimensional analysis of voters' placements in Southern Europe.

| | Greece | | | | | | | Italy | | | | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 2009 | | 2014 | | | 2019 | | 2009 | | 2014 | | 2019 | |
| Axes of competitions (Factors) | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 |
| Civil liberties | 0.735 | -0.160 | 0.136 | 0.250 | -0.492 | 0.432 | 0.385 | -0.613 | 0.259 | 0.348 | 0.007 | 0.5698 | -0.0082 |
| Deregulation | -0.085 | 0.760 | -0.303 | 0.351 | 0.107 | 0.630 | -0.100 | 0.628 | 0.116 | 0.665 | -0.055 | 0.6394 | -0.2381 |
| Environment | - | - | 0.151 | 0.776 | 0.144 | 0.678 | 0.056 | - | - | 0.652 | 0.077 | 0.7315 | -0.1137 |
| EU integration | -0.360 | -0.044 | 0.023 | 0.058 | 0.847 | -0.120 | 0.509 | 0.281 | 0.764 | -0.006 | 0.738 | -0.0138 | 0.7625 |
| Immigration | 0.657 | -0.085 | 0.731 | -0.195 | -0.038 | -0.074 | 0.790 | -0.393 | 0.675 | -0.126 | 0.787 | -0.1227 | 0.8016 |
| Redistribution | -0.029 | 0.769 | -0.166 | 0.638 | -0.293 | 0.796 | 0.079 | 0.700 | 0.095 | 0.650 | -0.131 | 0.7618 | -0.1444 |
| Social policy | 0.710 | 0.052 | 0.781 | 0.221 | 0.040 | 0.236 | 0.735 | -0.424 | 0.440 | 0.383 | 0.549 | 0.6403 | 0.3536 |
| <i>Proportion of explained variance</i> | <i>0.283</i> | <i>0.187</i> | <i>0.192</i> | <i>0.184</i> | <i>0.149</i> | <i>1.943</i> | <i>1.402</i> | <i>0.302</i> | <i>0.198</i> | <i>0.227</i> | <i>0.211</i> | <i>0.334</i> | <i>0.197</i> |

| | Portugal | | | | | | | Spain | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 2009 | | 2014 | | | 2019 | | 2009 | | | 2014 | | | 2019 | |
| Axes of competitions (Factors) | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 |
| Civil liberties | 0.697 | -0.099 | -0.187 | 0.727 | 0.153 | 0.574 | -0.060 | 0.841 | 0.043 | -0.015 | 0.205 | 0.476 | 0.094 | 0.731 | 0.309 |
| Deregulation | 0.092 | -0.656 | 0.509 | 0.417 | -0.125 | 0.617 | -0.075 | 0.137 | 0.867 | -0.143 | 0.483 | -0.505 | 0.374 | 0.476 | -0.471 |
| Environment | - | - | 0.105 | 0.651 | -0.097 | 0.602 | -0.106 | - | - | - | 0.680 | 0.196 | 0.041 | 0.765 | 0.140 |
| EU integration | 0.057 | 0.735 | -0.415 | -0.239 | 0.341 | 0.077 | 0.681 | 0.193 | 0.176 | 0.515 | -0.024 | 0.068 | 0.890 | 0.075 | 0.691 |
| Immigration | 0.560 | 0.451 | -0.101 | -0.016 | 0.794 | -0.124 | 0.737 | 0.646 | 0.020 | 0.263 | 0.039 | 0.670 | 0.329 | 0.140 | 0.692 |
| Redistribution | -0.627 | 0.008 | 0.826 | -0.132 | 0.066 | 0.661 | -0.191 | -0.360 | 0.615 | 0.397 | 0.736 | 0.029 | -0.094 | 0.770 | -0.012 |
| Social policy | 0.535 | 0.100 | 0.373 | 0.142 | 0.637 | 0.649 | 0.288 | 0.054 | -0.111 | 0.813 | 0.348 | 0.569 | -0.069 | 0.737 | -0.164 |
| <i>Proportion of explained variance</i> | <i>0.267</i> | <i>0.180</i> | <i>0.209</i> | <i>0.172</i> | <i>0.153</i> | <i>0.281</i> | <i>0.161</i> | <i>0.235</i> | <i>0.209</i> | <i>0.167</i> | <i>0.233</i> | <i>0.159</i> | <i>0.145</i> | <i>0.360</i> | <i>0.187</i> |

1.5. Two-dimensional maps of the policy spaces

Figures 1-4 present a bi-dimensional representation of the ideological spaces of the four countries under investigation. The two-dimensional maps allow for the static locations of political parties within the ideological space during the elections examined in this study. For the sake of simplicity, I grouped parties according to the classification derived from CHES (see Table A1 in the Appendix for a comprehensive overview of the specific parties encompassed within each party family). Relying on mean regression scores emerging from the factor analysis, I plot party family positions on economic and cultural issues-oriented axis of competition.

In Greece, given that the socio-cultural axis of competition has taken on the characteristics of a pro-/anti-EU political divide, socialist and conservative political parties maintained their overall pro-EU oriented positions. In fact, both party families showed a shared commitment to implementing austerity measures to secure the EU bailout. However, they hold divergent views on fiscal policy and on the need to implement redistributive measures. Right- and left-wing radical parties have consistently adopted opposing positions on socio-economic issues. Regarding the European integration process and the role of European institutions in domestic affairs, these party families have progressively moved towards the opposite poles of the axis. Only in 2015 both party families adopt a similar stance on the pro-/anti-EU axis. This aligns with the outcome of the government formation process following the 2015 elections when the radical left-wing party SYRYZA and the far-right Greek Independent (ANEL) party formed a coalition government. Both parties agreed on the imperative of implementing anti-austerity measures and shared a critical stance towards European and supranational institutions.

In Italy, too, socialists and conservatives have retained positions that are nearly indistinguishable on EU policy, while differing on their stances on socio-economic issues and on the overall role of the state in the economy. Radical right-wing parties lean notably to the right on both socio-economic and EU-

related issues. The Five Star Movement, categorized in this analysis with the label "New left", is located distinctly on the left of the socioeconomic left–right, given its strong support to the implementation of income and wealth redistributive policies. Conversely, the party has significantly tempered its initial Eurosceptic position.

In Portugal, the Eurozone crisis prompted a centrifugal trend in party competition dynamics, leading socialist and conservative parties to converge at the centre of the economic axis. On the cultural axis, which had hitherto exclusively encompassed parties' preferences on EU-related issues until the 2019 elections, socialist, conservative, and liberal parties have shifted to the right of the axis, while left-wing radical parties have moderated their Euroscepticism.

In Spain, party families have consistently maintained their positions over time along the principal axes defining the ideological space. As observed in Italy and Portugal, radical left-wing parties have gradually moderated their anti-EU stances. This shift facilitated the formation of the first coalition government in 2019, that saw socialists and the radical left parties Podemos and United Left (Izquierda Unida) entering a coalition agreement.

Figure 1: Two-dimensional map of Greek policy space.

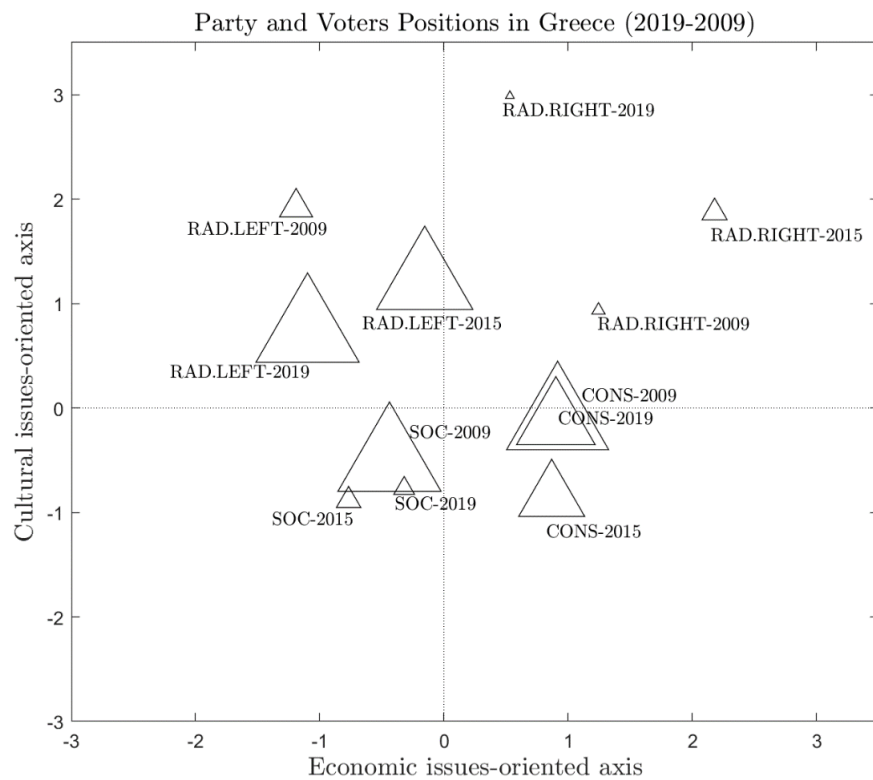


Figure 2: Two-dimensional map of Italian policy space.

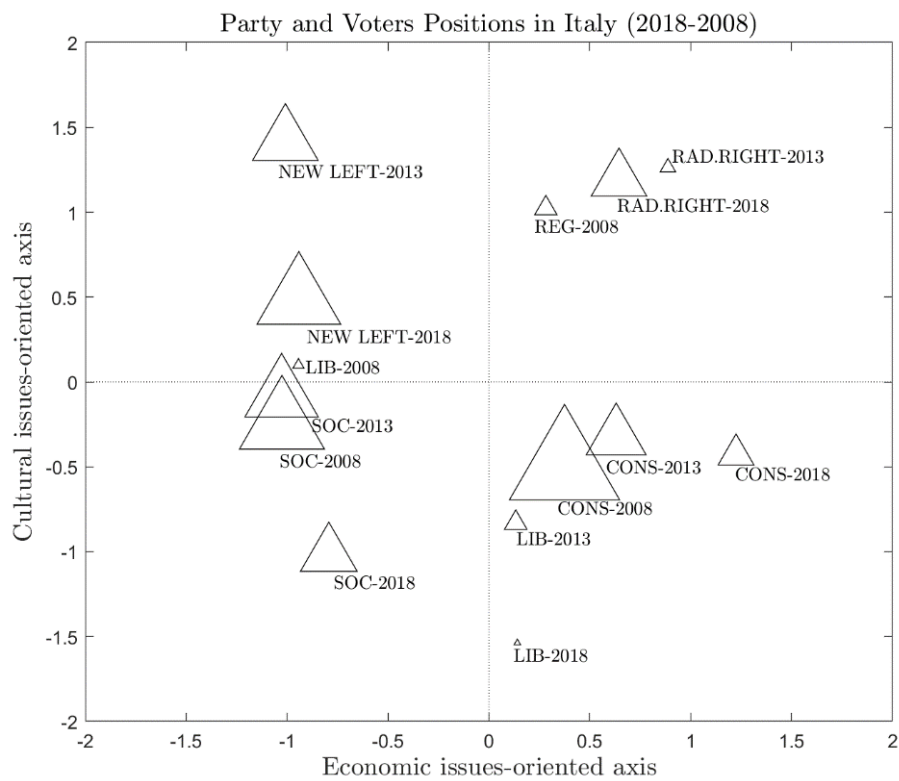


Figure 3: Two-dimensional map of Portuguese policy space.

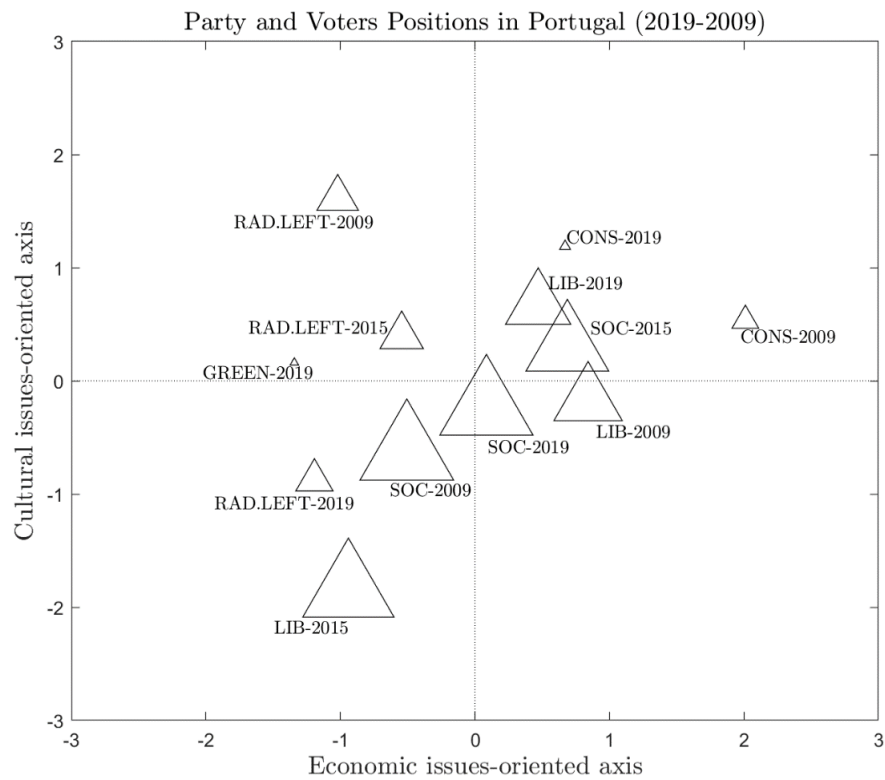
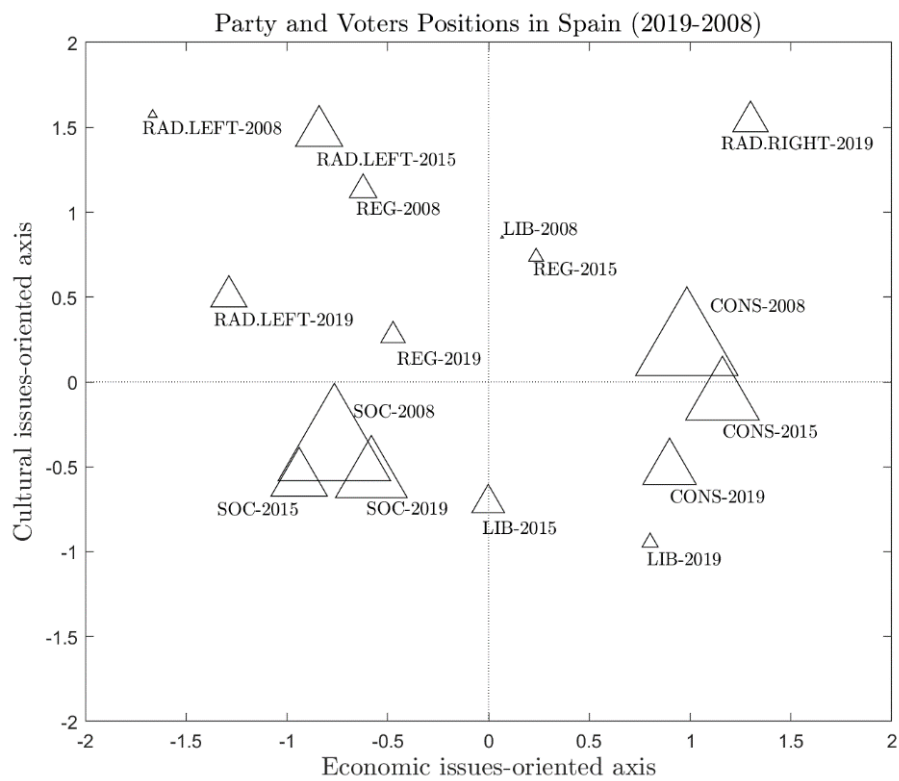


Figure 4: Two-dimensional map of Spanish policy space.



1.6. *Ideological shifts in party positions*

The dimensional analysis applied to the structure of the policy spaces at both the parties and the voters level reveal that, in the last decade, cross-country differences exist in the emergence of a cultural axis of competition. Furthermore, these developments do not align with the changes observed in the configuration of political spaces in Northwestern Europe. In fact, the effects of the financial crisis have slowed down the emergence of a cultural political divide that differentiated between liberalist and conservative values and that is rooted in the harsh criticism towards the interdependencies deriving from the processes of globalization and European integration (Bornschier 2010; Kriesi et al. 2006). To connect party strategies to the changing structure of political spaces, I analyse how party ideological positions have changed throughout time. The analysis of parties' ideological changes allows assessing whether there are centrifugal or centripetal tendencies in party competition dynamics on the main dimensions of contestation or whether parties do not significantly modify their positioning over time. Furthermore, as the economic and refugee crisis have created the opportunity for new political actors to mobilize large portions of the electorate by exploiting new issues or emphasizing policy issues neglected by the mainstream status quo (Hobolt, De Vries 2015), it is worthwhile to examine whether traditional parties have changed their positions by adapting their electoral strategies to those of their competitors (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; Downes, Loveless, Lam 2021; Williams 2015).

Figures 5-8 show the differences in party positions on the economic and socio-cultural axes³. Party positions are estimated based on the predicted regression scores that emerged from the factor analysis. A downward movement indicates a shift towards pro-EU and socially liberal stances, along with positions

³ The label "Economic" and "Socio-Cultural Axis" does not imply that the economic axis encompasses solely economic issues, nor does it imply that the cultural axis is limited exclusively to socio-cultural policy domains. Instead, the content of the main axes of contestation reflects the results of the dimensional analysis.

that support the implementation of redistributive policies, as well as measures aimed at expanding public services. An upward movement indicates a shift towards opposite positions. To assess whether differences over time are statistically significant, I perform tests on the equality of means. Only when the confidence interval bar does not cross the zero line, we can state that the observations provide strong statistical support for a change in parties' positions along the main axes of competition. Given that parties tend to imitate the strategies of parties belonging to the same ideological family (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009), I grouped parties according to the classification derived from CHES.

In Greece, over the last ten years of party competition, political parties maintained an almost coherent ideological profile on economic issues. Only radical right parties recorded a significant shift towards positions in favour of redistributive policies and greater state intervention in economic affairs. On the cultural axis, which in Greece can be interpreted as capturing parties' attitudes towards the EU, significant shifts are observed in radical left and radical right parties as they moved toward the opposed poles of the cultural political divide.

In Italy, on the main axis of conflict, a significant shift has been recorded by liberal and conservative parties who have moved significantly towards positions against redistributive policies and towards positions in favour of reduced state intervention in the economy. On the contrary, on the axis that subsumes parties' preferences on European issues, socialist and liberal parties have moved towards pro-EU and pro-immigration positions. It is noteworthy how the Five Star Movement, categorized in this analysis with the label "New left", tempered its positions on the process of EU integration over time. This aligns with research showing that challenger parties can abandon initial extreme positions in favour of more moderate stances to gain credibility as partners in potential coalition agreements (Heinisch, Hauser, 2016).

In Portugal, it is the conservative parties that have shifted towards positions favouring redistributive policies. The other party families maintained a coherent profile on economic issues. On the cultural axis which has exclusively

subsumed, until the 2019 elections, parties' preferences on EU-related issues, more ideological shifts are recorded. In particular, radical left and conservative parties have moved towards pro-EU and anti-EU positions, respectively. The analysis shows that radical left parties took Eurosceptic positions in the years in which the central government was called upon to define the bail-out agreements with the European and supranational institutions.

In Spain, radical left and liberal parties have recorded significant changes on the dimension that encompasses economic issues but also those dimensions related to immigration and societal issues. However, from figure 8, it emerges that radical left parties have maintained a coherent ideological profile in favour of the implementation of redistributive policies and the increase in public services. On the cultural axis of contestation dividing pro-EU from anti-EU parties, regionalist and liberal parties have moved significantly towards pro-EU positions in the last decade of party competition.

Figure 5: Change in party families' positions (Greece).

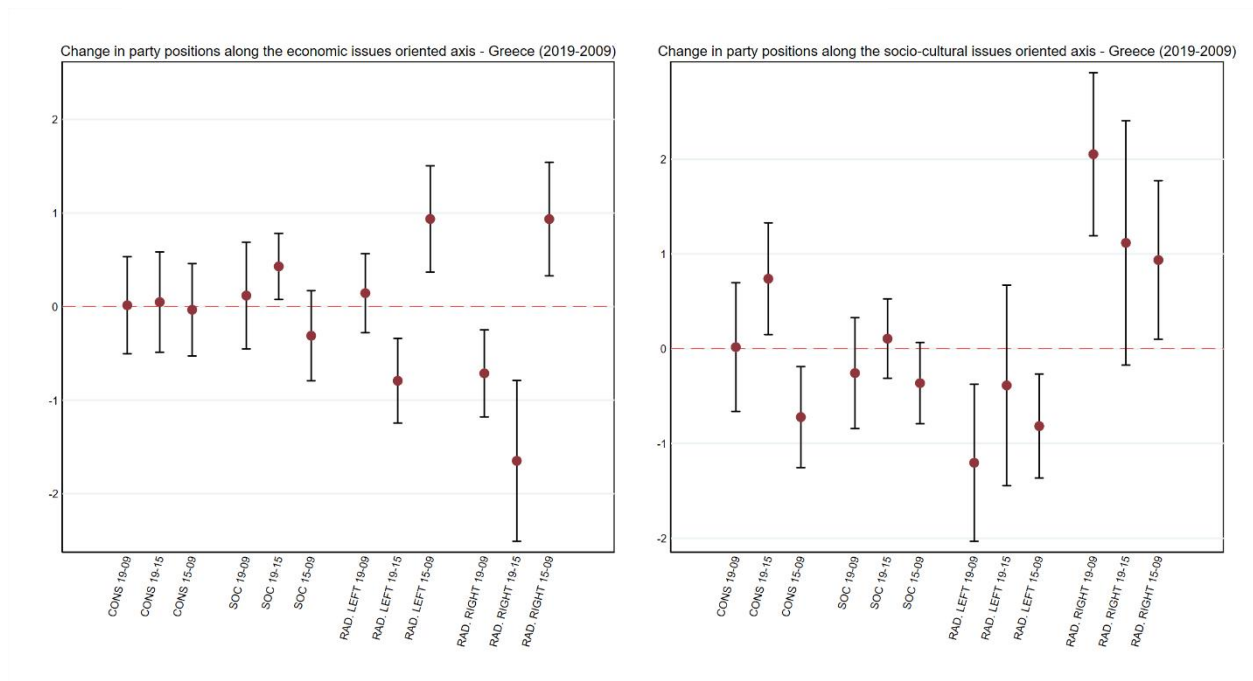


Figure 6: Change in party families' positions (Italy).

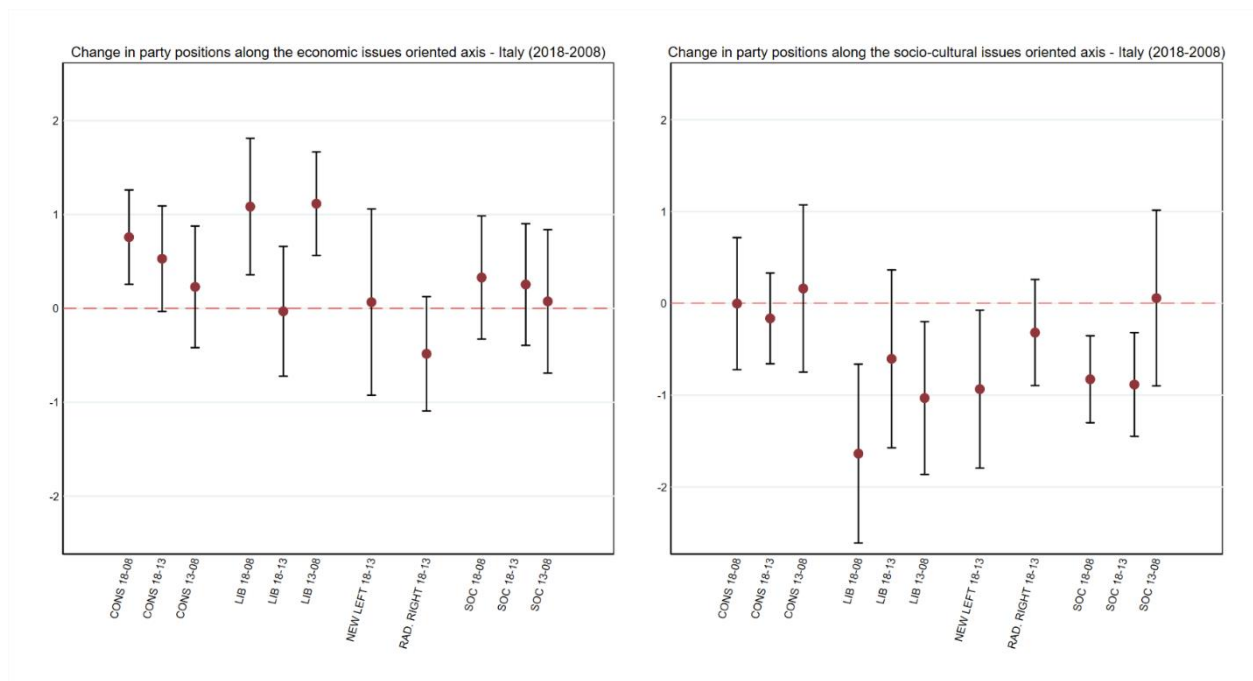


Figure 7: Change in party families' positions (Portugal).

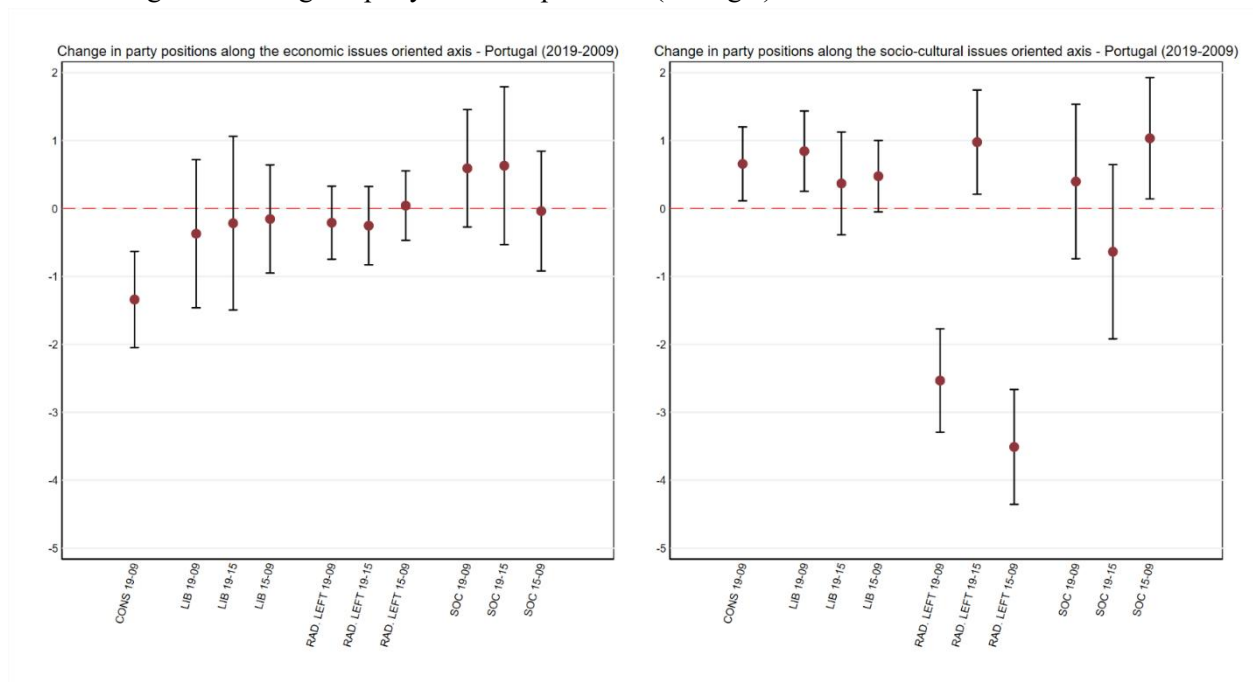
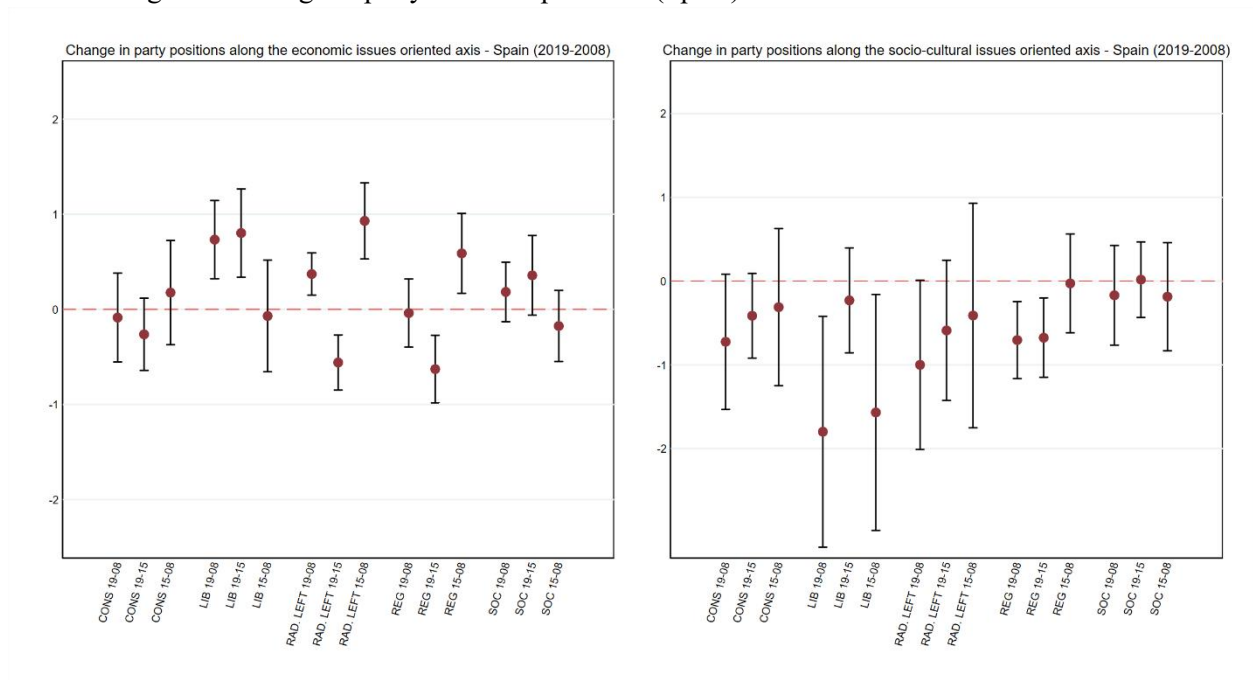


Figure 8: Change in party families' positions (Spain).



1.6.2. Regression results

The identification of the main axes of party competition enables assessing mutual interactions between different political actors such as those being held between political parties and voters (Downs, 1957; Hinich and Munger, 1992). Following this perspective, political parties compete with each other trying to expand their area of electoral consensus by locating themselves in close proximity to voters' ideal point. The analysis of parties' ideological changes along the main axes of competition highlighted significant movements in party positioning within national political spaces. Over the last decade of party competition, parties adjusted their positions on economic, socio-cultural, and EU-related issues. Hence, it is reasonable to investigate whether parties attempted to move closer to the electorate's ideal point to enhance their electoral achievements.

Table 5 shows the results of an exploratory fixed effect regression analysis aimed at verifying the existence of a relationship between the distance between parties' and voters' ideal points and party electoral performance. This exploratory analysis leaves out considerations on the salience that parties attribute to political issues in order to match with voters' preferences (see Bélanger, Meguid 2008). Furthermore, it does not incorporate valence issues or non-policy factors (see Stokes 1992) such as the possession of reputational assets deemed valuable by voters. The aim of this analysis is to examine how party-level findings correlate with the results obtained at the voter level. The dependent variable is represented by the change in the vote share obtained by a political party in the election at time t and the percentage of votes obtained in the election at time $t - 1$. I consider the elections that were held in Greece in 2019, in 2015 (September) and in 2009; in Italy in 2018, in 2013, and in 2008; in Portugal in 2019, in 2015 and in 2009; in Spain in 2019, in 2015, and in 2008. The variable *Distance from the Median Voter on Economic Issues* is measured by computing the difference between the distance of the party's position from the median voter's position on economic issues at time t and the distance computed at time

$t-1$. A positive value indicates that, at time t , the party has shifted its position closer to the median voter compared to the previous election. Conversely, a negative value suggests a shift away from the median voter. Analogously, I construct the variable *Distance from the Median Voter on Socio-cultural issues*. The values of parties' and voters' positions are based on the predicted regression scores that emerged from the factor analysis. I include dummy variables to control for the incumbent status of the parties and for the possibility that political parties have undergone a radical rebranding or participated in elections for the first time. Furthermore, I control for the position of parties on the main axes of competition.

The results show that political parties that were able to intercept the preferences of the electorate on socio-cultural issues increased their electoral consensus. On the contrary, the analysis reveals the absence of a significance relationship between party electoral performance and the distance between parties and voters on economic issues. These findings, rather than providing deterministic conclusions, show that the changes in the structure of the ideological spaces proved to be effective for those political parties that strategically locate themselves on the socio-cultural axis of competition. Given that the socio-cultural dimension emerged as a pro-/anti-EU political divide in most of southern European political spaces, it can be argued that party competition on EU-related issues has been pivotal for their electoral success. This stems from the Eurozone crisis and the growing influence of European institutions in domestic affairs, which encouraged the development of a political division between those in favour of European integration and those opposed to it. This division has influenced not only the political debate but arguably parties' electoral strategies. As an example, parties with pro-European stances have frequently emphasized the advantages of EU membership, such as economic stability and enhanced international collaboration, in their efforts to appeal to voters. Conversely, Eurosceptic parties have drawn attention to the potential drawbacks, such as the erosion of national sovereignty. These cultural and ideological divergences made the electoral competition even more heated and

pushed parties to develop strategies and political programs aimed at winning the support of voters with different positions on EU issues.

Table 5: Fixed effect regression analysis.

| | Change in vote share |
|--|----------------------|
| Distance on economic issues | -0.053 (0.032) |
| Distance on socio-cultural/EU issues | -0.063** (0.029) |
| Party position on economic issues | 0.007 (0.020) |
| Party position on socio-cultural/EU issues | 0.004 (0.014) |
| Incumbent status | -0.053 (0.034) |
| Rebranding | -0.003 (0.037) |
| Constant | 0.001 (0.021) |
| R-squared | 0.32 |
| N | 42 |

Notes: Fixed effects regression coefficients with robust standard errors. ⁺p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

1.7. Conclusions

The aim of this study has been to investigate the structural changes that occurred in Southern Europe during the decade 2008-2019 of party competition. Based on data derived from the Chapel Hill expert surveys and from the European Election Studies, I tracked the evolution of parties' and voters' ideological spaces in a political context characterized by the detrimental effect of the Eurozone crisis and the destabilizing impact of increasing migratory flows. At the party level, socio-cultural issues highly correlate with economic issues in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Furthermore, in a political context characterized by the active role played by European institutions in domestic

affairs, EU-related issues set up a specific axis of conflict and appear to be linked to issues relating to the delegation of powers and the deregulation of markets. Moreover, since 2014, southern European countries have been deeply affected by the outbreak of the refugee crisis. While the economic crisis largely oriented party competition dynamics toward economic issues and contributed to shaping the cultural divide as a pro-/anti-EU axis, the increasing migratory flows started to influence party ideological spaces during the latest elections in Southern Europe. This is particularly evident when we look at the configuration of the policy space in Italy during the 2018 elections, and in Portugal during the 2019 elections. In both countries, immigration alongside with EU-related and socio-cultural issues formed an axis of competition, orthogonal to economic policy.

At the voter level, the emergence and the configuration of a cultural axis did not follow homogeneous patterns in southern European countries. In Greece, socio-cultural issues related to cultural liberalism, civil liberties, and immigration highly correlate in 2009 and in 2014. Conversely, the preferences of the electorate on the European integration process set up a specific dimension, orthogonal to economic and social policy, when the central government was called to implement austerity measures and negotiate agreements for debt restructuring. Similar trends emerged in Spain during the central government's negotiations with EU institutions over the bail-out loan agreements. In Italy, during the last decade of competition, a latent factor subsumes voters' preferences towards the process of European integration and immigration highlighting that the Italian electorate perceived the challenges brought out by the immigration process closely linked to the intervention of EU institutions.

Moreover, I carried out an exploratory analysis to examine whether changes in the structure of political spaces influenced parties' electoral performance. The main findings show that parties' strategy to minimize the distance between their positions and voters' ideal points on the cultural/EU axis was electorally rewarding. Thus, considerations on the electoral success experienced by new

political actors in the last decade of party competition must be seen in relations to their ability to mobilize the electorate on the pro-/anti- EU political divide.

The analysis of the evolution of political spaces carried out in this study aimed at capturing the long-term effects of two transformational events: the 2008 financial crisis and the refugee crisis. A growing number of scholars contends that we are currently experiencing a period characterized by a *polycrisis*, a term that highlights the simultaneous emergence of multiple challenges that mutually reinforce one another (see Lawrence, Janzwood, Homer-Dixon 2022). These events are closely interlinked and interact in ways that amplify their potential single impacts, which in turn hampers the effective responses to the emergencies. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, not only highlighted the interdependences between countries, but it has produced more than just short-term challenges to global health; it has unveiled deep social inequalities and it has produced a severe economic downturn. Similarly, the ongoing war in Ukraine not only influenced individual attitudes towards foreign policy, defence, and national sovereignty, but it also produced geopolitical implications that extend beyond the region. For instance, the conflict has triggered severe economic consequences by causing an increase in the energy costs. Similar considerations also hold when taking into account the increasing frequency of weather events, which not only highlight the need for environmental and sustainability policies but also entail severe repercussions encompassing agricultural productivity, food security, and the risk of economic recession. Hence, although examining past crises, like the Eurozone and the refugee crises, offers valuable insights into the evolution of party competition dynamics in Southern Europe during a multi-year crises context, future research should seek to investigate the dynamic of contemporary challenges and their implications for the political arena.

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CHAPTER 2

DOES IDEOLOGY STILL MATTER? AN APPLICATION OF THE ISSUE ENTREPRENEURSHIP THEORY TO IMMIGRATION AND ECONOMIC ISSUES

In the last two decades, party systems across Europe underwent significant transformations. The outbreak of the financial crisis and the increasing flows of displaced refugees inevitably permeated domestic party competition and political parties' strategic interactions. In this context, immigration-related issues emerged as pivotal policy domains for the study of party competition dynamics (Abou-Chadi, Krause 2018; Downes, Loveless 2018). Relevant studies in the comparative politics literature show that immigration, alongside with issues relating to European integration and cultural liberalism, formed a new political divide, orthogonal to the traditional socio-economic axis of competition (see Bornschier 2010; Hooghe, Marks 2018; Kriesi et al. 2006; Schäfer et al. 2020). Furthermore, from an electoral perspective, the changing structure of European policy spaces paved the way for the success of those political actors that undermined the status quo by means of emphasizing those topics that were neglected by mainstream parties, and that often were associated with anti-immigrant stances and nationalism (Van Spanje 2010). The potential determinants that led to the electoral success of these political actors, alternatively defined as populist radical right (Mudde 2015), niche (Adams et al. 2006; Meguid 2005), and radical parties (Hutter, Kriesi 2022), have been extensively investigated.

Nonetheless, on the supply side of party competition, the incentives to mobilize specific issues remain subject to further investigation. With this attempt, the seminal work of Hobolt and De Vries (2015) aimed at the systematic identification of those conjunctural factors that increase the long-term trend to politicize a specific policy domain. According to the so-called theory of issue entrepreneurship, the incentives for a political party to mobilize voters on certain

issues increase when they lack government experience, in the event of an electoral defeat, and when they adopt niche positions compared to the mainstream status quo. They provide evidence of this theory by tracing the evolution and the politicization of issues related to European integration in western European multiparty systems. However, is the strategy of mobilizing the electorate on topical issues automatically triggered by the presence of the above-mentioned conjunctural factors? Or do exist party features such as parties' ideology that instead mediate this process?

In this article, I address this question theoretically by means of analysing party competition dynamics over immigration vis-à-vis economic issues in the last two decades. Assuming that political parties mobilize specific policy issues by means of adopting a position that markedly differs from the status quo of party competition, or by attributing a high degree of importance to issues that are not addressed by other competitors, I further investigate the validity of the issue entrepreneurship theory providing evidence that ideology act as a driving force in parties' politicization strategies. The main findings show that the consolidated mobilization incentives to act as issue entrepreneurs on specific issues do not constitute a sufficient condition per se and cannot be divorced from party features such as the ideology of political parties. In a nutshell, a left-wing political actor will be less likely to mobilize the electorate by means of politicizing immigration-related issues, whilst a right-wing political party will be more prone to exploit the electoral competition along the newly formed cultural divide.

The structure of the article proceeds as follows. In the next section, I present a brief overview of the parties' strategy to capitalize on immigration-related issues. Thereafter, I discuss the main hypotheses and the methodological approach implemented for the analysis. In the final section, I discuss the results and potential future developments.

2.1. Politicizing immigration: a brief overview

A vast body of the political science literature investigates the political conflict over immigration-related issues across Europe (see Hutter, Kriesi 2022; Van der Brug et al. 2015). In particular, two interrelated aspects have been scrutinized by scholars. The first one focuses on the links between voters' individual preferences and the electoral support towards those political parties emphasizing immigration. Studies on the supply side of party competition show that hostility towards immigration is a driving force in the support of radical right parties that mobilize voters through socio-cultural appeals (see Akkerman, Zaslove, Spruyt 2017; Dustmann, Preston 2001; Hainmueller, Hopkins 2014; Zhrkov 2014). Following this strand of the literature, the electorate's disenfranchisement towards traditional political parties and the support towards right-wing radicalism reach its peak among the losers of globalisation. With this definition, Kriesi et al. (2006) identify the individuals who perceive as a threat the growing interdependencies between economies and cultures and therefore advocate for protectionist provisions against the process of European integration and for restrictive containment measures to counter immigration. From an economic perspective, a relevant strand of the international migration literature investigates the relationship between population movements and personal attitudes towards migrants. The fear that immigration may adversely influence the host populations' control over resources and increase their economic vulnerability emerged as a crucial trigger for anti-immigrant sentiments in several studies (Mayda 2006; Werts, Scheepers, Lubbers 2013).

Conversely, literature on the supply side provides evidence of how party competition over issues encompassing immigration as well as EU-related issues contributed to reshaping domestic politics favouring the emergence of a new cultural divide (see Bornschier 2010; Hooghe, Marks 2018; Kriesi et al. 2012; Rovny, Whitefield 2019). Following these dynamics, party features and exogenous events lead political parties to fuel and strategically exploit the structural changes occurring in national political spaces. On the one hand, the

outbreak of the sovereign debt crisis hitting European economies and increasing migratory flows influenced patterns of party competition over the economic and cultural cleavages (Charalambous, Conti, Pedrazzani 2023). Recent research investigates the link between macroeconomic variables, such as the percentage of immigrants in the total population or the unemployment rate, and trends towards the politicization of immigration and voting behaviour. These studies are grounded on the assumption that increasing migratory flows or fluctuating economic indicators increase the chances of adopting an issue-mobilizing strategy on immigration-related issues. Nonetheless, there is no unanimity among this strand of the research. Some scholars show that the share of foreigners within the population has a sizeable effect on the level of politicization of immigration-related issues (Green-Pedersen, Otjes 2019) and on parties' electoral outcomes, especially in the form of increased support towards extreme right political parties that exploit immigration issues to channel voters' economic grievances (see Arzheimer, Carter 2006; Harmon 2018; Mendez, Cutillas 2014). Conversely, other studies do not identify any systematic correlation between country-level socio-economic indicators like the unemployment rate and the share of migrants in the host country's population, and the party's tendency to politicize the debate over immigration (see Grande, Schwarzbözl, Fatke 2019; Van der Brug et al. 2015).

On the other hand, party features such as parties' role within the party system as outsiders (Hobolt, Tilley 2016) or non-incumbents (Meguid 2005) can mediate or foster parties' reaction to the emergence of the new axis of competition. Relevant studies focus on the ability of radical right parties to exploit the lack of credibility of mainstream parties in tackling the migration and economic crisis (Ellinas 2013), whilst others centred the analysis on the advantage that outsider or challenger parties detain due to their lack of prior experience in government (Hobolt, Tilley 2016; Downes, Loveless 2018). A newly developed theoretical approach conceives party competition as being structured along different policy issues, each one characterized by a different degree of issue yield (De Sio, Weber 2014). According to this paradigm, political

parties strategically emphasize those issues with the highest issue yield, thereby ensuring the win-win outcome of increasing their constituencies while maintaining existing partisan support. These issues must jointly garnered consensus among both the party's voter base and the wider electorate, and they must be ones where the party is widely seen as possessing the substantial credibility to address them. Relevant studies offer a comprehensive assessment of the suitability of the issue yield framework to a significant number of recent European country specific elections (see inter alia Franzmann, Giebler, Poguntke 2020; Plescia, Kritzinger, Oberluggauer, 2020). These studies provide evidence that political parties mostly tailored their electoral campaigns focusing on those issues that have consistently proven to be electorally advantageous. Within this theoretical framework, immigration and internal security issues often emerged as issues characterized by a high issue yield (see Emanuele, Maggini, Paparo 2020).

However, differences are observed in the extent to which economic and socio-cultural issues are politicized by political parties based not only on the country-specific impact of the economic and migrant crisis but also according to the parties' stance on the left-right ideological spectrum. Focusing on the European elections that follow the onset of the migration crisis, Hutter and Kriesi (2022) highlight cross-regional differences in parties' politicization strategy over immigration issues. On the one hand, they show that the impact of mass migration waves inevitably incentivizes political parties to mobilize the electorate on the immigration dimension. On the other hand, these mobilization incentives are fuelled by the presence of radical right parties in national electoral campaigns. Whatever the focus of the investigation and the nomenclature of the political actors involved, these parties have triggered new party competition dynamics by mobilizing the issues of immigration, internal security and re-appropriation of authorities from the EU sovereign institutions. Nevertheless, we lack comparative evidence testing the existence of a linkage between parties' ideology and the incentives to politicize socio-cultural vis-à-vis economic issues.

2.2. Hypotheses

In this article, I tackle parties' mobilization strategy over immigration relying on the theory of issue entrepreneurship (see Hobolt, De Vries 2015). Following this conceptualisation of party competition, specific circumstances exist that increase the incentives for political actors to strategically politicize some issues with respect to other competing policy domains. Here the focus is on those political issues that were not addressed by the mainstream status quo or that can undermine party systems' equilibrium. This involves framing a political domain in a way that matches with the priorities of a target audience, underlying the consequences of the issue, or trying to persuade voters that parties in power are not able to tackle its adverse impact. According to this framework, issue entrepreneurs are those political actors who are faced with major incentives to politicize specific political issues in relation to their disadvantageous position within the multiparty status quo. These disadvantages are strictly intertwined with the main outcomes that political parties try to pursue within the political conflict. That is, obtaining government positions, implementing preferred policies, and increasing the electoral consensus. Therefore, when a political party is not engaged in government positions, holds a niche position on the dominant dimensions of contestation, or loses an election, it is more likely to act as issue entrepreneur. With these conditions in place, political losers can start an issue mobilization strategy by means of adopting a policy position that markedly differs from the average position of the mainstream status quo or attributing a higher degree of emphasis to policy domains that are neglected by other political competitors.

Nevertheless, the theory of issue entrepreneurship implicitly assumes that the presence of these mobilizing incentives within political contestation automatically drives political parties to politicize an issue. In their seminal work, Hobolt and De Vries (2015) track the party competition dynamics over European integration in western European countries. They show that, in the last three decades of party competition, political actors holding a losing position with respect to their office-, vote-, and policy-seeking objectives engaged in an issue

entrepreneurial strategy on EU-related issues. These mobilizing incentives applied to all political actors in multiparty systems regardless of party features, notably their ideology. Nevertheless, as the politicization of immigration is mainly driven by political actors within the right-wing party family (see inter alia Grande, Schwarzbözl, Fatke 2019; Hutter, Kriesi 2022), I argue that the mobilizing incentives identified by the theory of issue entrepreneurship do not represent a sufficient condition per se for political parties to strategically politicize relevant policy issues. In particular, with respect to immigration, I argue that parties occupying a losing position within the political system are faced with major incentives to act as issue entrepreneurs only within the right-wing party family. On the contrary, left-wing parties in losing positions have greater incentives to politicize socio-economic policy domains with respect to immigration-related issues. To test these assumptions, I formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: All else being equal, parties without government positions have more incentives to act as issue entrepreneurs.

Hypothesis 1a: Regarding immigration, these entrepreneurial incentives operate to a greater extent within the right-wing party family.

Hypothesis 1b: Regarding socio-economic issues, these entrepreneurial incentives operate to a greater extent within the left-wing party family.

Hypothesis 2: All else being equal, parties that have undergone an electoral loss have more incentives to act as issue entrepreneurs.

Hypothesis 2a: Regarding immigration, these entrepreneurial incentives operate to a greater extent within the right-wing party family.

Hypothesis 2b: Regarding socio-economic issues, these entrepreneurial incentives operate to a greater extent within the left-wing party family.

Hypothesis 3: All else being equal, parties that occupy a markedly different position on the dominant dimension of contestation have more incentives to act as issue entrepreneurs.

Hypothesis 3a: Regarding immigration, these entrepreneurial incentives operate to a greater extent within the right-wing party family.

Hypothesis 3b: Regarding socio-economic issues, these entrepreneurial incentives operate to a greater extent within the left-wing party family.

In the next section, I present the data and the operationalization of the variables used to estimate the impact of ideology on the incentives to act as issue entrepreneurs.

2.3. Data and methods

In this article, I track the issue entrepreneurial strategy of political parties over two distinct patterns of competition, namely immigration and economic-related issues. This empirical strategy allows us to test the hypotheses about the effect of party ideology on the mobilizing incentives identified by the theory of issue entrepreneurship (see Hobolt, De Vries 2015). Here the focus is on nine multi-party systems distributed across North-Western (i.e., Austria, France, Germany, Sweden, and United Kingdom), and Southern Europe (Italy, Greece, Portugal, and Spain) during a time interval that range from 2002 to 2019. As foreseen by the theory, party mobilization strategy embraces those policy issues that might ensure an electoral success. In their analysis, Hobolt and De Vries (2015) show that political parties acted as issue entrepreneurs on EU-related issues because they perceive this strategy as electoral rewarding. In the countries included in this analysis, socio-cultural policy domains, such as immigration, flanked economic issues in structuring the political conflict, and had a major impact on the preferences of parties and voters, especially in the aftermath of the refugee crisis. These countries experienced repeated waves of mass migration, mainly driven by global economic factors, conflict and crises in non-European countries. This surge in immigration put pressure on European member states to develop new policies to manage the influx of people, which in turn has been reflected into an increased level of issue salience within the public debate and the political contestation. In this context, migration and refugee-related issues gained renewed attention in both political parties' electoral programmes and as

a determinant of voters' choices. This has been particularly evident in the parliamentary breakthrough of those political parties that exhibited anti-immigration rhetoric as a key component of their political platforms. Therefore, it is crucial to examine whether ideology acts as a driving force in the entrepreneurial strategy of those political parties that, starting from a losing position within the party system, are faced with major incentives to challenge the mainstream status quo and to act as issue entrepreneurs.

The analysis departs from the operationalization of the entrepreneurial strategy enacted by political actors. In particular, denoting with x_k^j and s_k^j the ideological position and the salience of party k on the political dimension j , with \bar{x}^j the average position of all parties on the dimension j , the issue entrepreneurship (IE_k^j) of party k is given by

$$IE_k^j = |s_k^j(x_k^j - \bar{x}^j)|$$

This measurement (see Hobolt, De Vries 2015) suggests that political actors act as issue entrepreneurs by means of attributing a high degree of salience to a policy issue, or by adopting a position that markedly contrasts with the average stance of the other competing political parties within a multi-party system. Likewise, the recent political science literature conceptualizes the politicization of an issue in order to include the salience attributed by political parties to a certain issue category and the degree of polarization measured as the Euclidean distance between parties' positions on the same issue (see Grande, Schwarzbözl, Fatke 2019; Hutter, Grande 2014; Hutter, Kriesi 2022). These studies examine parties' attempts to politicize immigration by relying on different sources of data, which include the analysis of newspaper articles preceding a given election, or political parties' electoral manifestos. In this article, I use the Chapel Hill expert surveys data (Jolly et al. 2022; Polk et al. 2017) that provide estimates on parties' ideological positioning on a wide range of specific policy domains, using an 11-point scale. The substantive policy dimensions included in this analysis are immigration and economic issues. Parties with higher scores favour the adoption of restrictive immigration policy and call for a reduced role of the government

within the economy. On the contrary, lower scores identify those political actors that favour the adoption of liberal policies on immigration and advocate a greater involvement of the state on economic issues. Furthermore, I consider country experts' evaluation of the degree of importance attributed by political parties to the two policy dimensions.

Unlike recent studies that examine the extent to which political parties politicize immigration considering only the years in which an election took place (see Grande, Schwarzbözl, Fatke 2019; Hutter, Kriesi 2022), I develop a yearly measure of parties' entrepreneurial strategy for each political actor included in the analysis. Expert surveys provide estimates on parties' placements only at specific points in time. Starting from the known observations provided by the expert survey data in two distinct time points, I infer parties' ideological positioning and issue salience on all the years in between the known estimates by means of applying a linear interpolation approach. This methodological technique allows us to create a time series dataset with longitudinal and cross-national observations⁴. Thus, for each year, I construct the dependent variable by multiply the party salience score with the distance between its ideological positioning and the mean position of the other competing political actors, on both immigration and economic issues. The absolute value in the computation of the issue entrepreneurial strategy allows us to equally quantify the impact of parties' distance independently on whether parties are located further on the extreme right or on the extreme left of the average mainstream position of the party system.

The independent variables included in the analysis aim at capturing the parties' status of being a loser within a multi-party system. As foreseen by Hypothesis 1, parties without government positions are expected to engage in an issue entrepreneurial strategy to a greater extent than governing political actors.

⁴ To rule out the possibility that the results change without the implementation of the linear interpolation method, I run all the models relying on the non-imputed data and I observed that the ultimate results remain largely consistent.

The *Incumbent* variable is therefore modelled as a dichotomous variable which assumes the value of 1 in the case of a party holding government positions, and 0 otherwise. In this analysis, political parties that at time t provide external support to coalition governments are coded as having government positions too, since it is more likely that they are perceived as part of the ruling establishment by voters.

Hypothesis 2 links the chances for a political party to act as an issue entrepreneur to its electoral defeat. The variable *Electoral gain* is modelled as the difference between the vote share obtained by a political party in the election at time $t - 1$ and the percentage of votes obtained in the election at time $t - 2$. Thus, higher values are associated with an electoral gain achieved by political parties between two consecutive electoral rounds. The rationale behind this methodological choice is that it is a prior electoral performance, rather than a current one, that prompts political parties to adopt an entrepreneurial strategy. Specifically, when choosing their strategy during the electoral campaign at time t , parties are not aware of the difference between vote share at time t and vote share at time $t - 1$ ⁵.

Hypothesis 3 states that political parties that hold a losing position with respect to their policy-seeking objectives have more chances to adopt an issue entrepreneurial strategy. Therefore, I compute the distance of political actors from the average position of all parties within the system with respect to the general left-right dimension. For each political party, I compute the variable *Distance to the mean party on the dominant (left-right) dimension* as the absolute value of the difference between the single-party stance and the mean party position on the left-right ideological continuum.

Moreover, I control for the size of political parties (i.e., *Party size*) computed as the share of the votes obtained at the last national parliamentary election.

⁵ As a reading example, the electoral performance of a political party competing in the 2018 general election in Italy is computed as the difference between the vote share obtained in the 2013 election minus the vote share obtained in the 2008 election.

Furthermore, I merge the European Social Survey data (ESS Cumulative File 2020) and the Voter Study data (Schmitt et al. 2016, 2022; Van Egmond 2017), to construct a country measure for the voters' attitudes towards immigration and the role that governments should have in dealing with economic issues. The ESS's respondents were asked to evaluate the extent to which immigration is perceived as a threat to the national economy, the cultural life and the overall living conditions and to what extent central governments should adopt measures to mitigate differences in income levels. Moreover, I rely on the Voter Study's survey questions that asked respondents to evaluate their stance on immigration (liberal versus restrictive immigration policies) and redistribution (in favour vis-à-vis against redistributive policies). For each country included in the analysis, I compute a yearly measure for the electorate position on immigration and economic issues by means of interpolating the known observations provided by the two data sources (i.e., *Mean voter on immigration* and *on economic issues* variables). In the next section, I present the results of the statistical analysis.

2.4. Empirical analysis

Figures 1 and 2 track the long-term country-specific trends in the level of issue entrepreneurship on immigration and economic issues, respectively. In the period under examination, right-wing parties tended to act as issue entrepreneurs on immigration to a greater extent than left-wing political actors. Furthermore, almost all the countries in the sample show a strong upward trend in the politicization of immigration since the outbreak of the migration crisis in 2013-2014. Conversely, the distinction between right-wing and left-wing parties becomes less pronounced when considering the levels of issue entrepreneurship on economic issues. Although left-wing parties were on average more likely to adopt an entrepreneurial strategy on economic issues with respect to their right-wing competitors, exceptions are observed in Spain, Portugal and Great Britain. These observed patterns are consistent with the main hypothesis according to which right-wing parties have greater incentives to mobilize the electorate over strategic recourse to immigration whilst their left-wing counterparts are more

likely to mobilize economic policy domains. Nevertheless, this preliminary overview does not allow us to draw any conclusion on the role played by ideology in leading political parties to mobilize immigration vis-à-vis economic-related issues when specific conjunctural factors occur. In particular, does party ideology exert an influence on the choice to adopt an entrepreneurial strategy when political parties occupy a losing position within the system?

To assess the impact of ideology on party incentives to politicize immigration and economic issues, I rely on mixed effects regression models with random slopes. This statistical technique allows us to estimate the average relationship between party ideology and the measure of issue entrepreneurship removing any additional country-level differences. Furthermore, to deal with time-series dependencies that might occur due to the panel structure of the data, I added a lagged dependent variable in the analysis. Tables 1 and 2 present the results of six models with the issue entrepreneurship measures of immigration and economic issues as the dependent variables. For each hypothesis, I run two different regression analyses. The first Models (i.e., Models 1, 3, and 5) aim at capturing the effect of occupying a losing position in terms of party office-, vote-, and policy-seeking objectives on the level of entrepreneurial strategy enacted by political actors. The second Models (i.e., Models 2, 4, and 6⁶) investigate the effect of ideology on the strategy to mobilize the electorate when specific conjunctural factors occur. To this scope, the independent variables capturing the political party status of being an opposition party, undergoing an electoral defeat, and adopting niche positions on the dominant dimension of contestation are interacted with the dummy variable for the party ideology (i.e., left- vs. right-wing party). Parties are categorized as right-wing if they achieve a score of 5 or higher on the *lrgen* item of the Chapel Hill expert survey, which gauges a party's overall ideological stance; they are categorized as left-wing otherwise⁷.

⁶ Models identified by the wording *a* refer to the analysis of the entrepreneurial strategy on immigration. Models identified by the wording *b* refer to the analysis of the issue entrepreneurship on economic issues.

⁷ Parties that score 5 on the *lrgen* item and are labelled as centrist by Chapel Hill are excluded from the analysis.

Figure 1: Long-term trends in the level of issue entrepreneurship on immigration.

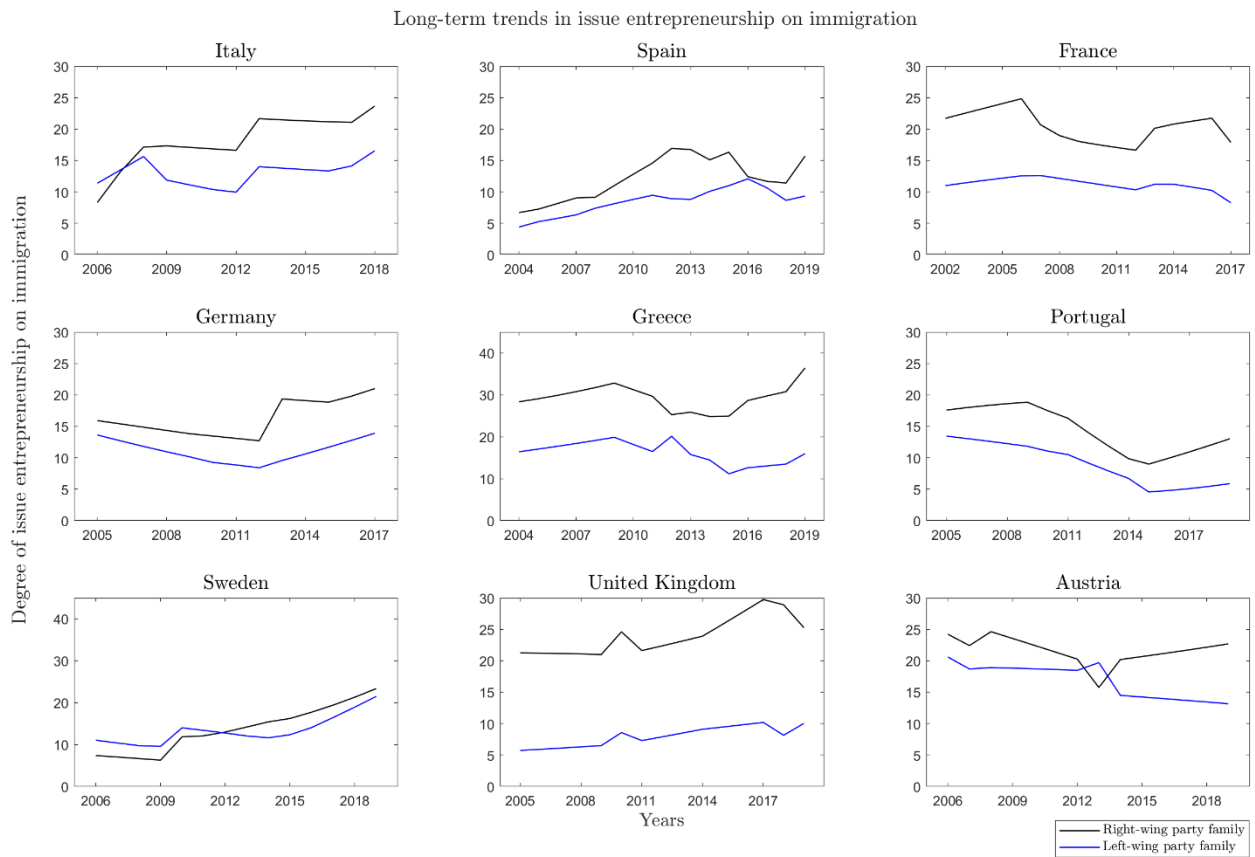
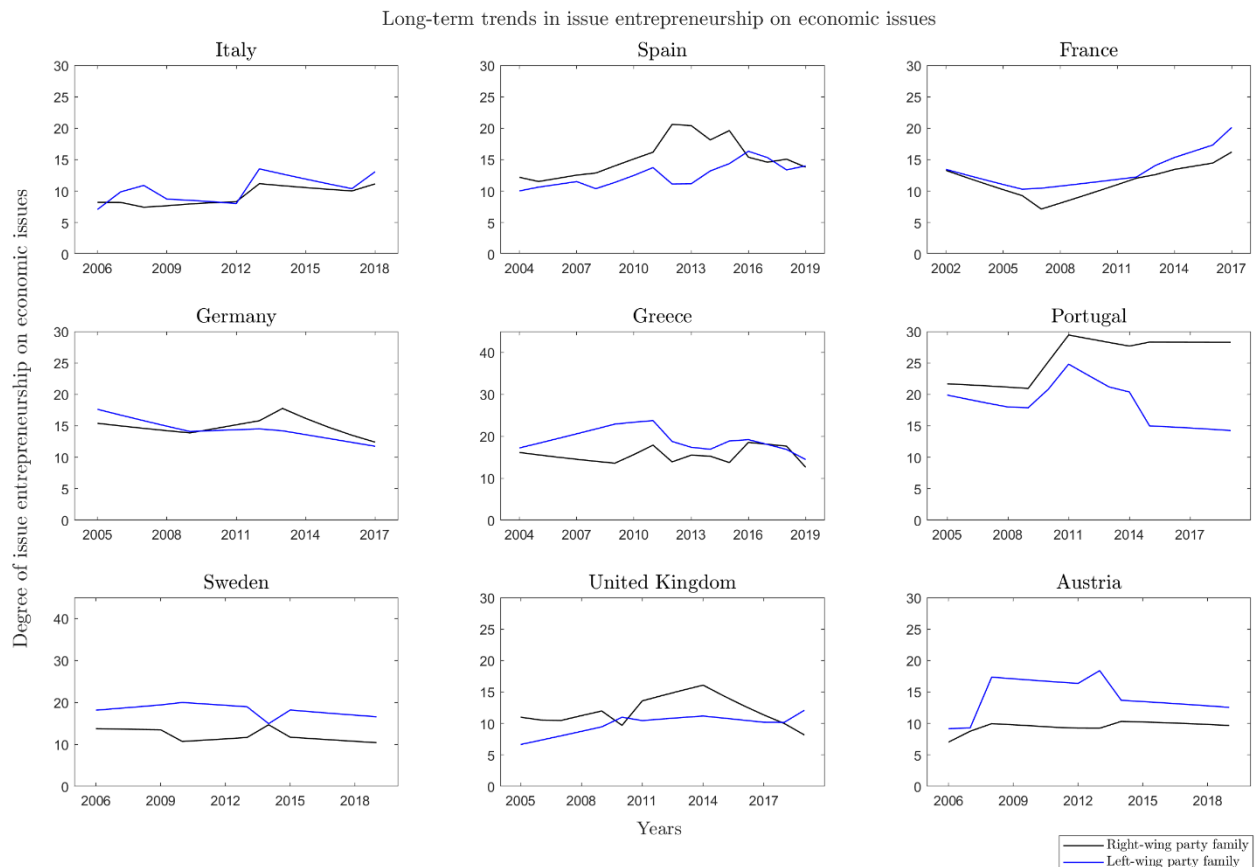


Figure 2: Long-term trends in the level of issue entrepreneurship on economic issues.



2.4.1. Incumbency status

The theory of issue entrepreneurship predicts that political parties without governing experience have greater incentives to act as issue entrepreneurs. This assumption also holds when considering the entrepreneurial strategy enacted by political parties on immigration and socio-economic issues (H1). The negative and statistically significant coefficient of the variable *Incumbent* in Model 1a and 1b indicates that all else being equal, being in government decreases the degree of issue entrepreneurship towards the two policy domains under investigation. Nevertheless, my contention is that the effect of not holding government positions on the entrepreneurial strategy to mobilize the electorate on topical issues is mediated by party features, first and foremost party ideology.

Specifically, I argue that when considering immigration, not holding government positions prompts political parties to politicize the issue, but only within the right-wing party family. Conversely, left-wing political actors without government positions are faced with major incentives to act as entrepreneurs on socio-economic issues. To test this hypothesis, in Model 2a and 2b, the variable *Incumbent* is interacted with a dichotomous variable which assumes the value of 1 in the case of a right-wing party, and 0 in the case of a left-wing political actor. The results of the model fully corroborate my assumption according to which political parties occupying a losing position in terms of their office-seeking goals have an incentive to mobilize immigration only if they are right-wing political actors (Model 2a). Analogously, a left-wing party in a losing position with regard to its governing ambitions will tend to mobilize socio-economic policy domains. The interaction coefficient is positive and statistically significant showing that party ideology has a mediated effect on the entrepreneurial strategy of political parties (Model 2b).

A graphical illustration (Figure 3a and Figure 3b) further clarifies the association between the *Incumbent* variable (and its interaction with the *Left vs. Right* variable) and the mobilizing efforts towards immigration and socio-economic issues. Based on the estimates from Model 2, the left panels in Figure

1a and Figure 1b show the difference in issue entrepreneurship between right- and left-wing parties, conditionally on the party incumbent status. A positive estimated value indicates that right-wing parties with government positions (without governing positions) act as issue entrepreneurs to a greater extent than incumbent left-wing parties (without governing positions). Figure 1a reveals that both governing and outsider right-wing parties tend to mobilize voters on immigration to a greater extent than their left-wing counterparts. In line with Hypothesis 1a, the strategy to mobilize immigration is stronger for those right-wing political parties that do not have government positions. Conversely, consistent with Hypothesis 1b, the strategy to mobilize economic issues is stronger for those left-wing political actors who do not hold governing positions. The right panels in Figure 3a and Figure 3b show the difference in issue entrepreneurship between governing and outsider parties, conditionally on their ideology. A positive estimated value indicates that holding governing positions increases the chance to engage in an issue entrepreneurial strategy to a greater extent than being an outsider, within the same party family. The figure reveals that holding governing positions significantly reduces the levels of issue entrepreneurship towards immigration and socio-economic issues, only within the right-wing party family in the first case, and only within the left-wing party family in the second case.

2.4.2. Electoral performance

According to Hypothesis 2, political parties experiencing an electoral defeat have major incentives to act as issue entrepreneurs within the electoral arena. The rationale behind this assumption is that parties defeated in elections are motivated to change their electoral strategy and attempt to focus the subsequent rounds of electoral campaigns on new patterns of political competition by mobilizing the electorate on new issues. However, the results clearly contradict this hypothesis. Furthermore, the positive and statistically significant coefficient of Model 3a indicates that the greater the electoral gain, the higher the degree of issue entrepreneurship on immigration. On the contrary, the variable *Electoral*

gain does not exert any statistically significant impact on the level of issue entrepreneurship on economic issues (Model 3b). To further analyse the effect of party electoral performance, in Models 4a and 4b the variable *Electoral gain* is interacted with the variable *Left vs. Right*. The results show that electoral success prompts a right-wing party to mobilize immigration to a greater extent than a left-wing political actor. Conversely, only a left-wing party that increases its vote share has a greater incentive to mobilize the electorate on economic issues. Therefore, ideology has an impact on the strategy to mobilize policy issues when considering party vote-seeking goals, especially when it comes to economic issues. The interaction between changes in electoral results and party ideology is significantly associated with an increase in the levels of issue entrepreneurship.

The meaning of the beta coefficient associated with the interaction terms is clarified in Figures 4a and 4b (middle-up panel). Right-wing parties have a greater incentive to mobilize the electorate on immigration in the event of electoral gains, whilst left-wing parties are induced to mobilize the electorate on economic issues if they increase their voter base. Based on the estimates from Model 4, I compute the difference in the degree of entrepreneurial strategy between right- and left-wing political parties experiencing an electoral gain, an electoral loss and an almost unchanged electoral performance between two rounds of elections (left-down panel in Figure 4a and 4b). Results show that, in the event of an electoral success, right-wing political actors act as entrepreneurs on immigration whilst not having the incentive to mobilize voters on economic issues. Furthermore, I estimate the difference in issue entrepreneurship between parties experiencing electoral success and parties undergoing an electoral defeat, conditional on ideology (right-down panel in Figure 4a and 4b). A positive estimated value indicates that right-wing (left-wing) parties after an electoral victory act as issue entrepreneurs to a greater extent than right-wing (left-wing) parties after an electoral defeat. Results clearly show that parties experiencing electoral success will mobilize voters on economic issues only if they belong to the left side of the political spectrum (right-down panel in Figure 4b). On the

contrary, a positive change in parties' electoral performance significantly leads political parties to engage in an issue entrepreneurial strategy on immigration both within the right- and the left-wing party family (right-down panel in Figure 4a).

In short, these findings show that occupying a losing position with respect to the electoral goals of political parties does not constitute an incentive to mobilize immigration and economic issues. A plausible explanation of the positive impact exerted by electoral gains is that political parties that mobilize the electorate on specific issues during their campaigning cannot cease to apply this strategy in the post-electoral period in order not to lose credibility in the eyes of the electorate. Moreover, this is particularly true for topical issues such as immigration which are by their nature more suited to be exploited for mere propaganda purposes. According to this perspective, parties capitalizing on nativist sentiment by means of strategically positioning themselves on anti-immigration stances or attributing a high degree of salience to the issue cannot dismiss this strategy once in office in order not to lose the opportunity to credibly claim the issue ownership over the electorate.

2.4.3. Distance from the average status quo

The theory of issue entrepreneurship posits that a party occupying a markedly distant position from the mainstream status quo has a greater incentive to act as an issue entrepreneur. To test Hypothesis 3, I examine whether a greater distance from the mean party position on the dominant dimension of contestation encourages parties to engage in issue entrepreneurship over immigration and economic issues. Models 5 and 6 consider the positional deviance of a party from the mean party position on the traditional left-right scale. The positive and statistically significant coefficients indicate that the farther a party is from its competitors, the more incentive it has to adopt an entrepreneurial strategy towards immigration and socio-economic issues (see Model 5a for immigration and Model 5b for economic issues).

However, I argue that a greater distance from the current equilibrium prompts political parties to mobilize the electorate on immigration only within the right-wing party family. On the contrary, a left-wing political actor occupying a niche position within the political system has a greater incentive to mobilize economic issues than its right-wing competitor. To test this hypothesis, in Models 6a and 6b, the positional deviance of a party from the average location of the party system interacts with the variable *Left vs. Right*. The positive coefficient of the interaction term in Model 6a indicates that the distance from the current equilibrium on the degree of issue entrepreneurship on immigration is significantly higher for right-wing parties. Conversely, the negative and statistically significant coefficient in Model 6b shows that a greater distance from the average position of the party system pushes left-wing parties to mobilize the electorate on economic issues to a greater extent than their right-wing counterpart.

Nevertheless, predictions based on the estimates from Models 6a and 6b partially supported hypothesis 3. Figures 5a and 5b clarify the association between party distance and the degree of issue entrepreneurship on immigration and economic issues, respectively. In particular, I estimate the difference in issue entrepreneurship between parties that are located far from the average party position and parties that occupy positions close to the mainstream status quo, conditional on ideology (down panel in Figures 5a and 5b). A positive estimated value indicates that right-wing (left-wing) parties far from the average status quo act as issue entrepreneurs to a greater extent than those right-wing (left-wing) parties that are close to the average party position on the dominant dimension of contestation. Results clearly show that political parties occupying positions that are distant from the average status quo have additional incentives to engage in an issue entrepreneurial strategy on economic issues, only within the left-wing party family (as foreseen by hypothesis 3b). On the contrary, both right-wing and left-wing parties that are far from the average party positions will mobilize voters on immigration, albeit right-wing parties to a greater extent than left-wing political actors.

Table 1: Determinants of issue entrepreneurship on immigration.

| | Hypothesis 1 - Incumbency status | | Hypothesis 2 - Electoral performance | | Hypothesis 3 - Distance to the mean party on the dominant dimensions | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|--|-----------------------|
| | Model 1a | Model 2a | Model 3a | Model 4a | Model 5a | Model 6a |
| Incumbent | -0.372*** (0.071) | -0.158 ⁺ (0.094) | | | | |
| Incumbent X Right-wing | | -0.515*** (0.126) | | | | |
| Electoral gain | | | 0.218*** (0.032) | 0.125*** (0.044) | | |
| Electoral gain X Right-wing | | | | 0.154** (0.063) | | |
| Distance to mean party | | | | | 0.671*** (0.025) | 0.363*** (0.032) |
| Distance to mean party X Right-wing | | | | | | 0.537*** (0.043) |
| Right-wing | | 0.772*** (0.073) | | 0.551*** (0.062) | | 0.424*** (0.042) |
| Party size | -0.075** (0.034) | -0.093*** (0.032) | -0.148*** (0.032) | -0.178*** (0.032) | -0.007 (0.024) | -0.074 *** (0.022) |
| Mean voter on immigration | -0.044 (0.041) | -0.026 (0.039) | -0.050 (0.042) | -0.060 (0.040) | -0.018 (0.031) | -0.022 (0.028) |
| Lagged dependent variable | -0.064 ** (0.032) | -0.058 ⁺ (0.030) | -0.067** (0.032) | -0.068** (0.031) | -0.003 (0.024) | 0.006** (0.021) |
| Intercept | 0.162 (0.107) | -0.185 ⁺ (0.104) | 0.040 (0.109) | -0.229** (0.112) | 0.019 (0.088) | -0.200 (0.096) |
| N | 922 | 922 | 832 | 832 | 924 | 924 |
| AIC | 2536.571 | 2430.173 | 2266.305 | 2190.231 | 2026.074 | 1799.828 |
| BIC | 2570.357 | 2473.611 | 2299.372 | 2232.746 | 2059.875 | 1843.287 |

Notes: Mixed effects regression models with random intercepts on countries. Table entries are standardized coefficients of regressions. Significance levels: ⁺p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

Table 2: Determinants of issue entrepreneurship on economic issues.

| | Hypothesis 1 – Incumbency status | | Hypothesis 2 - Electoral performance | | Hypothesis 3 - Distance to the mean party on the dominant dimension | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|---|----------------------|
| | Model 1b | Model 2b | Model 3b | Model 4b | Model 5b | Model 6b |
| Incumbent | -0.162** (0.071) | -0.428 *** (0.100) | | | | |
| Incumbent X Right-wing | | 0.512*** (0.134) | | | | |
| Electoral gain | | | 0.003 (0.033) | 0.122*** (0.047) | | |
| Electoral gain X Right-wing | | | | -0.232*** (0.066) | | |
| Distance to mean party | | | | | 0.521 *** (0.028) | 1.058 *** (0.032) |
| Distance to mean party X Right-wing | | | | | | -0.998*** (0.044) |
| Right-wing | | -0.218*** (0.078) | | -0.056 (0.066) | | -0.136*** (0.043) |
| Party size | 0.025 (0.034) | 0.031 (0.033) | -0.010 (0.033) | 0.004 (0.033) | 0.098*** (0.027) | 0.190** (0.022) |
| Mean voter on economic issues | -0.081 (0.053) | -0.044 (0.053) | -0.071 (0.058) | -0.080 (0.057) | -0.083 ⁺ (0.044) | -0.075** (0.037) |
| Lagged dependent variable | -0.071** (0.032) | -0.070** (0.032) | -0.097*** (0.034) | -0.103*** (0.034) | -0.078*** (0.027) | -0.045** (0.022) |
| Intercept | 0.073 (0.125) | 0.171 (0.132) | 0.035 (0.130) | 0.068 (0.131) | 0.008 (0.097) | 0.102 (0.116) |
| N | 922 | 922 | 832 | 832 | 924 | 924 |
| AIC | 2536.755 | 2525.878 | 2289.846 | 2281.055 | 2248.975 | 1842.337 |
| BIC | 2570.541 | 2569.316 | 2322.913 | 2323.569 | 2282.776 | 1885.795 |

Notes: Mixed effects regression models with random intercepts on countries. Table entries are standardized coefficients of regressions. Significance levels: ⁺p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

Figure 3a: Effect of party incumbency status on issue entrepreneurship on immigration.

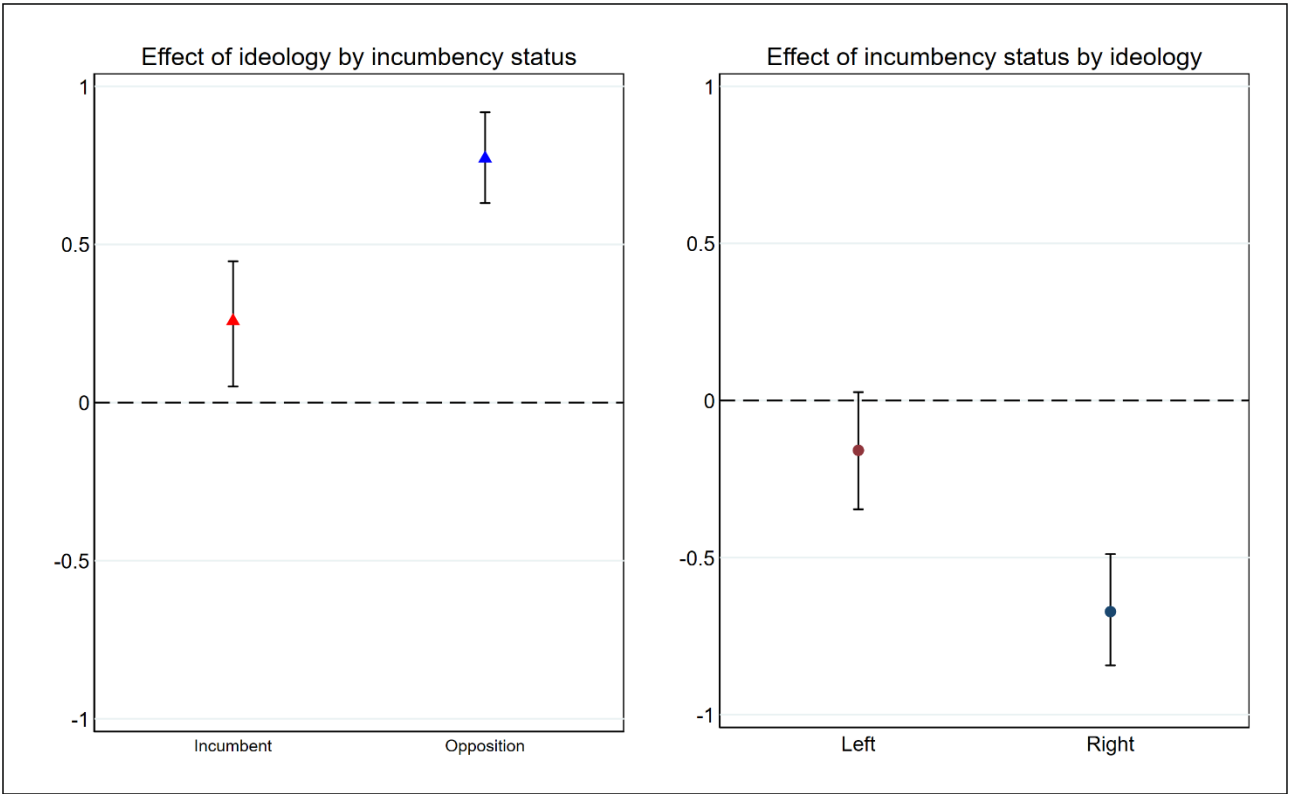


Figure 3b: Effect of party incumbency status on issue entrepreneurship on economic issues.

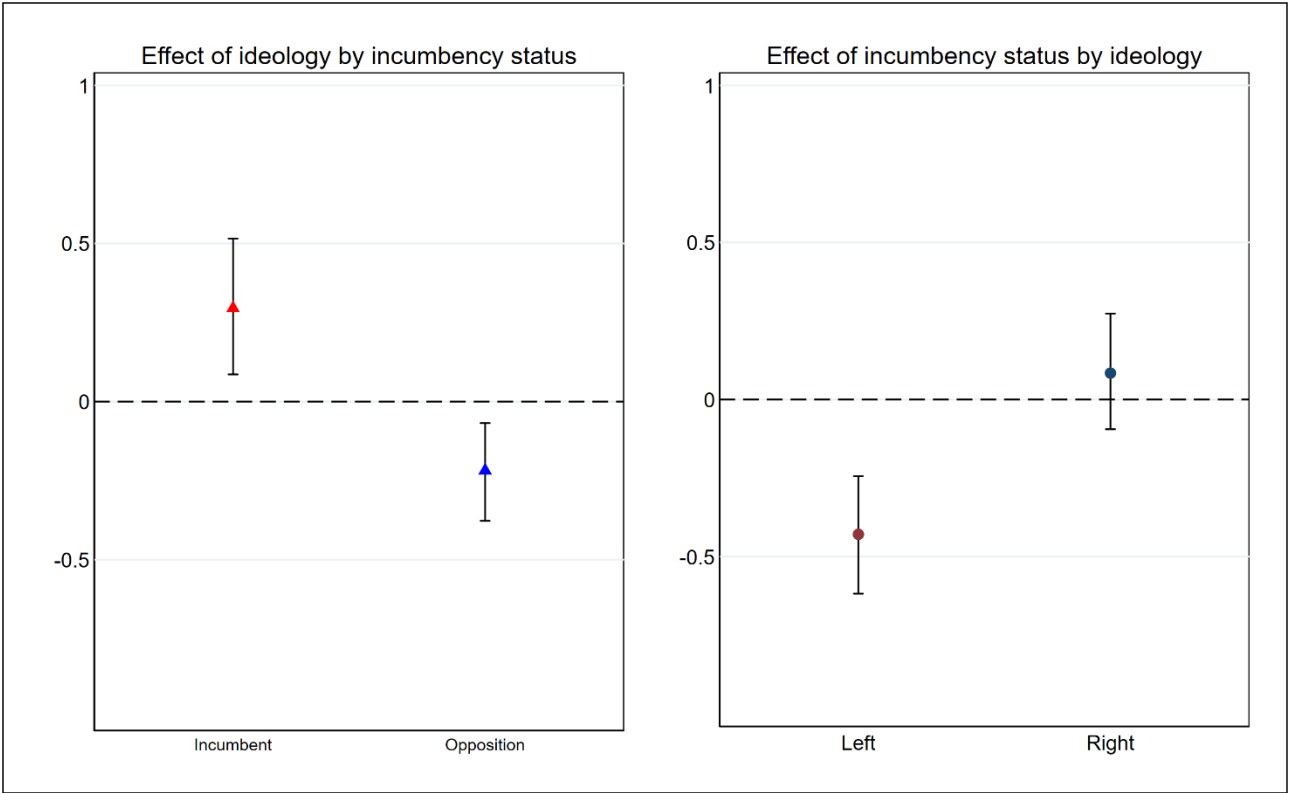


Figure 4a: Effect of electoral performance on issue entrepreneurship on immigration.

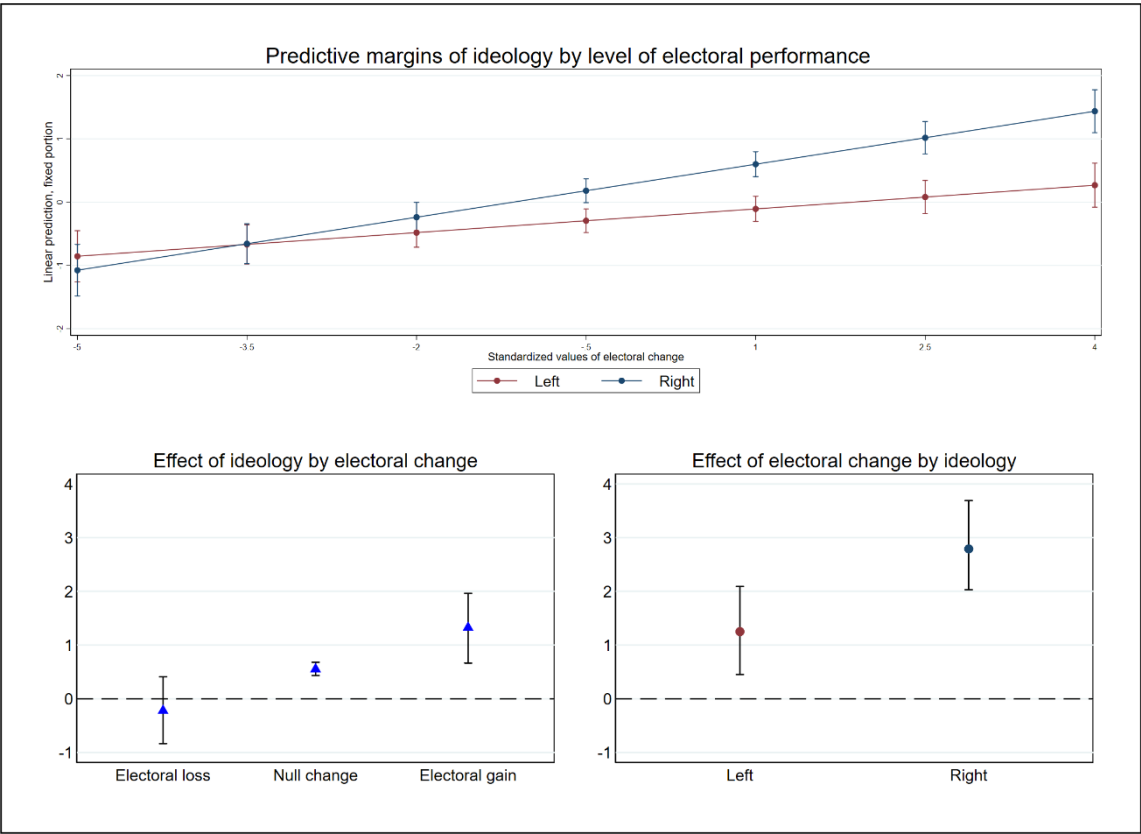


Figure 4b: Effect of electoral performance on issue entrepreneurship on economic issues.

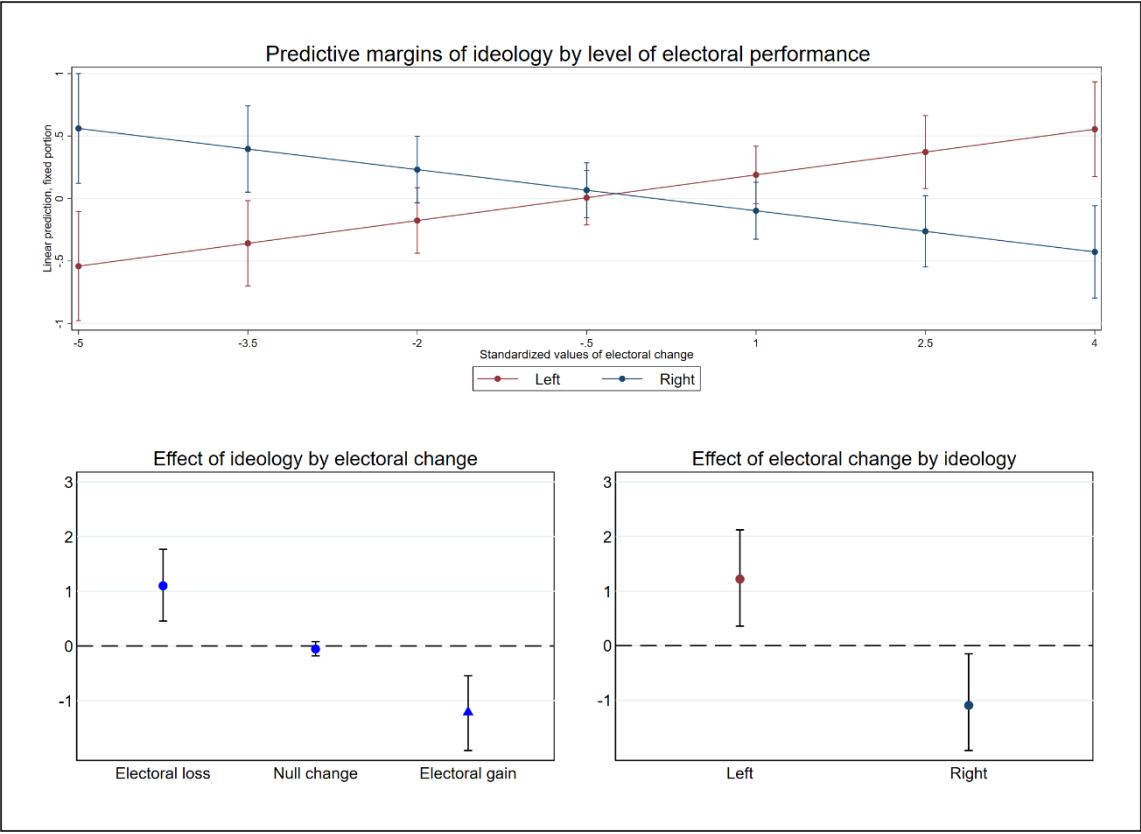


Figure 5a: Effect of party distance from the average status quo on issue entrepreneurship on immigration.

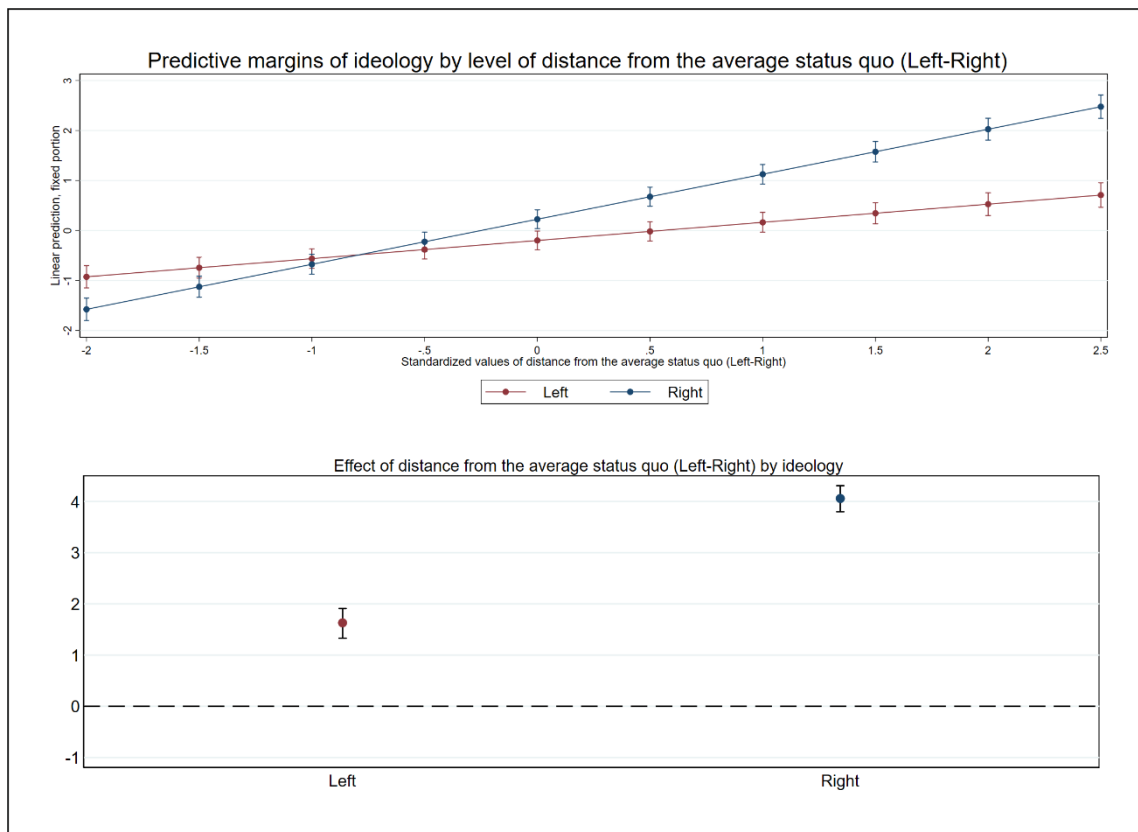
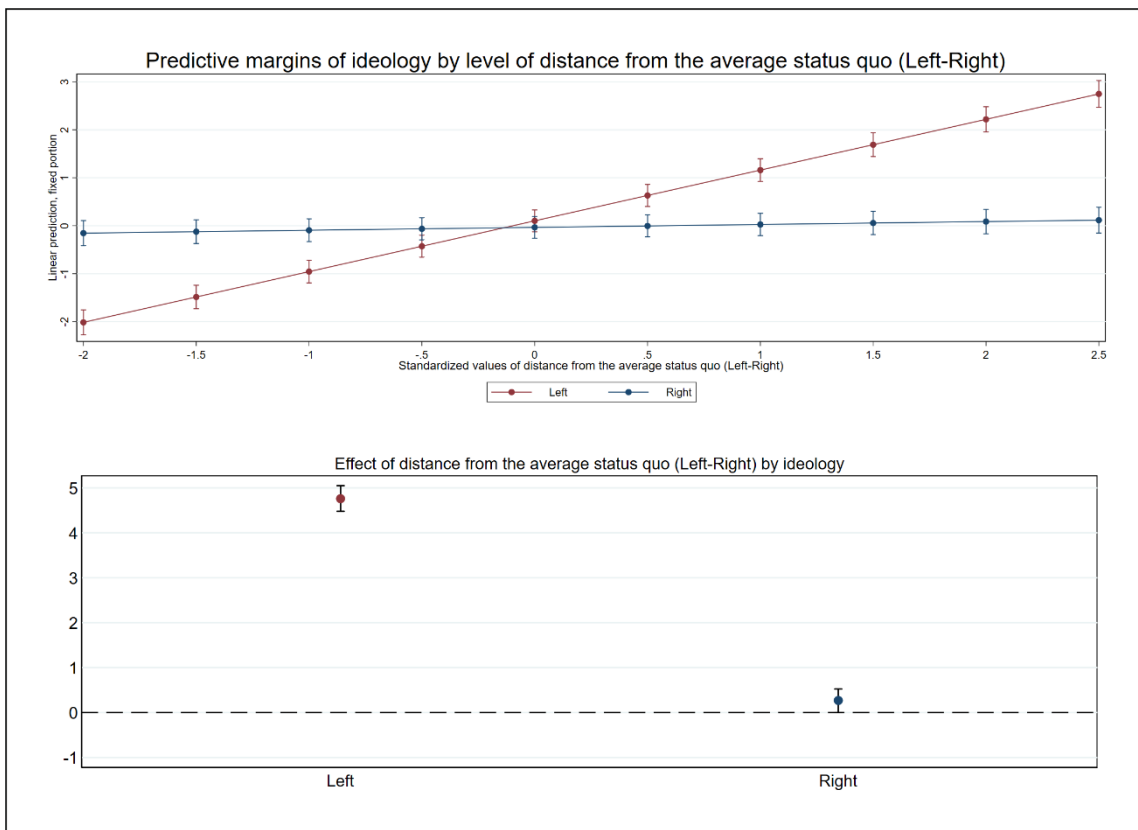


Figure 5b: Effect of party distance from the average status quo on issue entrepreneurship on economic issues.



2.5. Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to investigate whether incentives for parties to mobilize issues are mediated by other factors, first and foremost party ideology. Based on the theory of issue entrepreneurship (Hobolt, De Vries 2015), I examined whether being in a losing position within the party competition in terms of the party's office-, policy-, and vote-seeking goals automatically drives political actors to mobilize the electorate, or if party ideology mediates this process. To this purpose, I examined incentives that encourage political parties to engage in mobilization strategies over immigration and socio-economic issues. A flourishing literature has been developed on the politicization of immigration in the past decades of party competition. Additionally, relevant studies provided evidence of how this process is primarily attributed to the presence of parties in the political arena that are alternatively being defined as challengers, radicals, or right-wing extremists (see De Vries, Hobolt 2020; Hutter, Grande 2014; Hutter, Kriesi 2022).

However, if being in a disadvantaged position prompts political actors to mobilize an issue, it is worthwhile investigating whether party ideology mediates the incentives for mobilization identified by the current literature. The results show that occupying a losing position within the political contestation affects the likelihood that a party will adopt an entrepreneurial strategy towards immigration and socio-economic issues. Nevertheless, this effect is significantly mediated by the party's ideology depending on the type of incentive being examined. First, a party without government positions will have an incentive to mobilize the electorate on immigration only if it is a right-wing party. In contrast, only a left-wing political actor without government involvement will have an incentive to mobilize the electorate on socio-economic policy domains. Therefore, in reference to office-seeking goals, being in a losing position does not constitute a sufficient condition per se to act as an issue entrepreneur and cannot be divorced from the party's ideological family. Second, contrary to what is predicted by the theory of issue entrepreneurship, experiencing an electoral

defeat does not constitute an incentive to engage in issue mobilization strategies. The results show that only parties that increase their vote share are encouraged to adopt an entrepreneurial strategy on immigration and economic issues. However, this effect is significantly greater for right-wing parties when it comes to mobilizing the electorate on immigration issues. In contrast, only left-wing parties will have more incentive than right-wing competitors to mobilize voters on economic issues in the presence of an electoral gain. This result seems to suggest that being in a losing position in terms of a party's vote-seeking aim does not necessarily drive parties to adopt an entrepreneurial strategy, but rather that parties are more likely to act as issue entrepreneurs when they are experiencing electoral success. This might be related to the fact that a party that has politicized specific issues for electoral purposes, cannot dismiss this strategy once it has won elections. This could entail the risk of losing the opportunity to credibly claim the issue ownership towards its voter base. Third, the higher the distance of a party from the average party position on the traditional left-right scale, the more incentives it will have to mobilize the electorate on topical issues. Ideology has the effect of amplifying the impact of the distance from the current equilibrium on parties' mobilizing efforts, making its effect greater for right-wing parties when it comes to mobilizing immigration. On the contrary, only left-wing parties that occupy a distant position from the average status quo have an incentive to engage in an issue entrepreneurial strategy on economic issues.

The analysis carried out in this paper shows that ideology exerts a significant impact on the strategy to mobilize the electorate on immigration and economic issues. This is particularly true for a left-wing party which, finding itself in a losing position within the party system, will have the incentive to act as an issue entrepreneur on economic issues and not on socio-cultural issues, such as immigration. Following this perspective, left-wing parties occupying a central position within the party system should maintain their focus on economic issues in order not to risk seeing their electoral success eroded by those left-wing competitors who, starting from a disadvantaged position in the system, might capitalize on voters' attention to issues neglected by their mainstream

competitors. Thus, this study contributes to the existing literature on party competition by further clarifying the effects that party features might have on issue mobilization strategies enacted by political actors. On the one hand, the natural development of this article is to extend the analysis to other party characteristics, such as the level of party heterogeneity. On the other hand, future research should seek to investigate whether exogenous events, such as a systemic crisis, also exert an effect on the likelihood that a party in a losing position within the party system adopt an issue entrepreneurial strategy on one of the dominant dimensions of contestation.

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CHAPTER 3

THE EUROPEAN FINANCIAL CRISIS, MASS MIGRATION, AND THE OUTCOMES OF GOVERNMENT FORMATION PROCESSES IN SOUTHERN EUROPE ⁸

Over the last two decades, two systemic crises have harshly hit European countries, especially those of Southern Europe: the European sovereign debt crisis and the refugee crisis which reached their peaks in 2010 and 2014/2015, respectively. Both events had important consequences on party competition dynamics, affecting the electoral strategies of existing political parties (see Akkerman 2015; Charalambous, Conti, Pedrazzani 2023), contributing to the entry of new political actors (see Hobolt, Tilley 2016), and, finally, changing the voting behaviour of significant parts of the electorate (see Hernández, Kriesi 2016). Against this background, it seems worthwhile to extend the analysis on the process of government formation and to examine whether these exogenous events have also influenced the bargaining environment of parties and mattered for the outcome of the coalition formation process. Therefore, the research question we address in this contribution are whether issues related to the socio-cultural policy dimension and European integration policies flank parties' distances on an economic left-right dimension in the government formation process. More specifically, to what extent have the crises resulted in an increased impact of the associated policy dimensions on the outcome of the government formation processes?

⁸ This chapter is an adapted version of the paper “The implications of the European financial crisis and parties' positions on European integration on the outcomes of government formation processes in Southern Europe” written in collaboration with Marc Debus (University of Mannheim). The paper has been published in the journal *South European Society and Politics* (DOI: 10.1080/13608746.2024.2301834).

The exogenous events of the European sovereign debt crisis and the increased influx of refugees since 2015 influenced the structure and content of political spaces particularly in Southern Europe (see Hutter, Kriesi, Vidal 2018), accentuating, and in certain instances initiating, the process towards an augmented dimensionality of national party systems (Bornschier 2010). The increased role of European institutions in domestic affairs and the escalating waves of mass migration set incentives for parties to change their programmatic strategy (Charalambous, Conti, Pedrazzani 2023; Hutter, Kriesi 2022; Kriesi 2016). In so doing, parties mobilized the electorate by highlighting European and socio-cultural issues which should, in turn, increase the role of both policy dimensions in the process of government formation. These developments, as we argue, inevitably shaped the dynamics of coalition formation.

While studies with a focus on central and northwestern European countries show that parties with similar ideological profiles on socio-cultural issues, especially on immigration, are more likely to agree on governing together (e.g., Bräuninger et al. 2019; Debus 2009), we do not know if similar patterns exist also in southern European countries, where the salience for both policy dimensions increased during the last 15 years. Aiming at filling this gap, we analyse government formation over the past two decades in Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. The findings indicate that in the context of the severe crises that weighed on southern European economies and societies, in particular the parties' distance on EU-related issues determined which parties agreed to join a multi-party cabinet.

To derive these findings, we outline the main results of the coalition formation literature and provide an overview on the political context that characterized the process of government formation in the four countries under study. Thereafter, we present the theoretical argument on which we base our empirical analysis, followed by the presentation of the findings. The final section concludes and discusses incentives for future research.

3.1. *Existing research on government formation*

The literature on the process of coalition formation relies on models that delineate a strategic interaction between political parties which should result in the formation of a (multi-party) government. These models elaborate a series of attributes about potential coalitions, which have an impact on the likelihood that a given party composition will form a cabinet (see Laver 1998; Martin, Stevenson 2001). So-called office-seeking theories distinguish potential coalitions on the basis of the number of seats controlled by the parties in the legislative assembly or of actors involved in a coalition agreement. According to this line of research, the coalitions in which each single participant is pivotal to maintaining the control of a parliamentary majority are more likely to form a government as they ensure an optimal payoffs' distribution among the political actors (Riker 1962; von Neumann, Morgenstern 1944). Other studies emphasized the advantages in the negotiation process of the largest party within the parliamentary assembly, which has a higher chance to become the *formateur* in the search for a new government and has thus a higher probability of being included in the next (multi-party) cabinet (Austen-Smith, Banks 1988).

However, the inherent simplification of office-seeking theories does not take the ideological compatibility of the political actors into account. Policy-seeking coalition theories assume, by contrast, that parties are (also) driven by policy motivations. Thus, these models incorporate the distances between political parties on key policy dimensions. These theoretical models and their empirical evaluations show that parties' ideological proximity increases the chances that a given coalition will form and will remain stable over a legislative period (Bergmann, Bäck, Saalfeld 2022; Laver, Shepsle 1996). Following this strand of literature, previous studies predicted that political parties occupying a close position on the general left-right axis should be more likely to form a coalition government and should reach a policy agreement swiftly (see Axelrod 1970; De Swaan 1973; Ecker, Meyer 2020).

Laver and Schofield (1990) suggested on the basis of a comparative analysis of multi-party systems to consider political spaces as structured not only by a single ideological dimension. Since voting behaviour and party competition are structured by several policy dimensions as, for instance, the number of cleavages in European countries indicate (Adams, Merrill, Grofman 2005; Lipset and Rokkan 1967), policy-seeking parties have to reach agreements on specific policy issues in coalition negotiations which cannot be (completely) covered by a single left-right dimension. This sets incentives for the development of multi-dimensional models of coalition formation and for methods that allow for estimating the policy-area specific positions of parties. Given that party competition in most European countries is structured by at least two policy dimensions, more recent studies on government formation argued that multi-dimensional concepts of measuring the distances between parties and, therefore, the programmatic heterogeneity of potential coalitions can better explain the outcomes of government formation processes than models which focus on a single policy dimension only (e.g., Debus 2009).⁹

Furthermore, external events can increase the salience of specific policy domains which, in turn, influence the bargaining environment in which the government formation process takes place. Given that immigration has emerged as a key priority in political parties' policy agendas, Bräuninger et al. (2019) analysed in a case study on the 2017 government formation process in Germany the effect that the distances between the parties had on immigration-related issues – alongside with inter-party division on economic policy – and found that indeed incorporating immigration policy reveals a more detailed picture on the formation of the German government in 2017 and 2018. Other studies

⁹ The need to consider the ideological distance of parties on specific dimensions also emerges in studies that analyse voters' considerations about potential government coalitions. Relying on a multi-dimensional approach to coalition politics, Welz (2023) shows that voters negatively evaluate cabinet coalitions whose members are highly heterogeneous on issues that are salient to the electorate.

considered both the ideological compatibility of coalition partners and the degree of polarization within the party system (see, e.g., Golder 2010; Indridason 2011 and the contributions in Bergman, Bäck, Hellström 2021). It is supposed that polarization within a legislature alter the impact of ideological heterogeneity on the chance that a given coalition will form. This is because coalition members must not only assess the level of division among current partners but also consider the ideological differences with other parties in the respective parliament or legislature (Indridason 2011).

Finally, another strand of literature focuses on the impact that the institutional setting or behavioural norms might have on the final result of the coalition formation process. For example, some studies highlight the advantage of the incumbent cabinet parties for becoming again a member of the government after the next round of coalition negotiations (Laver, Shepsle 1996; Martin, Stevenson 2010; Schleiter, Bucur 2023). Moreover, pre-election agreements (Golder 2006) or explicit declarations of rejecting parties as coalition partners (Debus 2009; Martin, Stevenson 2001) represent behavioural norms helping to predict the parliamentary agreement that will form between political parties. These behavioural constraints mark party competition and affect the post-electoral phase of government formation.

3.2. Coalition bargaining in multi-dimensional political spaces

The Eurozone crisis and the waves of mass migration heightened the existing trend towards a multi-dimensional structure of party competition in Europe. Already in the 1970s, a new conflict line emerged that differentiated between “left-libertarian versus right-authoritarian” views (Kitschelt 1994), which could also be labelled as differences between “green/alternative/libertarian vis-à-vis traditional/authoritarian/nationalist” positions (Hooghe, Marks, Wilson 2002), “libertarian-universalistic and traditionalist-communitarian values” (Bornschieer 2010), or an “integration-demarcation” (Kriesi et al. 2006) cleavage.

The increasing complexity in political systems' structure makes it challenging to comprehensively elucidate party competition dynamics by referring to a single ideological dimension (see Bakker, Jolly, Polk 2012; Benoit, Laver 2012). Based on these premises and to study the impact of the European financial crisis and the migration crisis on the outcome of the government formation processes in Southern Europe, we assume that negotiations over the partisan composition of the next government occur in a three-dimensional political space. This policy space consists of three policy dimensions: the economic left-right axis, the socio-cultural dimension encompassing immigration-related issues, and a dimension that differentiates between positive and negative views on further European integration steps. Parties' stances on EU-related issues can show a high degree of alignment with parties' positions on the socio-cultural conflict dimension.

However, these dimensions do by far not overlap: Christian democratic parties, for instance, tend to adopt traditionalist positions on a societal policy dimension, but belong to the party family that supports further steps in European integration (see, e.g., Debus 2022). Issues that belong to both dimensions have been extensively politicized by political parties to mobilize different segments of the electorate and gave rise to an election-dependent conflict dimension (Charalambous, Conti, Pedrazzani 2023; Hutter, Kriesi 2022; Kriesi 2016). Furthermore, considering the uneven changes in the structure of political spaces in Southern Europe, we find it useful to consider analysing the impact of these conflict dimensions on government formation separately.

Indeed, the emergence of a new dimension potentially orthogonal to the economic left-right axis has taken on different connotations among southern European member states and cross-country differences exist in the salience and in the configuration of the new cultural dimension of conflict. The findings of the analysis conducted in Chapter I provide evidence that, within Southern Europe, socio-cultural issues tend to be highly correlated with economic issues since the onset of the financial crisis. Nevertheless, in a political context characterized by the increasing influence exerted by European institutions in

domestic affairs, issues associated with the European integration process have effectively configured the political landscape with parties' positions on EU-related dimensions facilitating the emergence of a distinct axis of party competition, orthogonal to the economic axis (see Giannetti, Pedrazzani, Pinto 2017; Hutter, Kriesi, Vidal 2018). Although the magnitude of the financial crisis has oriented party competition dynamics mainly towards the economic axis of competition, the outbreak of the refugee crisis has increased the salience of the new cultural cleavage, encompassing socio-cultural and immigration-related issues (see Charalambous, Conti, Pedrazzani 2023). As shown in Chapter I, with the increasing exposure of peripheral Southern European countries to migratory challenges, immigration-related issues started to shape the configuration of the ideological spaces especially in those countries exposed to greater migratory pressure. In this political context, the electoral success of Euro-sceptic, anti-austerity, and anti-immigration political actors has placed these parties as key players in the respective government formation processes. Consequently, these parties integrated these issues into the dynamics of coalition formation.

On the basis of the effects that the global financial crisis and the waves of mass migration had on the political decision-making and on policy outputs as well as on the patterns of party systems and party competition in Europe in general and in Southern Europe in particular (Hutter, Kriesi 2021; Kriesi 2016), we expect that government formation is increasingly influenced by differences between the potential coalition partners on European and socio-cultural issues such as migration and integration policy. This should be in particular the case in countries like Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain, which needed the support of the EU for the consolidation of their national budget. The latter, however, implied a severe amount of influence of the EU and its member states on political reforms in these four countries, which should have made questions on European integration highly salient not only for voters, but also for parties when they negotiate over policy compromises that should guide the next government. If parties would not focus on increasingly salient policy dimensions like European integration and socio-cultural questions during the coalition negotiations, the

respective parties would risk accepting far-reaching compromises on issues that voters consider as important. The latter, in turn, would increase the risk for the respective parties to lose support in the next election.

Based on these considerations, we argue that exogenous events can change the parties' utility of forming a specific coalition government. Parties can benefit from the increased salience of European and socio-cultural issues to cooperate and to govern with competitors that adopt very different positions on policy dimensions that lost importance due to the exogenous events that increased the saliency for the other policy dimensions. We therefore expect that *government formation in Southern Europe is increasingly influenced by the policy distances between potential coalition partners on European integration and a socio-cultural policy dimension.*

3.3. The context of government formation in Southern Europe: a brief review

Patterns of government formation vary among the countries selected in our analysis. In Spain and Portugal, for example, the government formation process often led to outcomes that were easily predictable on the basis of post-electoral results, creating parliamentary majorities identifiable with a specific side of the political spectrum. On the contrary, in Italy and Greece, the process of governments formation led to parliamentary alliances that were not always expectable, especially in the case of inter-electoral cabinets. We therefore provide a brief overview of the political context that characterize the process of government formation in the four countries under study in the following subsections.

3.3.1. The increased role of EU-related issues in the Greek government formation process

In Greece, the consequences of the economic crisis, coupled with the Athens government's request for financial assistance, profoundly influenced patterns of government formation since 2010. These patterns were historically marked by the alternation in power of the two main traditional parties, the conservative New

Democracy party (ND) and the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK). The need to negotiate bailout agreements with European and supranational institutions and implement public debt reduction measures disrupted the bipolar logic of party competition, undermined the stability of incumbent governments, and resulted in the formation of caretaker and national unity cabinets (see Verney, Bosco 2013). In this political context, EU-related issues increasingly gained salience to structure the party competition with the emergence of a conflict line cleaving pro-EU from Eurosceptic parties (see Hutter, Kriesi, Vidal 2018). Therefore, parties' interactions along the "pro-/anti-bailout" political divide inevitably characterized government negotiations' outcomes and influenced the dynamics of coalition formation. This resulted in the formation of cabinets whose members, rather than being driven by ideological proximity, have demonstrated a shared commitment to implement austerity measures. Thus, to secure the EU bailout through the implementation of structural reforms, the two historical rival parties, ND and PASOK, entered a coalition government with the far-right Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) in the Papademos cabinet in 2011. Subsequently, they formed a coalition with the social democratic Democratic Left (DIMAR) in the cabinet led by Antonis Samaras in 2012. The formation of the coalition cabinet led by Alexis Tsipras in 2015 followed a different rationale. This cabinet relied on an agreement between the radical left SYRIZA and the far-right Greek Independent party (ANEL). Despite being distant on economic and societal issues, both parties agreed on the need to implement anti-austerity measures and adopted anti-elitist positions with reference to both mainstream parties and European and international leaders (see Vasilopoulou 2018).

The magnitude of the Eurozone crisis took centre stage, hindering immigration issues to gain increased salience, despite of the increased influx of refugees (Charalambous, Conti, Pedrazzani 2023). In fact, although extreme right parties were the main drivers of the politicization of cultural issues during the migration crisis (Hutter, Kriesi 2022), economic and European policy domains prevailed in the Greek election campaigns. The electoral success of far-right and anti-immigrant parties Golden Dawn in 2015 and Greek Solution in

2019 cannot be explained without reference to their harsh criticism of traditional parties and European institutions deemed incapable of facing the multiple crisis that have hit the country (see Ellinas 2013).

3.3.2. The prevailing of non-economic issues in the Italian multiple crisis context

In Italy, the last two decades of party competition have been shaped by both the economic and refugee crisis, the role of European institutions in domestic affairs, the formation of new parties and the rebranding of existing political actors. These dynamics reflected in the coalition formation process, leading often to government agreements between ideologically not-adjacent political parties (Giannetti, Pedrazzani, Pinto 2022). As in Greece, the pressure exerted by the European institutions to implement austerity measures to stall the effects of the economic crisis altered the trajectory of incumbent governments. EU-related issues gained attention in the parties' election manifestos and played a significant role in shaping party competition. Studies on the dimensionality of Italian policy space reveal that European policy – in addition to an economic policy dimension – profoundly influenced party competition (Giannetti, Pedrazzani, Pinto 2017). This specific conflict structure also influenced the formation of agreements between parties that shared a pro-European vision, for instance in case of the coalition governments led by Prime Ministers Letta, Renzi and Gentiloni after the 2013 elections. The increased importance of issues beyond the economic policy dimension paved the way for the electoral success of new political actors and existing parties that went through a radical rebranding. In this vein, the parliamentary breakthrough of the Five Star Movement (M5S) has built on a harsh criticism towards European authorities to which the party attributes responsibility for the implementation of austerity measures and towards national elites deemed incapable to tackle the consequences of the economic crisis (see Conti, Memoli 2015).

In addition, fostered by the onset of the refugee crisis, socio-cultural issues, such as immigration, have been used by those political actors who attempted to

propose themselves as issue-owners to the electorate (see De Vries, Hobolt 2020). This is the case of the League (L) which in the 2018 elections achieved the best voting results of a right-wing party by means of centring the electoral campaign on the issues of immigration and internal security together with a harsh criticism towards European institutions (see D'Alimonte 2019). Following the 2018 elections, the government agreement between M5S and L (e.g., the Conte I cabinet) confirms the increased role of non-economic policy issues for coalition formation (Giannetti, Pedrazzani, Pinto 2018). Indeed, the two parties adopted opposing stances on economic issues whilst sharing common positions on European and immigration policies. Although the electoral success of Brothers of Italy (FdI) in the 2022 parliamentary election is due to a combination of multiple factors (see Baldini, Tronconi, Angelucci 2022), among which the party's anti-incumbency status and leadership played an active role, FdI also capitalized throughout its history on anti-immigration sentiments and on a critical perspective towards the European institutions and integration process.

3.3.3. The dominance of economic issues in Portuguese coalition politics

Government formation in Portugal is dominated by two main political parties, the Socialist Party (PS) and the liberal-conservative Social Democratic Party (PPD/PSD). Economic issues extensively influence party competition in Portugal. The European financial crisis since 2010 exacerbated the difficulties of an economy struggling with already high levels of unemployment. The role of the European institutions in domestic economic affairs was the central issue in the electoral campaigns of 2011 and 2015. These elections took place in a context characterized by the Portuguese government's request for financial assistance by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund. However, unlike other southern European countries, the effects of the financial crisis did not favour the emergence of new or anti-elitist political parties, especially on the left side of the political spectrum. Conversely, the Eurozone crisis induced a centrifugal direction to party

competition on economic issues with left-wing mainstream parties shifting to the left on the economic dimension.

In this political context, socio-cultural issues did not significantly influence party competition, which was – and still is – mostly shaped by economic issues (see Da Silva, Mendes 2019). However, immigration-related issues linked to nationalist stances and Euroscepticism dominate the rhetoric of recently formed political parties, such as the Chega party. Founded in 2019, it only won one seat in the 2019 legislative elections. However, it has since emerged as a viable contender for right-wing parties, notably evidenced by its electoral performance in the 2022 legislative elections, where it secured the third-highest number of votes. Based on the analysis of Chega representatives' political texts and proposals, Mendes (2021) shows that the party's policy agenda aligns with the characteristics of radical right parties. This alignment is evident in the emphasis on nativist, populist, and authoritarian stances.

3.3.4. The dominance of economic and regionalist issues in Spanish party competition

The process of governments formation in Spain has been characterized – until the 2019 parliamentary election – by the alternation of the two mainstream parties as the respective leading majority party. The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and the Popular Party (PP) led single-party governments with the external support of smaller, mostly regionalist parties when they did not control an absolute majority in the parliament. Following the 2019 political elections, the first government based on a post-electoral coalition agreement between the PSOE and the left-wing populist Podemos (UP) took office under the leadership of Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. Over the last two decades, the impact of the economic crisis and its consequences on the labour market determined the structure of party competition and had a major influence on the decision-making processes of Spanish parties and voters. Corruption scandals and the implementation of austerity measures aiming at mitigating the effects of the great recession shaped the political debate and contributed to the formation of new

political parties located on both sides of the ideological spectrum (see Cordero, Simón 2016). In this context, the rise of liberal Ciudadanos in 2006 and of Podemos in 2014 undermined the traditional bipolar logic of Spanish party competition (see Orriols, Cordero 2016).

Socio-cultural issues dominated Spanish election campaign as much as in other European countries. On the contrary, the configuration of the Spanish political space reflected the conflict over fiscal conservatism on the one side and over regional and independence-related issues on the other (Hutter, Kriesi, Vidal 2018; Palau et al. 2023). European integration issues mostly align with matters of delegation and decentralization of power rather than being embedded in a specific or an economic conflict dimension. Nevertheless, as in the case of Portugal, socio-cultural issues, such as the integration of immigrants and the enforcement of civil rights, gained attention, in particular in the rhetoric of recently formed parties, such as the far-right populist Vox. Marking the end of the so-called “Spanish exception” characterized by the absence of radical right-wing parties raised in the aftermath of the economic crisis, Vox mobilized large portions of voters on the issue of Catalan independence by imposing itself as a defender of nationalist values and by taking nativist, anti-regionalist and anti-immigrant positions (Payá, Martínez 2020).

Table 1: Formation opportunities.

| | Elections | Cabinet | Type of Government | Alternatives | Coalition | Status | Majority threshold | Coalition parties |
|----------|-----------|------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------------------|--------------------|--|
| Italy | 2018 | Conte II | Inter-electoral | 511 | Yes | Surplus majority | 315 | PD (112) - SI (14) - M5S (227) |
| | | Conte I | Post-electoral | 511 | Yes | Minimal winning | 315 | LN (125) - M5S (227) |
| | 2013 | Gentiloni | Inter-electoral | 2047 | Yes | Surplus majority | 315 | NcD (29) - PD (297) - UDC (8) |
| | | Renzi | Inter-electoral | 2047 | Yes | Surplus majority | 315 | NcD (29) - PD (297) - SC (38) - UDC (8) |
| | | Letta | Post-electoral | 1023 | Yes | Surplus majority | 315 | FI (98) - PD (297) - SC (38) - UDC (8) |
| | 2008 | Berlusconi IV(c) | Inter-electoral | 255 | Yes | Minority | 315 | LN (59) - PdL (240) |
| | | Berlusconi IV(b) | Inter-electoral | 255 | Yes | Minimal winning | 315 | FLI (33) - LN (59) - PdL (240) |
| | | Berlusconi IV | Post-electoral | 127 | Yes | Surplus majority | 315 | LN (60) - MpA (8) - PdL (276) |
| | 2006 | Prodi II | Post-electoral | 8191 | Yes | Surplus majority | 315 | RC (41) -Ulivo (226) – PdCI (16) – IdV (17) – VERDI (15) – RnP (18) – UDEUR (10) |
| Spain | 2019 | Sanchez II | Post-electoral | 4095 | Yes | Minority | 175 | UP (35) – PSOE (120) |
| | 2016 | Sanchez I | Inter-electoral | 511 | No | Minority | 175 | PSOE (85) |
| | | Rajoy II | Post-electoral | 511 | No | Minority | 175 | PP (137) |
| | 2011 | Rajoy I | Post-electoral | 1023 | No | Single party majority | 175 | PP (186) |
| | 2008 | Zapatero II | Post-electoral | 511 | No | Minority | 175 | PSOE (169) |
| | 2004 | Zapatero I | Post-electoral | 1023 | No | Minority | 175 | PSOE (164) |
| Portugal | 2019 | Costa II | Post-electoral | 63 | No | Minority | 115 | PS (108) |
| | 2015 | Costa I | Inter-electoral | 31 | No | Minority | 115 | PS (86) |
| | | Coelho II | Post-electoral | 31 | Yes | Minority | 115 | Frente (PP-PsD) (107) |
| | 2011 | Coelho I | Post-electoral | 31 | Yes | Minimal winning | 115 | PP (24) – PsD (108) |
| | 2009 | Sócrates II | Post-electoral | 31 | No | Minority | 115 | PS (97) |
| | 2005 | Sócrates | Post-electoral | 31 | No | Single party majority | 115 | PS (121) |
| Greece | 2019 | Mitsotakis | Post-electoral | 63 | No | Single party majority | 150 | ND (158) |
| | 2015 | Tsipras II | Post-electoral | 255 | Yes | Minimal winning | 150 | ANEL (10) – SYRIZA (145) |
| | 2012 | Samaras | Post-electoral | 127 | Yes | Surplus majority | 150 | PASOK (33) – DIMAR (17) -ND (129) |
| | 2009 | Papademos | Inter-electoral | 31 | Yes | Surplus majority | 150 | ND (91) - PASOK (160) |
| | | Papandreou | Post-electoral | 31 | No | Single party majority | 150 | PASOK (160) |
| | 2004 | Karamanlis | Post-electoral | 15 | No | Single party majority | 150 | ND (165) |
| | | | Total | 23381 | | | | |

3.4. Data and methods

3.4.1. Measuring the ideological heterogeneity of potential coalitions

To examine the effects of the variables identified by the office-seeking and the policy-seeking theories on the coalition formation process and to incorporate the effects of behavioural constraints on patterns of government formation, we assume that a parliament i will choose a governing coalition c out of a set of combinations between all parliamentary parties. This coalition c will maximize the utility of i . More precisely, let c be a coalition of n political parties, m the number of dimensions structuring the political space, with $j = 1, \dots, m$, the utility function of the i -th legislature is defined as:

$$U_i(c) = - \sum_j^m WIH_{jc} + t_{ic} + X_{ic}$$

This utility function was derived from Adams, Merrill, Grofman (2005) to analyse individuals' voting behaviour and applied by Debus (2009) to the context of coalition formation. It suggests that the utility of a parliament to form or support a coalition c depends on the amount of ideological heterogeneity of the participating parties, which is weighted by the importance the coalition parties attribute to each dimension j that structures the policy space (WIH_{jc}). The variable t_{ic} captures the effect derived by size-driven attributes and behavioural constraints on government formation. Therefore, the utility function takes into account the advantages of party combinations in the government formation process by identifying potential coalitions to be minimal winning, comprising the smallest number of parties, including the largest parliamentary party, or being based upon a pre-electoral alliance. Component X_{ic} refers to the determinants that play a role in the process of coalition building, but which are not directly measurable or observable.

To estimate the weighted ideological heterogeneity between the political parties belonging to a given coalition, we denote by s_k^j the relative salience attributed by party k to dimension j and by x_k^j the ideological positioning of party

k on policy dimension j . The weighted ideological heterogeneity of coalition c is given by

$$WIH_c = \frac{1}{n(n-1)} \sum_{k=1}^n \sum_{\substack{l=1 \\ l \neq k}}^n \left(\sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^m (s_k^j (x_k^j - x_l^j))^2} \right).$$

This measurement of intra-coalition conflict suggests that the ideological heterogeneity of a given coalition is a function of the weighted Euclidean distance between political parties' positions on the dimensions structuring the respective policy space. The rationale behind this approach is that a political party will tend to select bargaining partners in a way that the degree of intra-coalition conflict is as small as possible. If a party attaches less importance to a policy area in which it adopts a position that is very different from another party, the low salience of the respective domain for the first mentioned party might help to find a policy compromise with the other party. By contrast, if two parties have relatively similar positions on an issue dimension, but both consider this dimension as highly important, the parties, will be reluctant to make policy concessions.

3.4.2. Empirical model

The analysis of the partisan composition of a government is based on the identification of all the potential coalitions that could form a government. Let n be the number of political parties within a given parliament, the number of potential coalitions will be $2^n - 1$. We consider two events as government formation opportunities: (1) an election aimed at renewing the members of the parliament and (2) the formation of a new inter-electoral cabinet following a change in the partisan composition of the incumbent government or a replacement of the prime minister (see Table 1). Therefore, all combinations of parliamentary parties represent an opportunity for the formation of a cabinet, and among these opportunities only one will form the government. The dependent variable is therefore modelled as a dichotomous variable which is coded 1 in the case that a party combination formed a government and coded 0 in all other cases. We examine the effect of office- and policy-seeking attributes and the

impact of behavioural constraints on the patterns of government formation by relying on conditional logit models.¹⁰ Since the number of potential coalitions depend on the number of parliamentary parties, the number of potential coalitions varies between the formation opportunities. We use a conditional logit model (McFadden 1973) to explain the outcome of the government formation process in the countries under study. The specification defines each government formation process as a separate choice set (see Martin, Stevenson 2001). The model predicts which of the potential coalitions will form, taking the weighted ideological heterogeneity of the potential coalitions and other theoretically relevant factors into account.¹¹

There are three sets of independent variables. The first one identifies the characteristics that reflect the office-seeking approach for explaining coalition formation. Based on the number of seats a party controls in parliament, we can identify minority coalitions, minimal winning coalitions or surplus majority coalitions. Furthermore, we include a variable that provides information on the number of parties that form a potential coalition and a dummy variable indicating whether the largest parliamentary party is included in the respective party combination.

The second set of variables identifies the characteristics that refer to the policy-seeking theories and that consider the ideological compatibility of the parties. We use the Chapel Hill expert survey (Jolly et al. 2022; Polk et al. 2017)

¹⁰ Conditional logit model operates under the assumption of independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA). We test whether this assumption is violated following the methodology developed by Martin and Stevenson (2001). Table 4 and Tables A2, A3 and A4 display the average IIA-test values indicating that there is no significant evidence to reject the null hypothesis that the independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA) assumption holds.

¹¹ The formation opportunities are identified by the country-specific characteristics, so that including country-fixed effects in the model would over specify the model. Moreover, country dummy variables would not vary within the choice set of potential coalitions, so that no coefficient could be estimated in conditional logit model.

because this data provides not only estimates on the policy-area specific position of parties in the countries we study in this contribution, but also on the party-specific saliency of the three policy dimensions we are interested in.¹² Based on the Chapel Hill data, we measure the weighted ideological heterogeneity of all potential coalitions on an economic, European and socio-cultural policy dimension. Since the Chapel Hill survey covers several dimensions of EU-related issues, we refer to the average of the parties' score on issues relating to European integration in general, the EU internal market dimension, and the EU security dimension (see Jolly et al. 2022 for more details on the respective dimensions). The mean score of the parties' economic policy position stem from the redistribution policy dimension, the taxes vs. spending dimension, the deregulation dimension, decentralization and the environmental policy dimension.¹³ Finally, we estimate the position of parties on the socio-cultural dimension by means of the average between the parties' placement on immigration issues, multiculturalism, civil liberties and social liberalism. The party-specific saliences of economic policy, EU-related issues and socio-cultural policies are measured in a similar vein.¹⁴

To examine the effects of institutional and behavioural constraints on government formation, we include a dichotomous variable that identifies pre-

¹² The CHES estimates on the parties' policy profile on EU-related issues are based on a 7-point scale. To ensure consistency with the other measures on economic and societal policy, we adjusted the estimates on EU-related issues to a 11-point scale.

¹³ Previous studies considered environmental issues as structuring the cultural dimension of political conflict (Bornschieer 2010; Kriesi et al. 2006). However, in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey format parties' positions on environment are estimated considering the trade-off between economic growth and environmental protection. This led us to include environmental issues as one of the items for estimating the parties' mean position on the economic policy dimension. The results of the analysis do not substantially change if environmental issues are moved to the socio-cultural policy dimension.

¹⁴ The 2019 and 2014 CHES waves do not provide estimates on the issue-specific saliences. We therefore rely on the experts' evaluation of the salience attributed to economic and socio-cultural issues in general.

electoral alliances or agreements between parties. In addition, we include the incumbency status in the empirical models and thus take into account that bargaining and transaction costs for the parties that form the incumbent government are lower, which sets incentives to continue the respective coalition government. Both variables are coded 1 when the partisan composition under consideration involves parties agreed on a (formal) pre-electoral pact or formed the incumbent cabinet, and 0 otherwise.

3.5. *Results*

3.5.1. *Descriptive analysis*

Tables 2 and 3 show the descriptive statistics of both potential and actually formed coalitions. As shown by the data, out of all the coalitions that have been formed, 15% can be classified as minimal winning, whilst the remaining 37% are categorized as minority coalitions. Conversely, it is worth noting that 48% of the formed government coalitions contain unnecessary members to reach the legislative majority. However, when comparing potential and formed coalitions, the percentage of surplus majority coalitions remains stable. In contrast, there is a substantial increase in the proportion of minimal winning coalitions when we exclusively consider the governments that have been formed. Furthermore, the majority of coalitions that were actually formed were not based on pre-electoral agreements, accounting for only 15% of the total.

Regarding policy factors, the descriptive analysis reveals that the weighted ideological heterogeneity is lower in case of party combinations that finally formed the government than for party combinations that not formed. We can observe the same pattern when considering the programmatic distance between the parties on the three policy dimensions that structure the bargaining environment. These descriptive results suggest that indeed formed coalitions consist of parties that are programmatically similar. However, some interesting patterns emerge that support our claim that country-specific differences in party competition in general and the relevance of policy dimensions in particular

influence the patterns of government formation in Southern Europe. In Greece, the party combinations that finally formed a government involved political parties that shared similar positions on European issues. This finding is consistent with the increased role of EU related issues in shaping Greek party competition over the past two decades. In Portugal, the prevalence of economic issues translates into government coalitions whose members are adjacent on the economic policy dimension. In Italy, despite the salience of EU related issues in party competition, coalition parties seem closer on economic issues than on European policy and socio-cultural domains.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on potential coalitions.

| | Potential Coalitions | General WIH | WIH on Economic policy | WIH on EU policy | WIH on Sociocultural policy | % Minority coalitions | % Surplus Majority coalitions | % MWC coalitions | % Pre-electoral alliances |
|-----------------|----------------------|-------------|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| Greece | 522 | 2.33 | 2.53 | 4.22 | 3.74 | 0.49 | 0.47 | 0.04 | 0.00 |
| Italy | 14967 | 1.77 | 1.98 | 3.06 | 2.92 | 0.50 | 0.48 | 0.02 | 0.02 |
| Portugal | 218 | 1.72 | 2.52 | 2.87 | 2.70 | 0.50 | 0.40 | 0.11 | 0.04 |
| Spain | 7674 | 1.48 | 2.68 | 1.80 | 2.54 | 0.51 | 0.48 | 0.01 | 0.00 |
| Total | 23381 | 1.69 | 2.23 | 2.67 | 2.81 | 0.50 | 0.48 | 0.02 | 0.01 |

Table 3: Descriptive statistics on formed coalitions.

| | Potential Coalitions | General WIH | WIH on Economic policy | WIH on EU policy | WIH on Sociocultural policy | % Minority coalitions | % Surplus Majority coalitions | % MWC coalitions | % Pre-electoral alliances |
|-----------------|----------------------|-------------|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| Greece | 6 | 0.93 | 1.30 | 0.45 | 2.43 | 0.00 | 0.83 | 0.17 | 0.00 |
| Italy | 9 | 1.25 | 1.49 | 2.14 | 2.29 | 0.11 | 0.67 | 0.22 | 0.33 |
| Portugal | 6 | 0.08 | 0.06 | 0.18 | 0.24 | 0.67 | 0.17 | 0.17 | 0.17 |
| Spain | 6 | 0.19 | 0.27 | 0.47 | 0.23 | 0.83 | 0.17 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Total | 27 | 0.68 | 0.86 | 0.96 | 1.41 | 0.37 | 0.48 | 0.15 | 0.15 |

Notes: statistics included in the section Total stand for the mean of the variables weighted by the number of potential coalitions for each country.

3.5.2. *Multivariate analysis*

Because the descriptive analysis does not allow for an evaluation of the hypothesis, we turn to the results of the conditional logit models in the following section. Table 4 shows the results of the conditional logit analysis on the effect of size, policy and behavioural attributes on patterns of government formation. The results of Model 1 shows that parties' ideological heterogeneity weighted by issue salience exerts a significant impact on the formation of governments. In fact, the greater the general programmatic distance of coalition partners, the lower the probability that those parties will form a coalition cabinet.

Concerning size factors, minimal winning coalitions are more likely to form with respect to minority coalition. Furthermore, the chances of negotiations resulting in a favourable outcome are higher if they involve the smallest number of parties or if they include the largest party within the legislative assembly. Pre-electoral alliances increase the likelihood to enter a coalition government, although the variable barely reaches the conventional threshold of statistical significance. Conversely, being a surplus majority coalition or being a copy of the incumbent administration do not exert a significant influence on the formation of governments.

To test our hypothesis, model 2 takes into account the distance between parties' positions on the three specific axes of competition: the economic left-right axis, the socio-cultural axis, and the axis of conflict relating to attitudes towards the European Union.¹⁵ The results suggest that the heterogeneity between the parties on the socio-economic and on the European dimension has a statistically significant impact on the government formation outcome in Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. The weighted heterogeneity between parties on the socio-cultural axis does not influence government formation significantly.

¹⁵ The correlation between the parties' heterogeneity on the EU and socio-cultural dimension is .299 and thus shows a low degree of statistical association between the two variables.

Nevertheless, the findings indicate that economic policy is – at least in the four countries under study – not the only decisive issue that matter for coalition formation.

Model 3 replicates the analysis with the parties' weighted distance on EU and socio-cultural issues interacted with a dummy variable identifying government coalitions formed either before or in the aftermath of the EU sovereign debt crisis and the refugee crisis, respectively. This allows us to investigate the impact of issue-specific heterogeneity indicators while also considering the political context that could enhance the salience of certain non-economic political factors. It turns out that government formation process before 2010 is not influenced by the ideological heterogeneity of political parties on EU issues. On the contrary, during and after the Eurozone debt crisis, EU-related issues heavily affect the bargaining process over coalition formation. Nevertheless, the positions parties adopt on socio-cultural issues do not still exert any relevant impact on the ultimate outcome of the government formation game.

To evaluate the predictive strength of the models presented above, we calculate the margin of error that these models have in predicting the exact governing coalition that actually formed a cabinet. For each potential coalition that has the possibility to form after a formation opportunity, we calculate the predicted probabilities based on the logistic regression models' coefficients. Assuming that the party composition with the highest predicted probability is the one that actually formed the government (see Martin, Stevenson 2001), we calculate for each formation opportunity the difference between the predicted probability associated with each coalition and the highest probability recorded from the model. This difference must be equal to 0 in the case of the partisan coalition that actually formed a cabinet. A model with a high degree of predictive efficiency must assume on average a difference value tending to zero.

As shown in Table 4, the models exhibit a high degree of predictive efficiency. In particular, models 2 and 3 minimize the chances of incorrectly predicting government formation when comparing with the first model.

Furthermore, the increasing Pseudo R^2 and log likelihood scores suggest that the goodness-of-fit is greater in the case of the model that includes information on policy issue-specific heterogeneity indicators.

Table 4: Conditional logistic regression results.

| | M1 | M2 | M3 |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Size factors | | | |
| Minority coalition (mwc) | -2.697*** (-3.094) | -2.635*** (-2.961) | -2.662*** (-2.980) |
| Surplus majority coalition (mwc) | 0.247 (0.317) | 0.506 (0.627) | 0.531 (0.652) |
| Number of parties | -1.487*** (-4.445) | -1.506*** (-4.299) | -1.512*** (-4.254) |
| Largest party | 3.239*** (3.729) | 3.299*** (3.828) | 3.266*** (3.795) |
| Behaviouralist factors | | | |
| Pre-electoral agreement | 1.415 ⁺ (1.797) | 1.312 ⁺ (1.653) | 1.303 (1.625) |
| Incumbent status | 0.246 (0.292) | 0.044 (0.052) | 0.103 (0.122) |
| Policy factors | | | |
| Weighted ideological heterogeneity (WIH) | -1.622*** (-3.270) | | |
| WIH (left-right economic dimension) | | -1.303*** (-3.014) | -1.313*** (-3.034) |
| WIH (EU dimension) | | -0.488** (-2.262) | |
| WIH (sociocultural dimension) | | 0.422 (1.488) | |
| Interaction effect (Systemic crises) | | | |
| <i>WIH (EU dimension) X EU debt crisis</i> | | | |
| Before crisis | | | -0.313 (-0.772) |
| After crisis | | | -0.520** (-2.252) |
| <i>WIH (sociocultural dimension) X refugee crisis</i> | | | |
| Before crisis | | | 0.342 (1.019) |
| After crisis | | | 0.474 (1.534) |
| Number of potential coalitions | 23381 | 23381 | 23381 |
| Pseudo R ² | 0.492 | 0.513 | 0.514 |
| Log likelihood | -74.130 | -71.059 | -70.92 |
| AIC | 162.3 | 160.1 | 163.8 |
| Prediction error | 0.170 | 0.160 | 0.160 |
| Average P-value for rejecting IIA Assumption | 0.99 | 0.96 | 0.98 |

Note: *t*-values in parentheses. ⁺ $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

3.5.3. Country-specific analysis and robustness tests

Since we are interested in investigating what factors influence the likelihood that a given partisan composition will enter a coalition government, as a first robustness test we replicate the analysis excluding all the formation opportunities in which a single party won a parliamentary majority (see Martin, Stevenson 2001). When a party controls the majority within the legislative assembly, it may not feel compelled to collaborate or compromise with other political actors since it already has the power to implement its agenda without seeking consensus. The resulting logistic regression coefficients exhibit the same signs and the same level of statistical significance of the models presented in the empirical section (see Table A1 in the appendix).

To further explore the results of our analysis, we estimated the models for two country groups separately that share not only similarities in their patterns of party competition but also in the type of Euroscepticism they exhibit (Greece and Italy on the one side and Portugal and Spain on the other). Following this perspective, Teperoglou and Belchior (2020) identify a structural nature of Euroscepticism in Italy and Greece, whilst characterizing the Euroscepticism observed in Spain and Portugal as predominantly "conjunctural". The results are reported in Tables A2 and A3. The analysis that focused solely on Italy and Greece confirms that parties' heterogeneity on European issues, together with parties' attempt to minimize the divergences on the economy, have been pivotal in explaining the process of government formation in the last two decades of party competition. This tendency is particularly evident in the period following the outbreak of the financial crisis, which supports our hypothesis. Furthermore, these findings align with the characterization of Italy and Greece as two countries where Euroscepticism is inherently structural in nature (Teperoglou, Belchior 2020). On the contrary, the results show that in the aftermath of the refugee crisis formed coalitions were distant on socio-cultural issues. A potential explanation for this unexpected finding could be that Italian and Greek governments needed a coherent policy position on EU affairs to have more

bargaining power to negotiate with the EU institutions and paid less attention to their differences in migration policy.

The results based on the Spanish and Portuguese government formation processes suggest that only size-factors contribute for explaining government formation. Policy-factors did not influence negotiations to reach an agreement between the negotiating parties. On the one hand, these results confirm that European issues were closely aligned with the economic policy in Spain and Portugal, and that national electoral campaigns were dominated by purely domestic issues, such as the Catalan independence issue in Spain. On the other hand, it is worth noting that coalition governments in Spain and Portugal were significantly less common compared to single-party (minority) cabinets (e.g., Field 2016). In such cases, the need to minimize distance on specific issues seems to be negligible.

To further investigate the results, Table A4 replicates the analysis using as dependent variable a dichotomous variable that indicates both the coalition that effectively formed the government and the set of parties that supported it, even if these support parties were not formally part of the cabinet. The results show that the greater the general programmatic distance among the parties is, the lower the probability that they will support the incumbent government. Furthermore, when segregating the ideological distance into its three components, it becomes evident that political parties attempt to minimize divergences on economic issues compared to EU and socio-cultural policy domains.

3.6. Conclusions

In this paper, we examined the factors that exerted a significant impact on the likelihood that a given partisan combination formed a cabinet in four southern European democracies: Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. In particular, we investigated whether, in a timeframe characterized by the effects of the economic crisis and the refugee crisis, European integration issues and socio-cultural policy flanked economic issues in determining government formation.

We found that European related issues had an exogenous impact on the patterns of government formation, in particular in the aftermath of the 2010 European financial crisis, showing that the economic left-right dimension is not the only pivotal political issue in the context of coalition formation in four southern European states. Potential coalitions whose members have a low degree of heterogeneity on social-cultural issues, such as immigration, civil rights and social liberalism, were, by contrast, not more likely to form a government. These results demonstrate the intensified role played by European institutions in the political process of southern European countries in the last two decades.

Nevertheless, our results suggest that parties' policy profiles on European integration influenced patterns of government formation in Greece and in Italy, while there is no such effect in case of Portugal and Spain. One reason might be that in Greece and in Italy, European issues had – because of the significance of the financial crisis and the reactions by the EU and its member states – a significant impact on the political agenda and affected voting behaviour and party competition more strongly than in Spain and in Portugal, where the economy represented the privileged axis for understanding party competition dynamics.

Future research should elaborate in more detail the differences between the four countries under study, possibly by integrating patterns of party competition and government formation in the sub-national level into the analysis (e.g., Bäck et al. 2013). Furthermore, it seems worthwhile to analyse the impact of exogenous events like an economic crisis, conflicts over migration and immigration or international conflicts on other aspects of coalition politics like the duration of the negotiation rounds (e.g., Bäck, Debus, Imre 2022; Ecker, Meyer 2020), the content of the coalition policy agreements or the allocation of cabinet posts to the coalition parties (see, e.g., Bäck, Debus, Dumont 2011; Klüver, Bäck 2019). One could argue that the impact of such external events influences not only the dimensionality of party competition, but also the issue attention that parties have for specific policies, which could then affect the content of coalition policy agreements and the parties' preferences for specific

cabinet posts. For instance, if a government has to implement austerity policies, the highly important ministry for finance should be less attractive for the coalition parties, even if they normally prefer this cabinet post. In addition, integrating the perspective of voters and citizens seems worthwhile, not only because vote-seeking parties should focus on the issues that the electorate considers as important, but also because voters have clear preferences regarding coalition formation outcomes, which parties should integrate in the government formation process in order not to lose support in upcoming elections (e.g., Welz 2023). To evaluate such expectations, more sophisticated data is, however, required that covers information on the whole coalition life cycle (see, e.g., Bergman, Bäck, Hellström 2021).

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CHAPTER 4

NON-ECONOMIC CRITICAL EVENTS AND GOVERNMENT TERMINATION: HOW THE MIGRATION CRISIS UNDERMINES POLITICAL STABILITY IN SOUTHERN EUROPE

Since the onset of the migration crisis, migratory flows to Europe have considerably intensified with an ever-increasing number of forcefully displaced people requesting asylum in the European Union. The outbreak of the refugee crisis has inevitably influenced member states' party competition dynamics with issues relating to immigration and relations with the European institutions gaining more salience for both political parties and voters. Studies in the comparative political science literature show, on the one hand, the emergence of a new axis of competition that cleaves pro-EU political parties from Euro-sceptic political actors that favour restrictive immigration policies (see Bornschier 2010; Giannetti, Pedrazzani, Pinto 2017; Hooghe, Marks 2002; 2018; Hutter, Kriesi, Vidal 2018). On the other hand, these studies demonstrate how the socio-economic dimension is not the only pivotal policy domain through which analysing domestic political conflict and parties' strategic interactions. Furthermore, some scholars show that the strategic emphasis on immigration and EU related issues has been at the centre of the programmatic agenda of those political actors alternately defined as challengers, niches or populist parties (see *inter alia* Hobolt, De Vries 2015; Meguid 2005; Mudde 2007). Extending the analysis to the government termination process and to the coalition bargaining, it is worthwhile to examine whether the effects of the migration crisis also influenced the stability of governments and their ability to reach the end of their constitutional mandate: in particular, socio-cultural exogenous shocks such as those represented by an increase in migratory flows can determine the early dissolution of cabinets?

The literature on the effects of critical events on government stability has mainly focused on the detrimental impact of fluctuating economic indicators on the probability that a given cabinet will remain stable during the inter-electoral period (see Warwick 1994). Following this strand of the literature, previous studies predicted that a bad economic performance measured through changes in unemployment and inflation rates affects the length of an executive in office (see Hellström, Walther 2019, Saalfeld 2013). However, in the last two decades of partisan competition, EU member states have been exposed not only to the negative consequences of the sovereign debt crisis but also to the political implications of increasing flows of displaced refugees. However, the link between exogenous shocks not attributable to a purely economic dimension and government survival needs further scrutiny.

This paper aims to fill this gap by focusing on the effect that non-economic critical events, such as the one represented by the migratory crisis had on the premature end of governments. I investigate whether the growing number of asylum applications per capita exerts a significant impact on the premature end of governments in four southern European countries: Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. To test the effect of the refugee crisis on the durability of governments, I implement several Cox proportional hazard regression models within a multivariate setting. For each government, I identify the office-seeking attributes and the behavioural constraints as they emerged after the negotiations for the formation of a cabinet. Furthermore, I check for the ideological distance and for the importance that the governing parties attribute to economic issues and EU-related issues. The latter is used as a proxy to capture parties' perspectives on how to address the refugee crisis. Whilst the literature on cabinet termination considered both the ideological compatibility of government parties (De Swaan 1973; Warwick 1979) and the degree of polarization within the party system (Bergmann, Bäck, Saalfeld 2022; Maoz and Somer-Topçu 2010), it remains unclear whether the salience attributed to specific pivotal issues affects the stability of executives during turbulent times. Issue salience affects government action, prompting the parties to prioritize the approval of those policy issues on

which they campaigned the most (see Bevan, John, Jennings 2011). Furthermore, parties' strategic emphasis influences the content of coalition agreements or the distribution of ministerial posts in the post-electoral phase of government formation (see Bäck, Debus, Dumont 2011).

The results indicate that exogenous shocks in terms of increasing asylum applications per capita undermine the survival of those governments whose majority parties attach a high level of importance to European affairs. In fact, when controlling for the degree of ideological disagreements with the other government partners, parties will be less willing to compromise when they attribute a high issue salience to the EU policy dimension and for which, therefore, any differences about European integration policies have a higher weight.

4.1. Literature on government termination: a brief overview

An extensive body of the political science literature has been devoted to the analysis of the duration and premature end of governments (for a comprehensive review see Laver 2003; Saalfeld 2008). In particular, two contending perspectives underpin the models that investigate the process of cabinet dissolution. The first approach considers the stability and life of a government as a deterministic process whose future trend can be determined with certainty, and therefore predicted, starting from the initial conditions and the characteristics that characterize the executive from the moment of its formation. These studies are based on the identification of a number of attributes about incumbent governments and the political systems within which they operate whose presence has an impact on the stability and durability of incumbent cabinets. Following this strand of the literature, Herman and Sanders (1977) identified majority governments and single-party cabinets as those characterized by greater stability. Conversely, Laver (1974) showed that coalition governments in which each governing party is pivotal to maintaining a parliamentary majority are more stable and capable of lasting over time. Other relevant studies incorporated the ideological compatibility of governing partners into their

models, with the prediction that governments consisting of adjacent parties on the left-right continuum were best suited to form stable and durable governing coalitions (see Axelrod 1970; Warwick 1979). Studies analysing the impact of the political systems' properties and the characteristics of the bargaining environment over the coalition-building process showed that a low degree of fractionalization of the legislative assembly and the presence of procedural norms, such as the requirement of an investiture vote, delay government termination (see Herman, Sanders 1977; Strøm 1985; Taylor, Herman 1971).

Conversely, the second approach to government survival considers the duration of a government as a stochastic process whose future trajectory cannot be predicted as it is influenced by aleatory factors (see Browne, Frendreis, Gleiber 1984; Frendreis, Gleiber, Browne 1986). According to this line of the literature, unforeseeable events such as the emergence of a crisis, the worsening of economic conditions, and the outbreak of scandals involving coalition members can alter the natural functioning of the executive, triggering the premature end of a government. Furthermore, the differences between the two approaches do not belong only to a conceptual dimension but also concern the methodological framework of the models applied to the analysis. On the one hand, attribute theorists explore the existence of a causal relationship between government stability and those factors assumed to play a role in the premature dissolution of an executive, defining the former as a function of the latter and estimating the *ceteris paribus* impact of each variable on the duration of governments. On the other hand, event theorists study the stability of governments based on models that estimate the likelihood (i.e., the hazard rate) of a government facing a dissolution or termination event at any point in time.

Starting from the seminal work of King et al. (1990), the currently prominent approach in the literature incorporates the causal effect of the structural properties of governments in office into stochastic models that conceive the probability of government termination as a function of a set of predictors. These unified models allow scholars to study the dynamics of

government survival by jointly estimating the risk that government prematurely ends before the constitutional mandate due to random events and by taking into account the structural properties of both the government in power and the attributes of the political system within which it operates (see Warwick 1994). These models are subject to continuous methodological refinements in order to test the inferential power of new variables or to consolidate previous results with new assumptions, new statistical techniques or on the basis of more updated time-series data. To this scope, more recent studies (Bergmann, Bäck, Saalfeld 2022) investigate whether the presence of certain institutional properties of the political system and of the bargaining environment over the formation of coalition cabinets mitigates the already consolidated destabilizing effect of the degree of polarization in the legislature on the stability of executives. In particular, they show that the detrimental effect of a polarized legislature and the presence of extremist political parties in the parliament is mitigated by constitutional provisions, such as restrictions on the use of no-confidence votes by the parliamentary opposition. A new strand of the literature explores the linkage between government termination and behavioural norms. As pre-election agreements or explicit declarations of non-alliance between political parties (see Debus 2009; Martin; Stevenson 2001) help to predict the parliamentary arrangement that will form between political parties, Krauss (2018) provides evidence that coalition agreements between governing political actors decrease the risk of early government dissolution.

Most recent studies are devoted to investigating whether well-consolidated findings in the literature on coalition duration still hold in the presence of alternative criteria on what determines the end of a government. This is the aim of the analysis conducted by Shomer et al. (2022) who suggest modifying the widely accepted partisan criterion according to which the government that experiences any change in its party composition is to be considered as newly formed (Browne, Frendreis, Gleiber 1984; Woldendorp, Keman, Budge 1998). The authors suggest instead to consider only those partisan changes capable of modifying the majority status of the governments in office. By adopting this new

classification strategy, the authors challenge the prediction that minimal winning coalition cabinets are more durable. With a similar scope, Conrad and Golder (2010) propose to take into account in the analysis of the length of government the caretaker periods during which a new government is to be appointed but an ad hoc cabinet, usually coincident with the outgoing government, is in charge of governmental and institutional duties.

4.2. The role of critical events

In coalition cabinets as well as in a single party majority executives, government parties may face major incentives to end government during the constitutional inter-electoral period. The literature on the premature end of governments has extensively investigated the role that exogenous shocks and critical events have on the early dissolution of incumbent cabinets both from a game theoretical perspective (Laver, Shepsle 1998; Lupia, Strøm 1995; Tsebelis 2002) and from an empirical approach (Diermeier, Stevenson 2000; Matsumoto, Laver 2015; Saalfeld 2013). Any exogenous event resulting in a shift in the governing parties' policy positions (policy shock) and issue salience (agenda shock), or in the expectations that they formulate on their prospect electoral results (public opinion shock), might constitute a potential threat to the robustness of an equilibrium government (see Laver, Shepsle 1998). Tsebelis (2002) proposes an indirect mechanism through which a critical event can disrupt the stability of an executive. According to his model, an exogenous event that imposes a redefinition of the government agenda perturbs the stability of the incumbent cabinet when ideologically distant veto players hinder the opportunity for any change in the current policy status quo. Lupia and Strøm (1995) model a three-party legislature, with two governing parties forming a coalition cabinet and one party in opposition, whose equilibrium depends on the cost-benefit analysis performed by the ruling parties to compare the outcomes associated to three distinct scenarios: dissolving the legislature with resulting early elections, negotiating a cabinet replacement with the subsequent formation of a new inter-electoral government, and maintaining the status quo. When a

critical event causes a shift in the electorate's sentiment towards one of the governing parties, that party will decide to dissolve the legislature only if the benefits of holding early elections, such as an increased share of seats within the legislative assembly, outweigh the costs deriving from the early termination of an executive (i.e., loss of decision-making power, costs of electoral campaigning). Lupia and Strøm (1995) in their model do not clarify the nature of the event that can perturb the government's equilibrium but define as critical those shocks that have an impact on the parliamentary bargaining and that alter the policy-making power of governing political actors. Following this strand of the literature, Matsumoto and Laver (2015) explore the destabilizing effect of unfavourable electorate polls towards the political party leading a single-party majority cabinet.

However, the literature on the duration of governments has mainly focused on the impact of fluctuating economic performance on the stability of an executive (see *inter alia* Warwick 1994). By empirically testing the model of Lupia and Strøm (1995), Saalfeld (2013) provides evidence that economic exogenous shocks, such as rising unemployment and inflation rates, have a greater influence on the risk of an early election towards the end of a legislature, whilst increasing the risk of non-electoral replacement at the beginning of the legislative term. This is in line with the hypothesis of decreasing opportunity costs associated with the premature end of governments. In fact, the cost resulting from the failure to exploit policy-making power is higher at the beginning of the constitutional mandate. Therefore, according to this perspective, the ruling parties will have more incentives to renegotiate a new government agreement, possibly extending the coalition to other parties to share responsibility for unpopular measures, rather than calling for early elections. Furthermore, governing parties may seek to avoid the early dissolution of the executive as they anticipate the sentiments of the electorate, fearing to be blamed for the poor economic performance in the event of early electoral consultations (see Duch, Stevenson 2008). Within this line of research, some scholars investigate how the impact of an economic downturn is mediated by the type of

government in office (coalition vis-a-vis single party cabinet) and by the degree of control over the legislative assembly (majority vs. minority) (see Robertson 1983). Analysing the Italian context, Pinto (2018) observes the existence of a link between the recurrent turnover of governments in Italian history and the fluctuating trend of the country's economic performance.

4.2.1. Non-economic perturbing shocks

It remains unclear to what extent non-economic perturbing shocks can increase divisions between ruling parties and undermine the stability of the incumbent executive. In this article, I tackle this issue by means of exploring to what extent the refugee crisis influenced cabinet survival. Over the last two decades, along with the 2008 financial crisis, the growing waves of mass migration harshly hit European member states. These events heightened the trend towards an increased dimensionality of political spaces with the emergence of a specific axis of competition that flanked the economic dimension in defining parties' mutual interactions (see Bornschier 2010; Hooghe, Marks, Wilson 2002) and that cleaves pro-EU parties from those political actors perceiving European integration as a menace to sovereign national authority (see Giannetti, Pedrazzani, Pinto 2017; Hutter, Kriesi, Vidal 2018).

Extending the analysis to the coalition building dynamics, negotiations over the formation of coalition agreements started to involve political parties seeking to narrow the distance also on not exclusively economic issues (see Bräuninger et al. 2019; Debus 2009). Following this perspective, the results of the analysis conducted in Chapter 3 clearly show that, in Southern Europe, the probability to reach a government agreement is higher when the negotiations to form a cabinet involve political parties with similar positions on EU-related issues. In countries like Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, where governmental reliance on EU support for national budget consolidation is crucial, maintaining a cohesive stance on EU affairs strongly influence governments' political decision-making. Nevertheless, negotiations with EU institutions extend beyond the imperative to enact structural reforms or austerity measures in response to the financial crisis,

encompassing broader issues like member states' capacity to manage migratory flows. In this context, the growing number of forcefully displaced people require an ongoing redefinition of the relations with the European institutions to address the emergency. For example, one governing party may support an increased engagement of European institutions in managing the refugee crisis. This could involve a renegotiation of the Dublin Regulation which currently leaves each member state the responsibility of handling the asylum claims of migrants arriving on their territory. Alternatively, another coalition member may lean towards alternative approaches, such as tightening national immigration policies independently of other member states. Thus, I argue that European issues serve as a good proxy for the governing parties' perspectives on how to address the migration emergency.

In this article, I propose an indirect mechanism through which non-economic exogenous shocks, such as the one represented by the refugee crisis, undermine the stability and the tenure of governments. Specifically, I argue that the increasing number of asylum seekers since the onset of the migration crisis does not constitute a *condicio sine qua non* to determine the early dissolution of cabinets. Unlike deteriorating macroeconomic indicators that have an immediate impact on a government's ability to implement policies, increased incoming migratory flows do not directly affect the policy-making power of an executive in office. Conversely, migratory crises undermine the inter-party bargaining equilibrium of those governments that hold different views on how to handle the emergency and are unable to reach a policy compromise. Following this perspective, issue salience signals the willingness of parties to collaborate with other coalition partners. If a party downplays the importance of a policy area where it differs significantly from another party, the reduced significance of that domain for the first party could pave the way for reaching a policy compromise with the latter. On the contrary, when two parties have conflicting positions on an issue dimension, but attribute high importance to that policy domain, they are likely to be hesitant in making policy concessions. Therefore, issue salience not only influences the governments' policy agenda, as political parties tend to

prioritize the implementation of policies aligned with their most salient issues (Bevan, John, Jennings 2011), but it also magnifies the impact of ideological differences among coalition partners (see Greene 2017). I posit that governments that attribute a high degree of salience to European-related issues are exposed to a higher risk of early dissolution in the presence of a high degree of positional distance between ruling parties. In such cases, any divergences on how to manage increasing migratory flows will have a detrimental impact on government stability as parties may be less inclined to acknowledge the need of reconciling divergent positions and uphold government survival. Based on this consideration, I therefore formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: An increase in migratory flows does not exert a direct impact on the risk of the early termination of governments.

Hypothesis 2: An increase in migratory flows destabilizes governments that hold divergent views on EU-related issues and attach a high degree of importance on matters related to European affairs.

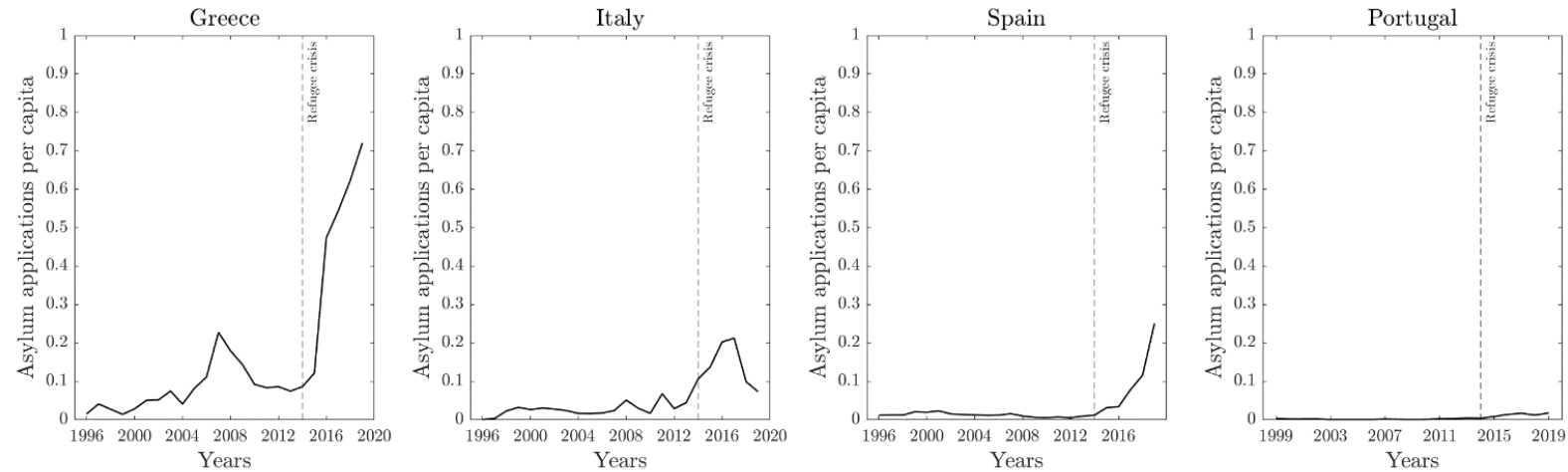
4.3. *Data and methods*

To test the effect of increasing population flows on the stability of governments, I implement a Cox proportional hazard regression analysis. This semi-parametric method allows modelling the relationship between multiple predictors and a time-to-event outcome. In particular, I evaluate the impact of certain prognostic factors, such as the institutional attributes that characterize the executive since its formation or the emergence of exogenous shocks, on the probability of early cabinet dissolution. Following this approach, the dependent variable is modelled as the duration, measured in days, of a government in power until its termination caused by a change in the figure of the prime minister, a rearrangement in the party composition of the executive, the occurrence of early or constitutionally mandated elections. Data on government duration were extracted from the European Representative Democracy Data Archive (Bergman, Bäck, Hellström 2021; Hellström, Bergman, Bäck 2021). Here, the focus is on four multi-party systems distributed across Southern Europe (Italy,

Greece, Portugal, and Spain) during a time interval that ranges from 1996 to 2021. The rationale behind this choice is twofold. First, in these countries, executive power and government action are subordinated to the favourable vote of the legislative assembly's majority. Second, southern European countries have been more exposed to the increasing inflows of migrants due to their geographical location, which makes them the primary access points in Europe. This has sparked a heated debate on emergency management with southern European governments requesting from EU institutions the implementation of a common European strategy and a greater distribution of responsibilities among EU countries. Figure 1 shows the long-term trend in the asylum applications per capita received by each country included in the analysis.

From a methodological perspective, I pool together all governments to predict the combined risk of an early dissolution triggered by either an early election or a replacement occurring during the inter-electoral period. This empirical strategy implies right-censoring governments' terminations whose dissolution occurs only for the intervention of constitutionally mandated elections. To take into account the impact of country-specific unobserved factors that may render governments in certain countries more susceptible to early dissolution compared to others I also incorporate country dummies. Relevant studies in the literature on government termination rely on a competing risk approach (Diermeier, Stevenson 1999) to estimate separate hazard rates for governments' dissolutions caused by either early elections or by non-electoral replacements, respectively. However, due to the relatively small proportion of early elections (21% of the total) and non-electoral replacements (37%), I choose not to estimate the risk of different types of government dissolution separately. Table A1 in the Appendix provides more details on the governments included in the analysis, their duration in days, and the type of event that led to their termination.

Figure 1: Yearly asylum applications per country. Results are expressed as a percentage of the total population.



4.4. Independent variables

In this article, I operationalize government exposure to the refugee crisis relying on the number of asylum claims received on an annual basis by each country included in the analysis. Data were extracted from the Eurostat's Migration and Asylum Database which provides information on the yearly number of individuals that submitted an application for international protection. However, the number of asylum applications that a country might receive could be influenced by its population size. For example, a country with a larger population may receive a higher number of asylum claims compared to a country with a smaller population. Thus, I first compute the number of asylum applications per capita. Data on the total population were extracted from the Eurostat's Population and Demography Database. Second, for each country, I create a dummy variable coding as one all the governments for which the levels of asylum applications per capita were above the country's mean for the years included in the analysis. In this way, the dummy classifies the cabinets that underwent a significant deviation in incoming migratory flows relative to the country's average.

To identify governments' policy-seeking attributes that consider the ideological proximity of parties and the salience attributed to pivotal policy domains, I rely on the Chapel Hill expert survey data (Jolly et al. 2022). Based on an 11-point scale, this source of data estimates parties' policy positions and

issue salience in nearly all European member states. I consider parties' stances on two specific policy domains: economic issues and European integration¹⁶. Parties on the left of the political spectrum favour an active role of the government in the economy and advocate greater cooperation and integration between European countries from an economic and political perspective. Conversely, parties located on the right of the economic and EU axes are in favour of a reduced role for the government and oppose the process of European integration. For each government, I compute the positional variance between coalition partners on the economic and the EU dimension. Let x_i be the ideological position of party i , \bar{x} the average position of all governing parties, the positional deviance of government k composed of n parties is given by: $\frac{\sum_i^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2}{n}$. For each cabinet, I estimate the average salience attached to economic and European issues.

Furthermore, I include in our analysis the factors identified by the literature as playing a role in the stability of governments. First, I identify the office-seeking attributes of governments as they emerge from the process of cabinet formation. Based on the number of seats controlled by the governing parties in the legislative assembly, I distinguish between minority coalition cabinet¹⁷, single-party majority cabinet, surplus majority coalition and minimal winning coalition. Existing studies on the effect of size-driven attributes show that minimal winning coalition governments are more likely to be stable and to last over time. Second, to capture the effect of the transaction costs associated with negotiating policy agreements with government partners, I include the absolute number of parties forming a cabinet. The higher the number of parties on whose agreement the government policy-making power depends, the more likely it is that a government will be unstable and exposed to the risk of early dissolution

¹⁶ CHES data on political parties' policy positions and salience on EU-related issues are based on a 7-point scale. Therefore, I transformed these estimates to be based on a 11-point scale in order to ensure consistency with the other estimates.

¹⁷ Single-party minority cabinets are likewise included among minority coalition cabinets.

in the event of exogenous shocks. To examine the effect of behavioural constraints on the stability of the executives, I control for the presence of pre-electoral or post-electoral written coalition agreements. I expect the presence of government agreements between coalition partners to decrease the risk of a premature end of cabinets. Furthermore, I include in the analysis a dichotomous variable which assumes the value of 1 when the government is a copy of the incumbent administration and 0 otherwise.

Finally, I control for the characteristics of the party system within which the executive operates and of the bargaining environment over the formation of governments. Thus, I include the effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP) and the number of days required to form a government. The characteristics of the bargaining environment preceding the formation of a government can have a twofold effect on the stability of the executive. In fact, whilst longer negotiation times may be indicative of stronger and more detailed party agreements, the length of reaching an agreement can also suggest incompatibility between the parties involved in the formation of the executive. Furthermore, I include the number of days until the next mandate elections at the time of cabinet formation. To further explore the impact of the refugee crisis on the stability of governments I include a dummy variable that identifies those governments formed either before or in the aftermath of the 2013 migratory crisis. In fact, I expect that the indirect effect of asylum requests on the stability of governments will be stronger for those cabinets that operate in a political context characterized by the increasing number of migrants moving from non-European countries to the EU.

4.5. Results

To test the impact of the refugee crisis on government stability, I fit several Cox proportional hazard regression models within a multivariate setting. Table 1 shows the raw coefficients expressed as proportional hazard estimates. A positive coefficient associated with one of the covariates included in the analysis

implies that the effect of that specific variable is associated with an increased risk of early termination. Conversely, a negative coefficient delays the premature end of a government. The first hypothesis posits that an increase in asylum claims does not exert a direct effect on the risk of the early termination of an executive. The non-significant coefficient associated with the asylum applications dummy confirms the prediction (Model 1)¹⁸. This suggests that an exogenous crisis in terms of rising waves of mass migration does not undermine the stability of an executive in office and does not influence the risk of cabinet dissolutions.

The second hypothesis states that an increase in mass migration destabilizes governments that have divergent views on EU-related issues and attach a high degree of importance to European affairs. Model 2 includes a three-way interaction effect between governments' positional variance, the degree of importance attributed to EU-related issues and the asylum applications dummy. The results show that the coefficient of the three-way interaction term is statistically significant when both types of cabinet terminations are pooled together. Figure 2 better illustrates the inherently interactive nature of the second assumption, showing the marginal effect of an above-average level of asylum applications per capita for different degrees of issue salience and difference levels of heterogeneity. A statistically significant effect occurs when the vertical bars in the graph, representing the confidence intervals, both lie either above or below the zero line. The findings demonstrate a notable relationship: in the presence of increasing migratory flows, the importance assigned by governments to European issues becomes increasingly influential in determining the likelihood of government instability when governing parties hold different views on how to address the emergency. As predicted, increased migratory flows exacerbate the bargaining environment within a government, exposing only those cabinets that attach a high degree of salience to European issues and that

¹⁸ The result continues to be valid when I interact the degree of positional variance within governments with the dummy variable associated with the number of asylum requests. See Table A2 in the Appendix.

are highly heterogeneous on EU affairs to a greater risk of early dissolution. On the contrary, the degree of heterogeneity and issue salience on economic issues do not play a significant role in explaining the premature end of governments that are exposed to increasing migration pressures.

The coefficients in Table 1 also suggest that minority governments are more unstable than minimal winning coalitions. Moreover, the executives that are a copy of the previous administration are more precarious and are more likely to be ended by early termination. In the presence of consolidated government alliances, some political parties may find it advantageous to momentarily breach the coalition agreement in order to reopen discussions on its contents, confident that such a move would not significantly jeopardize its participation in the next government (Warwick 1994). Furthermore, governments based on coalition agreements are more likely to last until the end of the constitutional mandate.

To further explore the effect of the migration crisis on government stability, I conduct an additional analysis where I substitute the number of asylum applications per capita with the number of asylum applications relative to the total number of long-term immigrants in each country included in the analysis (see Table A3 in the Appendix). Here the dummy variable classifies as one all the governments for which the levels of asylum applications relative to the immigrant population were above the country's mean for the years included in the analysis. The rationale behind this further specification is that a country with an established history of immigration is less exposed to the destabilizing effect of new waves of migration. In fact, this ratio will increase if there is a disproportion between the number of asylum requests that a country receives and the resident foreign population. A high ratio indicates that there has been an increase in the number of asylum applications while the level of immigration has remained steady. Alternatively, it suggests that the number of granted permissions to stay issued by a country has declined in relation to the number of asylum requests received. The analysis confirms the negative effect that increased migratory flows have on the stability of incumbent executives. Figure

3 provides clear evidence that when the ratio between the number of asylum applications and the immigrant population is high, there is a significant increase in the risk of government termination for those executives that attach a high degree of salience to EU-related issues and hold divergent positions on European affairs.

Table 1: Cox regression analysis for government stability.

| | <i>Pooled hazard without interaction terms</i> | <i>Pooled hazard with three-way interactions</i> |
|--|--|--|
| Number of parties | 0.094 (0.518) | 0.551 (0.607) |
| Type of cabinet: minority coalition | 2.099** (1.042) | 3.942 ⁺ (2.074) |
| Type of cabinet: single-party majority coalition | 0.000 (1.356) | 0.585 (4.811) |
| Type of cabinet: surplus coalition | 1.304 (1.167) | 1.185 (2.443) |
| Copy of the incumbent administration | 1.296 (0.898) | 2.587** (1.318) |
| Pre-/post coalition agreement | -1.051 ⁺ (0.613) | -2.974** (1.201) |
| ENPP | -0.590 (0.467) | -0.929 (0.935) |
| Days for cabinet formation | 0.008 (0.009) | 0.002 (0.012) |
| Days until next mandated elections | 0.000 (0.001) | 0.001 (0.002) |
| Refugee crisis | 0.306 (1.161) | 2.880 (3.952) |
| Asylum application dummy | 0.139 (1.101) | 28.637** (14.271) |
| Positional variance on economic issues | 0.102 (0.727) | -7.376 (8.793) |
| Positional variance on EU issues | 0.380** (0.192) | 2.362 (3.297) |
| Salience on economic issues | | -0.707 (1.667) |
| Salience on EU issues | | -0.370 (0.751) |
| Positional variance on economic issues X Asylum applications (dummy) | | -17.050 ⁺ (10.208) |
| Positional variance on EU issues X Asylum applications (dummy) | | -29.367** (11.799) |
| Salience on economic issues X Asylum applications (dummy) | | -2.551** (1.277) |
| Salience on EU issues X Asylum applications (dummy) | | -1.226 (0.815) |
| Positional variance on economic issues X Salience on economic issues | | 1.020 (1.240) |
| Positional variance on EU issues X Salience on EU issues | | -0.199 (0.414) |
| Positional variance on economic issues X Salience on economic issues X Asylum applications (dummy) | | 1.957 (1.384) |
| Positional variance on EU issues X Salience on EU issues X Asylum applications (dummy) | | 5.436*** (2.083) |
| <i>AIC</i> | 214.2 | 205.4 |
| <i>BIC</i> | 260.1 | 279.9 |
| <i>Observations</i> | 130 | 130 |

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (not shown due to space limitations).

⁺p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. The reference category for type of cabinet is minimal winning coalitions.

Figure 2: Average marginal effect of above-average asylum applications per capita for different degree of issue salience and different levels of positional difference on EU-related and economic issues.

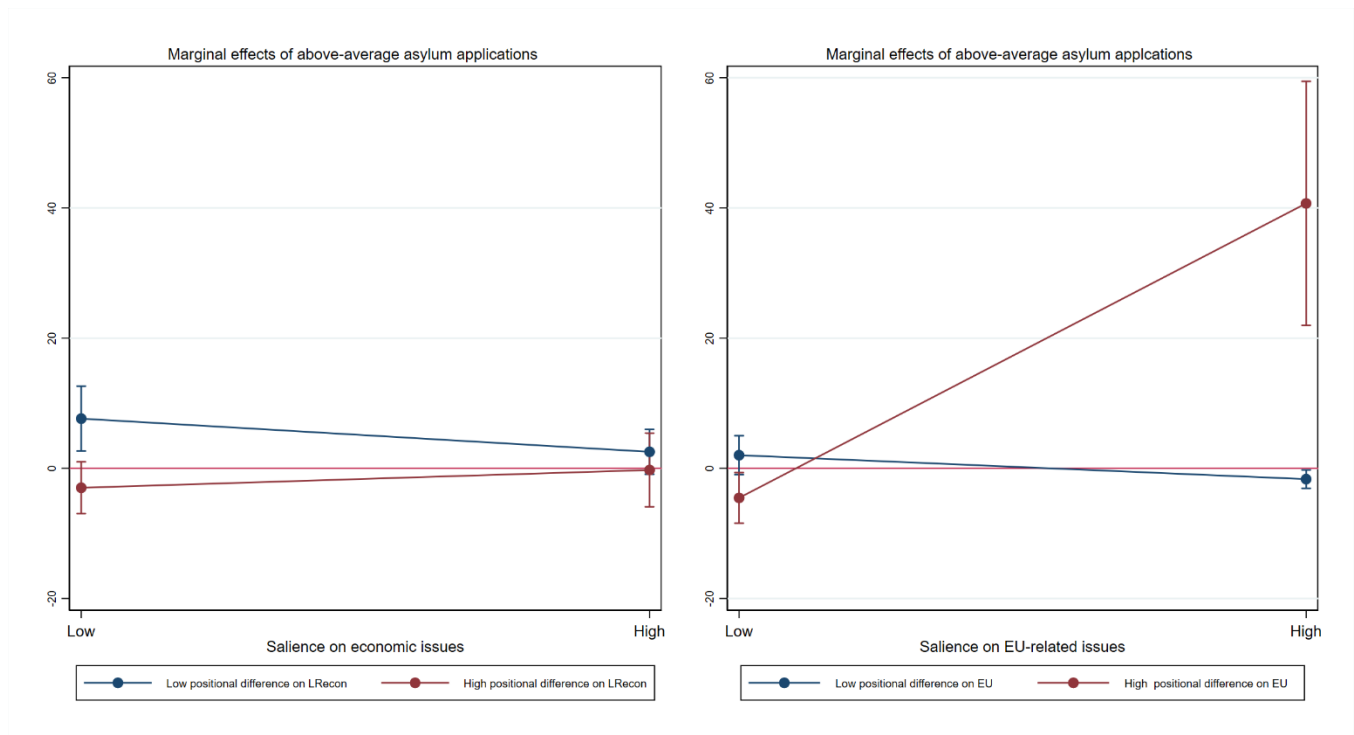
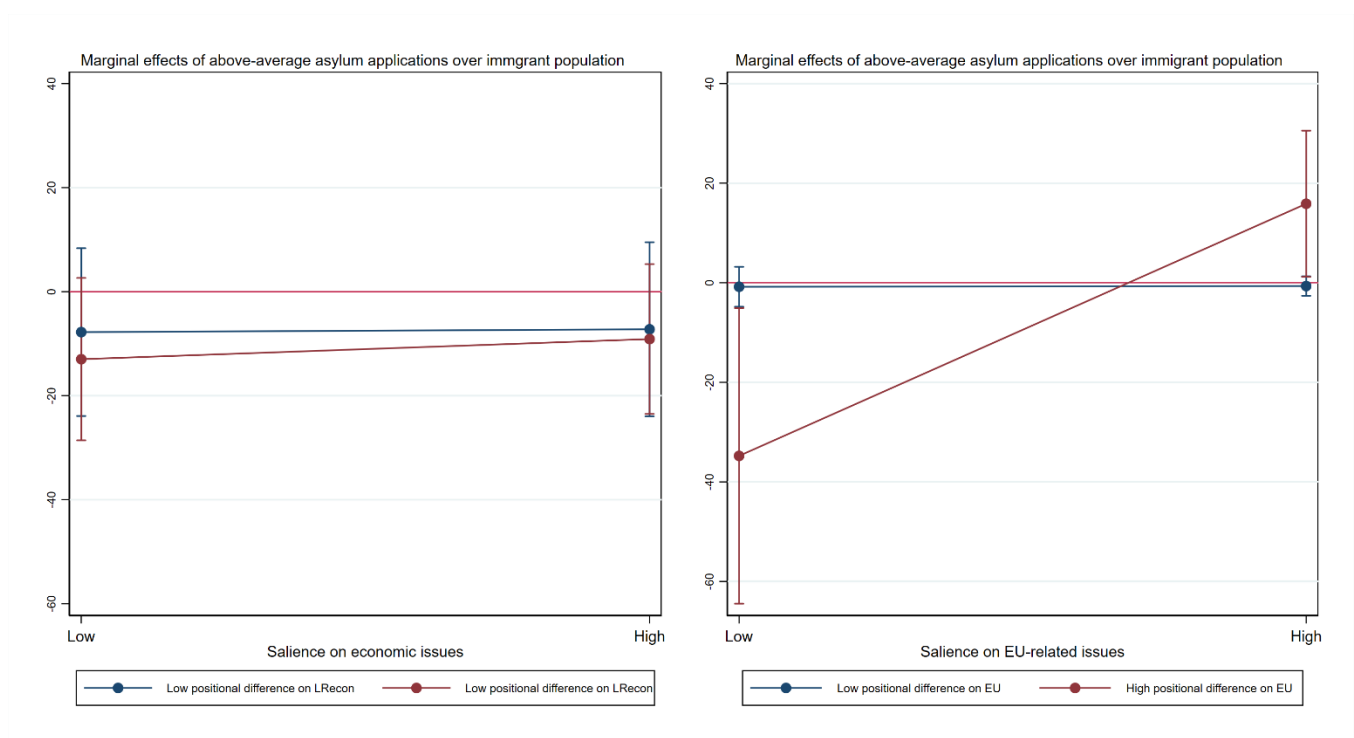


Figure 3: Average marginal effect of above-average asylum applications over immigrant population for different degree of issue salience and different levels of positional difference on EU-related and economic issues.



4.6. *Conclusions*

This paper represents a novel attempt to analyse to what extent non-economic exogenous shocks can alter the stability of incumbent governments. Focusing on four multi-party systems in Southern Europe, I investigated the role of increasing waves of mass migration on the stability of incumbent executives. I highlighted an indirect mechanism through which the refugee crisis, operationalized by the yearly number of asylum requests received by each country included in the analysis, undermines cabinet survival. In particular, a government will be more exposed to the risk of early dissolution if it attaches a high degree of importance to European integration issues. This may be explained by the fact that socio-cultural shocks do not exert a direct impact on the economic resources available to a government for policy implementation, unlike in the case of an economic or financial crisis. Indeed, decreasing macroeconomic indicators, such as unemployment or inflation rates, increases the chances that a government will terminate before its constitutional mandate. Nevertheless, the increasing flows of asylum seekers can alter the bargaining equilibrium between the governing parties when they have different views on how to manage the migration crisis. In the presence of a high degree of positional deviance between government partners, I find that as asylum applications increase, the importance attributed by governments to European issues has a detrimental effect on cabinet stability. I believe that European issues serve as a good proxy for the governing parties' perspectives on how to address the migration emergency. Some governing parties may support increased engagement of European institutions in managing the refugee crisis, whilst others may lean towards alternative approaches, such as tightening national immigration policies independently of other member states. The escalating number of forcibly displaced refugees threatens the stability of those executives that attach a high degree of importance to issues also pertaining to crisis management cooperation.

The contribution of this article is twofold. On the one hand, it broadens the existing literature on cabinet survival by confirming that the process of

government termination cannot be explained only by referring to the office-seeking attributes of governments or to the institutional features of the political systems within which executives operate. Furthermore, this study considers the impact of socio-cultural perturbing shocks instead of the effect of traditional economic indicators on the stability of incumbent executives. On the other hand, it extends the analysis of the role played by socio-cultural issues in defining political spaces and in complementing economic issues in structuring domestic party competition to the literature on governments and coalition bargaining. However, I considered the interactive effect of issue salience with migratory flows. Future studies should seek to further explore the effect of the refugee crisis by considering alternative party characteristics such as the degree of dissent within governing coalitions or the degree of ambiguity among cabinet allies. Furthermore, the analysis conducted in this article relies on objective indicators, such as the number of asylum seekers per capita, to estimate the effect of the refugee crisis on the government's ability to last over time. It is worth examining the potential effect of voters' preferences towards governing parties in the aftermath of the refugee crisis and, in general, on their performance in managing a critical event. For example, if a government decides to tighten immigration policies, a possible adverse reaction from public opinion can negatively affect relations between government partners, force a redefinition of the current status quo, and, therefore, undermine the stability of the executive.

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CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the dissertation has been to contribute to the debate on how the interplay of multiple crises affects party competition dynamics and the arithmetic of the processes of formation and termination of governments. It does so by analysing specific facets of party competition, with particular reference to those southern European countries that have been heavily exposed to the political implications related to the Eurozone and refugee crises. The study makes several empirical contributions to the discipline.

The analysis departs from the empirical evaluation of the structural changes that occurred in Southern Europe over the last decade of party competition. Given their magnitude, the financial crisis and the refugee crisis could have indeed triggered long-term societal changes in the structure of national political spaces that, in turn, influence parties' mutual interactions. Thus, the identification of the main axis around which political parties compete for electoral support is crucial to trace the changing shape of policy spaces over time. Unlike past studies exploring the dimensional structure of party systems during "crisis elections" that are more susceptible to the emergence of election-dependent political divides, I cover a timeframe extensive enough to encompass the destabilizing effects of both crises on domestic political contestation. Furthermore, to provide a more detailed overview of the changing structure of national party systems, I identified the main axes in the ideological space of both parties and voters. The analysis carried out in Manuscript I shows that, over the last decade of party competition, the Eurozone crises have had a significant impact on party competition dynamics, with issues related to the process of European integration and the role exerted by EU institutions in domestic affairs setting up a specific axis of conflict. The emergence of this new political divide represented an opportunity for those political parties that challenge the traditional establishment and advocate for radical change and socio-economic reforms. These parties have gained support by criticizing the austerity measures promoted by the European Union and other supranational institutions. Looking

ahead, future research should explore the impact of recent crises, such as the ones related to COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, on the spatial properties of ideological spaces. These crises are likely to have further shaped the political landscape and influenced the positions and strategies of political parties.

The structural changes in the dimensionality of policy spaces represent an opportunity for political parties to mobilize voters. In Chapter II, I delved into the incentives that encourage political parties to act as issue entrepreneurs on immigration vis-à-vis economic issues. More specifically, I delve into the well-established mechanism that assigns to a party that finds itself confronted with a disadvantaged position within multi-party systems a higher chance to engage in mobilization strategies over specific policy domains. A cross-national analysis of nine multi-party systems distributed across Northern and Southern Europe has found that a political party with no government positions, that suffers an electoral defeat, or adopts a distant position from the mainstream status quo is incentivized to politicize specific issues as a way to mobilize large portions of the electorate. Nonetheless, the decision regarding which issue to select for mobilizing the electorate is closely intertwined with intra-party features, first and foremost the party's ideology. These findings highlight the importance of party ideology in driving the strategic choices of political parties in response to specific conjunctural factors and contribute to our understanding of the strategic behaviour of political parties in contemporary politics.

This dissertation has also furthered our understanding on coalition durability during turbulent times. The increased complexity in the dimensional structure of policy spaces and in the nature of critical events set incentives to revise models of coalitions formation and termination. On the one hand, Manuscript III shows that, in Southern Europe, the post-electoral bargaining environment for the formation of multi-party governments has been influenced by the ideological stance of political parties on EU-related issues. The implementation of austerity measures following the outbreak of the Eurozone crisis and the need to hold a

cohesive policy profile when negotiating with EU institutions for the definition of financial assistance plans inevitably permeated the negotiation rounds over the formation of coalition governments. The ideological proximity of political parties on EU-related issues also served as a strategic advantage for those political actors that, rather than being driven by ideological proximity on economic or societal issues, agreed on the need to dismiss austerity measures and capitalized on anti-establishment sentiment towards mainstream parties and EU institutions. Therefore, given the magnitude of the financial crises in the peripheral countries of Southern Europe and the significance of EU-related issues in orienting parties' political agenda, incorporating European integration policies into models of coalition formation allows us to better understand the outcomes of the government formation dynamics.

On the other hand, Manuscript IV contributes to the literature on coalition duration by means of investigating the ability of governments to reach the end of their constitutional mandate when exposed to the destabilizing event of an increase in migratory flows. While the current literature mainly focused on the detrimental impact that economic exogenous shocks might have on the stability of an executive in office, I estimate the risk of an early dissolution when governments must address the political implications of growing waves of mass migration. In this political context, EU-related issues emerged as a robust gauge of parties' approaches to handling migration flows, given governments' frequent calls for greater involvement of European institutions in refugee crisis management. Hence the need for governing parties to have a cohesive policy profile, even in policy area not related to economic policy. Specifically, the findings show that escalating waves of mass migration erode the stability of governments whose members hold divergent stances and prioritize those issues connected with the refugee crisis, first and foremost EU-related issues. The emphasis placed by governing parties on crisis-related issues amplifies inter-party disagreements and set incentives for coalition members to call for an early dissolution.

This dissertation has made several significant contributions to our understanding of party competition dynamics and of the processes of coalition formation and termination during turbulent times, with a particular focus on southern European contexts. First and foremost, the findings of this research are consequential for our understanding of the evolving structure of party competition. By examining the long-term effects of the financial crisis and the refugee crisis, this study highlights the role of exogenous shocks in shaping the space of political competition and the adaptability of political parties in response to critical events. Second, this dissertation provides valuable insights into the role of party ideology in influencing parties' strategic choices to mobilize voters in response to adverse conditions within multi-party systems and contributes to our understanding of the strategic behaviour of political parties in contemporary politics. Furthermore, the dissertation questions whether existing models of coalition formation and durability are sufficient to capture the complexities of contemporary politics during turbulent times. The analysis provides evidence of the increasing relevance of non-economic policy issues in shaping the processes of government formation and termination. More specifically, EU-related issues significantly influence the post-electoral bargaining process to form a coalition government in Southern Europe, providing a unique perspective on the impact of the Eurozone crisis on the process of government formation. Additionally, the research highlights the role of growing ways of mass migration as a destabilizing factor, emphasizing the importance for governing parties to share cohesive policy profiles that go beyond economic policy.

APPENDICES

Appendix – Chapter 1

Table A1: Party classification.

| | Conservative | Liberal | New left | Radical Left | Radical right | Regionalist | Socialist |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|
| Greece | Néa Dimokratía (New Democracy) | | | Synaspismos Rizospastikis Aristeras (Coalition of the Radical Left) Kommounistikó Kómma Elládas (Communist Party of Greece) Métopo Evropaikís Realistikís Anypakoís (European Realistic Disobedience Front) | Elliniki Lisi (Greek Solution) Anexartitoi Ellines (Independent Greeks) Chrysí Avgí (Golden Dawn) Laïkós Orthódoxos Synagermós (Popular Orthodox Rally) | | Panellinio Sosialistikó Kínima (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) Dimokratikós Sinagermós (Democratic Rally) To Potami (The River) Kinima Dimokraton Sosialiston (Movement of Democratic Socialists) |
| Italy | Unione di Centro (Union of the Centre) Forza Italia (Forward Italy) Il Popolo della Libertà (The People of Freedom) | Italia dei Valori (Italy of Values) Centro Democratico (Democratic Centre) Scelta Civica (Civic Choice) Radicali Italiani (Italian Radicals) | Movimento Cinque Stelle (Five Stars Movement) | | Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy) Lega (League) | Südtiroler Volkspartei (South Tyrolean People's Party) Lega Nord (Northern League) | Partito Democratico (Democratic Party) Sinistra Ecologia Libertà (Left Ecology Freedom) Sinistra Italiana (Italian Left) |
| Portugal | CDS – Partido Popular (CDS – People's Party) | Portugal à Frente (Portugal Ahead) Partido Social Democrata (Social Democratic Party) | | Coligação Democrática Unitária (Democratic Unitarian Coalition) Bloco de Esquerda (Left Bloc) | | | Partido Socialista (Socialist Party) |

| | Conservative | Liberal | New left | Radical Left | Radical right | Regionalist | Socialist |
|-------|-------------------------------------|--|----------|---|---------------|--|--|
| Spain | Partido Popular (People's Party) | Ciudadanos (Citizens) Unión Progreso y Democracia (Union, Progress, and Democracy) | | Podemos (We Can) Más Pais (More Country) Izquierda Unida (United Left) | Vox (Voice) | Partido Nacionalista Vasco (Basque Nationalist Party) Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Republican Left of Catalonia) Bloque Nacionalista Galego (Galician Nationalist Bloc) Coalición Canaria (Canarian Coalition) Euskal Herritarrok (We Basque Citizens) Iniciativa per Catalunya (Initiative for Catalonia) Eusko Alkartasuna (Basque Solidarity) Convergència i Unió (Convergence and Unity) Junts per Catalunya (Together for Catalonia) | Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) |

Appendix – Chapter 3

Table A1: Conditional logistic regression results. All the formation opportunities in which a single party controlled a parliamentary majority are excluded from the analysis.

| | M1 | M2 | M3 |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Size factors | | | |
| Minority coalition (mwc) | -2.408*** (-2.690) | -2.373** (-2.566) | -2.394*** (-2.576) |
| Surplus majority coalition (mwc) | 0.112 (0.142) | 0.398 (0.484) | 0.436 (0.527) |
| Number of parties | -1.401*** (-4.112) | -1.436*** (-4.031) | -1.451*** (-4.020) |
| Largest party | 3.141*** (3.611) | 3.215*** (3.722) | 3.189*** (3.694) |
| Behaviouralist factors | | | |
| Pre-electoral agreement | 1.374+ (1.759) | 1.297+ (1.647) | 1.268 (1.592) |
| Incumbent status | 0.336 (0.393) | 0.144 (0.169) | 0.188 (0.220) |
| Policy factors | | | |
| Weighted ideological heterogeneity (WIH) | -1.442*** (-2.802) | | |
| WIH (left-right economic dimension) | | -1.202*** (-2.726) | -1.218*** (-2.748) |
| WIH (EU dimension) | | -0.476** (-2.200) | |
| WIH (sociocultural dimension) | | 0.434 (1.534) | |
| Interaction effect (Systemic crises) | | | |
| <i>WIH (EU dimension) X EU debt crisis</i> | | | |
| Before crisis | | | -0.294 (-0.695) |
| After crisis | | | -0.508** (-2.200) |
| <i>WIH (sociocultural dimension) X refugee crisis</i> | | | |
| Before crisis | | | 0.381 (1.124) |
| After crisis | | | 0.471 (1.514) |
| Number of potential coalitions | 22218 | 22218 | 22218 |
| Pseudo R ² | 0.414 | 0.437 | 0.438 |
| Log likelihood | -73.406 | -70.521 | -70.403 |
| AIC | 160.8 | 159.0 | 162.8 |
| Prediction error | 0.20 | 0.19 | 0.19 |
| Average P-value for rejecting IIA Assumption | 0.94 | 0.99 | 0.99 |

Table A2: Conditional logistic regression results (Greece and Italy).

| | M1 | M2 | M3 |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Size factors | | | |
| Minority coalition (mwc) | -5.509*** (-3.434) | -7.456*** (-3.764) | -8.452*** (-3.963) |
| Surplus majority coalition (mwc) | -0.028 (-0.031) | -0.160 (-0.182) | 0.505 (0.496) |
| Number of parties | -1.127*** (-2.859) | -1.219*** (-2.952) | -1.431*** (-3.036) |
| Largest party | 16.892 (0.012) | 16.551 (0.014) | 17.470 (0.008) |
| Behaviouralist factors | | | |
| Pre-electoral agreement | 3.490*** (3.487) | 4.680*** (3.745) | 5.209*** (3.871) |
| Incumbent status | -3.882** (-2.255) | -3.860** (-2.316) | -5.640** (-2.422) |
| Policy factors | | | |
| Weighted ideological heterogeneity (WIH) | -2.444*** (-3.182) | | |
| WIH (left-right economic dimension) | | -1.595** (-2.175) | -1.909** (-2.343) |
| WIH (EU dimension) | | -1.239*** (-3.525) | |
| WIH (sociocultural dimension) | | 0.507 (1.175) | |
| Interaction effect (Systemic crises) | | | |
| <i>WIH (EU dimension) X EU debt crisis</i> | | | |
| Before crisis | | | -0.578 (-1.051) |
| After crisis | | | -1.539*** (-3.346) |
| <i>WIH (sociocultural dimension) X refugee crisis</i> | | | |
| Before crisis | | | -0.026 (-0.053) |
| After crisis | | | 1.286** (2.146) |
| Number of potential coalitions | 15489 | 15489 | 15489 |
| Pseudo R ² | 0.487 | 0.555 | 0.587 |
| Log likelihood | -42.910 | -37.253 | -34.600 |
| AIC | 99.82 | 92.51 | 91.20 |
| Prediction error | 0.11 | 0.11 | 0.10 |
| Average P-value for rejecting IIA Assumption | 0.99 | 0.99 | 0.99 |

Note: t-values in parentheses. ⁺ $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A3: Conditional logistic regression results (Portugal and Spain).

| | M1 | M2 | M3 |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Size factors | | | |
| Minority coalition (mwc) | -2.491 (-1.455) | -3.229 ⁺ (-1.680) | -1.918 (-0.921) |
| Surplus majority coalition (mwc) | -1.810 (-0.557) | -1.622 (-0.317) | -0.799 (-0.156) |
| Number of parties | -2.240 ⁺ (-1.835) | -3.318 ⁺ (-1.785) | -3.449 (-1.487) |
| Largest party | 4.401** (2.564) | 4.539** (2.434) | 5.407** (2.191) |
| Behaviouralist factors | | | |
| Pre-electoral agreement | -2.148 (-1.329) | -2.262 (-1.353) | -2.213 (-1.319) |
| Incumbent status | -1.110 (-0.655) | -1.197 (-0.659) | -2.131 (-0.859) |
| Policy factors | | | |
| Weighted ideological heterogeneity (WIH) | -2.924 (-1.637) | | |
| WIH (left-right economic dimension) | | -2.234 (-1.524) | -2.551 (-1.412) |
| WIH (EU dimension) | | 0.533 (0.864) | |
| WIH (sociocultural dimension) | | 0.082 (0.093) | |
| Interaction effect (Systemic crises) | | | |
| <i>WIH (EU dimension) X EU debt crisis</i> | | | |
| Before crisis | | | -104.115 (-0.003) |
| After crisis | | | 0.838 (0.792) |
| <i>WIH (sociocultural dimension) X refugee crisis</i> | | | |
| Before crisis | | | 1.673 (1.042) |
| After crisis | | | -0.114 (-0.116) |
| Number of potential coalitions | 7892 | 7892 | 7892 |
| Pseudo R ² | 0.767 | 0.784 | 0.806 |
| Log likelihood | -14.511 | -13.458 | -12.057 |
| AIC | 43.02 | 44.92 | 46.11 |
| Prediction error | 0.18 | 0.14 | 0.11 |
| Average P-value for rejecting IIA Assumption | 0.99 | 0.99 | 0.99 |

Note: t-values in parentheses. ⁺ $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A4: Conditional logistic regression results (Portugal and Spain – DV = coalition with both governing and supporting parties).

| | M1 | M2 | M3 |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Size factors | | | |
| Minority coalition (mwc) | -3.293** (-2.054) | -2.762** (-1.980) | -2.603** (-2.151) |
| Surplus majority coalition (mwc) | -1.122 (-1.015) | 0.024 (0.019) | -0.374 (-0.298) |
| Number of parties | -0.287 (-0.890) | -0.105 (-0.291) | 0.243 (0.589) |
| Largest party | 1.507 (1.135) | 1.672 (1.273) | 2.689** (2.094) |
| Behaviouralist factors | | | |
| Pre-electoral agreement | -1.729 (-1.032) | -1.341 (-0.720) | 0.984 (0.484) |
| Incumbent status | 1.603 (1.162) | 1.913 (1.460) | 1.881 (1.256) |
| Policy factors | | | |
| Weighted ideological heterogeneity (WIH) | -2.629*** (-3.109) | | |
| WIH (left-right economic dimension) | | -2.720*** (-3.026) | -3.424*** (-3.399) |
| WIH (EU dimension) | | 0.713 ⁺ (1.780) | |
| WIH (sociocultural dimension) | | -0.062 (-0.102) | |
| Interaction effect (Systemic crises) | | | |
| <i>WIH (EU dimension) X EU debt crisis</i> | | | |
| Before crisis | | | 0.274 (0.227) |
| After crisis | | | 1.433** (2.376) |
| <i>WIH (sociocultural dimension) X refugee crisis</i> | | | |
| Before crisis | | | -1.422 (-1.400) |
| After crisis | | | 0.610 (0.833) |
| Number of potential coalitions | 7892 | 7892 | 7892 |
| Pseudo R ² | 0.331 | 0.424 | 0.502 |
| Log likelihood | -41.640 | -35.813 | -30.974 |
| AIC | 97.28 | 89.63 | 83.95 |
| Prediction error | 0.13 | 0.14 | 0.07 |
| Average P-value for rejecting IIA Assumption | 0.98 | 0.99 | 0.99 |

Note: t-values in parentheses. ⁺ $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Appendix – Chapter 4

Table A1: Governments included in the analysis.

| Country | Cabinet | Date in | Date out | Duration (in days) | Type of termination |
|----------|-------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Greece | Simitis II | 25/09/1996 | 09/04/2000 | 1292 | End of the constitutional term |
| | Simitis III | 13/04/2000 | 07/03/2004 | 1424 | End of the constitutional term |
| | Karamanlis I | 10/03/2004 | 16/09/2007 | 1285 | Early elections |
| | Karamanlis II | 19/09/2007 | 04/10/2009 | 746 | Early elections |
| | Papandreou | 06/10/2009 | 11/11/2011 | 766 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Papademos I | 16/11/2011 | 10/02/2012 | 86 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Papademos II | 11/02/2012 | 06/05/2012 | 85 | Early elections |
| | Samaras I | 21/06/2012 | 22/06/2013 | 366 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Samaras II | 22/06/2013 | 25/01/2015 | 582 | Early elections |
| | Tsipras I | 26/01/2015 | 20/08/2015 | 206 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Tsipras II | 23/09/2015 | 13/01/2019 | 1208 | Early elections |
| Italy | Prodi I | 18/05/1996 | 09/10/1998 | 874 | Non electoral replacement |
| | D'Alema I | 21/10/1998 | 18/12/1999 | 423 | Non electoral replacement |
| | D'Alema II | 22/12/1999 | 19/04/2000 | 119 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Amato II | 26/04/2000 | 13/05/2001 | 382 | End of the constitutional term |
| | Berlusconi II | 11/06/2001 | 20/04/2005 | 1409 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Berlusconi III | 23/04/2005 | 10/04/2006 | 352 | End of the constitutional term |
| | Prodi II | 17/05/2006 | 15/05/2007 | 363 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Prodi III | 16/05/2007 | 24/01/2008 | 253 | Early elections |
| | Berlusconi IV | 08/05/2008 | 29/07/2010 | 812 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Berlusconi V | 30/07/2010 | 16/11/2010 | 109 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Berlusconi VI | 17/11/2010 | 22/03/2011 | 125 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Berlusconi VII | 23/03/2011 | 12/11/2011 | 234 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Letta I | 28/04/2013 | 14/11/2013 | 200 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Letta II | 15/11/2013 | 14/02/2014 | 91 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Renzi I | 22/02/2014 | 17/02/2015 | 360 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Renzi II | 18/02/2015 | 07/12/2016 | 658 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Gentiloni Silveri | 12/12/2016 | 04/03/2018 | 447 | End of the constitutional term |
| | Conte I | 01/06/2018 | 20/08/2019 | 445 | Non electoral replacement |
| Portugal | Guterres II | 25/10/1999 | 17/12/2001 | 784 | Early elections |
| | Durão Barroso | 06/04/2002 | 17/07/2004 | 833 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Santana Lopes | 17/07/2004 | 13/12/2004 | 149 | Early elections |
| | Socrates I | 12/03/2005 | 27/09/2009 | 1660 | End of the constitutional term |
| | Socrates II | 26/10/2009 | 31/03/2011 | 521 | Early elections |
| | Passos Coelho I | 21/06/2011 | 04/10/2015 | 1566 | End of the constitutional term |
| | Passos Coelho II | 30/10/2015 | 26/11/2015 | 27 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Costa | 26/11/2015 | 06/10/2019 | 1410 | End of the constitutional term |
| Spain | Aznar I | 06/05/1996 | 12/03/2000 | 1406 | Early elections |
| | Aznar II | 28/04/2000 | 14/03/2004 | 1416 | Early elections |
| | Zapatero I | 18/04/2004 | 09/03/2008 | 1421 | End of the constitutional term |
| | Zapatero II | 14/04/2008 | 20/11/2011 | 1315 | Early elections |
| | Rajoy I | 22/12/2011 | 20/12/2015 | 1459 | End of the constitutional term |
| | Rajoy II | 20/12/2015 | 26/06/2016 | 189 | Early elections |
| | Rajoy III | 04/11/2016 | 02/06/2018 | 575 | Non electoral replacement |
| | Sánchez I | 06/06/2018 | 28/04/2019 | 326 | End of the constitutional term |

Table A2: Cox regression analysis for government stability with two-way interaction terms.

| | <i>Pooled hazard with two-way interactions</i> |
|--|--|
| Number of parties | 0.060 (0.713) |
| Type of cabinet: minority coalition | 1.869 (1.218) |
| Type of cabinet: single-party majority coalition | -0.152 (1.837) |
| Type of cabinet: surplus coalition | 1.173 (1.405) |
| Copy of the incumbent administration | 1.388 (0.923) |
| Pre-/post coalition agreement | -1.190 (0.788) |
| ENPP | -0.637 (0.458) |
| Days for cabinet formation | 0.009 (0.011) |
| Days until next mandated elections | 0.000 (0.002) |
| Refugee crisis | 0.473 (1.055) |
| Asylum application dummy | 0.249 (1.247) |
| Positional variance on economic issues | 0.431 (0.986) |
| Positional variance on EU issues | 0.349 ⁺ (0.204) |
| Positional variance on economic issues X Asylum applications (dummy) | -0.634 (0.594) |
| Positional variance on EU issues X Asylum applications (dummy) | 0.331 (0.709) |
| <i>AIC</i> | 216.4 |
| <i>BIC</i> | 268.1 |
| <i>Observations</i> | 130 |

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (not shown due to space limitations).

⁺p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. The reference category for type of cabinet is minimal winning coalitions.

Table A3: Cox regression analysis for government stability. Robustness check.

| | <i>Pooled hazard with three-way interactions</i> |
|--|--|
| Number of parties | 0.248 (0.562) |
| Type of cabinet: minority coalition | 2.395 (2.086) |
| Type of cabinet: single-party majority coalition | 0.008 (3.081) |
| Type of cabinet: surplus coalition | 0.151 (2.790) |
| Copy of the incumbent administration | 1.596 (1.047) |
| Pre-/post coalition agreement | -2.733 ⁺ (1.262) |
| ENPP | -1.125 (0.917) |
| Days for cabinet formation | 0.001 (0.015) |
| Days until next mandated elections | 0.001 (0.002) |
| Refugee crisis | 5.517 (3.987) |
| Asylum applications over total immigrants (dummy) | -1.608 (10.452) |
| Positional variance on economic issues | -5.903 (4.719) |
| Positional variance on EU issues | -0.210 (1.556) |
| Salience on economic issues | -2.186 (1.618) |
| Salience on EU issues | -0.556 (0.788) |
| Positional variance on economic issues X Asylum applications over total immigrants (dummy) | -7.589 (6.826) |
| Positional variance on EU issues X Asylum applications over total immigrants (dummy) | -39.375** (22.231) |
| Salience on economic issues X Asylum applications over total immigrants (dummy) | 0.272 (0.835) |
| Salience on EU issues X Asylum applications over total immigrants (dummy) | 0.050 (0.821) |
| Positional variance on economic issues X Salience on economic issues | 1.050 (0.717) |
| Positional variance on EU issues X Salience on EU issues | 0.121 (0.229) |
| Positional variance on economic issues X Salience on economic issues X Asylum applications over total immigrants (dummy) | 0.832 (0.795) |
| Positional variance on EU issues X Salience on EU issues X Asylum applications over total immigrants (dummy) | 5.610** (2.757) |
| <i>AIC</i> | 211.3 |
| <i>BIC</i> | 285.8 |
| <i>Observations</i> | 130 |

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (not shown due to space limitations).

⁺p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. The reference category for type of cabinet is minimal winning coalitions.

