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Portuguese attitudes to EU membership: Where Euroscepticism (still) doesn't sell?

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Abstract

This thesis examines the attitudes of the Portuguese population and its political actors towards the European project, paying particular attention to strands of Eurosceptic sentiment and thereby shedding light on the assumption of Portuguese exceptionalism to this phenomenon. At the time of writing, the European Union faces the challenge of a rising wave of populist Eurosceptic parties, particularly from the extreme right of the political spectrum, and Portugal's previously stable political landscape has not been immune to some degree of far-right populism. However, its generally optimistic attitude to the European project has long provided something of an antidote to populist Euroscepticism.

Incorporating data collected from national and Eurobarometer surveys as well as anecdotal evidence provided in the news media, this paper tracks Euroscepticism (and Euro-optimism) in political discourse and its role in shaping public opinion, particularly in the period following the Eurozone crisis (2013-2023). It charts the salience of key issues for Portuguese citizens in this period with a view to understanding the factors which have shaped attitudes to Europe. It maps the rise of sovereignty-based Euroscepticism, a relatively new phenomenon in Portugal, onto theoretical frameworks on the twin concepts of populism and Euroscepticism. Finally, it puts key theoretical assumptions to the test in two case studies on the dual elections in Portugal in 2024: for the national and European Parliament. It concludes that while Portugal has indeed proven resistant to populist Euroscepticism, it may not remain permanently immune to the phenomenon due to increased politicisation of EU-related issues among politicians, and public attitudes placing more responsibility on the EU for national issues.

Keywords: Euroscepticism, populism, Portugal, political discourse, public opinion, European integration.

1. Introduction

I. Relevance

For a brief moment in early 2022, Portugal, a country on the geographic and political periphery of Europe, experienced a rare and fleeting moment of enviable stability when the snap January election yielded an unprecedented absolute majority for the Socialist Party (*PS*). In an era of contagious political uncertainty in Europe and the world, Portugal stood almost alone as a beacon for strong, stable government and with it the prospect of a smooth post-pandemic economic recovery, an electorate repellent to the tide of populism sweeping through the global political landscape, and seemingly a success story of European integration. It was not to last for long. Two years later, as Portugal joined 63 other countries across the world as well as the European Parliament in what looked set to be a pivotal election year for democracy itself, this rare instance of political stability could not be more relevant.

Indeed, the dual prospects of strong political leadership and relative economic prosperity - made all the more unlikely by the country's recent reliance on shaky coalition-building, and the prolonged pain of the austerity years following the Eurozone crisis - were uncharted territory for the Portuguese. One could go so far as to say that there was a degree of national unease when it came to handing untrammeled power to a single party, perhaps as a social hangover from the rejection of Salazar's authoritarian tendencies. Unusually then, for a member state of the European Union, Portugal's transfer of a measure of sovereignty to Brussels upon its accession in 1986, seems to sit relatively comfortably with an electorate wary of absolute power being centralised in Lisbon.

Regardless of the political situation domestically, Portuguese public attitudes towards Europe have always reflected solidarity with its neighbours and allies on the continent, with Eurobarometer surveys regularly returning Portugal amongst the leading member states which feel membership has benefitted their country (Special Eurobarometer EB044EP, 2023), and pro-EU sentiment has steadily increased since the 1990s (Moreira, et al., 2010). This is broadly reflected in the sphere of the domestic political elites: most of the parties which have shared power over the last thirty years have also shared similar sympathies with Europe - the exception being the Communist Party (*PCP*) and the Left Bloc (*BE*), both of which most recently shared power with the Socialists in 2021.

	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	Euro-	Best election performance [since 1989] (% share of vote)	Last election performance [including 2024] (% share of vote)	Period in government? *(*support)*
Left Bloc (BE)		X		(X)	10.6 (2015)	4.4 (2024)	2015-2021*
Chega! (Ch)	X		X	X	18.1 (2024)	18.1 (2024)	-
Communist (PCP)		X		(X)	9.2 (1999)	3.2 (2024)	2015-2021*

Table 1: Current (or former) Eurosceptic parties in Portugal. [source: www.popu-list.org , with 2024 data added]

However, even the staunch opposition of the Communists towards Europe has been tempered by the political reality of sharing power through a time of economic crisis and recovery, a softening equally experienced by the Left Bloc's more nuanced Euroscepticism. Prior to Portugal's entry into the European Community, the Communists had enjoyed million-strong popular support and significant representation in the national parliament following the fall of the dictatorship, but they have seen their support ebb away towards more moderate leftwing parties in the decades that followed. Tracking Eurosceptic and populist parties in Europe since 1989, website *The PopuList* (see Table 1: Current (or former) Eurosceptic parties in Portugal. [source: www.popu-list.org , with 2024 data added] above) only designates the far-right populist *Chega* party as Eurosceptic in today's political context, though the degree to which this is the case will be explored later in this thesis.

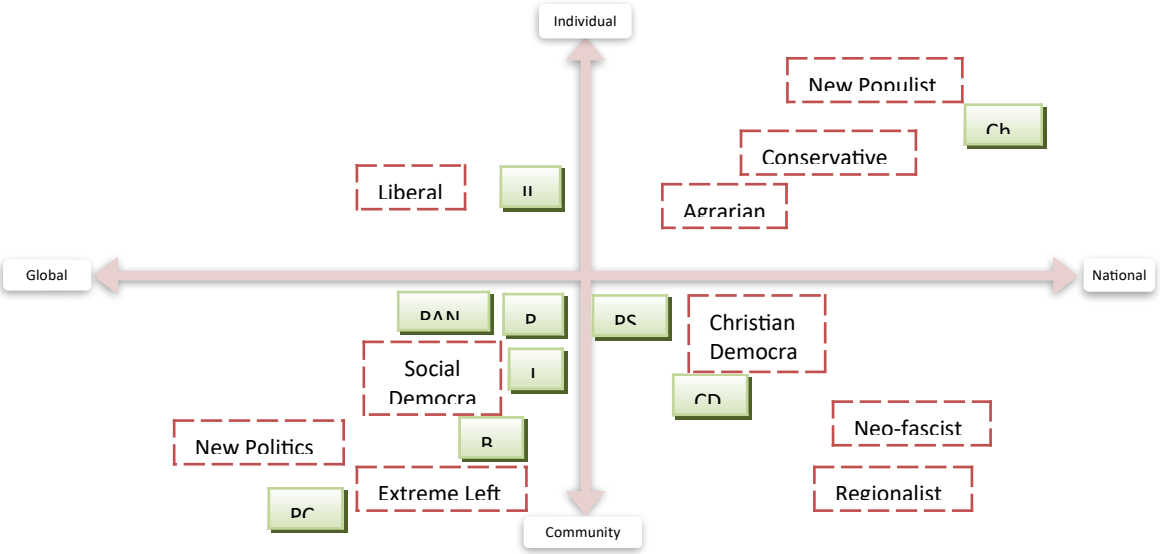

Figure 1: Mapping of the main Portuguese parties [source: Taggart (1998); mapping is author's own elaboration]

What is striking about the case of Portugal is the relative lack of a sustained Eurosceptic movement even in its more troubled times since accession. As indicated in Taggart's mapping of the parties (Taggart, 1998), most of the Portuguese parties comfortably sit

around the interaction point of the axes (see Figure 1: Mapping of the main Portuguese parties [source: Taggart (1998); mapping is author's own elaboration]above), suggesting a strong EU-friendly sentiment - these parties would have little reason to attack decision-making in Brussels and would likely find little sympathy among the electorate if they did. Of those outliers, the *PCP* and *BE*, as mentioned, have prioritised advancing their left-wing agenda when sharing power and have tended to turn their fire away from Brussels. Likewise at the other end of the spectrum, *Chega* was only recently born from a disparate group of monarchists, free-marketers and the Christian right and has gained traction by amplifying its position on a number of controversial issues, from immigration to gender identity. It has tended not to broadcast its position on Europe in the same manner however: while understood to be broadly Eurosceptic, this is clearly a dividing line even among its party members (Marchi, 2020).

Portugal faced two great electoral tests in the first half of 2024. The first, a general election scheduled for March and triggered by a corruption scandal that engulfed the ruling Socialist Party, resulting in the resignation of Prime Minister António Costa, was always likely to buoy the 'outliers' on Taggart's map, though not necessarily for reasons related to Euroscepticism. The anti-establishment *Chega*, who for much of their existence have pointed to the corruption of the 'system', arguing that "Portugal precisa de uma limpeza" (Portugal needs a 'cleaning'), were vindicated by seeing their national vote share dramatically improve in March 2024. More interesting, for the purposes of this thesis, is to see how these declining and resurgent parties positioned themselves in regard to Europe in the lead-up to the June European Parliament Elections, and the extent to which they were able to 'sell' their position to the electorate.

II. Research question

Hence, this thesis aims to answer the question **"Why has Euroscepticism been largely absent from political discourse in Portugal and what factors have driven Portuguese attitudes towards the EU?"**

In relation to the first part of the question, there is a multitude of literature on the broader phenomenon of Euroscepticism and to analyse all possible theories in the context of

Portugal would go beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I have picked a number of pertinent points on the topic which could go some way to explain the Portuguese position.

Many observers have pointed to the perceived 'democratic deficit' (de Wilde & Trenz, 2012) inherent in the EU's institutional structure and closed-door procedures. Lack of transparency and accountability in Brussels would likely drive Eurosceptic attitudes, though depending on the degree of trust in the national government, this could be overshadowed by a greater feeling of mistrust towards domestic politics. Franco and Dennison suggest this may be the case in Portugal, when voters' attitudes towards the EU and political systems: while 26% of voters identified with the sentiment that the country was 'broken' politically, only 5% responded that it was the EU that was broken, although 19% agreed that both the EU and Portugal were broken (Dennison & Franco, 2019). The theory that the EU provides an alternative outlet for national problems has not been borne out in Portugal.

Building on the theory presented by Taggart in the mapping of the parties (see Figure 1: Mapping of the main Portuguese parties [source: Taggart (1998); mapping is author's own elaboration]), it would be reasonable to assume that for the vast majority of Portuguese voters, a functioning European Union goes hand-in-hand with a healthy democracy at a national level (Vink, 2012), and only those represented on the political fringes would be likely to express a Eurosceptic sentiment. Although successive Portuguese governments have relied on smaller parties, usually inclined towards the centre-left or centre-right, the system has essentially been a duopoly between the two major parties, *PS* and *PSD*, which have dictated the Portuguese narrative in relation to Europe. Hence, a working hypothesis in this regard would be that **Eurosceptic attitudes are less likely to be voiced by those around the political centre-ground and therefore more likely to be taken up by far-left or far-right parties.**

Other commentators, such as McLaren, point to identity-based issues (McLaren, 2007). As mentioned, *Chega* are best positioned to exploit such issues around identity, though their message has tended to be that Portuguese values are being watered down by minority ethnic groups and excessive political correctness rather than loss of sovereignty to the EU. Many of the symbols of sovereignty which, for instance, were employed during the Brexit debate (the monarchy, the currency, the Commonwealth) making the concept more

visceral, Portugal has long abandoned. There is little appetite to bring back the monarchy, nor is there great nostalgia for the dictatorship, nor for the weak escudo currency. Perhaps the only real nostalgia, or 'saudade', belongs to Portugal's more distant historical prowess and the remnants of empire, all of which were lost long before joining the EU. It would be difficult for Eurosceptic parties to justify distancing the country from Europe as a way to 'make Portugal great again'.

Although I have found little evidence of a notable increase in identity-based issues *in relation to Europe*, one cannot ignore the rise of *Chega* and their particular brand of nationalist identity politics. My hypothesis is that prior to their existence, **the absence of a sustained populist-Eurosceptic movement in Portugal owed more to supply-side scarcity than lack of demand**.

The most salient theory in my opinion, also explored by McLaren (McLaren, 2007), relates to the knowledge of citizens about the EU institutions, with the suggestion that the better informed a population is regarding the EU, the less likely it is to succumb to Eurosceptic tendencies. This appears to tie in with similar theories of 'history without society' which argue that a pan-European history is rarely taught in the curricula of Member States (Waechter, 2018), and when it is, it is often presented through the realist, and as a result, usually nationalistic lens. The result is swathes of the European electorate with either an under-informed or nationally-skewed perspective on European integration. However, I believe Portugal's modern history of poverty, loss and dictatorship allows it something of a unique position from which to present its narrative of triumph over isolation, prosperity in spite of crisis, and ultimately success *through* integration.

My final hypothesis statement therefore is that **Portuguese history and identity has successfully been presented to its population as collaborative and coherent with the success of the European project.** This has been essential in cementing public support for integration, encouraging a broader multilateral worldview, and minimising the effects of Euroscepticism.

It is anticipated that the findings of this thesis will provide valuable insight into Portuguese attitudes to Europe and the dissemination of a positive narrative of multilateralism which may serve as a model for pro-European governments. However, I also hope to dispel the

myth that Portugal, as indeed any country, is completely immune to populist-Eurosceptic rhetoric and maintain that mainstream parties should be wary of leaning too heavily on statistics demonstrating currently recording high levels of public support for the benefits of European integration (FFMS, 2024).

III. State of the Art

As is the case with literature on the broader phenomenon of Euroscepticism, there has been a wealth of research conducted into Portuguese attitudes to the European Union, particularly over the last decade following the Eurozone crisis. My interest in the topic was triggered primarily after reading Lívia Franco and Suzi Dennison's policy brief for the European Council of Foreign Relations (ECFR) which gave a generous overview of Portuguese voting attitudes leading up to the 2019 elections. The policy brief describes Portugal's global role as an 'instinctive multilateralist' whose people believe that "their country's fate is inextricably tied to that of the European Union" (Dennison & Franco, 2019), and picked out the country's sense of optimism, which stood in stark contrast to that of the rest of the bloc at the time.

For their part, Moreira et al. analysed the attitudes of the Portuguese elites towards the European Union, breaking down voter attachment to Portugal and the EU through identification with various symbolic factors (Moreira, et al., 2010) and concluding that being a European citizen is not in conflict with the concept of being Portuguese. This may explain generally complementary individual attitudes towards Europe in Portugal, though does not explain the relative absence of Euroscepticism per se.

However, for more in-depth research on the topic of Euroscepticism in Portugal, Marco Lisi (Lisi, 2020) has assessed the impact of the recession on Portuguese attitudes to Europe, particularly in party politics of the left. While he accepts there was a rise in Euroscepticism following the crisis and period of EU-imposed austerity in Portugal, the fact that this coincided with a period of sharing power and greater cooperation following the 2015 election meant that this peak in Euroscepticism only had a temporary impact on party politics.

Among a number of papers on the topic, Marina Costa Lobo (Costa Lobo, 2023) has recently analysed the politicisation of EU issues among the parties and the media. She

complements Lisi's hypothesis of Euroscepticism peaking in the 2009-2015, albeit with the slightly more nuanced conclusion that while the negative tone of debate and discussion around the EU abated following the 2015 election, the salience of EU-issues has remained above pre-2009 levels. In other words, the politicisation of EU issues has maintained its importance for the parties as the role of EU still sits on the Portuguese conscience. Interestingly, Lobo points to the fact that while there is ongoing research into party positions on Europe, relatively less research has taken place into the individual attitudes and political behaviour of the Portuguese voter.

IV. Outline/Structure

This thesis will be divided into seven parts, including this first introductory section, two case studies, and a conclusion. The second section seeks to establish the theoretical foundations upon which the study will be based. This section will be divided into three sub-chapters, the first explaining Euroscepticism in the context of the three 'Grand Theories' on European integration, the second detailing the different strands of Euroscepticism, and their characteristic elements, and the last briefly exploring the constructivist perspective on European integration with a view to contextualising the Portuguese narrative.

The shorter third section is devoted to the methodological framework to be built around these theoretical foundations. It will elaborate on the data to be used to conduct the research and the methodology employed to interpret this data. The fourth section will analyse the attitudes of Portuguese voters towards the EU, firstly through the prism of democratic values, in particular analysing the perception of democratic deficit inherent in the EU's institutional framework, and the salience of particular issues at the national and European level.

A fifth section will focus more on the political discourse element of the research question by tracking the rise of populism and Euroscepticism in the Portuguese political sphere with the aim of establishing causal links between the aforementioned issues, and of mapping the Portuguese case against existing theoretical frameworks concerning these dual phenomena. Finally, two case-studies will be included: one on the March 2024 legislative elections, and one on the June 2024 European Parliament elections; before answering the research

question and formulating final conclusions and implications for further research in the final section.

2. Theoretical Framework

I. The 'Grand Theories' of European Integration

In much the same way that the so-called 'Grand Theories' (Realism, Functionalism, Federalism and their Neo- counterparts) have sought to explain the logic of European integration through assumptions about human behaviour, a great deal of literature has also conceptualized the relatively more recent phenomenon of Euroscepticism (Sørensen, 2006). A logical starting point, both when conceptualizing Euroscepticism and explaining national attitudes towards European integration would be the neo-realist school of thought.

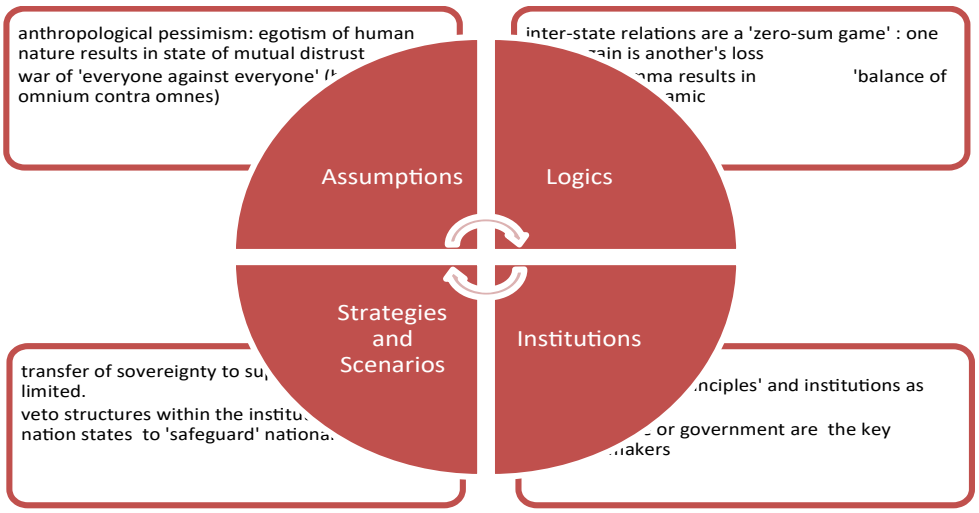

Figure 2: ALIS schema for neo-realist theory [adapted from source: CIFE]

Realism takes as its assumption that individual behaviour in a society is based around self-interest, in a sense espousing an 'anthropological pessimism' whereby a state of mutual distrust ensues. Projected onto the national level, the logic the follows is that nation states only enter into inter-state relations in order to maintain the balance of power and thereby guarantee their own security, hence the neo-realist depiction of the 'security dilemma'.

Through the prism of neo-realism, the European project could be viewed as a form of integrative balancing, or rather, cross-border cooperation facilitated by a low level of divergence among participating states, but no less another means of balancing power. States still seek to work principally in the national interest: this is borne out by the deployment of the veto system in intergovernmental decision-making procedures and is particularly relevant in the context of relative power afforded to otherwise weaker members.

Stanley Hoffmann's seminal neo-realist work on the role of the nation-state (Hoffman, 1966) makes the distinction between 'high' politics (e.g. foreign policy and national

security) and ‘low’ politics (e.g. trade and agriculture), arguing that nation-states are not inclined to trade away their exclusive competence in the former, even if integration does occur in the the case of the latter. A similar parallel can be seen between sceptical attitudes towards the EU, with the symbols of ‘high’ politics being used to enblematise the concept of ‘sovereignty’, while ‘low’ politics is rarely brought into most Eurosceptic discourse due to its relatively low emotive value.

Another perspective through which to view attitudes, both optimistic and sceptical, towards European integration would be that of neo-functionalist theory. Underpinning functionalism is the assumption that humans act rationally to fulfil basic functions and will instinctively do so in most cases, in cooperation with others. It explains the formation of supranational institutions and intergovernmental cooperation through the ‘form follows function’ argument, whereby a basic need is satisfied by regional integration.

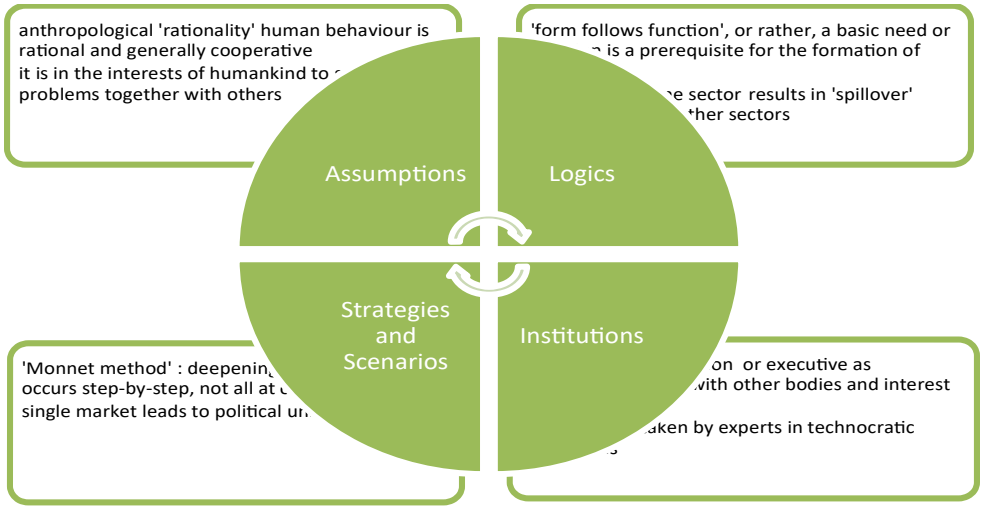

Figure 3: ALIS schema for neo-functionalist theory [adapted from source: CIFE]

Neo-functionalist theory has been used to explain some of the major breakthroughs in European integration where, often in cases of crisis, problem-solving has been ineffective at the national level and solutions have been sought supranationally. The functional spillover of sectoral integration that was envisioned by the founders of the European Coal and Steel Community has evolved into something of a political and cultivated spillover process whereby many nation-states have come to the understanding that the ‘common interest’ may be better furnished at the European level. Moreover, the ‘Monnet method’, of moments of widening followed by periods of deepening integration, appears to have prevailed as the European Union’s *modus operandi*.

The final ‘Grand Theory’ of European integration is (neo-)federalism, worth mentioning here for its dependence on democratic legitimacy and accountability, which is often seen as lacking in the European Union despite attempts to close the gap. Federalism maintains that full institutional integration of states is the only means of implementing a lasting peace, and the European Parliament is its greatest symbol of an overarching European identity.

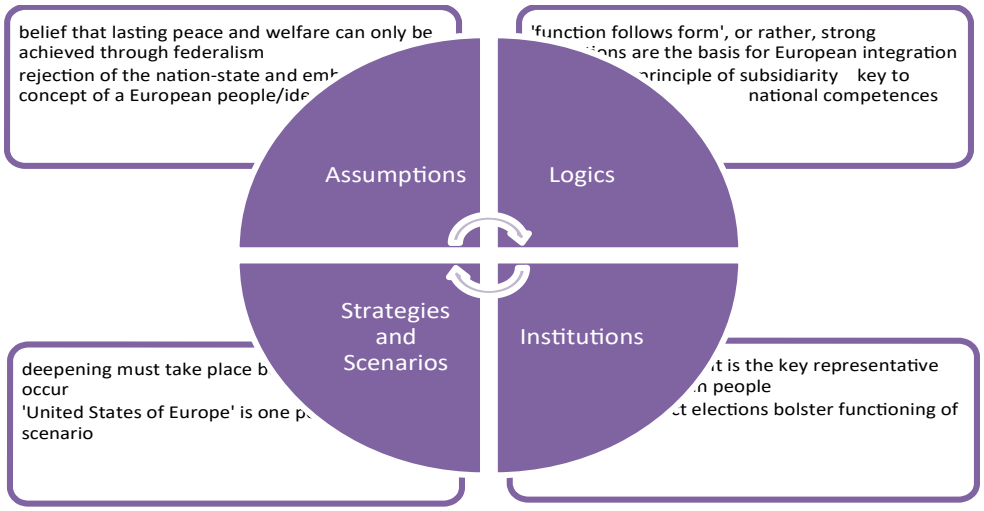

Figure 4: ALIS schema for neo-federalist theory [adapted from source: CIFE]

Central to the neo-federalist logic is the principle of subsidiarity, whereby “(d)ecisions shall be taken as openly and as closely as possible to the citizen” [TEU, Article 10, para. 3] (Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union, 2012) which underpins the need for free, fair and direct elections in the EU and the Parliament as a means to translate the will of the European people. It is perhaps worth noting at this stage that Portugal’s 1986 accession occurred within a decade of both its own (1976), and Europe’s own (1979), first free and fair democratic elections, so the affinity with the sense of ‘European identity’ might be stronger in Portugal than in earlier accession countries, who may be inclined to view the European Community as a project of political elites, as some federalists would argue it was, prior to EP elections.

It goes without saying that no one theory is enough to analyse the multiple push and pull factors behind an individual country’s integration into the European Community, nor can the phenomenon of Euroscepticism be fully explained by one particular perspective, as illustrated in the next section. However, a combination of the theoretical models can go some way to explaining different attitudes and strands of scepticism which have arisen over the last few decades.

II. Strands of Euroscepticism

If we are to analyse the (relative lack of) Eurosceptic attitudes in a member state such as Portugal, it is relevant to bear in mind the varied reasons which may motivate a sceptical stance towards the EU. Catharina Sørensen identifies four distinct strands (Sørensen, 2006) of Euroscepticism and elements which characterise individual behaviour in this regard (see Figure 5: Types of Euroscepticism and characteristic elements [adapted from source: Sørensen, 2006]): Ideological, Utilitarian, Sovereignty-based and Principled Euroscepticism.

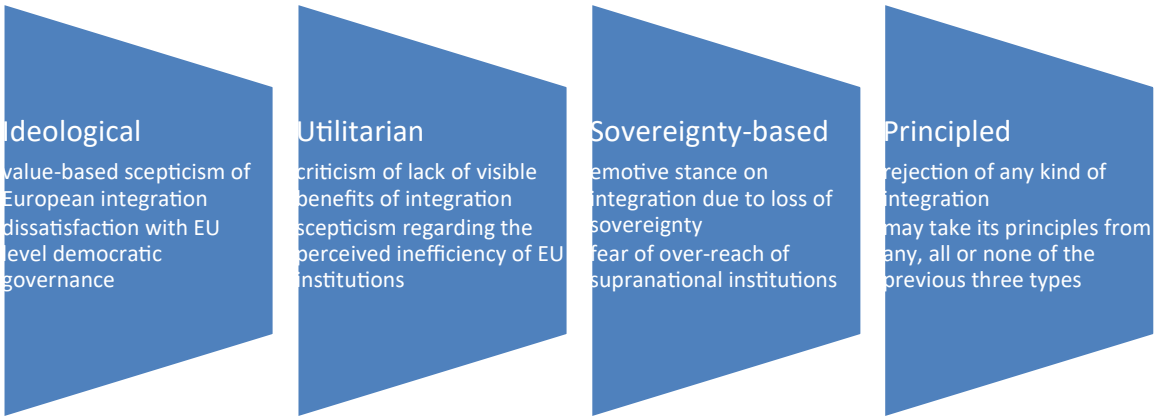

Figure 5: Types of Euroscepticism and characteristic elements [adapted from source: Sørensen, 2006]

It is important to note that, of the above strands, if we remove Principled Euroscepticism, which may have diverse roots or motivations with somewhat less rationally explicable foundations, only Sovereignty-based Euroscepticism reflects the perhaps more traditional notion of phenomenon as a wholly realist endeavour. The emotive stance conveyed aligns with Hoffmann's assertions on 'high' and 'low' politics, playing on fears that the EU is coming for the last vestiges of nation-state power. Yet, as Sørensen notes, this is just one branch of Euroscepticism, with its diverse and almost contradictory stances, which may explain the EU's relative lack of success in tackling waves of sceptical sentiment in recent years. This strand may align with a stronger feeling of national identity, and a subsequent absence of 'feeling European' (Robertson, 2005).

Utilitarian scepticism rather mirrors the neo-functional perspective, whereby individuals and member states are satisfied with regional integration only as long as they are able to see the benefits of it. When these benefits become less visible, or in purely economic terms, if a member state is 'putting in' more than it is 'taking out', the rational reaction would be to question membership, often citing the lack of efficiency of EU institutions in addressing national problems. A symptomatic variable to indicate this strand of

Euroscepticism would therefore be the feeling that one's country has not benefitted from EU membership (Robertson, 2005).
In turn, Ideological scepticism manifests itself in the form of dissatisfaction that the EU is not living up to its stated values or expected standard of democracy, which Sørensen posits could equally be about *not enough* Europe (i.e. lack of societal cohesion or direct Europe-wide democracy) as *too much*. In this sense, it is an argument that may be brandished by disaffected federalists and populist politicians alike. This brand of Euroscepticism however may be employed more frequently by parties on the left of the political spectrum - or on Taggart's map, the bottom left quadrant of parties - who, although they aspire to both community-based and in some cases global governance, would point to the democratic deficit inherent in the EU's technocratic structure as a major flaw. A demonstrated lack of awareness of the existence of the European Parliament (Robertson, 2005) or the role of MEPs as their directly elected representatives, as a could be a symptom of this particular strand of Euroscepticism.

When it comes to Principled Euroscepticism, or rather, outright rejection of the EU as a matter of principle, while Sørensen accepts that the intransigence of this latter group makes tranforming sceptical (or in this case, rejectionist) attitudes a formidable challenge, it is largely characterised by an older war generation which are gradually being replaced by a younger, generally more Euro-friendly cohort (Sørensen, 2006, p. 9). In her comparative study of Denmark, France and the UK, she identifies Principled scepticism as being apparent in British and Danish Eurosceptic attitudes and largely absent in the more ideological French. A large part of this rejectionism, it could be argued, is shaped by the 'Europe of the day' at the time of a member's accession: public perceptions of the European community were quite different for the French founders in 1957 to that of the Brits and Danes during the period of Eurosclerosis in the 1970s. In turn, one might naturally expect a different perception again during the period of renewed integration with the Single European Act and accession of post-Salazar Portugal in 1986.

An obvious definition of Euroscepticism, measurable by its use in Eurobarometers until 2012, and therefore used in various earlier studies (Robertson, 2005) (Sørensen, 2006) would be the perception of EU membership as a a 'bad' thing. The absence of this particular question in such surveys over the past decade could prove to be a limitation in

terms of my research, but also allows for a reframing of the concept in more nuanced terms, dependent on a variety of factors as in the case of Portugal.

III. European integration through the lens of constructivism

Although it is not considered to be a theory on integration per se, the contructivist perspective on human behaviour lends a valuable alternative angle from which to view the process. Constructivism stands in stark contrast to realism in the sense that it opposes the notion of self- and national interest, and rather studies the way in which interests are formed through institutions and identity takes shape via the diffusion of (European) norms (Checkel, 1999). In other words, human agents, rather than nation-states, interact to produce structures that then shape collective action.

While constructivist perspectives could arguably share some ground with neo-federalist theory, in terms, for instance, of the possibility of a European identity formed through socialisation and institutions, it is neo-functionalist theory that has the most potential overlap with the constructivist turn in integration theory. In fact, prominent neo-functionalist Ernst B Haas sought to downplay the notion that constructivism could 'subsume' neo-functionalism in a 2001 paper (Haas, 2001), arguing that the focus put on structures, particularly the influence of larger international structures in constructivism, distinguished it from 'his' neo-functionalist theory behind regional integration.

In the context of Euroscepticism, the strand on which a constructivist angle may shed the most light is the Utilitarian argument of the perception of benefits. While constructivism may provide for the social construction of the EU as a 'benefit giver', the absence of such (in a visible and tangible form) may lead to the opposite perception. Moreover, while the institutions provide an arena for agents to enhance integration and cooperation, the socialisation element has also ironically afforded single-issue Eurosceptic parties as agents the same arena in which to provide an alternative social construction: that of the EU as a 'benefit taker'. Case studies on the UK, Ireland, Denmark and Portugal compiled using Eurobarometer data from 1992 to 2001 (Robertson, 2005) found a close correlation between Euroscepticism (that is, the percentage of respondents who believed EU membership was a 'bad' thing) and the perception that Portugal had not benefitted, with both variables peaking in 1994. This correlation was only observed in the Portuguese data, while a mix of other factors, such as lack of awareness of the European Parliament, and

identity/nationality-based issues, appeared to have more of a bearing on British, Irish and Danish euroscepticism. While there are obvious limitations to pointing out the uniqueness of the Portuguese case in contrast to three geographically and economically distant countries, not to mention from a different historical 'wave' of EU accession, the conclusion is illuminating nonetheless.

One reason Portugal may have achieved relative success at keeping euroscepticism at bay in contrast to some of the aformentioned countries, is by tacking closely to the construction of the EU as 'benefit taker', and I believe the timing and nature of its accession have made its agents more prone to social learning than their counterparts. Checkel's hypotheses about social construction and integration provide three key instances in which social learning, that is, the acquisition of new preferences or shaping of new interests, is likely to occur (Checkel, 1999):

1. *when they are in a novel and uncertain environment and thus cognitively motivated to analyse new information.*
2. *when the persuader is an authoritative member of the in-group to which the persuadee belongs or wants to belong*
3. *when the agent has few prior, ingrained beliefs that are inconsistent with the persuader's message.*

It could conceivably be argued that Portugal in 1986, emerging from dictatorship to democracy less than a decade previously, was in a radically new and therefore uncertain environment (Robertson, 2005), and thus firmly fit the first instance, though parallels are also apparent in the subsequent instances. As all three of the statements above appear to ring true in Portugal's case, its agents and, by extension, its citizens, would likely have been more open to social learning from the Brussels sphere than, for instance, British or Danish citizens as referred to in the previous section. While it is true that the Northern enlargement countries *were* in a novel environment in economic terms, and in this sphere may have been more prone to social learning, the question of authority and ingrained beliefs about integration may also have been factors contributing to resistance against this phenomenon, and thus, more sceptical attitudes towards integration.

I consider the first instance to be the most relevant to the Portuguese case, and most appropraite as an explanation behind Portugal's attitude to European Union membership, at least at the level of the political elite. This has been sold with some degree of success at the

level of the electorate, though the 'novelty' of the current environment has obviously worn off somewhat and left scope to question some aspects of the relationship.

3. Methodology

I will draw on a range of methodological approaches when it comes to testing my three hypotheses. I will also elucidate on the key findings in light of these hypotheses in the two case studies, from the Portuguese legislative election, and the European Parliament election, presented in the second half of the thesis.

In order to establish the assumption of a generally sympathetic Portuguese attitude towards Europe, as suggested by the thesis title, I will make use of two barometer surveys compiled up to and within a year of the 2024 European Parliament election. The Portuguese think tank Fundação Francisco Manuel dos Santos (FFMS, 2024) publication of their *Barometro da Política Europeia* survey a month before the June election date provides a key snapshot of voting attitudes towards Europe on a national level, as well as an informative and useful breakdown of demographic groups. Limitations to the data, however, include the scarcity of comparative analysis with the European average for the latter, as well as the relative lack of long-term data to determine temporal evolution of attitudes, with this evidence in fact sourced from Eurobarometer surveys.

I have also compiled Standard Eurobarometer survey data for Portugal in order to track attitudes towards Europe, with particular focus on the last decade (European Commission, 2013 - 2023), this being the period following the notorious Eurozone crisis and imposition of the 'Troika' and austerity measures in Portugal. The Eurobarometer is a comprehensive tool providing a wealth of data on "how, to whom, and about what the European Union speaks to Europeans" (Rabier, 2003), through a series of questions posed at an individual, national and European level, the scope of which may extend well beyond the remit of this thesis. For this reason, I have only analysed some of the more pertinent questions that may act as determinants on Portuguese attitudes towards the European Union.

These are questions *QA1.2 How would you judge the current … situation of [the Portuguese] economy?* and *QA.2 What are your expectations for the next twelve months: … better, worse or the same when it comes to … the state of [the Portuguese] economy?* to

determine whether harsh economic realities in this period could have contributed to an increase in Utilitarian-style Euroscepticism and diminished perception of benefits. *QA6 How much trust do you have in certain institutions? For each of the following institutions, [the European Union; the Portuguese Parliament; the Portuguese government] do you tend to trust it or not to trust it?* to explore the perception of democratic deficit inherent at both a national and European level. Finally, I also used selected pertinent issues voiced over this period in response to *QA3 What do you think are the two most important issues facing [Portugal] at the moment?* alongside *QA5 What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment?* to assess whether the salience of issues were equivalent at the national and European level, and thereby infer a perceived degree of European responsibility for national problems (or otherwise).

There are limitations to the data provided by Standard Eurobarometer surveys, not least the aforementioned absence of a straightforward answer to the question of Portuguese support for EU membership. Such questions e.g. *QA7* (support for membership), *Q8* (benefits of membership) and *QA13* (image of the European Union) was provided in Eurobarometer surveys prior to the period in focus (i.e. Eurobarometer 73) but did not appear consistently in Standard Eurobarometer publications after Spring 2010. Another factor that needs to be taken into consideration is the criticism that has been levelled at Eurobarometers regarding their inherent potential slant towards those who favour EU integration leading to an overestimation in support for the European project (Bennike, 2019). Though this claim has been refuted by a number of experts (eupinions, 2019), according to Møller Hansen, response rates to the traditional face-to-face interview process, which are as low as 40% in Portugal, reflect unwillingness among those with less formal education, and often those with a more critical attitude towards the EU, to participate.

It is also worth mentioning at this point that, due to pandemic restrictions, Eurobarometer interviews were conducted online in the winter of 2021/22 and partially online the following winter. Ostensibly, there is potential for this to have had an effect on response rates, with those less willing to participate in face-to-face surveys arguably more likely to take part, although this is perhaps offset by the fact that such a method favours the digitally literate. This may account for slightly more skewed results in this period, though of course so too might the gravity of the ongoing global crisis.

Finally, while the Eurobarometer does not purport to provide a bank of objective statistics, it nonetheless provides an academically useful indication of the way the wind is blowing regarding key issues which concern Europe in order to forecast shifts in opinion. Although, like any barometer, it is prone to error and may be problematic as a policy-shaping tool, the Eurobarometer is seen to be one of the most comprehensive and consistent of any equivalent global comparative surveys (Lagos, 2012). "While not diminishing the importance of empirical data," Marta Lagos writes, "one must nevertheless recognise the simple observation of a living society as a powerful instrument to comprehend its evolution". While both national and Eurobarometer surveys admittedly have their limitations, I will synthesise my findings in both sets of data in order to gauge a robust, if not wholly airtight, interpretation of Portuguese attitudes towards the European Union.

In order to assess if **Eurosceptic attitudes are less likely to be voiced by those around the political centre-ground** I look at national statistics, particularly the FFMS findings, to analyse the demographic and ideological breakdown of attitudes towards Europe, and will attempt to establish a causal link between this and Eurosceptic discourse along party lines. If it is indeed the case that such attitudes are **more likely to be taken up by far-left or far-right parties**, then one might expect less favourable perspectives on Europe to be present in findings among the left-wing or right-wing inclined demographic.

In relation to my second hypothesis, namely that **the absence of a sustained populist-Eurosceptic movement in Portugal owed more to supply-side scarcity than lack of demand**, I will seek to map theories and concepts of populism and Euroscepticism to the Portuguese particular political reality, focusing again primarily on the period 2013 – 2023 and culminating in the rise of the far-right *Chega* movement. While mainly building on anecdotal evidence in this section, I expect empirical evidence provided in the later case studies – the 2024 legislative election and European Parliament elections – to bolster my analysis in this regard.

Finally, in relation to my third hypothesis, that **Portuguese history and identity has successfully been presented to its population as collaborative and coherent with the success of the European project,** I aim to synthesise my findings around the model of constructivism and theories on social learning. I am aware of the criticisms that have been levelled at constructivism in terms of lack of scientifically testable hypotheses (Eilstrup-

Sangiovanni, 1966). However, I feel that, while elements of each of the Grand Theories provide clues as to the nature of Portugal's relationship with the European Union, the constructivist model serves as the best fit to explain Portugal's European narrative.

4. Analysing the attitudes of Portuguese voters towards the EU

In May 2024 the respected national think tank, Fundação Francisco Manuel dos Santos (FFMS) published the results of a European Political Barometer survey carried out in Portugal. The data included in the survey appears to back Eurobarometer data recording unprecedented high levels (over 90%) of those in agreement with the statement 'Portugal has benefitted from EU membership' (FFMS, 2024) in 2024, the same going for the statement 'Portugal has benefitted from adoption of the euro' (over 70% in agreement, also an historic high). That EU membership has delivered tangible results to the Portuguese economy and indeed way of life is in no doubt, is likely to grant it some degree of immunity to the utilitarian brand of Euroscepticism previously cited.

Since accession in 1986, in fact, only once has the response to the former question ebbed below these initial levels of perception of benefits – just over 60% in 1986, lukewarm by today's standards – and this was of course in the period 2009-2012 during the financial crisis where confidence in the EU plummeted. While a process of rapid social learning likely accelerated Portugal's fervent support for EU integration in the late 1980s, with levels of agreement with the statement 'Portugal has benefitted from European [Union] membership' reaching the 90% mark in the early 1990s (FFMS, 2024), more surprising is how the EU was able to rebuild its image following a crisis to garner even higher levels of Portuguese support.

Another striking paradox is found when analysing the demographic breakdown of respondents to the two aforementioned statements. While response to the first question is relatively unanimous among gender and even generational lines, when respondents are broken down into groups according to their ideological position, there is a slight difference between those in the centre and on either side of the political spectrum. Interestingly, those positioned on the right (85.1%) or left (84.8%) ideologically are *more likely* to be in agreement with the statement 'Portugal has benefitted from EU membership' than those who position themselves in the centre (82.1%) (FFMS, 2024). This ideological divide is even more apparent when it comes to the second question: while those who consider themselves in the political centre are 66.7% in agreement with the statement 'Portugal has

benefitted from adoption of the euro', those on the left (76.6%) and right (74.1%) are *far more* inclined to agree.

This has perhaps not been fully taken on board by some anti-establishment parties who have flirted with Euroscepticism, with the Communist party, for instance, kicking off its European Parliament campaign by warning the Portuguese to "prepare to leave" the euro, citing the period after adoption of the single currency as being "tragic" for the country (SIC Notícias, 2024). While the far-right may yet choose to adopt equally drastic tones and measures, it would seem their more ambiguous position on Europe may work to their favour considering the relatively high levels of support on the right for EU membership.

On the other hand, although fifty years of democracy may appear to have largely benefitted the two centre parties, it does not appear that nearly four decades of EU membership has been experienced in quite the same way by their likely voters. While there is ample room for Ideological Euroscepticism on the political fringes as demonstrated by Taggart's mapping of the parties (Taggart, 1998) and the perception of democratic deficit explored below, it may be the case that those ideologically inclined both towards the left and right find the European institutions beneficial towards advancing their causes which gain less traction at a national level.

Another statistic which is telling of the Portuguese stance on the European institutions is the agreement with the statement "MEPs elected to the European Parliament represent the national interest" with a little more than half of respondents saying the national interest is represented 'well' or 'very well' in Brussels. However, those politically inclined towards the left are much more likely (60.7%) to agree with this statement (FFMS, 2024) than those towards the centre or right (both 51.9%). The only demographic with under half of respondents (48.9%) who believe MEPs represent the national interest are those between the ages of 35 and 54, something of a generational hiccup considering the more favourable perception of their younger (18 – 34) and elder (55+) counterparts (54.7% and 55.9% respectively).

Evidently, while support for EU membership remains high, the perception lingers among the Portuguese electorate of a rift between their interests or those of the country, and that of European leaders or national actors on the European level. There may be a number of

factors behind this, but one cannot ignore the spectre of the Eurozone crisis as contributing to a feeling of disenfranchisement which a demographic cohort may find it hard to unshackle from.

I. Perception of Democratic Deficit

To analyse the broader and multilayered attitudes of the Portuguese electorate, there is a wealth of information available on the EU's Standard Eurobarometer surveys, conducted every six months. There are a number of responses which could be considered indicative of a sceptical attitude towards European integration or otherwise. However, a particular factor which has been consistently scrutinised in an effort to analyse the perception of democratic deficit apparent in the EU over the last decade is the response to the question of trust in the EU institutions.

Over a ten-year period, from Autumn 2013 until the most recent Standard Eurobarometer in Autumn 2023 (European Commission, 2013 - 2023), when asked *QA6 How much trust do you have in certain institutions?* and more specifically *Do you tend to trust [the European Union] or tend not to trust it?* respondents in Portugal provided a starkly different response to the European trend.

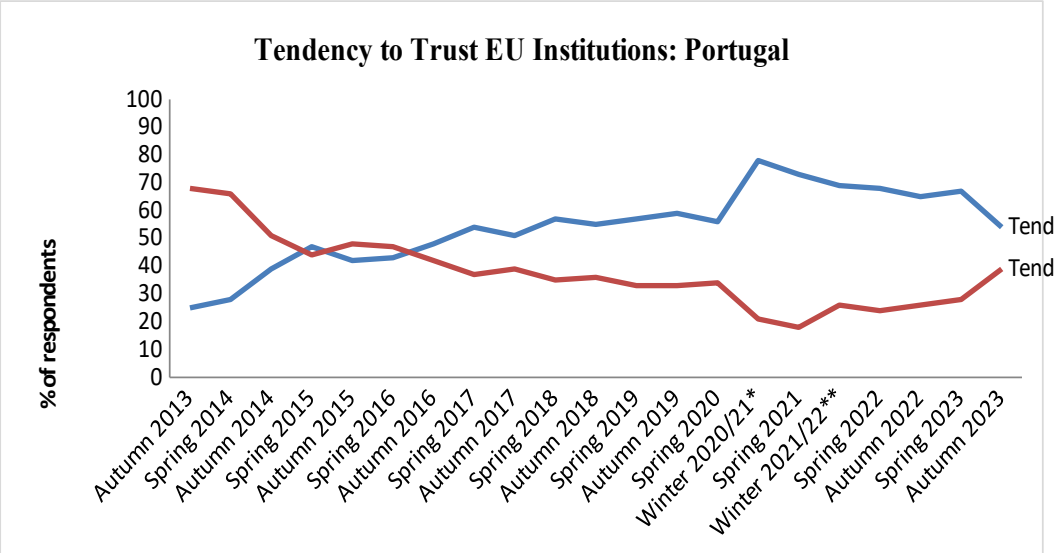

Figure 6: Tendency to Trust the EU: Portugal [compiled from source: Standard Eurobarometers 80-100, QA6] *Winter 2020/21 compiled solely using online interviews; ** Winter 2021/22 compiled using online + face-to-face.

Starting from an initially lower point in terms of public trust (25%) than the European Union average (31%) in the epicentre of the Eurozone crisis, the Portuguese tendency to trust European Union institutions has since made a rapid recovery, soon eclipsing those more sceptical of the EU by 2015-16. When compared to the European Union average,

where trust in the institutions took a much longer time to be restored ('tend to trust' only narrowly overtaking 'tend not to trust' in the midst of the pandemic, at which point the Portuguese tendency to trust the EU had skyrocketed to 78%), the relative uniqueness of Portuguese attitudes towards the EU, one of instinctive trust in multilateral cooperation, is highlighted.

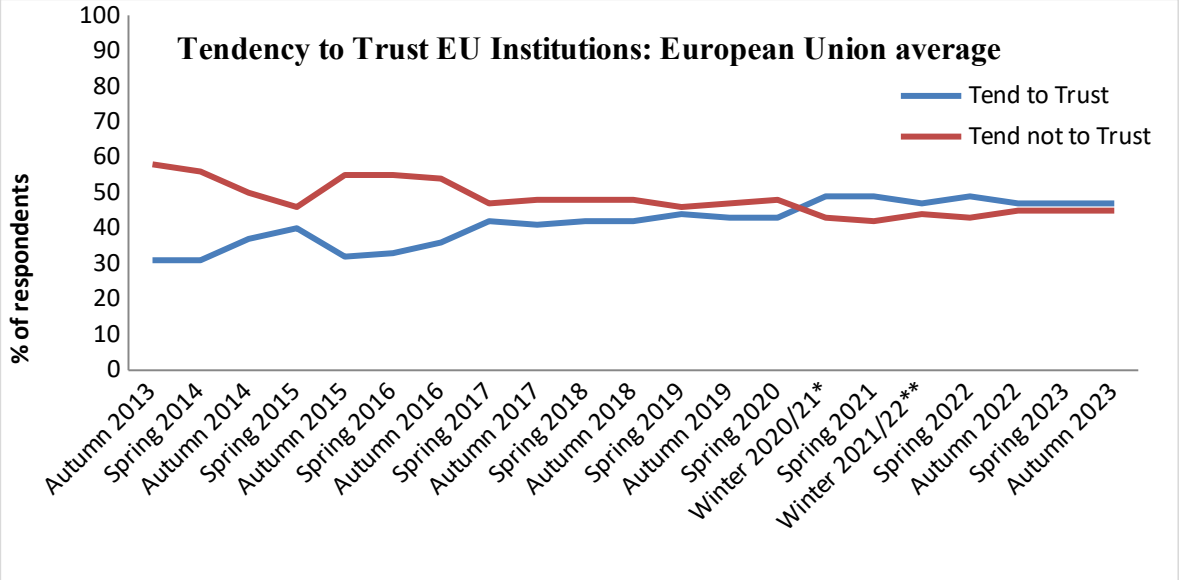

Figure 7: Tendency to Trust the EU: EU average [compiled from source: Standard Eurobarometers 80-100, QA6] *Winter 2020/21 compiled solely using online interviews; ** Winter 2021/22 compiled using online + face-to-face.

The recent Portuguese data would seem to buck the trend of an EU electorate whose confidence in the European project is wearing wafer thin (see Figure 5 above), yet as Portugal headed into an election in which the far-right was (correctly) predicted to make significant gains (Henley, 2024), the country does not appear to be immune to the current political headwinds in Europe and across the world. It now looks likely to contribute to the European Parliament's right-wing wave forecast in the June elections and could even join a long list of other member states where the far-right will take the first or second largest share of seats in Brussels (Cunningham, et al., 2024), (though a no-less-notable third place looks more likely at this stage).

My research does not seek to deny the existence of powerful populist undercurrents in the Portuguese political sphere, nor does it attempt to portray the Portuguese electorate as unique in this regard. Instead, I intend to explain the relative exceptionalism of Portuguese attitudes towards Europe (seen in Figures 4/5), which I believe it is important to distinguish from the aforementioned. In a later section I hope to differentiate the two concepts of populism and Euroscepticism to argue why a recent surge in the former in

Portugal does not necessarily amount to a rise in the latter (see Distinction and Intersection between Populism and Euroscepticism).

II. Salience of EU-related issues

Marina Costa Lobo has analysed the way in which EU related issues were politicised during the peak period for Euroscepticism following the 2009 crisis (Costa Lobo, 2023). She asserts that the salience of EU-related issues in political discourse and in the media, unlike the Eurosceptic sentiment itself, did not fully subside in the subsequent decade following the formation of the 2015 Socialist coalition government, thereby weakening Portugal's apparent immunity to populism and Euroscepticism. In fact, Sofia Ramos Paiva goes one step further, arguing that even among pro-European politicians the EU is now used as something of a 'scapegoat' (Ramos Paiva, 2019), thereby 'undermining from within' and fuelling a broader sense of Euroscepticism among the population.

Ramos Paiva's study builds on an analysis of speeches delivered by, and interviews conducted with, prominent members of the two main (and generally considered to be pro-EU) parties: the Socialist (*PS*) and Social Democratic (*PSD*) parties. Not only does she detect evidence of "the nationalisation of successes and Europeanization of failures" (Marinho e Pinto, 2019) in public political discourse, the scapegoating of the EU is acknowledged as a common practice among interviewees on both the centre-left and centre-right. While blaming the EU for national problems does not equate to promoting Euroscepticism, this practice may account for the paradox previously presented in FFMS data suggesting less favourable attitudes towards the EU among respondents aligned around the political centre.

It would be reasonable to assume that, inversely, to some extent, trust in Europe from those not ideologically represented by the government or the political centre, may be boosted when trust in the national institutions falls. As Figure 4 indicated, single issues, such as handling of the health crisis at the European level, can in fact result in a boost in trust in the EU institutions, to the detriment, it would seem, of the national government. On the other hand, national issues, such as the 2023 corruption scandal, might appear to have implications for all levels of government, including the EU, perhaps – unwittingly in this case – a scapegoat for broader mistrust of the democratic establishment. I have selected a

number of salient issues over the same period portrayed in Figure 4/5 (2013 – 2023) to analyse the themes which may characterise the attitudes of Portuguese voters within this timeframe.

a. Unemployment

In the Standard Eurobarometer surveys for the period Autumn 2013 – Autumn 2023 (European Commission, 2013 - 2023), respondents were asked the following question: *QA3a What do you think are the two most important issues facing [Portugal] at the moment?* While responses differ when asked the similarly worded question *QA5 [issues facing the EU at the moment]* – I have primarily chosen this question in order to depict the typical concerns of the Portuguese voter at a national level over this time period.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most pressing concern for Portuguese respondents in roughly the first half of this ten-year period, starting in the midst of the financial crisis, was related to the economy – in this case the workforce. Portuguese respondents considered unemployment to be far and away the greatest problem at a national level in 2013 – though the problem had social implications as well, with emigration surging during this period and this arguably remaining a politically contentious generational issue today (Goulão, 2024).

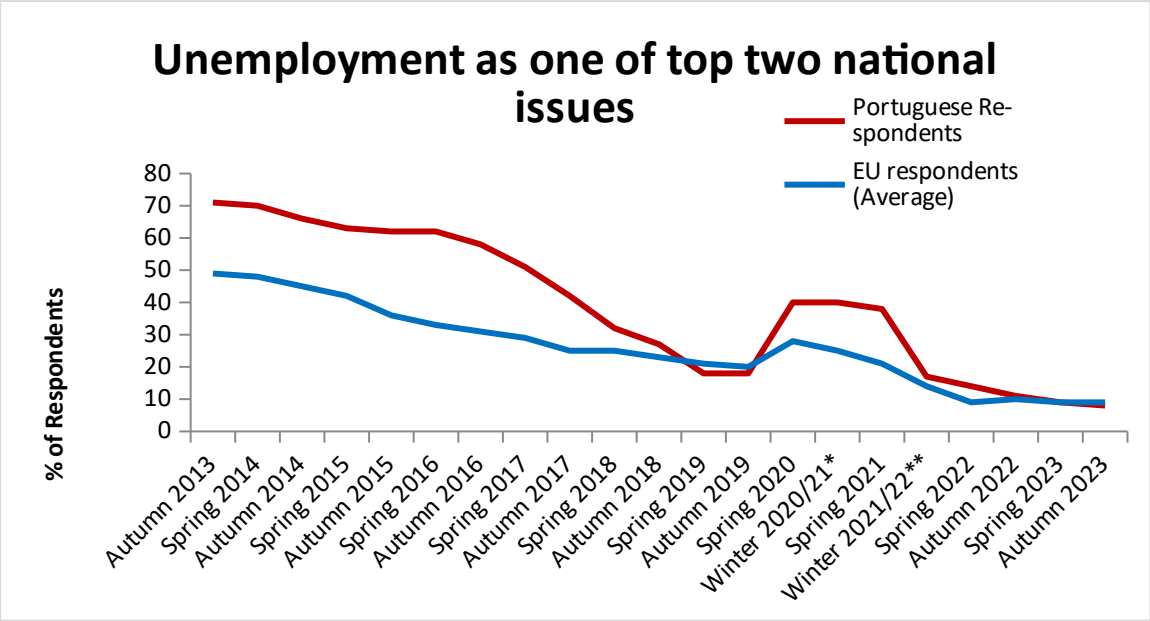

Figure 8: Unemployment as one of the top two issues facing Portugal [interpreted from source: Standard Eurobarometers 80-100, QA6] *Winter 2020/21 – online interviews; ** Winter 2021/22 – online + face-to-face.

While concern over this issue has gradually subsided, its salience for the Portuguese electorate has almost perennially remained above the EU average. Interestingly, when asked the similar question (QA5, mentioned above) about the most important issues

"facing the European Union at the moment", a much smaller percentage (never more than a third of respondents over this period) considered unemployment to be one of the major issues facing the EU, in fact correlating more closely to the EU average indicated in Figure 7 above. This may suggest i) an acute awareness of the Portuguese population towards the wider issues facing the European Union, often being at odds with the priorities of the nation, and ii) a consideration of unemployment, as a social concern, to be of greater salience at the national level and less so at the European level. Voters perhaps do not see the European Union and its competences as being primarily responsible for, or having the competence to deal with, this issue.

b. **Inflation**

In something of a reversal of the trend seen above, inflation appears to supersede unemployment as one of the top two issues facing the country in around 2018/2019 and remains a salient issue to this day (see Figure 8). The attitudes of Portuguese respondents correlates more closely to the EU average on this issue, where of course, the cost of living was drastically increased for Europeans across the continent following the pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine. In both Portugal and the EU average, around half of respondents list this as one of the top two issues facing their country at the moment.

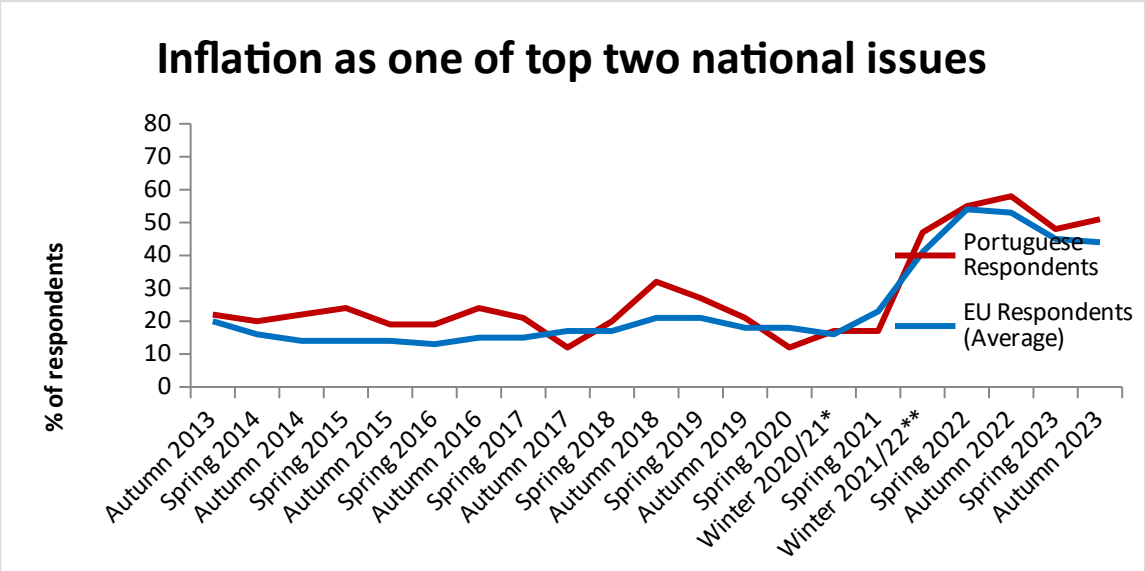

Figure 9: Inflation as one of the top two issues facing Portugal [interpreted from source: Standard Eurobarometers 80-100, QA6] *Winter 2020/21 – online interviews; ** Winter 2021/22 – online + face-to-face.

When it comes to whether Portuguese respondents consider this to be an 'EU issue' (*QA5*), the issue has risen in salience somewhat, but, much like the issue of unemployment, has not been considered a major issue facing the EU for more than a third of respondents. This is not to say that the Portuguese do not consider economic factors to be within the

European Union's competences, however: two of the consistently most important issues facing the EU, according to Portuguese respondents over this period, were the "economic situation" and "the state of Member states' public finances", both of which were also concerns at a national level (or rather, "economic situation" and "government debt").
In fact, the consistent salience of economic issues in this survey data appears to confirm the suggestion of a pragmatic population focused on responsible financial governance at both a national and European level. The fact that some of the more contentious issues which have allowed fervent Euroscepticism to flare up in other corners of Europe have not taken greater salience at the national level has meant that 'scapegoating' the EU has not gained greater traction.

c. Immigration

One such contentious issue would be that of immigration. On paper, Portugal appears to buck the trend across the EU of increasing concern over immigration: over the last decade, immigration has never exceeded more than 5% of respondents considering it to be one of the two most important issues facing the country (see Figure 9), and this remains far below the EU average.

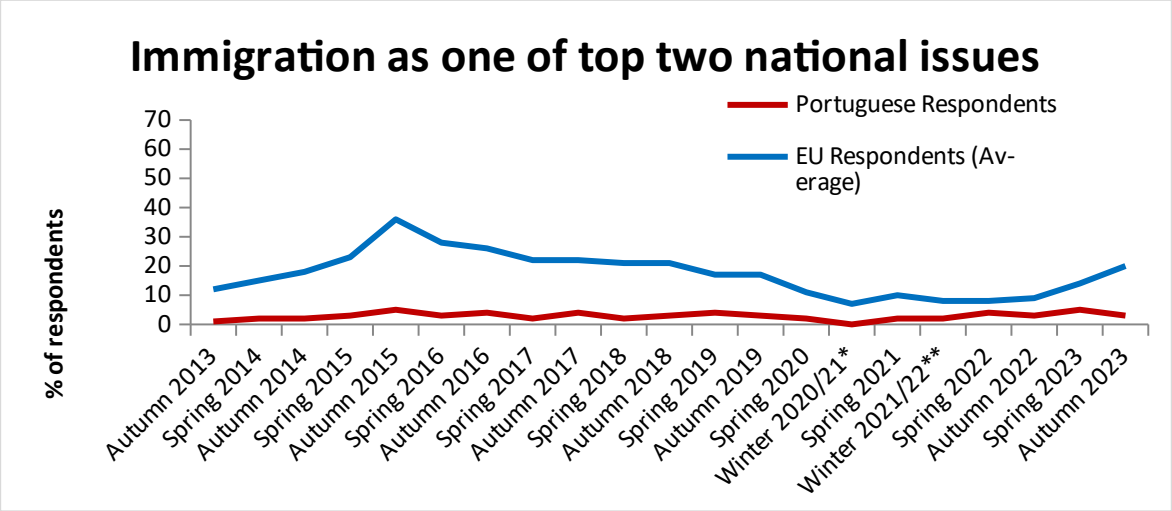

Figure 10: Immigration as one of the top two issues facing Portugal [interpreted from source: Standard Eurobarometers 80-100, QA6] *Winter 2020/21 – online interviews; ** Winter 2021/22 – online + face-to-face.

Of course, there are a few caveats here. Firstly, migration as an issue is actually particularly salient in Portugal given the high levels of *emigration*, mentioned previously, following the crisis. It stands out as one of the countries in Europe most concerned with high levels of emigration (Dennison & Franco, 2019), which is not represented in the data shown above. Another revealing statistic is that, as an EU-level issue (QA5), while the data is far less consistent than the national level shown above, Portuguese respondents much

more frequently list immigration as one of the issues facing the EU at the moment. Though responses fluctuate from 10% to 31% over this period, quite often immigration is seen as a more important issue for the EU than either of the factors mentioned above (inflation, unemployment) despite their much higher salience at the national level.
Additionally, the Eurobarometer data makes reference to those respondents only who cited migration as one of the *top two* issues facing the country or the European Union at the moment. While for many migration still may not be one of the top two concerns for Portuguese at a national or European level, its prominence has undoubtedly grown, as shown in a national online survey carried out in the same intervals (MAPLE 2019, 2024) (FFMS, 2024). While only 0.9% of those surveyed in 2019 thought immigration was the most important issue the country faced, this had increased tenfold (9.1%) by 2024, taking it from 12th to 5th most important issue in the space of five years.

While the Eurobarometer results appear to show immigration as having greater salience as a European issue than a national issue – perhaps due to the European Union's prominent responsibility in controlling external land borders, which Portugal itself does not possess. However, it would be a misconception to depict Portugal as unconcerned about these issues at a national level and migration more broadly given the importance respondents tend to place on the European Union's competence to tackle them. While voters consider the Portuguese government as being primarily responsible for dealing with the issues the country faces (FFMS, 2024), the European Union also has also taken a greater share of the responsibility for the Portuguese. On a scale 0 (not at all responsible) to 10 (extremely responsible), (MAPLE) 2019 respondents gave an average of 5.5 to the EU (7.6 for the national government); by 2024 this had risen to 5.9 (against 8.5 for the national government). It is clear that there is a greater appetite among the Portuguese to hold their democratic institutions to account, and by March 2024 they were given the first chance to do so.

These findings make clear that there are in fact a number of underlying issues which concern Portuguese voters which were perhaps overlooked by a complacent political elite, both represented by the *PS* majority government in 2022 and their only mainstream opponents in the centre, the *PSD* (or *AD* coalition in the 2024 minority government). This has provided fertile ground for a new populist movement to bloom, and the promise of new

pastures for Euroscepticism, though whether this is the political territory on which the populists choose to graze remains to be seen.

5. Portuguese Populism and the Scope for Euroscepticism in Portugal

I. Distinction and Intersection between Populism and Euroscepticism

It is important at this stage to differentiate the concepts of populism and Euroscepticism, which, despite frequently interacting both in theory and in practice, do not necessarily always go hand in hand (Rooduijn & van Kessel, 2019). A first parallel can be drawn in fact in the very act of defining them: neither populism nor Euroscepticism have a single, incontestible definition and therefore causes, consequences and features of populist and Eursceptic movements may differ in the literature on the topics. However, for the purposes of defining populist and/or Eurosceptic movements or parties with which to draw comparisons to the Portuguese case, I refer to Paul Taggart and Andrea Pirro's thorough research article on populism before the pandemic, in which a comprehensive list of all major populist and/or Eurosceptic parties in Europe is provided (Taggart & Pirro, 2021, pp. 5-7). In Portugal, only *Chega* is listed as a populist party, and is denoted soft-Eurosceptic.

Both populism and Euroscepticism are sets of ideas which share common ground by often being found on the further fringes of the left or the right, but are not necesarily confined to the extremes of the political spectrum, with some notable European exceptions of centrist parties with either populist, Eurosceptic tendencies or both (Taggart & Pirro, 2021). Likewise, there are a number of examples of populist parties with a broadly favourable attitude to Europe (*Forza Italia, ANO* in Czechia), though as a general rule, soft or hard Euroscepticism is more likely to be found in populist parties with a harder left- or right-wing agenda, according to Taggart and Pirro's categorisation.

Populism	Euroscepticism
A general set of ideas about the functioning of democracy.	A position toward a more concrete political issue, i.e European integration.
Intersection: contestability (over definition, causes, features, consequences, etc.)	
Not necessarily prerogative of Eurosceptic parties only.	Not necessarily prerogative of populist parties only.
Intersection: closely related theoretical explanations (economic, cultural and institutional factors)	
Electoral success of populist parties related to their position on economic/sociocultural issues.	Electoral success of Eurosceptic parties only partly related to Euroscepticism; economic/sociocultural issues still matter
Intersection: intertwining both with left and right positions on socioeconomic and sociocultural issues	
Expresses the opposition of the ordinary and "pure" people against the unresponsive and corrupt elites.	Expresses the opposition to increased political/economic integration and the increasing powers of the EU.
Intersection: anti-elitism sentiment	

Table 2: A comparative perspective of Populism and Euroscepticism [source: Saoulidou & Sarantidis]

A key distinction to be made between populism and Euroscepticism (see Table 2: A comparative perspective of Populism and Euroscepticism [source: Saoulidou & Sarantidis]Error: Reference source not found) comes when interpreting electoral success. With the ostensible exception of single-issue Eurosceptic parties, such as UKIP and the Brexit party, electoral success can only partly be interpreted in relation to Euroscepticism given that a number of economic and sociocultural issues will contribute to shaping a Eurosceptic parties vote share. Populist parties owe their electoral success to their position on these issues as voters are often fully aware of where a populist party stands on the issues that concern them in the lead-up to an election.

While there have been moments when Portugal has fallen prey to at least a moderate degree of both populist and Eurosceptic sentiment over the course of its half a century of democracy, identifying an instance in which both have successfully intertwined, in a *populist Eurosceptic* movement, is more difficult to pinpoint.

It is worth noting that, prior to *Chega*, despite its apparent ideological isolation in a political landscape dominated by a multitude of a left and centre-left parties, smaller parties had existed on the fringes of the populist right – the top right quadrant of Taggart's Mapping of the Parties (see Figure 1: Mapping of the main Portuguese parties [source: Taggart (1998); mapping is author's own elaboration]. Much in line with Taggart's reasoning, these parties held a mild- to hard-Eurosceptic position, though were often single-issue parties, or those that focused on a small number of niche issues and failed to gain any significant traction. During the 1990s the *CDS-PP* made the rejection of the Maastricht Treaty one of their flagship policies, though has seen their national and European vote share steadily drop since the first European Parliament election in 1986. While the party remains somewhat relevant as part of the *AD* coalition government elected in 2024, much like smaller fellow coalition partner the Monarchist party (*PPM*), its anti-integration position on Europe and its vote share have both diminished significantly in the twenty-first century (Graça, 2015).

Arguably the party that occupied the Eurosceptic position on the right for the first half of the following twenty years was the New Democracy Party (*PND*) which, despite failing to make any major impact in European and legislative polls, received 4.5% of the vote for its presidential candidate in 2011. Extinct since 2015, this party has now been replaced by the

National Democratic Alternative (*ADN*) which saw its vote share rise by 1.35% in 2024. Further to the right, and harder Eurosceptic, though far less successful electorally, lie the National Renewal Party (*PNR*), now renamed *Ergue-te* (Rise Up).

While none of these parties gained any notable increase in vote share that could be attributed principally to their Eurosceptic rhetoric, and thus could be considered relevant for this thesis, it is important to establish the fact that populist (but not *popular*) Euroscepticism was not a completely new phenomenon in Portugal prior to the rise of *Chega*. Mainstream right-wing parties, such as the *CDS-PP* had occupied the Utilitarian Eurosceptic ground during the 1990s without being populist, though one reason for the decline of the movement on the right in the 2000s was that the mantle of (Ideological) Euroscepticism was taken up to a greater extent by the left.

As mentioned, Euroscepticism in Portugal arguably reached its peak between 2009 – 2015 (Lisi, 2020), spearheaded in no small part by the two parties further to the left – the Left Bloc (*BE*) and the Communist party (*PCP*). While their success owed to their position on economic and socio-cultural issues, particularly in tackling unemployment and opposing EU-imposed austerity measures, their status as populist parties remains questionable (see Table 1: Current (or former) Eurosceptic parties in Portugal. [source: www.popu-list.org , with 2024 data added]). While some of their views could be seen to be anti-establishment, these parties today, particularly *BE*, represent some of the staunchest defenders of democracy (Esteves Cardoso, 2016). As Lisi suggests, the parties may have softened their position on Europe when supporting the Socialist government, but the fact that they were ready and reasonably willing to join forces with one of the 'establishment' parties for seven years (2015- 2022) belies the image of "pure" populists challenging the elite.

On the other hand, *Chega* undoubtedly ticks many of the boxes qualifying it as a populist party. Its ideas about the functioning of democracy stand in stark contrast to most of the party political landscape, while the concept of the "pure" people against the corrupt elite has been central to its messaging throughout its brief existence. Yet while much of its positioning could well intersect with that of a populist Eurosceptic party, it may not lean heavily into Eurosceptic sentiment.

In a comparative study between populist Euroscepticism in Greece and Portugal following the similar raft of austerity measures introduced following the Euro crisis which engulfed both countries, Saoulidou and Sarantidis illustrate the requisite conditions for a rise in the populist Eurosceptic vote (Saoulidou & Sarantidis, 2021). They identify the point at which the two countries diverged politically, leading to a rise in the populist Eurosceptic vote in Greece, represented by the success of the *SYRIZA* and *ANEL* parties, which was not replicated in Portugal.

While it is widely accepted that in relative terms, there were both high levels of popular Euroscepticism in both Greece and Portugal following the Euro crisis, it is important to note the extent to which trust in the EU fell in Greece in this period (2007 – 2015), of 64.62% more than doubled that of Portugal's 31.58% (Saoulidou & Sarantidis, 2021). In the *BE* and *PCP*, there was also the existence of Eurosceptic parties which joined the government in coalition, parallel to the rise of *SYRIZA* and *ANEL* in Greece. In this sense, both conditions i) and ii) were met to some extent in Portugal (see Figure 11: Requisite conditions for a rise in populist Eurosceptic vote following the Euro crisis [source: Saoulidou & Sarantidis, 2021]).

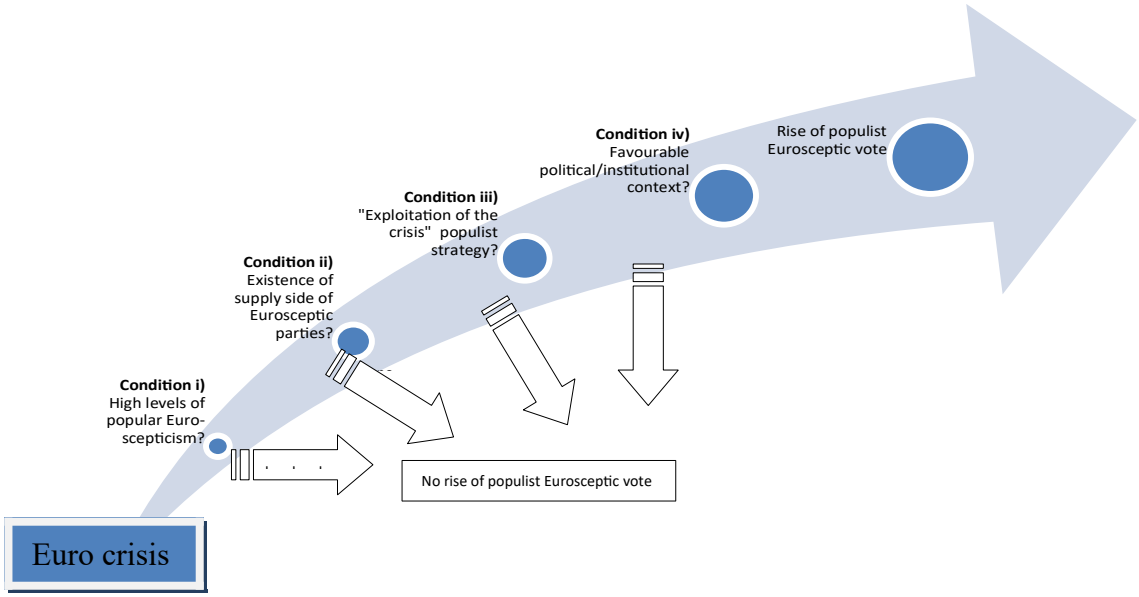

Figure 11: Requisite conditions for a rise in populist Eurosceptic vote following the Euro crisis [source: Saoulidou & Sarantidis, 2021]

However, it is argued that the two countries differed when it came to the "exploitation of the crisis", a populist strategy which has been well-documented (Moffit, 2016) and was employed quite viscerally in Greece's divisive referendum on the European Commission's bailout package. The *BE* and *PCP* in Portugal, at this point, took a different bearing, opting to be "aggregators of popular discontent" without becoming populist parties per se

(Salgado, 2019). As condition iii) was not met, there was no notable rise in the populist Eurosceptic vote in Portugal, or not nearly to the same extent as there was in other countries.

Nevertheless, with successive crises only piling on the pressure and widening the scope for exploitation across the fringes of the political spectrum, it is fair to assume that the box has been opened, as it were, on the first two conditions, despite Euroscepticism not being quite as pronounced in the present day as in the Euro crisis period. It is also clear that *Chega,* and its charismatic leader André Ventura in particular, have used the "exploitation of the crisis" strategy to significant effect, thus meeting condition iii). One factor Saoulidou and Sarantidis attribute to condition iv) not being met in Portugal is the absence of "charismatic leadership" among the populist movements to have had previously negligible effect on the Eurosceptic vote (Saoulidou & Sarantidis, 2021). Again, this trend may have been reversed with the rise of André Ventura.

II. "Exploitation of the Crisis" populist strategy

Populism has been defined as "a powerful reaction to a sense of extreme crisis" (Taggart, 2000), with emphasis on the word 'sense' particularly relevant in the case of Portugal, where in fact the political stability mentioned in the opening lines of this thesis had brought with it relative economic success. However, the results of the 2024 legislative elections certainly show a reaction to a sense of crisis, namely a crisis of trust in the governing elite mired by corruption scandals – a sense indeed that both major parties are essentially as corrupt as each other (Henley, 2024). More interestingly in the case of *Chega* is the perpetuation of crisis 'performed' by its actors, in particular by André Ventura, who shifted the focus away from corruption when his own party started to face greater scrutiny following the March 2024 election (Observador, 2024). Based on Taggart's definition, it is natural for a populist party to maintain its existence by morphing from crisis to crisis without offering solutions: rather, helping to bring an end to the sense of crisis would be counterproductive for the populist party to prevail (Moffit, 2016).

Instead, populist actors 'perform' crisis by 'spectacularisation of failure' through six main steps (Moffit, 2016): starting with i) identifying the failure and ii) elevating it to crisis level by linking it to a wider framework, populists are able to iii) frame 'the people' against those responsible. It would seem that this has been carried out to good effect by Portugal's

populists with the 2024 elections as a case in point. From here the populist actor will iv) exploit the media channels to v) present simple solutions and project the image of strong leadership before vi) continuing to propogate the crisis. The latter step could come in the form of 'switching' the crisis, a trend which has been observed among other populist leaders in Europe, particularly from socioeconomic issues to sociocultural crisis.

Arguably this is what has already started to happen in Portuguese politics. With the PS government at the heart of the corruption scandal now out of power and the sting taken somewhat out of the tale (Lopes, 2024), Ventura took little time to shift the sense of crisis onto uncontrolled immigration as the issue begins to take on increased salience in the Portuguese conscience (GB News, 2024). More importantly, this allowed him to align with his ECR and ID political counterparts across Europe on a defining issue.

Moffit notes the limited extent to which such a tactic, of crisis 'shifting', has experienced success, with mixed results at best at least at a European level. One example given (Moffit, 2016) was the Swedish *Ny Demokrati* shifting from an economic to immigration crisis in the mid 1990s and losing vast swathes of seats. Conversely, Geert Wilders' 2012 campaign shift, from one centred around anti-Islamisation themes, to one focused on the Netherlands leaving the European Union again proved costly, losing the *Partij voor de Vrijheid* seats and momentum, and perhaps prolonging the former's apparent current rise to power. It is telling however, that both countries noted above now have populist parties very much on the cusp of power. Evidently today these parties inhabit a very different political landscape where the perpuation of crisis need not be a performance given the number of real national and geopolitical challenges European countries face.

However, while 'switching' the crisis, in European politics at least, may have historically met with limited electoral success, another tactic in propogating the crisis is to extend the scope and size of the crisis beyond a national issue. In other words, if pivoting from anti-corruption to anti-immgration proves to be ineffectual in stemming the loss of salience, the populists, *Chega*, may instead broaden their crisis to the European level – in a certain sense aping the policies and propaganda of its ideologically ally Viktor Orban in Hungary, to whom the party hints at a certain affinity according to its manifesto (Partido Chega!, 2021).

Ultimately, the fortunes of the populist party will hinge on the crisis it chooses to exploit, fortunes that may in turn push it to pursue a broader – thereby harder Eurosceptic – propogation of the crisis. *Chega* may position itself towards a more rejectionist position in Europe if politically expedient to do so, but are likely wary of alienating vast swathes of the Portuguese population by so doing. André Ventura may also be cautious to avoid the pitfalls of hardline crisis shifting experienced by Geert Wilders in 2012 and instead pursue the longer-term escalation of the scope of the crisis strategy pursued by Viktor Orban.

6. Case Study I – the March 2024 legislative election

I. Initial Analysis and Impact

When Portuguese elections on the 10th March 2024 ushered in a centre-right coalition government (*AD*), the country's shift to the right did not come as a great surprise, given the trend sweeping through Europe and correctly predicted in in-depth pan-European analyses (Cunningham, et al., 2024). What ensued however, may be more telling of the sentiments of the Portuguese electorate and may give some clues as to the trajectory heading towards the Brussels elections.

Firstly, the major surprise was not the growth of the far-right *Chega* party, which, despite its remarkably short history, had long been expected (Mendes, 2021), but the scale of this growth, with the party quadrupling its share of seats in the Assembleia da Republica (Público, 2024). Moreover, this vote share accounted for over a million Portuguese – from a population of over ten million – as well as additional seats picked up by the party on behalf of Portuguese emigrants residing elsewhere in Europe and the rest of the world.

The second impact of this pivotal election result was that the aforementioned stability highlighted in the opening paragraphs of this thesis was thrown into disarray. The assumption that a unified right/far-right coalition would take over as a majority government had already been ruled out by PSD leader and incoming Prime Minister Luís Montenegro if it involved the *Chega* party. It seems thus far that the Prime Minister has kept to his word, but with the repercussion that an emerging three-bloc system, unlikely to be sustainable in the long-term, has taken root. Cracks were already starting to show days after the results, with the election of the speaker of the house resulting in a tussle between the left-bloc, right-bloc and far-right *Chega* contingent (so far politcally isolated), an 'impasse' (Público, 2024) which was narrowly averted, and a new political reality which Portuguese politics may take some time to come to terms with. What is evident is that voter satisfaction with 'politics as usual' and the two-party system is at an all-time low, which may also spell warning signs for the mainstream parties when filling Portugal's twenty one seats in the European Parliament.

II. Possible explanations for *Chega*'s surge in the 2024 elections

A number of analysts who have charted the rapid rise of *Chega* over recent years (Caseiro, 2023) (Mendes, 2021) have pointed to Cas Mudde's assertion that no country is truly immune to the lure of populism, nativism or authoritarianism, and in Portugal, the previous dearth of success of far right movements may owe more to a lack of supply rather than demand (Mudde, 2019). Far-right movements in the twenty-first century had been few and far between prior to the 2019 emergence of *Chega* onto the political landscape (and, in fact, into the last European Parliament campaign trail) - though there has evidently been a growing appetite in recent years to challenge the establishment, this could only really be vented by somewhat more organised populist movements (at the time) on the far-left: the aforementioned *BE* and Communist party (PopuList, 2023).

Unsurprisingly, confidence in the Socialist Party plummeted after the corruption scandal and ongoing investigation, known as "Operation Influencer" (Lopes, 2024), emerged in the latter half of 2023, but with it seems to have followed a broader drop in confidence in the ruling class in general. This dip can even be detected in Eurobarometer data: when asked whether they tend to trust or not to trust the national Government, national Parliament, and the government of the EU in the most recent Standard Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2013 - 2023), respondents indicated less trust in all three institutions, despite the major scandal – albeit one involving EU funds – implicating the incumbent government as the guilty party (see Figure 12: Portuguese Tendency to Trust Democratic Institutions [source: Eurobarometer data 2013 - 2023 QA6a, European Commission] *Winter 2020/21 – online interviews; ** Winter 2021/22 – online + face-to-face. below).

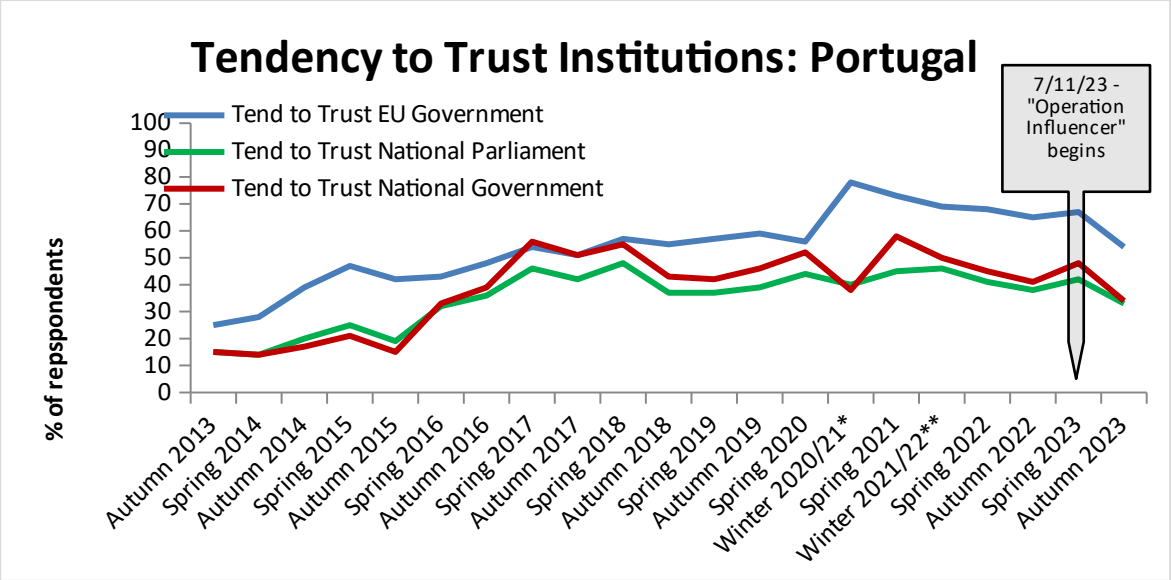

Figure 12: Portuguese Tendency to Trust Democratic Institutions [source: Eurobarometer data 2013 - 2023 QA6a, European Commission] *Winter 2020/21 – online interviews; ** Winter 2021/22 – online + face-to-face.

This was reflected anecdotally in a recent production for Portuguese television channel RTP heralding an historic 50 years of democracy due to be commemorated on the 25th April 2024, which interviewed certain members of the public and academics on their perceptions and interpretations of democracy (Viva a Democracia - 50 Anos e o Futuro, 2024). The picture portrayed of the Portuguese zeitgeist was telling, with a number of the members of the public referring to lack of trust in the democratic institutions and the governing class as their reason not to vote, or being behind their disaffection with democracy.

Yet even if it seems as if democracy is not currently sitting completely well with the Portuguese, it is very much alive, as reflected by the diminishing levels of voter abstention, which had peaked in the middle of the last decade, now returning to only a third (33.8%) of the electorate – the lowest level since 1995 (Público, 2024). The logical conclusion is that *Chega*'s direct attack on political corruption motivated many previously undecided, uninterested voters, as well as demotivated Socialist voters, towards the ballot box in a protest vote.

As the dust settles on the March election results, two or three particular groups take centre stage when it comes to drawing conclusions. One is the 'left behind', those in disadvantaged regions or those disproportionately affected by income inequality – most glaring in Portugal's Algarve region, which garnered a heavy *Chega* vote share. One could also include in this category the smaller but significant Portuguse emigrant population,

which gifted *Chega* an additional two seats. The other group, perhaps more strikingly, given their traditional tendency to lean towards the left, is the first-time, younger voters – a group who may indeed themselves feel 'left behind' by the traditional two-party system.

The prime example of the disadvantaged Portuguese *Chega* voter which has characterised this election landscape can be observed in the Algarve region (Jack, 2024), well-known for its tourism industry. For these voters, the far-right turn is likely due to economic and migration issues, with both local property prices and non-EU immigration numbers rocketing. While some attempts have been made by the government to curb tax exemptions favouring wealthy holidaymakers, it is unlikely that the economic effects of tourism and social effects of increased migration which have rattled the local population will wear off any time soon. The Algarve may indeed have lost its immunity to the far-right, and while the role of Brussels might be a non-issue for many locals, its new political leaning could be responsible for Portugal's first far-right representation in the European Parliament.
A causal link may be identified between two different waves of migration and disaffected Portuguese voters both in these 'left-behind' regions and those who have left the country behind to reside in Europe and beyond (admittedly an unlikely coalition). The first wave, of emigration, previously mentioned and provoked by unemployment following the Euro crisis account for *Chega*'s hefty share of the emigrant vote (around 21,000 votes) (Lopes, 2024). The second 'shock' wave, of immigration, was experienced strongly in depopulated regions of the country, conversely those regions arguably worst affected by the knock-on effects of the first wave of emigration – and also likely of more general internal migration of the working population towards the cities as a result of urbanisation. Both these groups were left behind by a crisis which still simmers in the Portuguese memory, and both ostensibly seek the same simple solution to complex political problems: enticing back the emigrant population through the promise of better jobs and wider access to habitation. Whether the emigrants, now settled abroad, would take up these jobs and repopulate these regions, is another matter.

The other left-behind demographic may come to represent a far greater challenge to the European Parliament, though not just in Portugal. The shift towards the right and far-right among younger voters has been observed across Europe, though again is more alarming in a country with a deep living memory of a relatively recent fascist regime. Those under 30

in Portugal lent the majority of their support to parties on the right (Hernandez-Morales, 2024), a suggestion that the politics of memory may be wearing off.

Studies of the Chega voting profile reveal a predominantly male and relatively young electoral base powering the party's formidable five-year rise (Mantas, 2022). Somewhat surprisingly, perhaps, a segment of this base are highly-educated, with almost two in every five *Chega* voters in 2019 (39%) having completed a higher education degree, though this has reduced to around a third. Less educated voters, that is, those who have not completed high school, are in fact the least likely to vote for the party, with only one in every ten (11%) *Chega* voters coming from this demographic in 2019, though this has risen slightly. However, *Chega* continues to hold most appeal to those who have completed at least a high-school level of education.

One interpretation of this demographic and their motivation towards a populist party may be explained by Inglehart's argument that relative economic affluence and political security are likely to breed a postmaterial value priority shift in a population (Inglehart, 1990), one that includes support for participatory or more direct democracy, and 'elite-challenging modes of participation'. Data appears to confirm that such a shift is most prevalent among younger, well-educated (Hoffmann-Lange, 2012) and predominantly male voters. Although the trend Inglehart commented on was at the end of the twentieth century, among a generational cohort of Western nations whose members had endured decades of political stability after World War II, the same could be observed in twenty-first century Portugal, albeit somewhat staggered from most of its Western counterparts. That is, the social hangover of the dictatorship, which only came to and end in 1974, likely prolonged Portugal's value priority shift by several decades. Only now may we be seeing a generation emerge that is no longer preoccupied with the stability of democracy because only now are they starting to take it for granted.

At the same time, right- and far-right parties should not take these voters for granted, as the zeal of younger voters towards supporting extremist parties tends to be short-lived, and thus one might expect such voters to abandon the party once the novelty wears off (Hernandez-Morales, 2024). While it is true that younger voters tend to be motivated with dissatisfaction with the present, rather than nostalgia for the past – and the far-right swing

should be interpreted as such – the allegiance of these voters, in the short-term future at least, will be determined by the Brussels campaign trail.

III. *Chega*'s European agenda - hard or soft – (or non-) Eurosceptic?

In his final appearance on behalf of Portugal at the European Council, outgoing Prime Minister António Costa sought to reassure his European counterparts and perhaps the domestic audience as well, by pointing out the exceptionalism of Portugal's new populists (Expresso, 2024). *Chega*, he claimed, unlike other populist parties in Europe, had never launched a campaign against the EU. Far-right populists they may well be, but Eurosceptic they are not, and their share of the popular vote does not bring Portugal's commitment to the European project into question, according to Costa's reckoning.

In fact, *Chega* as the party in its current form is technically a newcomer to European elections, although André Ventura did represent the party as leader of a right-wing coalition called *Basta!* in 2019. Having only stood thus far in one European Parliament election, and having launched legislative campaigns off the back of a multitude of contentious national issues - of which continued membership of the European Union has not (yet) featured - Costa is not entirely wrong in his assertion. However, this affirmation adds little indication as to the future direction of travel – without any sitting MEPs at present, and scarce clues thus far as to the agenda *Chega* plans to take to Brussels, its true intentions regarding the European Union remain relatively ambiguous for now.

The party does, however, offer some clues to its position in its party manifesto, a formative version of which was compiled in 2021 (Partido Chega!, 2021). Under its short section on foreign policy, *Chega* lays out its intention to integrate *a European space, without being annihilated in it*[1] (Article 33e), while at the same time pushing against the supposed multilateralist national instinct (Dennison & Franco, 2019) in favouring 'bilateral contacts' over 'multilateral relations' (Article 34). In Article 35, under the heading 'European and International Re-Alignment' it promotes the negotiation of a new EU Treaty along the lines being pushed by the Visegrad countries with reference to borders, immigration and the respect of European cultural values. *Chega* would appear to seek closer ideological proximity with the bloc of Hungary, Poland, Czechia and Slovakia - at the time, at least, dominated by the populist politics of *Fidesz, PiS, ANO, SMER* - the former two of which are infamous for their Eurosceptic stance, soft though some acknowledge it to be (Taggart & Pirro, 2021). Indeed, Taggart and Pirro, in their pre-pandemic analysis of populist movements, deemed *Chega* to be very much in the same camp as *Fidesz* and *PiS* – radical right, soft Eurosceptic parties.

On the other hand, while not making reference to the EU specifically, *Chega'*s proposal for an Economic Community for Portuguese-speaking Countries (Article 35d) - essentially something of a commonwealth grouping of former colonies – and withdrawal of non-governmental organisations which could *interfere with national sovereignty and put Portugal's interests at serious risk*[2] (Article 35f) (Partido Chega!, 2021) are more reminiscent of the harder, Sovereignty-based scepticism which characterised the Brexit debate in the United Kingdom. While of course this does not demonstrate that the party are hard-Eurosceptic, it certainly hints at a party unwilling to embrace further integration within a supranational organisation such as the EU, and the active seeking of alternative integrations in which Lisbon sets the terms.

This worldview is bolstered in its 2024 legislative agenda (Partido Chega!, 2024), which argues *for a Europe of sovereign nations*[3]. While starting by stating that *reaffirming the need for Portugal to stay in the EU is vital for the country*[4], the party also pledges to *refuse any further transfer of sovereignty to Community organs*[5]. The 2024 manifesto holds firm

[1] Author's own translation from source: *Partido Chega!, 2021, Article 33e*
[2] Author's own translation from source: Ibid. *Article 35f*
[3] Author's own translation from source: *Partido Chega!, 2024: Soberania.*
[4] Author's own translation from source: Ibid. *proposal i.*
[5] Author's own translation from source: Ibid. *proposal ii.*

on a number of 2021's proposals, while fleshing out further the features of an emboldened nationalist party: refusing the institution of an automatic 'European nationality' for EU citizens *currently being discussed in the European institutions*[6], and pushing back against the movement towards a common diplomacy by recognising the right of sovereign states to wage war and sue for peace. *Chega* does appear to have been relatively consistent in its position towards Europe, and Taggart and Pirro's categorisation of the party as soft-Eurosceptic seems to hold true, albeit with some hard-line policies on sovereignty issues. In other words, through its support for the existence of – and its country's continued membership of – the European Union, the party does not pursue a Principled strand of Euroscepticism, but takes a primarily Sovereignty-based stance on Europe by drawing on contentious policy areas in order to garner support. While there is little evidence of Ideological or Utilitarian scepticism in its manifesto, the party may also pick up voters aligned with these strands through its media communications.

One interesting snapshot into André Ventura's position vis-à-vis Brussels was the media coverage, admittedly limited, of its unsuccessful first run as part of the *Basta!* coalition. In an interview on the 15th April 2019 (Correio da Manhã, 2019), Ventura laid out his three 'fundamental points' on Europe, the first of which being *a Europe of strong borders, of secure borders, and not the muddle (...) we've witnessed throughout Europe*[7] - the latter presumably referencing the migrant crisis. Yet his second point was one of cohesion, *in which Portugal has exactly the same value as all the other States*[8] - a Europe of equality, which, according to Ventura, has never existed. It would appear that Ventura's soft Euroscepticism itself has shifted – from one playing on ideological concerns about the EU's values of social cohesion failing to trickle down to those countries on the margins, to one much more rooted in sovereignty, as indicated in its 2021 and 2024 manifestoes.

Ventura's final point then was perhaps an appeal to the Utilitarian sceptics within the Portuguese electorate. He made the economic argument something of an ultimatum: either we have *a Europe[an Union] which moves economically in the same direction, in terms of development*[9], or there is no point in there being a European Union at all, according to Ventura (Correio da Manhã, 2019). Fully aware of the economic hardship endured by the Portuguese seemingly at the hands of the European Union, presumably the *Chega* leader sought to appeal to potential Eurosceptics from across the broader political spectrum.

[6] Author's own translation from source: Ibid. *proposal xiv.*
[7] Author's own translation from source: *Correio da Manhã, 2019.*
[8] Author's own translation from source: Ibid.
[9] Author's own translation from source: *Correio da Manhã, 2019.*

It would appear that *Chega*'s tendency towards Europe is one of pragmatic soft-Euroscepticism rooted in the Utilitarian strand, but which now plays into elements of the Ideological and Sovereignty-based strands in order to maximise electoral gain. Now running a well-oiled media machine, especially on social media, from which it can easily mobilise its voters towards the view that obstruction of the EU's agenda is in the country's interest (CHEGA TV, 2024), the potential of this party to turn the tide on Portuguese integration in Europe should not be underestimated. However, there is little evidence of single-issue, Principled Euroscepticism in their manifesto or political discourse which might define a hard-Eurosceptic party. On the other hand, the image of a country where Euroscepticism *still* doesn't sell – neither due to supply from the political parties, nor demand from the electorate – becomes somewhat more of a mirage. There is at least supply now, the question is whether there is sufficient demand.

IV. Portuguese Perceptions of *Chega*'s European agenda

A crucial determiner in *Chega*'s vote share in the June European Parliament election may be the extent to which Portuguese voters perceive the party to be anti-European rather than simply anti-establishment at the national level. Mainstream, pro-EU parties may choose to lean into this, but should do so cautiously. While it is unlikely that the Portuguese electorate will reward a party that is openly hostile towards Europe, relatively few voters see this as one of *Chega*'s defining characteristics (Krastev & Leonard, 2024). According to an ECFR report published following the legislative election in March 2024 (though actually compiled using a YouGov and Datapraxis survey conducted in January), only 23% of far-right voters see leaving the EU as something André Ventura wants to achieve. Moreover, only 28% of voters of other parties see this as one of Ventura's objectives, a somewhat flattering result for the *Chega* leader only beaten by his counterparts in Greece and Italy. A similar percentage of far-right and other voters (23% and 27% respectively) see it as Ventura's goal to leave the eurozone. In this sense at least, the often outspoken leader has been wise to keep his cards close to his chest on this particular issue, though the opacity of *Chega*'s overarching intention regarding the European institutions may have the effect of confusing potential Eurosceptic voters.

However, the perception of both far-right and other voters is higher when asked whether Ventura wants to obstruct the EU's work (Krastev & Leonard, 2024). In a party that has already made a name for itself obstructing the legislative agenda at a national level, it is

perhaps no surprise that a third (33%) of Portuguese voters of other parties see this as part of its agenda at the European level. It is no less surprising that a higher percentage (34%) of its own voters expect it to disrupt the system at a European level. This is unlikely to be a perception that the party will wish to shake off either, as it has proven to be a vote winner (Público, 2024). Indeed, Ventura makes no secret of his desire to prevent Ursula von der Leyen securing a fresh mandate as president of the European Commission (CHEGA TV, 2024). The risk in pointing out *Chega*'s soft Eurosceptic tendencies is thus that it risks politicising EU issues, which could easily be conflated with broader issues facing the nation.

A much more surprising finding of the survey was on the question of migration. As appeared to be the case according to Eurobarometer data and previous reports when asked a similar question (Dennison & Franco, 2019), emigration generally was considered to trump immigration as greater concern to the Portuguese. In fact, when asked "Are you more worried about immigration or emigration?" (Krastev & Leonard, 2024), while single-issue responses – "immigration" or "emigration" – were roughly around the median for the countries surveyed, Portugal had among the highest number of respondents (46%) who claimed to be "worried by both equally", and the lowest (5%) to respond "I am not worried by either of these." It seems, over the last five years, that migration issues have gained far greater salience to the Portuguese voter.

While net immigration figures did rise in Portugal over this period (INE, 2023), continuing the country's positive net balance for the sixth year in 2022, what is clear is the influence of the far-right to polarise opinion and exploit this issue, and lay the blame at the door of the incumbent Socialist government. When asked "Do [the Socialist Party] want to open up your country to migrants and refugees?" in the January survey (Krastev & Leonard, 2024), Portugal's government of the time ranked first among its European counterparts, with 54% of respondents saying Prime Minister António Costa wanted to achieve this. While other countries (Hungary, Poland) still blame the EU and Ursula von der Leyen for this issue rather than the national government, Portugal's relatively lower (41%) response on this front, suggest the Portuguese continue to hold the national government more accountable than the European institutions, even as this previously dormant issue of migration looks to finally rear its head towards Portugal.

One conclusion that can be drawn from the legislative election results is that a number of the factors noted which have concerned voters across the European Union over the last decade: inflation, immigration, crime, housing, have now cut through to the electorate at a national level, and the populists have been able to conflate these issues into a single, easily solvable crisis: namely uncontrolled immigration. The fact that even *Chega* acknowledge that this is a very recent phenomenon for Portugal (Partido Chega!, 2024) only serves for them to heighten the sense of crisis among their base, and allows them emulate similar populist movements across the continent which have garnered support by politicising this issue.

This has been combined with a general mistrust of the democratic establishment (Viva a Democracia - 50 Anos e o Futuro, 2024), with many frustrated voters seeking a third option to the two-party system, and finding it in the form of the far-right, according to André Ventura. While it is perhaps too easy to dismiss this result as a simple 'protest vote' – and far more difficult to prove – it should not be taken for granted that these voters' allegiance to the far-right would prevail until they sent their ballots to Brussels – or that these voters would even turn out to vote at all in June: only 50% of *Chega* voters said they would definitely vote in the European Parliament elections (Krastev & Leonard, 2024).

Nevertheless, the myth of Portuguese exceptionalism which appeared to have prevailed through successive crises now appears to be increasingly close to being debunked. The legislative election results confirm Mudde's theory that no country is immune to populism, while mounting concern over immigration shows that Portuguese politics may now be increasingly fought on very much the same battle ground as is now well-trodden by rightwing and populist parties across the continent. Only António Costa's claim, of the exceptionalism of Portugal's populists, appears to hold firm, albeit on shaky foundations. He is partially correct – as of June 2024, *Chega* has never openly campaigned against the EU. However, as of June 2024, *Chega* has never taken up any seats in the European Parliament. Were the populists to reach the "gates of Brussels" (Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2023), whether Portugal's exceptionalism to Euroscepticism would hold, only time will tell.

7. Case Study II – the June 2024 European Parliament Election

I. Correlation between National and European Results

One unlikely conclusion that could be drawn between national and European election results is that party positioning on Europe, as outlined in the previous section, ultimately does not matter. One obvious argument that could be made to support this claim is that European Parliament elections, held every five years to increasingly low turnout, are seen by many European citizens as 'second order' elections (Burns, 2019), and are of less interest to voters than the national arena. While it may seem that the 2019 elections marked a reverse in the European trend, with voter turnout across the Union returning to levels over 50% only seen in the 1990s, unfortunately Portuguese turnout hit an all-time low of only 30.75% (European Parliament, 2019), very much reinforcing the idea that European elections do not matter much to Portuguese citizens.

Another factor to bear in mind is that partisanship is considered to be widespread in European elections, with the perception among the political elite that voters will vote along party lines backed up by historical trends (Freire, 2012). While an increased vote share for smaller parties in comparison to legislative elections has been observed, particularly in the 2000s, with a slight decline in support for the larger parties at the European level, in general the percentage of support for the large and medium-sized parties in European elections usually mirrors that of the most recent legislative elections. Rather uniquely in 2024, the proximity between the legislative election preceding the European election by less than three months, allowed some commentators to draw foregone conclusions regarding the outcome of the June vote (Vieira, 2024).

Party (or Coalition*)	March 2024 election/projected vote share (%)	Projected nº of MEPs (nº/21)	June 2024: actual vote share (%)	Actual nº of MEPs (nº/21)	Difference (%) between March-June
AD*	29.49%	8	31.12%	7	+1.63%
PS	28.66%	7	32.10%	8	+3.44%
Ch	18.06%	4	9.79%	2	-8.27%
IL	5.08%	1	9.07%	2	+3.99%
BE	4.46%	1	4.25%	1	-0.21%
CDU*	3.30%	0	4.12%	1	+0.82%
Li	3.26%	0	3.75%	0	+0.49%

Table 3: Comparison between projected EP vote share based on March 2024 legislative election [adapted from source: Vieira, 2024] and actual vote share in June 2024 [author's own addition from European Parliament]

Obviously, the author acknowledges that such a prediction (see 'Projected vote share' in Table 3: Comparison between projected EP vote share based on March 2024 legislative election [adapted from source: Vieira, 2024] and actual vote share in June 2024 [author's own addition from European Parliament] fails to take into account a number of obvious caveats regarding the European election. Even precluding the flawed presumption that 'Europe doesn't matter' and assuming that voters would be more inclined in these elections to vote in the national interest and along party lines, the political landscape has, admittedly, changed in a matter of months. While André Ventura would, quite naturally, have been keen to frame the European election as a 'rematch' of the March election, the electorate would by this stage have got a measure of the *Chega* party as obstructors-in-chief in the national Parliament. Voters, even those inclined towards the right, must have at least considered whether forcing an impasse on a broadly centre-right agenda is really something they would lend their support to at a European level.

Furthermore, at least some of the lustre of the novelty of a 'protest vote' is likely to have worn off – not to a great extent after just two months – but again enough to turn off some voters. Now with the *PS* in opposition and the key proponents of the corruption scandal now absent from the scene, voters were in effect given another opportunity to show their level of dissatisfaction with the new government via a more sanitised channel. In a sense, the European election was fortunate to have been the *second* election to have taken place in 2024, with March allowing voters to vent their frustrations, albeit to the detriment of political stability at the national level, before delivering a much more restrained response in the June election.

II. The election results: a repudiation of Euroscepticism?

As shown in the June 2024 results (see 'Actual vote share' in Table 3: Comparison between projected EP vote share based on March 2024 legislative election [adapted from source: Vieira, 2024] and actual vote share in June 2024 [author's own addition from European Parliament], the European election produced some striking findings in Portugal. With abstention levels in fact somewhat lower than the 2019 election at 36.54% (European Parliament, 2024), a similar trend to the national rightwing surge looked likely to emerge, yet the most glaring outcome was in fact the near collapse of the *Chega* vote. With the notable improvement in performance from all three pro-European centrist parties and a modest increase in vote share even for the budding Europeanist Green movement (*Livre*),

despite it narrowly failing to win any MEPs, it would seem Europe does in fact matter to the Portuguese.

Pro-European parties accounted for a 9 – 10% increase in vote share compared to the March election, largely offset by *Chega*'s 8.27% reduction and, as arguably the standard-bearer for sovereignty-based issues in post-pandemic Portugal, one could argue the result serves as a categorical repudiation of Euroscepticism. At the same time, although the far-left and historically sceptical Communist party regained enough electoral momentum to secure them an MEP, in fact both they and the Left Bloc (*BE*) each lost one MEP from the 2019 European Parliament intake – in contrast, *Chega* gained their first two ever MEPs. Another reading of the result could thus be that the (historically) ideological sceptics amongst the 2019 cohort – one each from the two radical left parties – were essentially supplanted by two sovereignty-based Eurosceptic MEPs on the extreme right. As one strand of Euroscepticism has weakened in intensity, it has simply given rise to another.

Nonetheless, largely contrasting results from the rest of Europe demonstrate that the European Parliament elections were an abject failure for Portugal's far-right populists, a reality immediately acknowledged by André Ventura following the exit polls (Amaral Santos, 2024). Although the rise of the Eurosceptic far-right may have been tempered in most of the countries across the bloc, Portugal was among a select few which actually saw the populists significantly retreat in numbers – by some 700,000 votes (Guerreiro & Costa, 2024), and Ventura was quick to admit defeat and take the blame personally – though perhaps not as ready to address the reasons behind the defeat.

III. Possible explanations for Chega's decline in the 2024 European election

While I have argued that, even isolated from the European context, a number of competing factors may have led to a minor outflow in support for the populist party, the scale of the outpouring means that the European element cannot be ignored. Some commentators put the result down to abstention (Guerreiro & Costa, 2024), despite the national trend being put into reverse in these elections, with relative interest in the European arena amongst likely *Chega* voters being lower than previously predicted (Krastev & Leonard, 2024).

Others pointed to the Ventura effect – or lack of – on the campaign trail, with the lead candidate for the party, António Tânger Corrêa, sending mixed messages to potential

voters (Pereira, et al., 2024) and failing to provide the same levels of charisma which have defined Ventura's leadership and swelled *Chega*'s ranks. It has even been suggested that the scale of the defeat could have been worse had Ventura not stepped in to 'eclipse' his leading MEP (Guerreiro, 2024) in the week leading up to the election. The fact that only the leader himself was able to stem a drastic reduction in support for the party goes to show the sheer scale of Ventura's cult of personality, but also exposes the lack of clarity on what the party stands for as a whole under the thin verneer of its leader's outspoken personal views.

I would argue that the lack of clarity over *Chega*'s position on Europe was a contributing factor to their effective defeat. Running on a similar anti-corruption line to the legislative elections "Europa precisa de uma limpeza" (Europe needs a 'cleaning') (Partido Chega!, 2024), Tangêr Corrêa levelled corruption allegations, largely considered to be misleading at best (Duarte, 2024), at European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. Needless to say, the party's message failed to cut through to voters who have almost consistently placed greater trust in the European institutions than the national (see Figure 12: Portuguese Tendency to Trust Democratic Institutions [source: Eurobarometer data 2013 - 2023 QA6a, European Commission] *Winter 2020/21 – online interviews; ** Winter 2021/22 – online + face-to-face.. This perhaps indicates that 'elevation of the crisis' to a European level is an ineffective strategy in Portugal, though some put this down to *Chega*'s relative lack of history (Guerreiro, 2024), where other leaders (Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders, Viktor Orban) have been able to succeed in the long-term.

As indicated in Taggart's Mapping of the Parties (see Figure 1: Mapping of the main Portuguese parties [source: Taggart (1998); mapping is author's own elaboration], aside from a few tiny nationalist parties, *Chega* is practically isolated in occupying an entire quadrant on the populist right of the map, and is theoretically well-positioned to soak up anti-European sentiment. It could pull from multiple strands of Euroscepticism (see Figure 5: Types of Euroscepticism and characteristic elements [adapted from source: Sørensen, 2006] but mainly draws on the sovereignty-based component, and while it supposedly aligns politically with the Identity and Democracy group in the European Parliament, its European perspective according to its campaign literature (Partido Chega!, 2021) (Partido Chega!, 2024) suggests a soft-Eurosceptic position akin to that pursued by populist parties in the Visegrad countries and MEPs in the ECR grouping. This contradiction, while it may

seem minor, has the effect of ambiguity which, while it may ostensibly envelop the different Eurosceptic strands, may have the opposite effect. The heterogeneous nature of party's membership at least as far as Europe is concerned (Marchi, 2020) was highlighted by Tangêr Corrêa and Ventura's seemingly different ideological stances and messaging (Pereira, et al., 2024), which likely confused potentially sceptic voters.

Ironically, it may have been *Chega*'s very isolation on the far-right fringe that contributed to this temporary setback. While centre-right parties under threat from the far-right have the tendency to lean in to populist Eurosceptic rhetoric, particularly on migration (Krastev & Leonard, 2024), thereby legitimising the populist viewpoint, early indications are that the Portuguese centre-right government is unlikely to cede to *Chega*. Portugal's far-right populists remain politically isolated, and Euroscepticism largely at bay, although conversely there is a likelihood that *Chega*'s trailblazing will now allow for a growth of the smaller parties with more extreme positions (as observed with *ADN*), perhaps having a 'moderating' effect on Ventura's party. While it would be premature to proclaim the European elections as the beginning of the end for the leader – with presidential elections in 2026 likely to put the focus back onto Ventura's cult of personality over the course of the coming year – the muted response of Portugal's pro-European majority towards *Chega'*s anti-European agenda offers some clues as to how to tackle a Eurosceptic wave across the bloc.

8. Conclusion

As my research question is essentially twofold, the first question being **"Why has Euroscepticism been largely absent from political discourse in Portugal?"** and the second **"what factors have driven Portuguese attitudes towards the EU?"** I will answer the first question with regard to past discourse surrounding the European Union in the political sphere.

In fact, my findings show that while very few of the parties which make up the current political landscape broadcast openly Eurosceptic views, there are two observations which challenge this assumption. One is that the 'nationalisation of success' and the 'Europeanization of failure', essentially a means of undermining the European Union from within (Ramos Paiva, 2019), is commonplace among the Portuguese mainstream parties. This is significant firstly because there may be a causal link between the discourse of political elites in centrist parties and the relative attachment their likely voters have towards the EU, which has been noted to be lower than that of left- or right- wing compatriots (FFMS, 2024). Hence the paradox, which would appear to present a limitation to my first hypothesis that **Eurosceptic attitudes are less likely to be voiced by those around the political centre-ground.**

This is also significant however because common practices among the mainstream parties essentially legitimise harder Eurosceptic positions on the political fringes. Such positions *are* **more likely to be taken up by far-left or far-right parties**: this much is evident from *Chega*'s concept of sovereignty presented in its manifesto (Partido Chega!, 2024) as it was at the start of the last decade, and continues to be, from parties on the left such as the *PCP* (SIC Notícias, 2024) opposed to the EU's neoliberal structures. Marina Costa Lobo's implication then, that the Pandora 's Box of Euroscepticism has now been opened, and that since the Eurozone crisis, the salience of EU-related issues has remained higher than pre-crisis levels (Costa Lobo, 2023) appears to hold true.

I believe this is demonstrated in the multiple issues that have concerned Portuguese voters over this period (European Commission, 2013 - 2023), which is included in the second part of my research question **"what factors have driven Portuguese attitudes towards the EU?"** I have identified a number of factors that I see as characterising the post-crisis period for Portugal (2013 – 2023), highlighting causal links between these factors and the

2024 election results presented in my two case studies. While evidence shows that the Portuguese continue to hold their own national democratic institutions, namely the government, to account for these issues (FFMS, 2024), there is both a slight increase in the amount of responsibility they attribute to the EU, and a closer proximity to the more common issues faced by other EU countries and the Union itself (Krastev & Leonard, 2024), particularly immigration.

This has led to a politicisation of these issues, which has been pursued by a majority of the populist Eurosceptic parties around the EU, giving Portugal's own populist-Eurosceptic party very much a playbook in the perpetuation of crisis which has so far been followed to the letter. My hypothesis that **the absence of a sustained populist-Eurosceptic movement in Portugal owed more to supply-side scarcity than lack of demand** appears to be true, though I believe it is crucial to distinguish between the two terms 'populist' and 'Eurosceptic'. The former, anti-establishment connotation and the outspoken nature of its leader have fuelled the rise of the far-right *Chega* party where their far-right and far-left predecessors had failed to pick up steam.

The Eurosceptic element of their legislative agenda is one feature of this broader populist stance, and it is not one they have chosen to play on to a great extent thus far. Thus, the relative *demand* for a populist-Eurosceptic party becomes more difficult to test as a hypothesis based on the current, limited evidence. However, if crisis-shifting fails to cement the party's long-term ascendancy, *Chega* may broaden the scope of their 'crisis' (Moffit, 2016) to the European level, playing on broader identity-based issues to attack Brussels. A large allocation of seats in the National Parliament and a likely array of ideological allies in the European Parliament may help them to do this.

My closing hypothesis, however, affirms that the vast majority of the Portuguese electorate still share a broadly favourable view of European integration (FFMS, 2024). Populist and Eurosceptic parties have pulled at strands of Euroscepticism which have prevailed over time, from a Utilitarian strand, arguably more prevalent in the 1990s, towards a more Ideological strand largely championed by the left around the Eurozone crisis, finally culminating in a Sovereignty-based strand playing on national identity, spearheaded by *Chega*, in 2024.

According to my hypothesis, **Portuguese history and identity has successfully been presented to its population as collaborative and coherent with the success of the European project**, which continues to be reflected in record levels of confidence in the benefits of EU membership (FFMS, 2024). As a sustained Eurosceptic movement would have to bring together multiple strands of Euroscepticism to prevail, a populist party would need to re-shape the national narrative while convincing ideologues from across the political spectrum that the drawbacks of EU membership outweighed the benefits. This is perhaps why we have not seen a great deal of evidence of the *Chega* party 'playing the Eurosceptic card', or at least not consistently, in Portugal's dual election year.

However, one limitation of my research is precisely this, the limited evidence we have of Portugal's new populists' leanings towards Europe. This owes to the relative youth of the party: while it would be easier to track the well-documented Euroscepticism across the *PCP* (Communist Party) for example, which has existed for fifty years since the advent of democracy in Portugal, *Chega*'s mere five years of existence make more in-depth research problematic. I chose to focus on the far-right party due to the relevance of their 2024 surge in the context of the broader European picture. Evidently if the party continues to grow, so too will the data and literature available, and there is ample room for further research into the brand of Euroscepticism the party chooses to pursue, through its discourse and the potentially shifting demographics of its membership.

I believe there is also scope for bolstering my final hypothesis by analysing further the means through which the Portuguese historical narrative has been 'Europeanised'. My initial supposition was of the European narrative being diffused at a national level through education, which I had intended to map through an examination of Portuguese history and geography curricula over successive government terms against attitudes to Europe over this time (República Portuguesa - Educaçao, 2022). However, limited evidence combined with further reading on generational value-shifts (Hoffmann-Lange, 2012) suggested a number of competing factors, beyond the scope of this thesis, which may cloud the conclusion of any findings in this regard. I would recommend a more thorough investigation, particularly regarding the electoral motivations of Portugal's new generation of currently politically active voters and their sentiments towards Europe, as I believe this is indicative of the future direction of travel for Euroscepticism in Portugal.

All in all, I trust my findings present an informative and objective interpretation of Euroscepticism in Portugal in the context of democracy's 'make-or-break' year, and I believe mainstream pro-EU parties in Portugal should continue not to lean too heavily into the Eurosceptic tendencies of populist parties – by doing so Portugal could provide tentative answers for the (still) pro-European majority across the bloc facing off the 'Eurosceptic Internationale' (Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2023). However, I also hope I have been able to some extent demystify the assumption that Euroscepticism will never "sell" in Portugal, even though there may not (yet) have been any buyers sufficiently interested in paying the price.

List of Abbreviations

AD – *Aliança Democratica* (Portuguese 'Democratic Alliance' of *PSD*, *CDS* and *PPM*)

ADN *– Alternativa Democrática Nacional* (Portuguese far-right Eurosceptic party)

ALIS *– framework indicating Assumptions, Logics, Institutions, Strategies and Scenarios*

ANEL - *Anexartitoi Ellines* (Greek Eurosceptic party)

ANO - *Akce Nespokojených Občanů* (Czech populist party)

BE *– Bloco de Esquerda* (Portuguese Left Bloc party)

Ch *– Chega!* (lit. "Enough!": Portuguese Far-Right populist party)*

CDS-PP *– Centro Democrático Social – Partido Popular* (Portuguese Right-wing party)

CDU *– Coaligação Democrática Unitária* (Portuguese coalition of *PCP* and ecologists)

ECFR *– European Council on Foreign Relations* (European think-tank)

ECR *– European Conservatives and Reformists* (European Parliament grouping)

EP *– European Parliament*

ID *– Identity and Democracy Group* (European Parliament grouping)

IL *– Iniciativa Liberal* (Portuguese Centre-Right Party)

INE *– Instituto Nacional de Estatística* (Portuguese National Statistics Office)

Li *– Livre* (lit. "Free": Portuguese Green/Left Party)

MAPLE *– Measuring and Analysing the Politicisation of Europe Before and After the Eurozone Crisis* (European Research Project and survey repository)

MEP *– Member of the European Parliament*

PAN *– Pessoas, Animais, Natureza* (Portuguese Green Party)

PiS *– Prawo i Sprawiedliwosc* (Polish 'Law and Justice' populist party)

PCP *– Partido Communista Português* (Portuguese Communist Party)

PND *– Partido da Nova Democracia* (now ***ADN***: extinct Portuguese Eurosceptic party)

PNR *– Partido Nacional Renovador* (now ***Ergue-te***: Portuguese ultranationalist party)

PPM – *Partido Popular Monárquico* (Portuguese Monarchist Party, far-right, Eurosceptic)

PS *– Partido Socialista* (Portuguese Socialist Party)

PSD *– Partido Social Democrata* (Portuguese Social Democrat Party)

RTP *– Rádio e Televisão de Portugal* (Portuguese national broadcaster)

SMER *– Sociálna Demokracia* (Slovakian 'Direction' left-wing populist party)

SYRIZA - *Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás* (Greek Radical Left populist party)

TEU *– The Treaty on European Union*

******* *may also be referred to as* ***Basta!*** (also lit. "Enough!" – a short-lived Portuguese rightwing coalition formed by *Chega!* to contest the 2019 European Parliament Election).

List of Tables and Figures

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Annexes

Annex 1

Standard Eurobarometer data for Portugal, Autumn 2013 – Autumn 2023 (EB 80-100), for *QA1.2 How would you judge the current … **situation of** [the Portuguese] **economy**?* (**PT** = Portugal; **EU** = EU national average; **'+'** = "good"; **'-'** = "bad"; **'?'** = "don't know") and *QA.2 What are your **expectations for the next twelve months**: … better, worse or the same when it comes to … the state of [the Portuguese] economy?* (**PT** = Portugal; **EU** = EU national average; **'+'** = "better"; **'='** = "the same"; **'-'** = "worse"; **'?'** = "don't know"; figures given as % of respondents)

		Situation of Economy						Expectations for next 12m							
		PT			EU			PT				EU			
	Year	+	-	?	+	-	?	+	=	-	?	+	=	-	
EB 80	Autumn 2013	3	96	1	31	68	1	11	27	57	5	21	45	30	
EB 81	Spring 2014	4	96	0	34	63	3	17	40	37	6	24	47	23	
EB 82	Autumn 2014	6	94	0	34	63	3	21	42	32	5	22	45	28	
EB 83	Spring 2015	10	89	1	38	59	3	27	41	26	6	26	48	21	
EB 84	Autumn 2015	8	91	1	40	57	3	16	43	30	11	24	44	26	
EB 85	Spring 2016	10	89	1	39	57	4	25	39	25	11	21	46	26	
EB 86	Autumn 2016	15	84	1	41	56	3	27	49	18	6	22	47	26	
EB 87	Spring 2017	33	64	3	46	51	3	45	40	8	7	26	47	21	
EB 88	Autumn 2017	33	63	4	48	49	3	36	44	12	8	27	46	23	
EB 89	Spring 2018	43	55	2	49	47	4	34	51	9	6	25	48	23	
EB 90	Autumn 2018	36	60	4	49	48	3	29	50	11	10	21	57	27	
EB 91	Spring 2019	37	61	2	49	47	4	25	59	9	7	22	47	26	
EB 92	Autumn 2019	44	54	2	47	50	3	34	47	11	8	19	45	31	
EB 93	Spring 2020	12	87	1	34	64	2	17	29	45	9	20	28	49	
EB 94	Winter 2020/21*	10	90	0	29	69	2	23	18	59	0	29	26	42	
EB 95	Spring 2021	11	88	1	40	58	2	31	39	25	5	35	33	29	
EB 96	Winter 2021/22**	23	74	3	39	59	2	32	38	25	5	28	37	31	
EB 97	Spring 2022	20	77	3	34	64	3	18	32	41	9	16	28	53	
EB 98	Autumn 2022	14	81	5	35	63	2	18	39	34	9	19	43	35	
EB 99	Spring 2023	38	57	5	40	58	2	33	33	26	8	21	39	36	
EB 100	Autumn 2023	18	80	2	35	62	3	17	33	44	6	20	40	37	

Annex 2

Standard Eurobarometer data for Portugal, Autumn 2013 – Autumn 2023 (EB 80-100), for *QA6 How much trust do you have in certain institutions? For each of the following institutions, [**the European Union**; **the Portuguese Parliament**; **the Portuguese government**] do you **tend to trust it or not to trust it**?* (**EU Govt** = the European Union; **National Parl** = the [Portuguese] Parliament; **National Govt** = the [Portuguese] Government; **PT** = Portugal; **EU** = EU national average; **'+'** = "tend to trust"; **'-'** = "tend not to trust"; **'?'** = "don't know"; figures given as % of respondents)

		Tend to trust EU Govt						Tend to trust National Parl						Tend to trust National Go					
		PT			EU			PT			EU			PT			EU		
	Year	+	-	?	+	-	?	+	-	?	+	-	?	+	-	?	+	-	
EB 80	Autumn 2013	25	68	7	31	58	11	15	83	2	25	69	6	15	83	2	23	72	
EB 81	Spring 2014	28	66	6	31	56	13	14	84	2	28	65	7	14	85	1	27	68	
EB 82	Autumn 2014	39	51	10	37	50	13	20	76	4	30	62	8	17	80	3	29	65	
EB 83	Spring 2015	47	44	9	40	46	14	25	72	3	31	62	7	21	76	3	31	63	
EB 84	Autumn 2015	42	48	10	32	55	13	19	77	4	28	64	8	15	79	6	27	66	
EB 85	Spring 2016	43	47	10	33	55	12	32	63	5	28	65	7	33	62	5	27	68	
EB 86	Autumn 2016	48	42	10	36	54	10	36	61	3	32	62	6	39	57	4	31	64	
EB 87	Spring 2017	54	37	9	42	47	11	46	50	4	36	57	7	56	40	4	37	57	
EB 88	Autumn 2017	51	39	10	41	48	11	42	54	4	35	58	7	51	45	4	36	59	
EB 89	Spring 2018	57	35	8	42	48	10	48	49	3	34	60	6	55	43	2	34	61	
EB 90	Autumn 2018	55	36	9	42	48	10	37	50	5	35	58	7	43	53	4	35	59	
EB 91	Spring 2019	57	33	10	44	46	10	37	59	4	34	60	6	42	55	3	34	61	
EB 92	Autumn 2019	59	33	8	43	47	10	39	57	4	34	60	6	46	50	4	34	61	
EB 93	Spring 2020	56	34	10	43	48	9	44	53	3	36	58	6	52	45	3	40	56	
EB 94	Winter 2020/21*	78	21	1	49	43	8	40	60	0	35	60	5	38	62	0	36	60	
EB 95	Spring 2021	73	18	9	49	42	9	45	51	4	35	59	6	58	39	3	37	59	
EB 96	Winter 2021/22**	69	26	5	47	44	9	46	50	4	36	58	6	50	47	3	35	60	
EB 97	Spring 2022	68	24	8	49	43	8	41	53	6	34	60	6	45	50	5	34	61	
EB 98	Autumn 2022	65	26	9	47	45	8	38	56	6	33	61	6	41	55	4	32	63	
EB 99	Spring 2023	67	28	5	47	45	8	42	55	3	33	62	5	48	49	3	32	63	
EB 100	Autumn 2023	54	39	7	47	45	8	33	63	4	36	60	4	34	62	4	39	56	

Annex 3

Standard Eurobarometer data for Portugal, Autumn 2013 – Autumn 2023 (EB 80-100), for *QA3 What do you think are **the two most important issues** facing [OUR COUNTRY] **at the moment**?* (only selected issues presented; figures given as % of respondents for whom these issues were one of two most important; **PT** = Portugal; **EU** = EU national average)

		Most Important Issues PT								Most Important Issues EU							
	Year	Unemployment	Economy	Inflation	Government Debt	Health	Immigration	Crime	Taxation	Unemployment	Economy	Inflation	Government Debt	Health	Immigration	Crime	Taxation
EB 80	Autumn 2013	71	39	22	14	9	1	3	14	49	33	20	14	12	12	11	11
EB 81	Spring 2014	70	38	20	19	11	2	5	15	48	29	16	13	14	15	12	11
EB 82	Autumn 2014	66	31	22	20	13	2	4	14	45	24	14	14	16	18	9	10
EB 83	Spring 2015	63	28	24	18	14	3	4	15	42	21	14	12	18	23	9	8
EB 84	Autumn 2015	62	35	19	22	12	5	3	11	36	19	14	10	14	36	10	8
EB 85	Spring 2016	62	30	19	18	12	3	4	14	33	19	13	10	16	28	10	7
EB 86	Autumn 2016	58	34	24	24	11	4	3	12	31	19	15	10	18	26	11	7
EB 87	Spring 2017	51	26	21	19	17	2	4	11	29	16	15	10	20	22	12	7
EB 88	Autumn 2017	42	21	12	15	22	4	8	9	25	16	17	9	20	22	12	7
EB 89	Spring 2018	32	22	20	16	26	2	4	8	25	15	17	9	23	21	11	7
EB 90	Autumn 2018	27	16	32	15	33	3	4	17	23	15	21	10	20	21	12	8
EB 91	Spring 2019	18	22	27	13	34	4	3	11	21	16	21	10	21	17	11	8
EB 92	Autumn 2019	18	16	21	7	44	3	5	16	20	14	18	8	23	17	12	8
EB 93	Spring 2020	40	52	12	7	56	2	3	4	28	33	18	12	31	11	8	5
EB 94	Winter 2020/21*	40	52	17	14	32	0	3	16	25	33	16	13	44	7	6	5
EB 95	Spring 2021	38	42	17	10	52	2	2	12	21	26	23	13	28	10	9	6
EB 96	Winter 2021/22*	17	25	47	8	39	2	3	18	14	19	41	9	32	8	7	6
EB 97	Spring 2022	14	27	55	6	40	4	1	7	9	20	54	8	14	8	6	5
EB 98	Autumn 2022	11	30	58	4	31	3	3	6	10	19	53	7	14	9	7	5
EB 99	Spring 2023	9	22	48	3	39	5	3	9	9	18	45	9	14	14	6	5
EB 100	Autumn 2023	8	19	51	2	44	3	2	16	9	18	44	9	12	20	9	6