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A Leftist Political Surge: How an Authoritarian Past Helped Spawn a Modern Political Movement in Spain and Portugal

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A LEFTIST POLITICAL SURGE: HOW AN AUTHORITARIAN PAST HELPED SPAWN
A MODERN POLITICAL MOVEMENT IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

by

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B.A. May 2021, Marshall University

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ABSTRACT

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Jared Sykes
Old Dominion University, 2023
Director: Dr. Georg Menz

Since the 2008 financial crisis ravaged the EU, Spain and Portugal struggled economically to recover, especially as forces in the EU, the European Central Bank (ECB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) enforced bailout packages conditional on the implementation of austerity. Additionally, Spanish and Portuguese society have continuously struggled with a history of authoritarian legacies, of the Franco and Salazar dictatorships that ruled the Iberian Peninsula for nearly 50 years. As outrage continued, protest movements, most notably the Spanish 15-M Movement, fueled voter dissatisfaction. Eventually, many prominent figures from the protest movement founded or brought momentum to left-wing political forces, chiefly the Spanish *Podemos* and the Portuguese Left Bloc, that saw a meteoric rise in the aftermath of the financial crisis.

As a result, this thesis will argue that the combined effects of the immediate fallout of the financial crisis and the long-standing implications of Iberian authoritarian legacies have culminated in the rise of the Spanish and Portuguese New Left. In turn, these factors culminated in immense electoral success for both *Podemos* and the Left Bloc, and even allowed both parties to participate in government coalitions with mainstream social democratic parties, and resulted in a more economically redistributive and socially liberal system of governing in both countries. Moreover, the rise of the Iberian New Left shows a transformation of the European far-left away

from tradition matter regarding workers' rights and more toward a progressive agenda that appeals to university educated and urban voters.

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This thesis is dedicated to broadening the research of European electoral and party politics in hopes of expanding the research and making notable contributions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Following the 2010 Eurozone crisis, the Troika (European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund) imposed stringent austerity measures upon its member-states, namely the “PIIGS” states, Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and Spain. The EU bailed out these member-states and required that they cut government spending and encourage a balanced budget. Within many of these countries, a hostile response was triggered in the form of quickly-rising anti-austerity movements and political parties. In the Iberian Peninsula, Spain and Portugal, the anti-austerity movements were particularly powerful in their response to the mainstream political parties’ perceived kowtow to the EU by accepting austerity conditions for the bailout packages.

In Spain, the *Movimiento 15-M* (also known as the *Movimiento Indignados*), named for the date of its founding on May 15, 2011, led massive protests against Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero of the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE), and later the center-right government of Mariano Rajoy (*Partido Popular*, PP). Approximately 6.5 to 8 million Spanish citizens turned out in protest against the government according to Ipsos and RTVE. In turn, the *Indignados* evolved into *Podemos*, a left-wing, anti-austerity political party that was critical of the government’s acceptance of the EU’s terms. The party was launched on January 16, 2014 in preparation for that year’s European Parliament election that lamented the party’s meteoric rise in Spanish politics. The leading figure of the party was the former academic, Pablo Iglesias, whose dynamic personality and campaigning tactics helped that party surge in the polls, achieving 7.98 percent of the vote (approximately 1.2 million votes) in the European

Parliamentary election. In turn, it earned 5 of Spain's 54 seats in the Parliament, while both PP and PSOE saw historic losses.

Meanwhile, in Portugal, the anti-austerity movement was led by a number of notable movements and parties, including the existing *Bloco de Esquerda* (Left Bloc) which was founded in 1999. It was a unification of the People's Democratic Union, Revolutionary Socialist Party, and the Politics XXI party.¹ Similar to *Podemos*, the Left Bloc relentlessly rebuked the government of Prime Minister José Sócrates for its acceptance of the conditions of EU bailouts that required strict austerity measure. While the Left Bloc has not seen as grandiose electoral achievement, after years of criticizing both Socialist Party (center-left) and Social Democratic Party (center-right, despite its name), it supported the Socialist government alongside the Communists and the Greens in a confidence and supply agreement known as the “*Geringonça*,” or the “Contraption” from 2015 to 2019. While the agreement eventually came to an end following the 2019 parliamentary election, the Socialist Party was still forced to appeal to the Left Bloc for assistance in critical policy and budgetary votes. Ultimately, the Left Bloc would abandon the Socialists in 2021 for not going far enough on its budget in housing reform, thus triggering a snap election that was held on January 30, 2022.

Both *Podemos* and the Left Bloc have stemmed from a “New Left” political trend in Iberia that is distinct to the region and can be connected to the authoritarian legacies of Spain and Portugal. While similar in many ways to New Left/populist movements elsewhere in Europe, such as Jean-Luc Mélenchon's France Unbowed in France, the Iberian new left often draws its ideology from the struggles faced under the regimes of Francisco Franco and António de Oliveira Salazar. The particularly oppressive stance that these dictators took against dissidents

¹ Carreira et al, 2021, 944

led to powerful underground movements that have inspired modern left-wing resistance, as both regimes often arrested and exiled leftist dissidents. Both *Podemos* and the Left Bloc have vociferously campaigned against the authoritarian legacies within their countries. Moreover, these parties argue that vestiges of the dictatorships remain prominent in the political systems of Spain and Portugal. They argue that the only way to rid their countries of the scars of the past are to completely reform the country. Additionally, these parties have seen movements of the past, such as the Portuguese and Spanish Communist Parties, as insufficient to the cause. The Spanish and Portuguese New Left combines anti-authoritarianism, left-wing economics, and progressive social values² into a distinct ideology. With the recent rise and growing popularity of right-wing populist parties in Spain (*Vox*) and Portugal (*Chega*), both of which have performed well in recent opinion polls, there has been a recent rise in nostalgia for authoritarian rule, which many on the right have equated to stability and national pride. Thus, not only is the authoritarian legacy engrained institutionally, but also culturally and politically, as several politicians maintain admiration for Franco and Salazar, and the humiliation of Spain and Portugal after the end of authoritarianism.

Altogether, I argue that the unique set of historical circumstances in Spain and Portugal, being that both countries experienced fascist/semi-fascist regimes that survived the end of World War II, created a different political climate. In turn, the more gradual modernization and transition to democracy in Iberia throughout the Twentieth Century sparked a different type of left-wing movement than those of France and the United Kingdom, much older democracies, or Germany, whose transition to democracy was immediate. In turn, in both Spain and Portugal the period known as “*la Transición*” allowed for vestiges of dictatorship to remain ingrained in

² Iglesias 2015; Martins 2017

society. Many leftist academics, such as Pablo Iglesias and Íñigo Errejón, who went on to found *Podemos*, have actively pointed out the faults of Spanish society which they believe are a result of the lasting legacy of Francisco Franco's iron grip on the country. In Portugal, the left remains critical of the Salazar regime's relentless attempt to hold on to the Portuguese colonial empire. While Portuguese citizens suffered economic woes brought on by the colonial wars and the Arab Oil Embargo from the time of Salazar's death in 1970 to the Carnation Revolution in 1974 and millions of state funds were poured into losing battles in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau. The New Left sees these issues continuing to manifest in Spanish and Portuguese politics, rooted deeply within the constitutions and political systems of their countries.

The New Left seeks to take on the mantle of the left-wing, away from older left-wing alliances, such as the Unitary Democratic Coalition in Portugal and the United Left in Spain. Additionally, the New Left also seeks to confront the establishment, both center-left and center-right, who they view as continuing to propagate the dictatorial and fascist legacies of Iberia. To spread their populist messages, these parties have taken to modern political tactics that involve broad movements to appeal to young voters through the means of social media and protest movements. These parties have worked to transcend traditional party politics by utilizing modern tactics and riding on fervor sparked by protest movements. For these parties, anti-austerity movements were the catalyst, and combating a system, that, in their view, is rooted in an authoritarian legacy, is the fuel for their movements throughout the last decade. In many ways, these parties have siphoned votes away from the old left and simultaneously, activated large groups of first time (typically youth) and/or formerly disillusioned voters. Both *Podemos* and the Left Bloc champion themselves as being voices for those left behind by the established political parties and the Troika.

Several authors have struggled to label the rise of left-wing populist parties across Europe, pointing out many different causes of Europe's New Left. While many point out the austerity measures imposed by the "European Troika" (European Commission, European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund), I argue that in the case of Iberia, while this was an important catalyst to the rise of the Iberian New Left, it fails to get at the root cause. Franco and Salazar established regimes in Iberia that were meant to last, unlike other Fascist counterparts in Germany and Italy. By forgoing conquest of European neighbors, Franco and Salazar instead raised national glory by redefining what national pride meant and creating political systems that relied on their authority to be sustainable. These dictators established regimes in Spain and Portugal where all information and decision-making traveled directly through their offices. While the two men are vastly different in their style and mannerisms, fundamentally, many of their nationalistic movements relied on a similar core. Ideas of what it meant to be Catholic alongside what it meant to be Spanish and Portuguese, defined these regimes, enticed citizens, and allowed the dictatorships to last well into the Cold War. In turn, they remained so ingrained in society and political systems, that we can observe their affects in the modern Spanish and Portuguese politics. In turn, *Podemos* and the Left Bloc recognize this, and seek to reverse course.

CHAPTER II

REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

Several authors have attempted to deduce the relationship between the origins of populism and its meteoric rise in some countries. Populism, both left- and right-wing, has been found to thrive under a specific set of circumstances, that allow its message to have broader appeal amongst populations that may have not previously supported its mantra. Additionally, populism thrives on the dissatisfaction of the populace. When the mainstream does nothing to mitigate the distress of the electorate, established parties pay the consequences at the ballot box, while populists seemingly rise out of nowhere, feeding off of the frustration. Often times, populist success stems from political systems embroiled in popular dissatisfaction, economic uncertainty, and electoral instability. The global economic crisis stimulated a populist wave across Europe, that was centered on Euroscepticism, concentrated in economic issues that only fueled anti-European sentiments.³

Cas Mudde, who remains one of the most prolific researchers of populism has authored several articles on the subject theorizing its origins and its success. In one piece he authored for the Guardian, he lays out 5 theses and 5 lessons pertaining to populism, and what we need to know about it. He argues that populism is “neither left nor right,” and he goes on to label it as a “thin-centered” political belief and a tool that must latch itself onto an ideology.⁴ Populism can latch itself onto left-wing, right-wing, or even centrist political pursuits. He also notes that while populism is anti-system, it is not anti-democracy, in actuality, populism survives on democracy. Democracy allows otherwise fringe political figures to contest elections and build a base of

³ Serricchio et al, 2013, 61

⁴ Mudde, 2017

support. Instead, populists seek to tear down the system they claim is constructed against them by the elite, in the case of *Podemos* and the Left Bloc, the liberal elite, who are conducive to authoritarian legacies in Spain and Portugal. “It is illiberal democratic response to undemocratic liberalism.”⁵

In a separate article, he emphasizes that populism is utilized by a diverse array of parties ranging from Greece’s neo-Nazi Golden Dawn, to Spain’s left-wing *Podemos*, to politically ambiguous parties like Italy’s 5-Star Movement.⁶ These parties all have one thing in common: a perceived conflict between the elite and the people. Populist parties hijack the word people, and use it within their claims to be the spokesmen and women for the masses at large, as would coin it, the silent majority. Mudde’s research lays the foundation of the study of populism, as it continued to be a hard to define topic within political science.

However, Mudde still does not remain confident that there is a solid definition of populism, nor does he think that the field of political science will ever reach a consensus.⁷ He does highlight several schools of thought on populism. The first one being the “cultural backlash” theory, that attributes populism to a backlash against cultural shifts caused by mass immigration, fueled by nativism.⁸ Another theory he highlights stems from the tension between “responsiveness and responsibility”⁹ within political systems, that ultimately sows immense dissatisfaction when the populace perceives a lack of responsibility within the government. A third set of theories emphasized by Mudde centers on polarization and partisanship. Here, he highlights the polarizing role of the Great Recession in Spain, Italy, and Greece that ultimately

⁵ Mudde 2017

⁶ Mudde 2018

⁷ Mudde, Kaltwasser 2018, 1669

⁸ Ibid, 1676

⁹ Ibid, 1678-1679

contributed to political party fragmentation and the collapse of mainstream parties in some cases.¹⁰ Helen Milner presents a similar case, regarding globalization and economic distress being the primary drivers of populism (though, in her study concentrates on right-wing populism).¹¹

In 2004, Mudde presented his definition of populism, by analyzing what factors that he saw as critical to the formation of a populist movement. As previously mentioned, Mudde emphasizes that populism is a “thin ideology, that must latch onto another ideology in order to succeed within a political system. This thin ideology once again, returns to the idea that society is divided between two distinct groups, the elite and the people.”¹² In contrast to other ideologies, populism on its own has no solid political basis beyond the conflict between the elite and the other according to Mudde’s definition. Mudde highlights how recent events have allowed for populism to thrive more than ever before in European politics. Several factors, including electoral systems and economic crises, culminate in previously unseen backlash against the unelected elite within the European Union. Spain and Portugal are no stranger to this, as *Podemos* and the Left Bloc found their messages empowered by these notions. Zullianello presents a slightly different populist classification system that labels *Podemos* and similar parties as left-wing and social populists.¹³ Meanwhile, others indicate, that both left-wing and right-wing populists have several areas of agreement, primarily in regards to globalization and national

¹⁰ Ibid, 1681-1682

¹¹ Milner 2021, 2312

¹² Mudde 2019, 578

¹³ Zullianello 2020, 330-332

sovereignty.¹⁴ Another author highlights how left-wing populists can adopt several different strategies, including regionalist ones, in order to win votes.¹⁵

Bremmer, Hutter, and Kriesi directly investigate the relationship between the rise of protest parties and the 2008 financial crisis in Europe. In the text they argue, “In the Great Recession, incumbents were heavily punished in the electoral arena. However, this punishment was not limited to the electoral arena; instead, citizens also punished the government by voicing their grievances in the street.”¹⁶ In all, they discover that the financial crisis had a profound impact on the electoral environment throughout the European Union, including Spain and Portugal.

Matthijs Rooduijn contends that populist parties are best able to construct a supportive base within the electorate through the use of narratives and rhetoric that are able to trigger an emotional reaction, conducive to populism. However, he argues that populist parties have no single narrative that appeals to the average “populist voter” as some studies argue.¹⁷ In all, he argues that people support populist parties based on low levels of political trust, especially in that of the EU within European countries.¹⁸ Similarly, Lubbers and Scheepers find that populist Eurosceptic support increases dramatically amongst individuals who hold nationalistic values, alongside a situation where a country is less reliant on international trade, especially with other EU member-states.¹⁹ Meanwhile, in a later study, Mark Visser and Marcel Lubbers (among others) argue that support for left-wing populists relies on economic factors, and support is

¹⁴ Otjes, Louwerse 2015, 75

¹⁵ Massetti 2018, 950

¹⁶ Bremmer, Hutter, Kriesi 2020, 860

¹⁷ Rooduijn 2018, 353

¹⁸ Ibid 364

¹⁹ Lubbers, Scheepers 2007, 658

greatest among those at the greatest socioeconomic disadvantage,²⁰ rather than a simple the people against the elite narrative. Concurrently, Thomas Kurer suggests that European populism can be tied to an individual's occupation, where those holding jobs most threatened by automation, globalization, and EU integration are more likely to adhere to nationalist sentiments and populism.²¹ Kurt Weyland instead describe populism as a political strategy, that are defined by opportunism and leader-centrism to fuel party fervor.²² Conversely, Nemčok et al. find that populist parties can sway voter behavior in drastic ways, such as stimulating increased political participation and mobilizing “disadvantaged subgroups” of the population.²³

Other authors have deliberated further on the tenants and rise of populism, especially in Europe following the Eurozone crisis that would spark the 15 M Movement in Spain and similar movements in Portugal and elsewhere. Giray Gozgor, in his analysis of the Eurozone crisis and populism, goes as far as to argue that “economic uncertainty” creates anxieties among the population, and in turn, leads to a rise in populist support,²⁴ in line with past researchers, such as Cas Mudde, who highlighted similar factors. When the economy begins to slump, the population turns to blame someone for the problem, and that usually befalls the elites, who are often considered the ones in government. That message is pushed to immense levels by populist rhetoric, who, at times, see a meteoric rise in support, as observed by *Podemos* and the Left Bloc. Gozgor goes further in highlighting other economic factors, beyond uncertainty-fueled populism,

²⁰ Visser et al. 2014, 554

²¹ Kurer 2020, 1821

²² Weyland 2020, 186

²³ Nemčok et al. 2022, 20-21

²⁴ Gozgor 2022, 241

such as globalization and technological change, can have particularly strong impacts on the working class.²⁵

Other authors, such as Andrés Santana and José Rama, take the notion on globalization and its influence on populist parties, particularly left-wing parties, a step further than Gozgor. Using data from the 2014 European Parliamentary election, they find that opinions EU membership and anti-EU integration have a particularly strong relationship with rising support for left-wing populist parties.²⁶ Many consider these issues as falling within the wider debate over globalization and national identity. Moreover, these issues are not limited to left-wing populist parties, as many right-wing parties adopt similar rhetoric on these issues. Furthermore, Santana and Rama find that support stems from the “losers of globalization,” who often find themselves “struggling to pay bills” and face immense uncertainty.²⁷ The authors identify this trend across most EU member-states, thus, further indicating that economic criteria do act as a great catalyst to propelling left-wing populist movements and political parties. Asara writes that the *Indignados* (15M) movement “was not just a reaction to austerity policies and the economic crisis, but framed the crisis also as political, cultural and environmental.”²⁸

Additionally, Giorgos Charalambous observes the left-wing populist pushback against perceived EU elite hegemony over politics, that promotes a capitalist worldview.²⁹ A combination of the Eurozone crisis and the 2015 migrant crisis culminating in a mishandling of both instances, fueled anti-establishment rhetoric that led to the rise of both left- and right-wing populists across EU member-states. However, Charambalous also points out several areas where

²⁵ Ibid, 242

²⁶ Santana, Rama 2018, 568

²⁷ Ibid, 569

²⁸ Asara 2016, 539

²⁹ Charalambous 2019, 91

Europe's radical left have struggled and have become divided, such as climate change debates, favorability of the EU, and levels of immigration from outside the EU.³⁰ In Spain and Portugal, both *Podemos* and the Left Bloc have struggled with similar debates. In Portugal, those on the left who are more anti-EU and socially conservative drift away from the more progressive ideology of the Left Bloc and toward the Portuguese Communist Party. In Spain, divisions within *Podemos* have led to figures, such as Íñigo Errejón abandoning the party he helped found for the regionalist and green Más Madrid movement, which he expanded to Más País. From cases such as these, Charalambous concludes that divisions within the European left-wing are unlikely to cease, even while they are able to latch onto and unite behind specific issues within populist rhetoric.³¹

Matt Bolton's research on the global democratic socialist movement as a whole sum up the various contingencies and theories surrounding the research surrounding left-wing populism well. He points out that in the West, the true "socialists" have only recently become in vogue again, as the legacies of the Cold War become vestiges of the red scares.³² In many ways, the term socialism does not hold the baggage that it once came with, so now, parties such as *Podemos* and the Left Bloc do not refute such labels, even if it's not explicitly mentioned in their names. Like many previous authors, Bolton returns to the notion that democratic socialists and left-wing populist return to the foundation of the "shift back to nation-state centred [*sic*] modes of production across the globe, with protectionism and economic nationalism advocated on both sides of the political divide as a means of overcoming the limits of the previous 'neoliberal'

³⁰ Ibid, 94

³¹ Ibid, 100

³² Bolton 2020, 334

model.”³³ United fights regarding economic uncertainty and the ever-increasing income disparities have driven more people toward populist left-wing parties. In Spain and Portugal, while some of the fervor of the mid-2010s has dwindled, there remains a solid base of voters, that once felt disempowered by the system, that remain wholly in favor of movements, such as *Podemos* and the Left Bloc. As the crisis went on in southern Europe, including Spain and Portugal, some authors suggest that it caused a democratic backsliding.³⁴

As the literature turns to a closer inspection of Spain and Portugal, we find several of the broader trends in place at the Iberian regional level as well. Margarita Cachafeiro and Carolina Plaza-Colodro argue that behavior within Iberian political systems, as a result of the financial crisis, shows “the transformation of the radical left emphasizing distributive issues in a Eurosceptic populist direction.”³⁵ These authors demonstrate through analysis of voting patterns and behavior how left-wing populists in Spain and Portugal intensified their political and electoral momentum. In turn, this results in increased Euroscepticism and disdain for the Troika, alongside the established parties that kowtowed to the demands of the perceived elites. Cachafeiro and Plaza-Colodro conclude that public discontent with austerity policies triggered changes in citizens’ political attitudes.”³⁶

Filipe Carreira da Silva, Luca Manucci, and David Veloso Larraz provide a comparison between Spanish and Portuguese new left populists. They highlight 2015 and 2019 as being pivotal years for the Iberian New Left where they applied new pressures on both the electoral system and the established parties.³⁷ Da Silva et al. highlight these years as the beginning of the

³³ Ibid, 340

³⁴ Matthijs 2017, 270

³⁵ Cachafeiro, Plaza-Colodro, 2018, 347

³⁶ Ibid, 355

³⁷ Da Silva et al. 2021, 944-945

fragmentation of the Iberian political party systems, and the emergence of new forces, with *Podemos*, *Vox*, *Ciudadanos*, and regionalist parties in Spain, and the Left Bloc, *Chega*, and the Liberal Alliance in Portugal. Challenges came from the left, right, and center across the Iberian Peninsula, and both the center-left and center-right mainstreams struggled to maintain electoral prowess. The authors also highlight the importance of defining populism, and differentiating it from other ideologies, especially nationalism, which many have come to use interchangeably with populism.³⁸ Ivaldi et al. define *Podemos*'s New Left populism as being defined by socialism, suspicion of the EU, and serving the underprivileged,³⁹ while other authors emphasize the urban movement nature of the party and 15-M.⁴⁰

Other similar sources highlight the importance of youth voter behavior and the relationship between populist left-wing political movements and the aftermath of the anti-austerity movements. Zamponi and González emphasize the role of students and youth had in acting as a “definitive broker in the diffusion of anti-neo-liberal discourse.”⁴¹ They trace the roots to attempts in the 1990s and early 2000s to cut funding to education in Southern Europe. They also point out that stronger youth movements were in areas where more intense anti-austerity protests were present. In both Spain and Portugal, volatile anti-austerity protests also had strong youth movements,⁴² and in turn, produced powerful parties like *Podemos* and (the rise of) the Left Bloc. Seongcheol Kim looks at *Podemos* through the lens of social movements studies rather than that of a political party, and social movement studies relation to perceptions of populism. Kim writes, *Podemos* represents a “left populism heavily reliant on vertical

³⁸ Ibid, 951

³⁹ Ivaldi et al. 2017, 358

⁴⁰ Martínez, Wissink 2021, 7

⁴¹ Zamponi, González 2017, 66

⁴² Ibid, 77-78

identification with mediatic leadership.”⁴³ *Podemos* has thrived off voter dissatisfaction following the outbreak of the 15-M Movement’s protests, which culminated in a jump-starting support ahead of the 2014 European Parliamentary election. The capture and utilization of the financial crisis allowed *Podemos* to steer voter behavior away from both the mainstream left and older left-wing populist parties, and toward *Podemos*, culminating in a sudden rise for the party and the beginning of Pablo Iglesias’s and other left-wing personalities political careers.

Luis Ramiro and Raul Gomez highlight that while *Podemos* adheres to basic tenants of populism attached to a left-wing ideology, it also maintains certain elements, particularly Spanish patriotism. Furthermore, Pablo Iglesias has labeled himself as firm believer in Spanish patriot on several occasions.⁴⁴ Unlike other left-wing populist groups, such as the *Izquierda Unida*, *Podemos* attracted a new type of voter, which the authors label as losers of globalization and holding soft Eurosceptic political values. They write that *Podemos* has built its success “gaining support from specific groups of voters that other direct competitors are not able to reach.”⁴⁵ From this research, we can see that parties like *Podemos* are able to tap into areas where other left-wing parties have failed to garner support. That results in a meteoric rise coupled with the success of dynamic party figures who are able to draw large crowds and influence voter behavior. Alexandros Kioupiolis argues that *Podemos*’s electoral strategy thrives on making ambiguous and ambitious promises that mobilizes voters, and as other scholars have highlighted, that works best with those who feel most harmed by the Troika and others. He points out four claims that are paramount to understanding *Podemos*’s meteoric electoral success in the aftermath of the financial crisis. *Podemos* has both a horizontal structure,

⁴³ Kim 2019, 222

⁴⁴ Ramiro, Gomez 2016, 112

⁴⁵ Ibid, 122

that involves widespread party networking, and a vertical structure that follows traditional party structures and hierarchies, that trace back to Pablo Iglesias among others. Furthermore, *Podemos*'s "politics of the common," reflexivity, and a hegemonic leadership, that all culminates under a dualistic party strategy that seemingly brings opposite approaches together.⁴⁶

Alternatively, Karen Sanders et al. emphasize the role of exclusionary narratives and strategic discourse amongst the voting base to explain the rise of *Podemos*. Pablo Iglesias's objective was to "generate a political discourse that crosses ideological boundaries, resisting the imposition of political categories and by political parties' intent on preventing [*Podemos*'s] electoral success."⁴⁷ As with other populist parties, Sanders highlights that *Podemos* relies on othering political rivals and capturing less ideological "floating voters" (as emphasized by Iglesias), who do not maintain loyalty to a single party and were some of the hardest hit by the financial crisis. While not relying on blatant "us vs them" tactics that right-wing populists rely on, *Podemos* does create a construct of "the people" and pits the people against perceived elites who repress the people.⁴⁸ Alternatively, Hugo Marcos-Marne argues that *Podemos* succeeded in the years following the financial crisis because of its ability to transcend traditional Spanish political norms within the electoral system.⁴⁹ Additionally, he highlights that populist parties, including *Podemos*, tend to attract voters who are not wholly committed to established parties and who tend to come from political extremes of the left-right spectrum and hold populist "the people vs the elite" values. Online survey results confirm Marcos-Marne's hypothesis that voters who express more populist attitudes tended to be swayed by *Podemos*'s political message more

⁴⁶ Kioupkiolis 2016, 100-101

⁴⁷ Sanders et al. 2017, 555

⁴⁸ Ibid 561

⁴⁹ Marcos-Marne 2021, 1054

often than other voters. Furthermore, he finds that these results are particularly strong for left-wing voters, especially when populist parties' campaign on economic redistribution.⁵⁰

According to some sources, one of the greatest sources of strength for *Podemos* has been political polarization. Ruptures in Spanish political society and dissatisfaction with both PSOE and PP has driven people to both *Vox* and *Podemos*. Moreover, authors such as Lluís Orriols and Sandra León found that as Spanish politics became increasingly polarized, the Spanish left became increasingly unified, as the *Izquierda Unida* and left-wing regionalist, such as *Alto Aragón en Común* and *Catalunya en Comú*, have continued to cooperate with *Podemos*.⁵¹ In turn, by uniting other left-wing forces, *Podemos* was able to take advantage of the polarization within Spanish politics. Rama, Cordero, and Zagórski cite the formation of new parties, such as *Vox* and *Podemos*, out of polarization as being rooted in institutional and contextual factors. Through the institutional side, they refer to the basic tenants of Duverger's theory, where proportional representation systems are more likely predisposed to multiparty systems. On the contextual side, they look at social and economic factors that were intensified during the Great Recession and dissatisfaction with political institutions.⁵² Looking at factors of voter demographics, they find that supporters of *Podemos* and other Spanish populist parties are typically young and dissatisfied with the political system and rampant corruption.⁵³ One Pew Research study mentions that many *Podemos* supporters previously supported PSOE.⁵⁴ Without these specific set of circumstances, *Podemos*, *Vox*, and *Ciudadanos* would not have been able to reach the heights of political success that they did.

⁵⁰ Ibid 1064

⁵¹ Orriols and Sandra León

⁵² Rama et al. 2021, 2-3

⁵³ Ibid, 11

⁵⁴ Wike et al. 2019

Concurrently, García-Viñuela et al. argue that strategic voting has helped *Podemos* rise through the Spanish political system. Similar to Orriols, they highlight that regional factors lead to voters of similar ideologies uniting behind a single party or alliance, which occurred for *Podemos*.⁵⁵ Strategic voting is more successful in districts that are found to be more competitive, while smaller parties are more likely to claim victory when less is at stake.⁵⁶ Ibán Díaz-Parra and Beltran Roca offer a similar social movement analysis of 15M and *Podemos*. Using spatial analysis methods, they find that 15M and *Podemos* utilized grassroots strategies to cultivate grassroots support and influence voter behavior towards a left-wing populist approach.⁵⁷ They also highlight *Podemos*'s ardent criticisms of the current Spanish political system and the remnants of Francisco Franco's regime that remain prominent throughout the political system. They also emphasize the "mobilization cycle" that lasted from 2011 to 2015 that constantly triggered massive anti-system protests and maintained political dissatisfaction that translated in *Podemos*'s electoral success.⁵⁸

Alternatively, Rubio, Oleart, and Raube approach analysis of *Podemos* from a different perspective than voter behavior and populist rhetoric. Instead, they highlight the differences in success of *Podemos* and other Spanish populist parties based on the scale of the election. They argue that different results come from European Parliament versus national parliamentary elections based on nuances between European and national-level issues.⁵⁹ They find that when national issues become "Europeanized," whether it be issues surrounding Catalonia or increasing minimum wage, populist parties tend to put a European spin on it (i.e. blocking an independent

⁵⁵ García-Viñuela et al. 2015, 739

⁵⁶ Ibid 747

⁵⁷ Díaz-Parra, Roca 2016, 274

⁵⁸ Ibid 269

⁵⁹ Rubio et al. 2021, 363

Catalonia from EU membership or creating a European minimum wage), that garners support within European Parliamentary elections.⁶⁰

Conversely, Sampedro, Durán, Seoane, and Farné argue that voter mobilization only occurred as a result of the “Hybrid Media Strategy” implemented by *Podemos*. They imply that previous theories alone cannot explain *Podemos*’s rise, and that it rose with an “unprecedented intensity” that requires more scholarly interest to fully understand beyond standard studies of populism.⁶¹ While they acknowledge that *Podemos* has converted widespread political dissatisfaction into political capital (in line with Cas Mudde’s theory), the authors argue that *Podemos* utilized the media to garner attention. They continued to go onto mainstream outlets, despite bias toward PSOE and PP, in order to continue to propagate their message.⁶²

In all, several theories have attempted to explain the rise of *Podemos* within the political system. These theories do an excellent job at analyzing *Podemos*’s initial rise and the catalysts that rocketed it there; however, other literary sources begin to look at the role the Francisco Franco’s regime and its lasting legacy play. The Franco regime was particularly repressive against left-wing movements, especially the Spanish Communist Party. The oppression of communist forced them to operate grassroots movements underground, but their efforts were negligible. José Foraldo highlights that the Spanish communists were forced into exile, and their party lost traction, but the 1970s and during the early years of the Transition, it was a ghost of its former self.⁶³ In turn, for several years, leftist garnered minimal electoral support, with the *Izquierda Unida* remaining only a minor voice in Spanish politics. Another author, Emanuele

⁶⁰ Ibid 363-364

⁶¹ Sampedro et al. 2021, 4911

⁶² Ibid 4913

⁶³ Foraldo 2017, 667

Treglia, points out that the Spanish Communist Party was ardently anti-West and Eurosceptic.⁶⁴ While *Podemos* holds similar anti-imperialistic views as the Spanish Communists, ultimately, *Podemos* took a more broadly appealing approach that chose not to call for the withdrawal of Spain from the European Union, thus, allowing it to gain more electoral appeal beyond the political fringes.

Christoph Schwarz goes as far as to argue that collective intergenerational memory of Franco's regime has stimulated resistance to the current Spanish political system, primarily through the *Indignados* (15M). In particular, he points to the culture of civil disobedience that exists in Catalonia protesting some of the actions of the Spanish government, especially under Mariano Rajoy's premiership,⁶⁵ which was often compared to Franco in terms of government forces being deployed against protestors. Throughout the *Indignados* movement, Schwarz has observed "an intergenerational transmission of hope through memory work and activism."⁶⁶ Many young activists in the new "*Iaioflautas*" movement have attributed the momentum of their movement to the successes of 15M and *Podemos*. Kostis Kornetis offers a similar analysis of the 15M Movement and its relation to the Spanish Transition, emphasizing how the movement has attempted to reshape the legacy of authoritarianism, and in turn, work to preserve the collective memory and reject Franco's legacy.⁶⁷

Furthermore, Tamar Groves contends that most Spanish citizens were not closely involved in the movement against the Franco regime, hence, the legacy and institutions of the dictatorship were often allowed to remain in Spain. Groves also highlights the gradual

⁶⁴ Treglia 2019, 145

⁶⁵ Schwarz 2022, 113

⁶⁶ Ibid 114

⁶⁷ Kornetis 2014, 94-95

democratization process that slowly permeated throughout Spanish politics, beginning in the late 1970s, thus setting the Transition in motion.⁶⁸ Alternatively, Matthew Light, in a 1993 article, investigates the role of Spain's autonomous region system, and how it has influenced the Transition. Perhaps one of the most iconic actions of the Franco regime beyond the Civil War, was the systematic oppression of Catalanian, Basque, and other linguistic minorities. To mitigate that, the newly created Kingdom of Spain established the present-day autonomous region system that grants the regions of Spain a considerable degree of autonomy. In all, Light sums up his argument well when he writes, "Spain now seems to have navigated a safe passage the twin shoals of authoritarian centralism and regional fragmentation."⁶⁹

Some studies of the anti-Franco movement offer insights into the modern left-wing movement that carried *Podemos* to victory. In his paper of the Spanish Anarchist Movement under the Franco regime, Eduardo Romanos contends that underground anarchist movements in Spain engaged in "strategic dramaturgy" before both domestic and international audiences, coupled with "hope and indignation" as fuel for the movement.⁷⁰ Additionally, in two separate articles, Ferran Gallego and Javier Rodrigo each emphasize the definitive legacy of fascism in Spain. Gallego argues that the Spanish Transition was a unique case in the movement away from fascist dictatorships. In his study of "fascistization" He writes, "Fascistization makes it possible to define the Spanish experience as a cumulative process involving the conquest of social layers, with ideological and political fusion of the extreme right-wing and initial fascists."⁷¹ Similarly, Rodrigo argues that Franco's fascist regime relied on systemic violence and terror perpetrated by

⁶⁸ Groves 2012, 326

⁶⁹ Light 1993, 69

⁷⁰ Romanos 2014, 561

⁷¹ Gallego 2012, 173

the regime in order to sustain itself. The regime utilized purges to sustain itself into the 1970s, when the system fell apart not long after the death of Franco.⁷² Nevertheless, Franco set up the modern Kingdom in an attempt to preserve his legacy. While dictatorship ended, we continue to see the remnants of Franco's efforts throughout the political system.

Sabastiaan Faber's *Exhuming Franco: Spain's Second Transition* offers a unique insight into how ingrained Franco's legacy is into the Spanish political system. Through a series of interviews with media figures and left-wing activists he finds several instances of Francoist laws and sentiments remaining in force in Spain, such as the enforcement of fines for unauthorized protesting or criticizing the police and King⁷³ and prominence of Francoist ideas and behaviors (fondness to the regime, anti-Basque and Catalan sentiments, etc.).⁷⁴ He also emphasizes the role that *Podemos* and non-mainstream media sources have played in remaining critical of the Spanish Transition from dictatorship, which they argue, does too much to preserve the authoritarian legacy.⁷⁵ In all, the book offers an interesting academic look into the case of the Spanish Transition, and how left-wing forces have continued to criticize the perceived lasting influence of the regime on modern Spain.

The literature on Portugal's Left Bloc offers a similar look into left-wing populism as that on *Podemos*. Elisabetta De Giorgi and João Cancela investigate the transformation of the Left Bloc as a party of the political fringe to its decision to support the Socialist Party government of Antonio Costa in an agreement that became known as the *Geringonça* (Contraption). They point out that one of the biggest reasons that the Left Bloc and the Unitary Democratic Coalition

⁷² Rodrigo 2012, 192

⁷³ Faber 2021, 33

⁷⁴ Ibid 44-45

⁷⁵ Ibid 183-184

(CDU), a left-wing alliance between Communists and Greens, were able to gain enough momentum to have an impact of government policy came about after the intense public response to the implementation of Troika-imposed austerity measures by the center-right Social Democratic Party government.⁷⁶ The Left Bloc, Portugal's new left party, utilized similar tactics as *Podemos* in Spain to apply pressure to the Socialist government that lasted until the 2022 snap parliamentary election. Moreover, unlike the Communist old left, the Left Bloc was able to hold onto its support longer, which helped to mitigate losses in 2022. Additionally, they found that the Left Bloc was willing to make pledges and deals with the Costa's Socialist, more than the CDU.⁷⁷

Jorge M. Fernandes, Pedro C. Magalhães, and José Santana-Pereira go a step further and argue that the *Geringonça* went as far as to pull Portugal from being the “sick man” of the EU to the “poster boy.”⁷⁸ Despite wide ideological differences, the Socialists, Left Bloc, and CDU managed to produce government policy that was both generally popular and in compliance with the Troika's austerity guidelines. Additionally, they found that the governing coalition between the New Left and Old Left has made strides toward improving employment levels and political trust.⁷⁹ In all, though different in several ways, these authors reveal very similar strategies that *Podemos* utilized within its coalition with PSOE in Spain. Similarly, Jalali, Moniz, and Silva look at the impact of the left-wing alliance after the 2019 election. They point out that within the alliance, the Left Bloc was the ideological center, with the Socialists to the right and the CDU to the left.⁸⁰ On top of this, they argue that while the *Geringonça* member-parties did not outright

⁷⁶ De Giorgi, Cancela 2021, 282-283

⁷⁷ Ibid 291

⁷⁸ Fernandes et al. 2018, 503

⁷⁹ Ibid 516

⁸⁰ Jalali et al. 2020, 233

acknowledge their intention to form an alliance, it was implied unofficially throughout the campaign, as a tool to counteract a center-right coalition between the Social Democratic Party and the Christian democrat CDS-People's Party.⁸¹

Marco Lisi and Enrico Borghetto investigate the populist tactics instituted by the Left Bloc. They find that the Left Bloc promotes discourse surrounding shifting blame for the economic crisis and subsequent austerity policies implemented. Similar to *Podemos*, the Left Bloc, alongside the CDU and the right-wing *Chega*, have been considered anti-government forces, that adhere to populist discourse similar to *Podemos*.⁸² Additionally, they point out that the Left Bloc and others have become more populist since the onslaught of the economic crisis. Meanwhile, De Giorgi and Santana-Pereira highlight how unprecedented in Europe the case of mainstream-populist cooperation was when the *Geringonça* was formed.⁸³ In 2015, neither *Podemos* had not joined PSOE in Spain, nor had the 5-Star Movement and the League joined forces in Italy yet.

Other authors have drawn connections between the Left Bloc and civil society to explain the party's eventual rise to the *Geringonça*. Before the Left Bloc endorsed the Socialist government, Marco Lisi found that established political parties in Portugal, chiefly the Social Democrats and Socialists, had lost their deep-rooted intermediary role and "capacity to [mobilize] citizens."⁸⁴ Additionally, he argues that both the Left Bloc and the Communists utilized the declining influence of the established parties and the economic crisis to campaign against the Troika and the political mainstream that accepted austerity. According to Lisi, the

⁸¹ Ibid 241-242

⁸² Lisi, Borghetto 2018, 408

⁸³ De Giorgi, Santana-Pereira 2020 142

⁸⁴ Lisi 2013, 22

Left Bloc was one of the first parties to utilize “single-issue” campaign strategies, where various arms of the party focused on issues popular with the people.⁸⁵

Ricardo Morais and João Carlos Sousa highlight the importance of the media in boosting small parties in Portugal. In the 2011 election, they found that newspapers were particularly important in furthering the campaigns of parties like the Left Bloc.⁸⁶ Meanwhile, Britta Baumgarten observes the role of generational movements, similar to Cristoph Schwarz, by drawing connection between the Carnation Revolution, that overthrew the Portuguese dictatorship and the anti-austerity movement. Baumgarten argues that collective memory surrounding the Carnation Revolution inspired younger generations to protest the Troika in Portugal. “The construction of such group memory is an interactive process embedded in a specific framework of national memory struggles.”⁸⁷ Moreover, in recent years, the Left Bloc has been able to outcompete the Communists and the Greens in being the largest left-wing party in Portugal. The Communist Party of Portugal had long remained the bastion of left-wing politics, that centered on Euroscepticism, according to Carlos Cunha. The Left Bloc, took a softer Eurosceptic approach to European integration, and chose to focus more on “social integration and democratization.”⁸⁸

Since the Carnation Revolution, which was the first step to establishing democracy in Portugal following the end of the Salazar regime, there has been growing dissatisfaction with the Portuguese political system. Edalina Rodrigues Sanches and Ekaterina Gorbunova found that public faith in the Portuguese democratic system is at a historic low.⁸⁹ Economic stressors and

⁸⁵ Ibid 33

⁸⁶ Morais, Sousa 2014, 367

⁸⁷ Baumgarten 2017, 59

⁸⁸ Cunha 2022, 71

⁸⁹ Sanches, Gorbunova 2016, 222

imposed rulings from the Troika have driven the dissatisfaction with Portuguese democracy, and in turn, have driven people away from traditional liberal institutions and political parties.

António Costa Pinto turns to the case of the legacy of António de Oliveira Salazar and his Estado Novo that lasted from 1933 to the 1974 Carnation Revolution. The Salazar regime was an interesting case, that took a different approach than Franco's Spain. While Salazar maintained much control over the state, maintaining a delicate balance during World War II and holding onto Portugal's African and Asian territories until the regime's fall. Unlike Spain's transition to democracy, Costa Pinto finds that Portugal's while sudden in revolution, worked to reintegrate former officials and prop up democracy against authoritarianism.⁹⁰ Costa Pinto writes, in his book, *An Authoritarian Third Way in an Era of Fascism*, Salazar combined corporatism and a strong adherence to Catholic principles to help prop up his regime.⁹¹

Tom Gallagher expands further on the nature of Salazar's regime through his biography on the Portuguese strongman. Gallagher notes that today's new left, has attempted to counteract the legacy of Salazar's regime.⁹² Nevertheless, Salazar's regime had a lasting impact that can still be observed in modern Portugal. In turn, the Left Bloc, seeks to overturn the legacy, and ensure a more democratic system, from their perspective. Gallagher also emphasizes Salazar's ability to hold his regime together, which ultimately fell apart a few months after his death. Heriberto Cairo also emphasizes the role that propaganda played for the Salazar regime in maintaining both power at home and in its rebellious colonies. Salazar attempted to hold on to Mozambique, Angola, Macau, East Timor, and the other colonies by maintaining that these overseas positions were an integral part of Portugal proper, and that Portugal "was not a small

⁹⁰ Costa Pinto 2008, 284

⁹¹ Costa Pinto 2022, 15

⁹² Gallagher 2020, 275

country.” Salazar utilized maps to demonstrate the sheer size of Angola and Mozambique compared to mainland Portugal to push to citizens that Portugal was powerful.⁹³

Alongside propaganda, Salazar was known for instituting political purges and torture against left-wing opponents, which has culminated in modern new left efforts to wash away remaining vestiges of the regime.⁹⁴ Many times, journalists and newspapers, such as *Portugal Democrático*, were forced into political exile, where many continued to pen articles critical of the regime.⁹⁵ Alberto Pena Rodríguez argues that Salazar attempted to keep a strong hold on universities, and control both information and culture within the education system.⁹⁶

Additionally, the Salazar regimes active campaign against political dissidents, especially those on the left, is similar to Francisco Franco’s campaign in Spain. In turn, this has spurred movements in both countries to remove the legacy of the Iberian regimes.

During the transition to democracy following Salazar’s death, several factions, led by various generals, sought to restore the dictatorship, with some further right than Salazar himself. The democratic movement was unified both with elite and grassroots supporters to counteract the threat of military coups in response to the Carnation Revolution.⁹⁷ Following the fall of the dictatorship, several movements arose that sought retribution against the former regimes and reconciliation for the victims. Omar Encarnación investigates the movement for justice following the fall of Salazar and Franco’s regimes. He writes, “Spain's transition to democracy was as orderly as Portugal's transition was unruly. Dictating order in Spain was, interestingly enough,

⁹³ Cairo 2006, 382-385

⁹⁴ Cardina 2013, 252

⁹⁵ Travancas 2017, 127

⁹⁶ Rodríguez 2014, 2

⁹⁷ Costa Pinto 2008, 312

the desire of the Spaniards to avoid the Portuguese example.”⁹⁸ Portugal’s transition was more violent and unpredictable, but it spawned a political system that abandoned more of its authoritarian past, while the Spanish transition held onto many factors that were designed by Franco, including the establishment of Juan Carlos as King of Spain. Osuna observes the differences between Portuguese and Spanish civil societies’ relationship with each countries’ respective militaries during the transition period. Different perceptions of the military, Osuna argues, stem from the different roles the military played in society, in Portugal, following the Carnation Revolution coup d’état, was more active, while the Spanish military remained an observer. In turn, we find differing roles of the military, and differences in how they are perceived in relation to the former dictatorships.

Within this study, it is also important to understand the concept of transitology, a phenomenon that has historically occurred in waves, and it most notably documented in Latin American and post-communist Eastern European studies of democracy. Carothers writes that throughout the 1970s substantial democratization occurred across the globe, including in Spain and Portugal. He writes, “a country’s chances for successfully democratizing depend primarily on the political intentions and actions of its political elites without significant influence from underlying economic, social, and institutional conditions and legacies.”⁹⁹ In turn, places, such as Spain, where the authoritarian elite (Franco) were in control of the transition, his legacy was allowed to persist into democratic Spain. Similarly, Wiarda emphasizes the role of transitions to democracy in determining the current political situation in Eastern European states, citing the massive impacts that totalitarian government had and the legacy effects still felt today.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Encarnación 2012, 182

⁹⁹ Carothers 2002, 17

¹⁰⁰ Wiarda 2002, 155-156

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Within this project, I will largely conduct a cross-case study of both the Left Bloc and *Podemos*, that will seek to better understand the rise of these parties in Iberia and their unique brand of New Left politics. The research will be primarily qualitative, and will look at patterns of voter behavior and New Left Iberian political parties. Voting patterns and other data released by the Spanish Central Election Council and the Portuguese National Commission of Elections. Additionally, I will be looking at party rhetoric through literature produced by Pablo Iglesias (*Podemos* leader) and Catarina Martins (Left Bloc National Coordinator) among others. Through this, I seek to demonstrate how the Eurozone crisis and the imposition of austerity measure by the Troika were the catalyst for these parties, that had been formed out of a systemic dissatisfaction that predates the formation of these parties and campaigns against the vestiges of authoritarian government.

Through this method, I hope to investigate what push and pull factors have driven voters toward the New Left in Iberia. Alongside the Eurozone crisis and the authoritarian legacies, I also seek to investigate factors such as regionalist movements, dissatisfaction with the established two-party systems, and societal polarization that has shifted to the far-left and far-right, with the rise of *Podemos* and *Vox*. Additionally, I will demonstrate how these factors work in tandem with the application of standard populist political studies, as theorized by political scientists such as Cas Mudde, Mattia Zulianelli, among others. Additionally, the methodology will reveal how the Iberian New Left is a unique case, that transcends typical analyses of populism, and has notable differences from other New Left parties, such as *La France Insoumise*, *Die Linke*, or the Scandinavian Leftist parties.

I will also look at the results of both national/parliamentary and European Parliament elections from the beginning of the crisis in early 2008 to the most recent elections, which are November 2019 in Spain and January 2022 in Portugal. Through these results, I hope to show how the surge in support for the Iberian New Left has grown and transformed over the years. I also will observe the electoral successes of the New Left in comparison to that of the Old Left, both mainstream center-left and communist/left-wing parties, including PSOE, Socialist Party of Portugal, the *Izquierda Unida*, and the Portuguese Communist Party. By comparing the electoral results of these parties, we can gauge a more accurate picture of how meaningful the efforts of Iberian New Left parties have been against their closest ideological neighbors. This also allow us to gauge the success of their left-wing populist message in garnering support amongst voters who are dissatisfied with the current political system.

In all, this methodology will demonstrate how these factors culminate in the rise of the Iberian New Left, which has a unique anti-authoritarian approach to left-wing populism, based on the history of Spain and Portugal. Within these cases, the in-depth cross case study will allow for an in-depth analysis of each case and a comparison of the parties' strategies, histories, and ability to influence voter behavior patterns. In all, this methodology also contributes to the wider literature on populist political parties that continue to challenge the status quo throughout the European Union. This study will exemplify how these parties seek to challenge the incumbent political elite and seek to reform the political systems. While these parties have consistently applied the standard populist technique, utilizing what Cas Mudde described as "the people versus the elite" rhetoric, they also have placed themselves in a regionally unique area, that is distinct to Iberia.

The cases of *Podemos* and the Left Bloc are distinguishable cases for comparison, in contrast to other European New Left parties, due to Spain and Portugal's unique historical circumstances for Western Europe. In both countries, democratic systems fell to the wave of authoritarianism and fascism that swept Europe during the inter-war period. Unlike Germany and Italy, the Spanish and Portuguese regimes survived World War II relatively unscathed, and persisted, with nominal Western support, through to the 1970s. As a result, the nearly 40 years of authoritarianism on the Iberian Peninsula facilitated an interesting political dynamic from the 1980s to today as the countries transitioned to democracies. In turn, vestiges of authoritarianism remained within the Spanish and Portuguese political systems that sparked virulent anti-authoritarian movements in Iberia, especially following the financial crisis. In turn, this creates two interesting cases for study, to demonstrate how two political parties within similar historical and political circumstances differed in their tactics and overall electoral success.

The Portuguese and Spanish cases are comparable due to the apparent divergent paths to success that the two New Left parties took to achieve electoral success. The differences, I argue, stems from the nature of both countries transitions to democracy in the 1970s and 1980s, and the subsequent experiences felt by the populations during the financial crisis. In Portugal, the shift to democracy was sudden, after the military coup d'état during the 1974 Carnation Revolution, named for the flower that many civilians placed in the barrels of soldiers' guns. Portugal's Transition was also heavily influenced by the Portuguese Colonial Wars in Africa and Asia. The Salazar and the successor Marcelo Caetano (1968-1974) regimes waged war throughout the 1960s and early 1970s to maintain Portuguese hegemony over Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Goa, East Timor, and elsewhere. Propagandists went as far as to label the colonies as

integral provinces of Portugal in order to maintain authority.¹⁰¹ In all, this left the Portuguese population tired of war, and ready for democratization (which was unstable in its first few years).

Alternatively, Spain's Transition to democracy was much less violent, and was originally designed by Francisco Franco himself before his death in 1975. As a result, several left-wing figures and regionalist political parties have remained critical of the incumbent Spanish political system. Unlike Portugal, Spain had few colonies abroad, and so, the decolonization process was relatively smooth, and conducted through agreements, such as the 1968 granting of independence of Spanish Guinea or the 1975 Madrid Accords that handed the Spanish Sahara provinces over to Morocco and Mauritania. Upon Franco's death, the Kingdom of Spain was re-established, and Juan Carlos I of the Spanish Branch of the Bourbons, grandson of former King Alfonso XIII, was bestowed the newly revived title of King of Spain. As the *Indignados*, and subsequently *Podemos*, have argued, due to the nature of the Transition, several Francoist institutions were left intact following the democratization of the country. Sebastiaan Faber goes as far as to allege that several existing family fortunes that were amassed as a result of Francoist atrocities remain within several prominent Spanish families and many war crimes from the Franco regime remain unpunished.¹⁰² Nevertheless, from *Podemos*'s perspective, several steps have been taken to quash remaining Francoist vestiges in Spanish society, such as the removal of Franco's body from the iconic Valley of the Fallen cemetery.

This brings me to hypothesize that the Left Bloc and *Podemos* rely on the dissatisfaction of traditional center-left voters and floating voters, who feel abandoned by both the Spanish and Portuguese governments alongside the Troika. Both are clear cases of direct result of when a

¹⁰¹ Cairo 2006

¹⁰² Faber 2021

large portion of the population feel an intense disdain for both the political and economic situation they are in, and in turn, rebel against the system by voting for outsider and protest parties (whether from the left or the right) in order to bring change. Additionally, this drastic change in voter behavior can cause mainstream parties to implode in terms of electoral support as occurred for both Spain's People's Party and Portugal's Social Democratic Party. However, the slightly divergent historical narratives in Spain and Portugal have produced New Left parties that differ in several areas, despite similar ideologies.

CHAPTER IV

SPAIN AND PODEMOS

The Franco regime targeted most aspects of Spanish culture and regularly instituted restrictions and censorship initiatives against artists, musicians, authors, academics, and other cultural figures who spoke out against the regime.¹⁰³ By controlling narratives and suppressing opposition voices, the Franco regime operated an intricate machine that was critical to its maintenance of power. The government-sponsored suppression led to notable left-wing forces, such as the Communist Party of Spain, into exile, gutting these groups of much of their political influence, having once played a prominent role in the Spanish Republic up to the Civil War in 1936. Many Spanish communists, who were also disavowed by the Soviet Union due to reservations with Nikita Khrushchev, took on the label of “travelers” throughout Europe.¹⁰⁴ “Murders for reasons of occupation and political cleansing, imprisonment, ideological/political/identitary re-education” tactics were all used throughout Franco’s reign.¹⁰⁵ Through to the *Transición*, Spanish communists and leftists remained underground and in exile, working on their projects from afar. When Spain began its democratic reforms, under the reign of King Juan Carlos I, left-wing figures began to return to Spain, and formed unified blocs. One such example is the previously mentioned *Izquierda Unida* (IU), which brought together democratic socialists, communists, and some regionalist parties into an electoral alliance in 1986. The IU saw modest political and electoral success through the 1990s and 2000s, remaining a opposition voice to the center-left PSOE, who IU attempted to siphon votes from, and a

¹⁰³ Acevado et al. 2012

¹⁰⁴ Foraldo 2017, 661

¹⁰⁵ Rodrigo 2012, 187-188

secondary force within the *Cortes Generales* (Spanish parliament). Today, IU has largely been absorbed by the *Podemos*-led electoral bloc, known as *Unidas Podemos*.

The Spanish regime was also boosted by a laissez-faire approach by the Western Powers, similar to, though less enthusiastic, its support for Salazar's Portugal. Generally, the United States and the Western European powers took a hands-off approach to Francisco Franco's Spain. The United States saw the Franco regime, despite its blatant human rights violations and anti-liberal democratic values as a necessary regime in Western Europe, to stop Soviet influence from gaining traction in Spain, and Iberia as a whole, as it had in the Spanish Republic.¹⁰⁶ While not a direct NATO ally until 1982, well after the fall of Franco's regime, Francoist Spain was a useful pawn in the greater global balance. Even as Spain became increasingly isolated on the world stage due to its fascist stance and reluctance to renege to the UN's pressure to decolonize Africa, Spain remained a strategic "ally of convenience" for the United States. In turn, Franco was permitted to continue his authoritarian practice, with almost no threat of a Western intervention against his actively anti-democratic regime, right on the doorstep on both Portugal (Salazar was close with Franco) and France, two NATO member-states. Additionally, the West remained relatively tolerant of Franco's regime due to the importance of the Strait of Gibraltar, which remained an important geostrategic trade chokepoint of international shipping for both the West and the Soviet Union (especially because the Soviet's warm-water port in Sevastopol could be cut off).

In all, the permissive environment, both domestically and internationally, allowed Francoism to permeate throughout all rungs of Spanish society. In turn, Franco maintained a tight grip on Spain and instituted strict authoritarian rule that sought to establish a single Spanish

¹⁰⁶ Martín García 2022, 721

identity defined by nationalism and Catholicism. This culminated in systemic oppression of minority groups, which spills over into left-wing and regionalist sentiments that remain extremely salient in modern Spanish politics.¹⁰⁷ This created a fuel for New Left movements in Spain that they were able to take full advantage of in modern Spanish politics. Furthermore, parties like *Podemos* then create a political environment, within the party, that is overtly hostile to the history of Franco's oppression, and the political system that was designed for Spain during the *Transición*.

In all, Francoism was an authoritarian ideology that has often been labeled as fascist by political scientists. It is defined by a solely Spanish and Catholic identity, and the government plays a strong role in the day-to-day lives of the citizens. In line with Francoism, ethnic minority separatists, especially Catalan and Basque, were often exiled or jailed. As part of *Franquismo*, Catholicism became the only state-sponsored religion, and generally, other denominations of Christianity were discouraged.¹⁰⁸ Francoism literally redefined what it meant to be Spanish and vehemently lambasted the brief stint at Republicanism that Spain experienced, associating it with communism and anti-Catholicism. In the years following Franco's death, several sources have indicated that the governing *Alianza Popular* attempted to maintain Francoism, despite Spain's trajectory toward democratization under the leadership of King Juan Carlos I.¹⁰⁹ In turn, the lasting effects of Francoism and its deeply rooted control of Spanish politics and society played a definitive role in the *Transición*, even after Franco's death.

Within Schmitter, O'Donnell, and Whitehead's seminal 1986 collection of essays on democratic transitions in southern Europe and Latin America, Maravall and Santamaría

¹⁰⁷ Dowling 2018, 371

¹⁰⁸ Solsten, Meditz 1988

¹⁰⁹ Osorio 1980

emphasize the role the outgoing Franco regime played in the democratic transition process. In the early stages of the transition to democracy, many former Franco loyalist with the *Unión del Centro Democrático* (UCD), which sought a softer transition to democracy, and held a fondness for the authoritarian regime amongst many party loyalists and factions.¹¹⁰ Ultimately the UCD would collapse, but many of its staunchest supporters and politicians would remain prominent in Spanish politics eventually going on to form the *Partido Popular* (PP). Transition Spain was also broadly defined by party corruption and a systemic limitation of prominent party composition that ultimately resulted in polarization between the right and the left that has only recently been broken apart.¹¹¹ In many ways, these lasting vestiges highlighted in pivotal pieces such as Schmitter, O'Donnell, and Whitehead's had created a conducive environment for many politicians and political norms to holdover through the transition and maintain prominence in a democratic Spain.

One of the biggest arguments that Francoism persists in Spain centers on the continuation of several Spanish governmental entities through the *Transición* and into the modern Spanish state. Moreover, massive public resistance within the ranks of the center-right PP and the populist-right *Vox* to the PSOE government's exhumation and movement of Franco's body from the Valley of the Fallen reveals lingering systemic sympathies for Francoism, as its legacy persists. Many right-wing politicians and supporters continue to venerate Franco and his legacy in Spain, citing his time in power as a time when Catholicism flourished.¹¹² Additionally, up until recently, the Spanish government maintained many titles and honors that were bestowed by the Franco government, such as those given to Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, founder of the

¹¹⁰ Maravall, Santamaría 1986, 95

¹¹¹ Ibid 103

¹¹² Freedland 2011

Falangist/nationalist movement, and generals who ordered massacres in Seville and Badajoz.¹¹³

These legacies provide easy campaign fuel for *Podemos* to challenge the Spanish political system and highlight areas where the legacy of Francoism persists in both politics and society.

Additionally, systemic remnants of Francoism have remained in Spain due to the ruling parties' (PP and PSOE) complacency with many policies and other vestiges of the regime. Some journalists have gone as far as to accuse the *Partido Popular* of avoiding direct condemnations of the Franco regime, even going as far as not to acknowledge some of the human rights violations and other violent instances perpetrated by Franco.¹¹⁴ Additionally some go as far as to accuse PP of being a direct continuation of Francoist policies, though with a democratic spin on things. Originally, PP was founded as the *Alianza Popular* by Manuel Fraga who had been Francisco Franco's Minister of Information and Tourism until 1969. Moreover, several individuals within party leadership as late as 2018 continued to refuse to support an official parliamentary condemnation of the Franco dictatorship. According to Faber, the closest PP ever came to repudiating Francoism and its legacy was in 2002, when the party supported measures to condemn the 1936 coup and subsequent civil war, led by Franco, against the then Republic of Spain, that left the country economically devastated.¹¹⁵ Even PSOE has not played a significant role in combatting some aspects of the Francoist regime still present in Spain, as *Podemos* and other leftists in Catalonia have continually accused them of from time-to-time.

As a result of mainstream party complacency with the authoritarian legacy, several left-wing forces, which culminated in the 15-M Movement and later *Podemos*, have contended that Francoism has been allowed to continue in Spain, and old legacies and regimes remain intact

¹¹³ Reuters 2022

¹¹⁴ Faber 2021, 133

¹¹⁵ Ibid 135

despite the *Transición*. Groups across Spain felt like the political parties and the regime were failing to address many of the problems at the core of Spanish politics and society. This sentiment was especially felt during the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent Eurozone crisis when unemployment levels sky-rocketed and the Spanish government, at the behest of the Troika, began implementing harsh austerity measures. To a lot of Spaniards, this gutted vital government support and was often perceived as an almost authoritarian move by a democratically elected government, which was now run by the “elites,” who answer to their financial backers in Europe. Moreover, this drives the fuel for populist movements and convinces many voters that the governing parties in Spain do not have the best interest of the voters at heart, and in turn, allowed *Podemos* and other parties to mobilize new voters.

The founders of *Podemos* campaigned on several core issues in order to sway voters against the Spanish mainstream. Iglesias writes, “The emergency policies to ‘save the euro’ imposed—and soon normalized—by the German-led bloc have had disastrous effects.”¹¹⁶ Additionally, Iglesias emphasizes that the problems that arose during the financial crisis were a part of a bigger problem and a legacy of corruption and fascism (often labeled as Falangist) within Spanish politics. Corrupt urban projects and real estate bubbles that have been continuously manufactured since the “Post-Franco Transition” are to blame. Iglesias sees a system that has in many ways been a continuation of the Franco regime that has culminated in dire economic circumstance in Spain.¹¹⁷ These sentiments set the foundation for *Podemos* and Iglesias’s ideology that define the party, even during today’s coalition government with Pedro Sánchez’s PSOE and regionalist parties from across Spain.

¹¹⁶ Iglesias 2015, 9

¹¹⁷ Ibid 10

In an interview, Iglesias furthered his viewpoint when he argued that “the 78 Regime” provided only “temporary solutions, in terms of discourse and practice, to many of the problems inherited from the Franco dictatorship.”¹¹⁸ This is the primary complaint of the Spanish New Left pertaining to the current political system. Sebastiaan Faber contends that Franco’s legacy is so far entrenched into the Spanish political system, that based on the current state of affairs, it is nearly impossible to reconcile for the expansive presence of it within day-to-day Spanish politics.¹¹⁹ Additionally, move, such as Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez’s decision to exhume Franco’s body from the tomb in the Valley of the Fallen is largely viewed by the New Left as only a small step (yet quite a symbolic one) in reconciling Spanish political society for the perceived harm and oppression that the fascist regime imposed among both ethnic and political minority groups within Spain.

Podemos’s current Policy platform document lists the many priorities of the party as it continues to participate in government and working toward the next general election which is scheduled for 2023. On social and political issues, *Podemos* emphasizes the role that the current political system plays in holding back marginalized and vulnerable groups within Spanish society. An important plank of *Podemos*’s program focuses on reconstructing the Spanish constitution so that it becomes a feminist document that codifies fundamental equal rights among all gender identities, beyond traditional male-female dichotomies.¹²⁰ Additionally, *Podemos* proposes expanding the rights of the LGBTQ+ community and increasing anti-discrimination policies.

¹¹⁸ Iglesias 2015, 30

¹¹⁹ Faber 2021

¹²⁰ *Programa de Podemos* 2022, 27

Podemos's economic platform approaches things from a staunchly left-wing perspective, combined with virulent anti-austerity and anti-Troika policies, in order to avoid a repeat of the fallout of the Eurozone crisis. *Podemos* states in its Program that it will transition the Spanish economy into a carbon neutral economy by 2025, and invest in industries and create jobs that pertain to green energy and abandoning fossil fuels. Other policy goals that *Podemos* argues for includes the end of the privatization of water systems and the provision of free/affordable public water for all Spanish citizens as a human right, alongside government mandates that encourage the purchase of electric cars and incentives for automobile manufacturers to produce electric vehicles over those running on petroleum and diesel.¹²¹ Moreover, *Podemos* seeks to expand the Spanish social welfare and other support programs to those worst effected by continued economic struggles in Spain, such as continued youth unemployment levels that are higher than the EU average. *Podemos* also produced a plan to address the increasingly digitized economy and how to modernize jobs and government services so that Spain is well equipped to handle unique challenges of the computerized world.¹²²

In the collection of essays titled *CT o la Cultura de la Transición*, leaders of the *Indignados*, many of whom would go on to take formative roles in *Podemos*, emphasize their qualms with the Spanish political system and society as a whole. The authors remain critical of the “*Cultura de la Transición*” which they view, did not go far enough in purging the Spanish culture and political system of its authoritarian past. They write that the culture created from the *Transición* was a culture that was both “de-problematizing” and depoliticizing, often remaining silent on salient issues regarding the Franco regime.¹²³ In turn, dissatisfaction with these attitudes

¹²¹ Ibid 12

¹²² Ibid 37

¹²³ Acevado et al. 2012, 38

within Spain drove Spanish voters, who were already dissatisfied with the economic affairs of Spain, toward political movements and parties that emphasized these issues. As people gathered toward the New Left, as they presented an alternative to the austerity-imposing Troika, the *Indignados*, and later *Podemos*, began to also rail against the continuation of Franco's fascist government, which they claimed was still powerful, despite the *Transición*.

For millions of Spaniards from the Civil War to the Transition to Democracy, life was incredibly difficult, as the regime systemically silenced dissidents and enforced a deeply ingrained control on most levels of society. Concurrently, the Franco regime also utilized tools such as the Catholic Church, a very important segment of Spanish culture and society, to implement and prop up its nationalistic policies. Religion became a useful method in propagating Spanish nationalism and furthering government priorities, in what would become a form of Spanish Catholic Nationalism. Additionally, the Franco regime utilized the "*Sociedad General de Autores*" and other organizations to maintain control over narratives and reshape Spanish culture to remain in lock-step with the regime's demands.¹²⁴ Moreover, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and other government institutions played a direct role in maintaining order and preserving a conservative catholic Spain.

Several of *Podemos* and the *Indignados* Movement's ideas are laid out through a collection of interviews conducted by Andrés Gil and J.V. Barcia called *Voces del cambio: El fin de la España de la Transición*. In one interview Pablo Iglesias argued, in reference to the onset of the 2015 European Elections, that his vision was to create a new future opportunity for Spain and to make a change toward the truth, through an accumulation of forces, ultimately, as an

¹²⁴ Acevado et al. 2012, 104

effort to form a new Spain, that removed the vestiges of its past.¹²⁵ Iglesias also proclaimed that the Spanish citizens wanted change, and had been disappointed before by other offers of drastic systemic change. In particular, he cites the promises made by the centrist party, *Ciudadanos*, which vowed to break the party system and offer a real alternative. Instead, *Ciudadanos* failed to break through the political threshold, and became another part of the Spanish political machine, stuck between the two poles of PSOE and PP.¹²⁶ Iglesias's words exemplify what is at the core of *Podemos*'s political messaging and strategic campaign. As is standard for most populist parties, *Podemos* seeks to create political waves and pressure mainstream political forces, but in Spain, there seems to be an extra element within the formula. *Podemos*, campaigns on further systemic changes that, rather than focus on returning to the past or reestablishing a country's independence from the EU, focuses on the changing the system anew.

Other leaders and figures of the *Indignados* express similar motivations to Pablo Iglesias when lambasting the Spanish political system. Former *Podemos* co-founder Íñigo Errejón (turned leader of the rival *Más País* party), rails against the Franco regime, proclaiming that it destroyed the collective good and fragmented culture in Spain by suppressing minority groups in Spain, and argued that *Podemos* seeks to fix these issues and repair Spain.¹²⁷ Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona and member of the city's affiliate party of *Podemos*, *Barcelona en Comú*, the current Spanish system is flawed, and is derived from violence and authoritarianism left over from Francisco Franco's regime. Furthermore, she and her party indicate that the *Transición* left several societal issues left unaddressed, as Francoist institutions remained largely intact and that incumbent political parties have been too insufficient in addressing the problems facing Spanish

¹²⁵ Gil, Barcia 2015, 56-57

¹²⁶ Ibid 53

¹²⁷ Ibid 103

society and politics.¹²⁸ In all, these leaders saw the Spanish political system as flawed, and the financial crisis was a product of long-standing problems stemming from the *Transición*, that were left unaddressed by both center-left and center-right governments.

Many journalists and analysts have highlighted the continued institutions of the Franco regime that survived (sometimes de facto) the *Transición*. In an interview, Sebastián Martín indicated that Franco's legacy also persists through academia and historic accounts, particularly by associating the Republic years before the Civil War as being defined by chaos and violence and viewing Franco as the restorer of order in Spain. This is in lieu of Franco's tactics to restore order, which often relied on totalitarian violence and terror.¹²⁹ In many ways, the Francoist legacy saw it as necessary to adapt to democratic reforms in order to preserve itself during the *Transición*. Other highlight the "jurisdictional culture" that continues to persist in the Spanish judicial and education systems, that stipulate that democracy is instituted through rule of law, rather than being constitutional codified, and as a result, it often overlooks matter concerning human rights within Spain.¹³⁰ Additionally, other figures, such as José Antonio Zarazalejos have Spanish memory laws and proposed legislation have failed in wholly reconciling the crimes and unjust convictions carried out under the Franco regime, and cite that the laws need to be transformed into a "universal law of reparations for all Spaniards."¹³¹ In turn, these legal interpretations and lack of action to address the past has allowed for many holdovers of the Francoist authoritarian legacy to remain in Spain, which the populist left has capitalized on, especially in the wake of the financial crisis, where many of these Spanish institutions failed in

¹²⁸ Ibid 17

¹²⁹ Faber 2021, 106

¹³⁰ Ibid 107-108

¹³¹ Ibid 128

curtailing the economic effects of the crisis. In the party's official program, *Podemos* describes the current Spanish political system as failing to respect the right of the citizenry as it claims to do, as laid out in the Spanish Constitution.¹³² Additionally, in order to revitalize the Spanish economy, *Podemos* proposes an extensive "green horizon and new industrial model." As Politico noted, in 2015, the party planned to root out systemics problems by substantially raising taxes on the wealthiest rungs of society and continuing its efforts to root out the troubles of the incumbent "1978 Regime," and its Francoist roots.¹³³

¹³² *Programa de Podemos*. 2022

¹³³ Dallison 2016

Table 1: Podemos and PSOE General Election Results 2015 – Present (Congress of Deputies)

<i>Podemos/Allies</i>			<i>PSOE</i>	
Year	% Vote	Seats	% Vote	Seats
2008	3.8 (IU)	2 (IU)	43.9	169
2011	6.92 (IU)	11 (IU)	28.76	110
2015	12.67	42	22.01	90
2016	13.37	45	22.66	85
April 2019	11.39	35	28.68	123
November 2019	9.8	26	28.0	120

Source: <https://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/200/>

Table 2: Podemos and PSOE General Election Results 2015- Present (Senate)

<i>Podemos/Allies</i>			<i>PSOE</i>	
Year	% Vote	Seats	% Vote	Seats
2008	3.8 (IU)	0 (IU)	43.9	89
2011	6.92 (IU)	0 (IU)	28.76	48
2015	12.67	9	22.01	47
2016	13.37	8	22.66	43
April 2019	11.39	0	28.68	121
November 2019	9.8	0	28.0	92

Source: <https://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/200/>

Table 3: *Podemos and PSOE European Parliament Election Results 2014 – Present*

<i>Podemos</i>			PSOE	
Year	% Vote	Seats	% Vote	Seats
2009	2 (IU)	3.7 (IU)	38.8	23
2014	8.0	5	23.0	14
2019	10.1	6	32.9	21

Source: <https://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/244/>

Furthermore, *Podemos* seeks to create substantial changes in the areas of the Catalan independence question, in a “democratic manner,” and to increase welfare spending for vulnerable populations in Spain.¹³⁴ Through party manifestos and political platforms, *Podemos* is attempting to cast a broad, attention-grabbing net that piques the interest of those most harmed by not only the financial crisis, but also those who became disillusioned and oppressed by the Franco regime. *Podemos* leadership regularly returns to the message that Spain in its current form is the product of an anti-democratic system that undermines the rights of most Spaniards. In one interview, Xosé Manuel Beiras goes as far as to describe the time immediately after the transition to democracy, even under center-left PSOE’s rule, as often defined by “*franquismo sin Franco*,” or Francoism without Franco.¹³⁵

Franquismo sin Franco, has become a useful description for the “1978 Regime” that *Podemos* and other left-wing movements have turned into a staunch criticism of the incumbent Spanish political system. The vague nature of the slogan coupled with its seismic accusation that

¹³⁴ *Programa de Podemos*. 2022

¹³⁵ Gil, Barcia 2015, 136

the current Kingdom of Spain is continuing many of the practices of the Franco regime seeks to strike at the core memories of authoritarianism and the powerful protest culture in Spain. These massive appeals to those who remember the anguish imposed by the Franco regime, turn out once again to protest the economic strife facing Spain in the early and mid-2010s, especially upon the invoking of memories of the harsh realities endured under Franco. In several ways, the imposing policies of the Spanish government and the austerity conditions forced onto Spain by the Troika to receive a bailout reminded many Spaniards of the oppression they faced from the 1930s to the 1970s. Moreover, it should be noted that the leadership of 15-M and subsequently *Podemos*, was largely young, and many of whom did not directly experience life under the Franco regime. Here we see the culture of protest being passed onto the younger generation, who attack the vestiges of the Franco regime, despite having no memories of it, and citing it and the failure of the *Transición* as an example of Francoism continuing its hold on Spain. They provide a staunch critique of the Spanish socio-political system from the left of PSOE, and often criticize the remaining vestiges of Franco's dictatorship that they perceive to be rampant in Spain.

Podemos taps directly into these feelings by vowing to combat authoritarianism, and it was proven successful for the party, and now, as a result, it has a considerable sway over government policy. Altogether, *Podemos* can attribute its electoral success to its ability to influence voter behavior and appeal to core memories. In turn, the party is capable of mobilizing a considerable segment of the Spanish electorate. Desperation amongst the Spanish voters leads them to vote for parties outside of the traditional bipolar structure of the Spanish party system. As we have seen in other recent elections, other parties, particularly the far-right *Vox* and centrist *Ciudadanos*, have made notable inroads with the electorate and played definitive leveraging roles within regional governments across Spain. *Podemos* is no different, aside from its anti-

authoritarian appeal and left-wing approach to populism. Moreover, *Podemos* has created a voter base for itself that is young and particularly socially liberal, promoting ideas of LGBTQ+ inclusivity, openness to refugees, and expanding the welfare state and other social safety nets, alongside an ardent opposition to austerity measures and a soft Eurosceptic view.¹³⁶

In particular, collective memories of oppression have been no more activated elsewhere than in Catalonia. *Podemos* and its Catalan allies have significant inroads in building an anti-Francoist message and working toward a democratic solution to Catalonia, unlike the events that transpired in October 2017. Catalan sentiments were inflamed throughout the Franco regime as the government systematically oppressed Catalans calling for increased autonomy and began implementing restrictions on the practice of Catalan culture and the usage of the Catalan language. Additionally, Franco's Falangist party began targeting political opponents, such as the Spanish Communist Party, forcing them into exile in Eastern Europe. As a result, the Spanish left-wing was quashed, and subsequently fragmented as governmental pressures continued to mount on it.¹³⁷ While some returned following the restoration of democracy during the *Transición* to participate in the revitalization of the party and the formation of the *Izquierda Unida*, the old Spanish hard left was never able to fully recover, and many disdainful memories of the Franco regime were left in the minds of Spanish leftists. Furthermore, Franco's systemic targeting of political opponents hardened both regionalist and left-wing sentiments, and in turn, created an anger towards the regime that lasted into the present day.¹³⁸ Many regionalist forces in Catalonia, Galicia, the Basque Country, and elsewhere began affiliating their movements and political parties with *Podemos*, and the party's network expanded horizontally across Spain.

¹³⁶ *Programa de Podemos* 2022

¹³⁷ Foraldo 2017

¹³⁸ Acevado et al. 2012; Gil, Barcia 2015

Even in the post-democratic transition period, many regionalist and nationalist forces in Catalonia and the Basque Country continue to contend that the current Spanish political system maintains too much unitary power, as Franco's regime did, and demand that Spain become a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual state.¹³⁹ Often, they accuse the incumbent Spanish regime of imposing authoritarian rule and going against the autonomous regional system in place in Spain. Meanwhile, *Podemos* and its allies have coordinated with regionalist voices to combat this perceived authoritarian legacy, and the national party often remains neutral on the questions of Catalan and Basque autonomy and independence questions. As these dissatisfied individuals find their place within the 15-M Movement, and later *Podemos*, they begin utilizing the financial crisis and austerity as turbulent issues that sway many Spanish voters toward their side. In turn, *Podemos* achieves a meteoric rise within a matter of months in both European and Spanish National Elections.

Additionally, the movement was further propagated by pieces of critical artwork and media. Perhaps the most notable multimedia to surface from the financial crisis was the video by artist Alex Saló, titled "*Españistán, de la Burbuja Inmobiliaria a la Crisis*."¹⁴⁰ The video went viral across Spanish media for its cartoonish criticisms of the Spanish government and Troika for their perceived poor handling of the financial crisis and subsequent rolling out of austerity measures. Nevertheless, the core message of the video remains true to the sentiment felt across Spain, and Iberia as a whole. People had become dissatisfied with a political system mired with problems, and had finally decided to push back, as the fallout from the financial crisis was issue that pushed the Spanish public into a state of outrage.

¹³⁹ Guibernau 2000, 63

¹⁴⁰ Saló 2011

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7P2ExRF3GQ&list=PL2BA445B1F4D6B39A&index=2>

Without the tech-savvy and relatively young leadership of the *Indignados*, and subsequently *Podemos*, the movement may have ended up suffering the same fate as IU, which saw increasingly lower vote shares, save for the 2014 European Parliamentary election. In turn, the leadership of *Podemos* began a coordinated campaign, with sub-groups and allies across most autonomous regions, that targeted both Spain's financial hardships and the lingering vestiges of the Franco regime. *Podemos*'s tactic of "reflexivity," as some have dubbed it, in its approach to populist politics allows it to coordinate broad left-wing alliances.¹⁴¹ In turn, the nature of the movement helped to mobilize voters, especially voters aged 18 to 24 years, who in 2014 and 2015 were experiencing unemployment levels of greater than 55 percent¹⁴² (as of August 2022, the youth unemployment rate remains at 26.9 percent),¹⁴³ leading many to grow dissatisfied with an already struggling political system. In turn, the attention-grabbing slogans, tech savvy campaign tactics, and youth-friendly outreach of *Podemos*'s leadership to garner broad appeal amongst younger voters in the lead up the 2014 European Parliamentary Election. Additionally, grassroots and regionalist networks of communication and organization, brought over from the 15-M/*Indignados* movement allows for the party to cultivate a large swath of public attention, and command a sizeable chunk of the electorate. *Podemos*'s organization tactic has been especially useful in the party's ability to bargain with PSOE since joining Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez's government in 2019. One study by the *Informe Juventud en España* found that generally, youth voter turnout is around 70 percent, and in recent years, as anger has increased

¹⁴¹ Kioupkiolis 2016, 100

¹⁴² Eurostat 2015

¹⁴³ Eurostat 2022

over economic instability, youth voter turnout has increased dramatically, much to the benefit of *Podemos*.¹⁴⁴

In line with several past studies by the Pew Research Center on party alignments and populism, it would seem that much of *Podemos*'s support tends to come from educated and unemployed urban voters.¹⁴⁵ Youth unemployment levels well above the European average has driven many younger voters to turn toward the populist parties, chiefly in urban areas, this has been *Podemos* and its allies. Additionally, years with higher youth voter turnout have indicated higher levels of support for *Podemos*, especially in the elections immediately following the austerity packages.¹⁴⁶ These figures indicate that the lifeblood of the Spanish New Left is found within younger urban voters who were greatly affected by the financial crisis. This factor, coupled with *Podemos* party leadership's affinity for campaigning against the Franco regime and its lingering legacy, has fueled the party's rise and its emphasis on combatting right-wing authoritarianism.

In many ways, it would seem that the Iberian Peninsula, when compared to the rest of Western Europe, has found itself delayed in the wave of democratic socialist and green parties that rose to notoriety in the 1970s and 1980s. As previously mentioned, up until the formation of *Podemos* and the response to the financial crisis, there was no major left-wing movement in Spain that was able to garner upwards of 15 percent of the vote like *Podemos* did. The aforementioned *Izquierda Unida*, was the furthest extent of electoral success for left-wing populist forces before the rise of *Podemos*. Beyond smaller parties like the small environmentalist *Equo*, there were very few political parties in Spain that centered their policies

¹⁴⁴ Government of Spain 2016

¹⁴⁵ Wike et al. 2019; Silver 2022

¹⁴⁶ Government of Spain 2016

of the environment and left-wing social justice politics. The party built its solid base through the connections made with disenchanted youth and college-educated voters, even though that demographic remains small in Spain, and from there, built an ideology that sought to create a new political culture in Spain, on the left, that was based on ideological confluences and political flexibility.¹⁴⁷ In turn, this facilitated the political party to institute its broader appeal toward others who feel left behind by the Spanish political system, and the legacy of Franco's Spain and old political money that continues to haunt the Spanish political system.¹⁴⁸ In turn, this vocal and young minority, was able to start the momentum for the party that eventually led it to garner enough support to join PSOE in government and leverage Spanish political moderates for more left-wing concessions, as other left-wing parties have successfully done in other European countries by joining government, such as in Sweden¹⁴⁹ and Finland.¹⁵⁰

On top of the open ideological void at the leftward end of the political spectrum, Spain also presented a second opportunity for *Podemos* to rise through an inebriated PSOE, which was struggling with the baggage of the 2008 financial crisis, which occurred under a PSOE-led government. Like other Social Democratic parties across Europe, PSOE experienced a substantial loss in support, as part of broader ideological trends away from the political center, especially as the parties shifted away from being a voice of the working class and toward one with greater appeal to social progressive and educated middle and upper classes.¹⁵¹ In turn, these trends have results in record-low electoral performances for many social democratic parties, including PSOE, which was especially harmed during the 2011, 2015, and 2016 elections. While

¹⁴⁷ Gil, Barcia 2015, 89

¹⁴⁸ Reuters 2022

¹⁴⁹ Oskarson 2021

¹⁵⁰ Helsinki Times 2022

¹⁵¹ Menz 2022

today, PSOE, under the leadership of Pedro Sánchez, has mostly recovered, in the critical years of PP government, while PSOE restructured itself, *Podemos* took advantage of youth unemployment to garner critical support, building off the 15-M protests.¹⁵² Moreover, despite the recent increase in support for PSOE, it has yet to achieve pre-2008 levels of support, and *Podemos* continues to voters to the left away from the mainstream left.

Despite the success in building a base of youth support, the Spanish populists had a more difficult time in creating a solid movement that can sustain itself, as the Spanish government was more welcoming of EU reforms and avoided worsening the issue by creating more public debt. Nevertheless, Spain's biggest problem was the massive real estate bubble that had ballooned, as interest rates remained low and citizens bought up swathes of land. In turn, when the 2008 crisis emerged, many were caught off guard and unable to maintain the costs and mortgage payments of real estate they had previously gotten for cheap.¹⁵³

Spanish banks were betting on Spain's ability to draw in retirees from Northern Europe to purchase prime coastal real estate and bring more money into the Spanish housing market. Additionally, the banks and construction firms benefitted from the ECB's low interest rates in the leadup to the financial crisis, that actually did not serve Spanish needs well. Moreover, the real estate boom also led the Spanish government to pursue massive infrastructure and construction projects that were often costly and poorly managed. Many of these projects, such as on airports, failed to consider economic and usage considerations, leading to a lot of funds being wasted, and the EU remaining very critical of the Spanish government in its assessment, on top of less than expected Northern European migrants to Spain. The artificial housing bubble created

¹⁵² Acevado et al 2012

¹⁵³ Blyth 2013

by low Eurozone interest rates, facilitated an increase increased “credit demand for housing,” which allowed lower income people to purchase homes.¹⁵⁴ In turn, when the bubble burst and interest rates sky-rocketed a credit and real estate crisis ensued leading many to lose their homes. In response the Spanish government attempted to “socialize” the bad credit of the banks, which only intensified the hardship as Spain neared bankruptcy.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, the crisis highlighted the imbalances from within the Eurozone between the northern and the southern member-states of the EU, that culminated in monetary policy that often did not align with the interests of southern economies and made economic adjustments and monetary policy-making difficult. Low levels of exports compared to other Eurozone members, such as Germany, made exports a relatively small part of Spanish GDP, and creates artificially high prices. In turn, Spain and the other southern European states are trapped in a low growth equilibrium as the costs are too high to leave the Eurozone and there a few tools to devalue the Euro domestically, making it increasingly difficult to combat debt and adding more pressure to the welfare state.¹⁵⁶

The gross mismanagement of the market by the banks and the government spurred the widespread 15-M protests, which eventually gave rise to *Podemos* in 2014. The crisis was only worsened when the initial lower housing prices, combined with higher than EU average unemployment levels, exacerbated the problem, causing more people to declare bankruptcy and defaulting on mortgages.¹⁵⁷ *Podemos*, in line with other figures in Spanish politics, was also quick to campaign against the elitist Spanish banking giants, who they dubbed responsible for the crises. *Podemos*’s criticism of the banks also involved a criticism of the Spanish and

¹⁵⁴ Martín et al. 2018, 41

¹⁵⁵ Pérez 2019

¹⁵⁶ Ibid

¹⁵⁷ Dokko et al. 2011, 260

European governments for allowing the reckless lending by the banks to take place. These policies fueled public opposition to many within the mainstream and turned them toward populist forces, chiefly *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos*, and later, *Vox*. Additionally, economic hardship was placed on Spain and other countries due to the European Central Bank's relatively low interest rate. These interest rates worked for the Eurozone's stronger economies, but it caused the real estate bubble to balloon even further as rates were lower than they should have been for the Spanish economy. In turn, several began to utilize these issues and others as leverage against the EU, as a part of an "emergency plan B" to challenge the Eurozone and other institutions if the need arose.¹⁵⁸ Failure of both the Spanish government and the EU to work to prevent the housing bubble burst, the banking crisis, and decreasing immigration rates to support projects drove many voters away from the mainstream and European integration, and Troika-imposed austerity measures only heightened this sentiment. Public debt only worsened when the Spanish government nationalized many of the debts that businesses and private citizens had, thus worsening the economic outlook.

In turn, the housing and construction boom coupled with both lower migration rates and a fertility rate well below replacement rate (1.4 births per woman in 2009 and as low as 1.3 in 2013),¹⁵⁹ led to massive excess in the availability of housing. In turn, the housing bubble was created, and ready to burst, and it did so in 2008, following the crash in the United States. Additionally, mass amounts of personal debt created by this system were worsened with the 2008 crash, and many were forced to default on their mortgages, as many lost their jobs, and unemployment (especially among the youth) skyrocketed. Youth voters became very distraught

¹⁵⁸ Bortun 2022, 1424

¹⁵⁹ World Bank 2020

with the current state of affairs in Spain and began to look elsewhere for politics, beyond PP and PSOE. These economic factors provided fuel to the anger amongst Spanish citizens, that eventually drove them to participate in the 15-M Movement protests.

Podemos also fueled its movement off of a strong culture of protest in Spain. It is not uncommon to witness huge protest rallies and marches traversing the streets of Madrid or Barcelona, in route famous city hubs to *Puerta del Sol* or *Plaza de Catalunya*. During the May 15, 2011 protest (of which 15-M is named for) at least six-million Spanish citizens turned to the streets to protest Troika-imposed austerity measures that implemented deep cuts to Spanish government spending and social services, according to *Radio y Televisión Española*.¹⁶⁰ The ability to mobilize large swaths of people through organizing that was largely concentrated to social media platforms and online forums¹⁶¹ created specifically for the protest was a monumental achievement for 15-M and its successor *Podemos*. For populist parties, voter mobilization is critical for the party to garner sufficient support to enter parliament and challenge the established parties. Additionally, generational collective memories have greatly fueled protests in Spain. Many individuals, who once protested Franco's regime, have influenced younger generations to also take on the activist mantle. Memories of the *Transición*, were awoken by perceived undemocratic edicts handed down from the government and the Troika, and in turn, youth, who were experience dire conditions, turned out to protest, much like their parents had.¹⁶²

The financial crisis was the catalyst for the explosion of left-wing populists that arose around 2011 and made waves in the mid-to-late 2010s Spanish general and European Parliament

¹⁶⁰ RTVE 2011

¹⁶¹ Elola 2011

¹⁶² Schwarz 2022, 107-108

elections. Leading up to the crisis, unlike Greece, the Spanish government's finances had been responsibly managed, and the budget remained balanced, with relatively fiscally conservative practices. However, the Spanish banks were another story, conducting irresponsible lending in at artificially low interest rates, due to the nature of the Eurozone. In 2008, the system that had been operating within the Eurozone had been gradually becoming bloated, as real estate problems intensified and immense amount of capital flowed into southern Europe seeking to make substantial profits off of the introduction of the Eurozone in 1999.¹⁶³ Over time, as property continued to be bought up and businesses invested in southern Europe for cheaper costs, a bubble was in the making. Due to the nature of the Eurozone, financial policy was in the hands of the European Central Bank. Since the Eurozone contained fifteen member-states, at the time, some countries were subject to financial policy that was often suboptimal for their economic situation. Due to the fact that they shared a strong currency with richer countries, and in many ways, received a lot of aid from them, many of these countries went on spending sprees, accumulating astronomical levels of debt. When the U.S. market entered a recession, it brought the European markets down with it, especially in countries with poor economic policies, budget deficits, and large amounts of national debt. In turn, countries in southern Europe, including Spain and Portugal, found their economies in shambles, unemployment rates sky-rocketing, and governments on the verge of bankruptcy. Additionally, several of these countries were permitted to join the Eurozone, when in actuality, their countries did not meet the stringent criteria laid out by the European Union. Nevertheless, they were permitted in, and the ticking time-bomb had been set, awaiting the arrival of 2008, to challenge the very notion of a unified Europe.

¹⁶³ Matthijs 2014, 102

Following the blowback from the financial crisis and the organization of many 15-M Movement leaders into *Podemos*, the party was ready to begin contesting Spanish elections by 2015. The first electoral test for the party was the 2014 European Parliamentary election. In total, *Podemos* garnered 8 percent of the popular vote and 5 out of 54 Spanish seats in the European Parliament. Meanwhile, the Plural Left, led by *Izquierda Unida*, made substantial gains, winning 10 percent of the vote, but this would remain short-lived as *Podemos* would soon overtake it. The mainstream parties, PSOE and PP, both saw considerable losses, losing nine and eight seats respectively, with each losing approximately 16 percent of the vote compared to the 2009 European Parliamentary election. This election marked *Podemos* first electoral triumph that would eventually carry the party to becoming a junior partner in government by the November 2019 election for the *Cortes Generales*.

In terms of subsequent European Parliamentary elections, *Podemos* has experienced very similar trends as in general elections since its inception in 2014. As previously mentioned, in the May 2014 election, *Podemos* rocked Spanish politics by winning five seats in the European Parliament. While *Podemos* and other populist parties, especially *Ciudadanos*, made considerable gains, at the expense of PSOE and PP, the leadership continued to propagate its message against austerity and the legacy of the Franco regime. Throughout the years between European Parliamentary and national elections, *Podemos* continued to campaign against the system and austerity, while providing some support to the PSOE government as needed to pass some left-leaning legislation. However, good fortune for *Podemos* in European Parliamentary elections would not last long. In the 2019 European Parliamentary election, *Podemos*, now unified with *Izquierda Unida* under the alliance *Unidas Podemos*, lost several seats. Before the election, the electoral alliance had eleven Members of the European Parliament (MEPs),

Podemos's five and *Izquierda Unida*'s six from the previous election. As the results came in, the losses were devastating for *Unidas Podemos*, leaving them with only six seats in the European Parliament, after garnering ten percent of the popular vote.

Despite being able to join government and sway Spanish politics and government programs leftward, *Podemos*-led electoral alliance, *Unidas Podemos*, experienced disappointing election results both in the April 2019 general election and the November 2019 snap election, that was called after Pedro Sánchez failed to form a government with the April 2019 *Cortes Generales*. In April, *Podemos* lost 29 seats in the lower house, the Congress of Deputies, winning on 42 seats, and in November, it lost another seven seats, leaving it with only 35 members. In the Senate, the upper house of the *Cortes*, *Unidas Podemos* lost all 15 of its Senators in April, and failed to win any seats back in the November election. These disappointing results in Spain's most recent election were a far cry from the 2015 and 2016 *Cortes Generales* elections where *Podemos* won and subsequently maintained nearly 70 seats in the Congress of Deputies, and even gained a few more members as people joined *Podemos* from other political parties. Meanwhile, *Podemos*'s chances were further hindered by internal rebellions and rival left-wing parties siphoning votes away from their traditional base. Most notably is Íñigo Errejón, a founder of *Podemos*, and his new party *Más País* (an expanded national version of the Madrilenian regional *Más Madrid*).

Upon joining the PSOE-led government of November 2019, alongside the support of smaller left-wing political parties and several Catalan and Basque regionalist parties, *Podemos* had achieved its first real taste of putting policy into political action. In turn, the Spanish government, led by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, was shifted markedly to the left, without applying too much pressure on several issues regarding opposition to the EU and NATO. While

both the April and November general elections were disappointments for *Podemos*, as they lost seats in both elections, they were not barred to continuing to apply pressure on the Sánchez government in an attempt to promote a more left-wing agenda that combats austerity measures and the broader authoritarian legacy in Spain. *Podemos* joining PSOE was the first time that a left-wing political party has supported government, either as junior coalition member or in a confidence and supply agreement, since 2004 general election, where PSOE Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero was supported by the *Izquierda Unida*.

Nevertheless, despite *Podemos*'s more sluggish growth over the most recent elections, the rise of *Podemos*, and other Spanish populist forces, harkened the end of the long establish post-Franco bipolarity that defined Spanish politics. Both PSOE and PP have never fully recovered from the electoral losses they sustained against *Podemos*, *Vox*, and *Ciudadanos*. Neither party is able to form a government alone, without a coalition, confidence and supply, or, at least, case-by-case agreements with the smaller parties within the *Cortes Generales*. In turn, this brings the present-day PSOE-*Podemos* coalition (supported by smaller parties) into fruition, offering *Podemos* its first taste of governing at the national level. As promised, when Pablo Iglesias assumed the role of Deputy Prime Minister in 2020, he began to utilize his new platform to continue *Podemos*'s message. In all, in line with past speeches, he decried the “corruption of the political elites identified in the system” and the rampant cronyism and political favors that had persisted since the end of Francoist Spain.¹⁶⁴

Though his stint as deputy PM was relatively brief, with Iglesias leaving office in March 2021 following disappointing results in the Madrilenian regional election, he did not fail to make headlines throughout his tenure that challenged European austerity and Francoist legacies. While

¹⁶⁴ Iniesta 2016, 257

in office, he and *Podemos* continued to lambast the Spanish elite and campaign against Francisco Franco, utilizing his “oratory skills” and time in office, as one journalist put it, to highlight Spanish societal issues and harken back to his mother’s sentence in prison after protesting the Franco regime.¹⁶⁵ Iglesias own case exemplifies the notion originally formulated by Schwarz and other that the Spanish New Left has relied on collective memories and protest culture that were cultivated during the Franco years to continue to protest a socio-political and economical system that is perceived as unfair toward the average Spanish citizen.¹⁶⁶ In turn, the collective memory and widespread frustration was captured and transformed into a political movement ignited by the Eurozone crisis and the austerity politics, and fueled by the energy to fight against “the elite and bankers,” as *Podemos* sees it, that were propped up by the 1978 Regime, which the declare to be a continuation of the Franco regime under the false auspices of democracy.

In turn, the momentum on *Podemos*’s side, especially in the early days of Pablo Iglesias’s leadership, led the party to make substantial gains against the Spanish political establishment, particularly PSOE. Across several elections between 2014 and 2019, *Podemos* can be observed making substantial gains, while PSOE floundered against regaining control from PP (until PSOE regained government in 2019 elections, following corruption allegations and investigations against the PM Mariano Rajoy of PP). In 2014, as PSOE continued to suffer from its tarnished legacy and association with austerity measures and the Eurozone crisis under PM Zapatero, *Podemos* marketed itself as a pro-average Spanish citizen party, seeking to reinvigorate Spain. Journalists turned activists Irene García Rubio and Silvia Nanclares, as part of 15-M, saw legislation propped up by both PP and PSOE as one in the same, under a false guise of equality,

¹⁶⁵ France24, 2021

¹⁶⁶ Schwarz 2022

especially in terms of women's rights, in order to market the incumbent Spanish regime as a democratic and socially progressive government.¹⁶⁷ In turn, these messages were utilized to campaign against the establishment and draw away from their electoral support. The impact, especially in the early days of *Podemos*'s existence, were quite devastating for PSOE, as it had sunk to historically low levels of support. *Podemos* continued to ride the wave of support and furthered its messaging seeing its historic electoral success as a public endorsement of its anti-austerity and anti-authoritarian campaign message.

In all, *Podemos* fared exceptionally well against the establishment electorally, especially early on in its existence in the mid-2010s. Additionally, *Podemos*, since joining government, has played a pivotal role in steering Spanish policy, while simultaneously balancing other issues to avoid gridlock. *Podemos* utilizes a "highly inclusionary" form of populism that works to expand rights and service to many key outgroups, including immigrants and refugees, and working actively to join government and propagate policies that are in line with party manifestos and objectives.¹⁶⁸ Since *Podemos* joined PSOE in government following the November 2019 election, their influence has shifted the country markedly to the left, remaining a force within government that is critical of military institutions (especially NATO, since abstaining in the vote on the accession of Sweden and Finland¹⁶⁹), soft Euroscepticism and challenging the Troika, and helping to continue Spain's reputation as one of the most welcoming states in Southern Europe (and the EU as a whole) of refugees.¹⁷⁰ Additionally, *Podemos* continues to remain a thorn in the

¹⁶⁷ Acevado et al 2014, 192

¹⁶⁸ Font et al. 2021, 176

¹⁶⁹ Heller 2022

¹⁷⁰ Sanchez 2018; Connor, Pew Research 2018

side of PSOE as it always seeks to continue to balk the established system of the “1978 Regime” and threatens to siphon votes away from PSOE’s left flank.

Additionally, *Podemos* contributed to the further fractionalization of the Spanish party system by breaking barriers, and doing what similar parties, chiefly *Izquierda Unida*, was never able to do. *Podemos*’s strongly populist and anti-elitist message appealed not only to traditional leftists, but also other segments of Spanish society that felt marginalized by both the existing political and economic systems. Additionally, *Podemos*, through alliances with regionalist parties in Catalonia, Galicia, and other autonomous regions, continues to operate at both national and regional levels in order to maintain party and alliance hierarchies and influence voter behavior in favor of *Podemos* left-wing policy platform. *Podemos* and its allies appeal to voters in these regions by appealing to memories of resistance against the Franco regime, and highlighting the “1978 Regime’s” continuation of the legacy.

The PSOE-*Unidas Podemos* dynamic took an interesting path on October 4, 2022 as the leaders of both parties announced the continuation of the government alliance and the formation of an electoral pact ahead of the next general election, which is scheduled to take place by May 2023.¹⁷¹ This solidifies the notion that the New Left has become an integral part of the Spanish party system, and also signals a slight change in *Podemos*’s political strategy. The hard-left has now become officially accepted as a wing of Spanish politics that will continue to have some sway over Spanish politics, especially in situations where there is a lack of a majority consensus, as is often the case in parliamentary systems. Additionally, this give *Podemos* more leverage to implement its anti-austerity and anti-Franco political push. As a result, future Spanish governments, if the PSOE-*Podemos* alliance holds, could lead to greater pushed against the

¹⁷¹ Fresneda 2022

legacy of the Franco regime, potentially, on the scale of the exhumation of Franco's grave in 2019 from the historic military cemetery at the Valley of the Fallen, which proved to be both a historic and divisive move by the PSOE government.¹⁷²

Nevertheless, even with political alliances, *Podemos* continues to attract voters who are nominally left-wing, with many supporters coming from *Izquierda Unida* or PSOE, with *Podemos* being one of PSOE's sharpest critics before the 2019 coalition.¹⁷³ One strategy PSOE implemented to stave off the electoral threat of *Podemos* was incorporating the populists in PSOE-led regional governing coalitions whenever possible. This plays off of some suggestions of political scientists that the best way to curtail populist threats is to moderate them by working with them in government.¹⁷⁴ A combination of appealing directly to both disaffected voters burned out by the financial crisis and more left-wing PSOE supporter dissatisfied with neo-liberal trends, allowed for *Podemos* to directly siphon votes from its future electoral ally.¹⁷⁵ In turn, this led to *Podemos* slightly moderating some of its policies, such as a softer approach to the EU and a hands-off approach to NATO-related issues, and emboldening PSOE to begin using *Podemos* as a natural ally on critical social and economic issues, including questions pertaining to Catalan regionalist forces, of which, *Podemos* aligns itself with on several issues.

The continuation of the PSOE-*Podemos* alliance allows for *Podemos* to only ramp up its anti-Franco and anti-austerity rhetoric, and it all gives *Podemos* an increased platform as its place in government is reassured. Additionally, this signals a continuing wave in Spain along the lines of polarization, and *Podemos* shifts the government leftward. As others have noted,

¹⁷² Faber 2021

¹⁷³ Rama 2021, 6

¹⁷⁴ Zarzalejos 2016, 187

¹⁷⁵ Ibid 190

Podemos's participation in government, as PSOE's junior coalition partner, has intensified party polarization in Spain, as the New Left applies pressure on Pedro Sánchez's government to institute more left-wing policies.¹⁷⁶ These factors were first intensified during the two years leading up to the 2019 general elections in April and November, that culminated in the present PSOE-*Unidas Podemos* alliance. The announcement of the continuation of the left-wing alliance ahead of the 2023 general election will embolden *Podemos* to apply more pressure on PSOE to implement "New Left" political policies and perhaps even more attempts to quash the Francoist authoritarian legacy in Spain.

The Spanish New Left has overall made a very interesting case in combatting modern economic problems alongside perceived long-standing authoritarian legacies. Several areas of emphasis within party literature and from interviews have indicated that the specter of Francisco Franco continues to haunt the Spanish political system through educational and judicial practices. This criticism is also coupled with the relative oversight Franco had over the Spanish transition of democracy. Moreover, many New Left leaders have also highlighted the continued veneration of Francoist leaders in modern Spanish politics, especially by *Vox*, has also exemplified Franco's continued legacy in Spain.

¹⁷⁶ Orriols, León 2020, 361

CHAPTER V

PORTUGAL AND THE LEFT BLOC

Similar to Spain, Portugal was subject to a harsh authoritarian regime, led by António de Oliveira Salazar, who maintained a firm, corporatist grasp on Portuguese politics. Unlike Franco, he was not a military figure, instead, Salazar found his early roots in academia, and only became politically involved in the mid-1920s, as he was finishing up his education. Salazar was a classical liberal in many regards, basing many of his political decisions on the recommendations of corporate cronies according to the ebbs and flows of the market in a way that would benefit both the state and affiliated corporations.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, Salazar played a pivotal role in transforming the Portuguese economy, by industrializing what was once a primarily impoverished agricultural society. Moreover, similar to Franco, Salazar emphasized the role of Portuguese identity and Catholicism into his authoritarian rule over the small Iberian state.

The Portuguese authoritarian regime was often associated with the countries continued and growing relationship with the West, alongside attempts to stave off the potential for a communist uprising, as the Communist Party of Portugal had a strong relationship with the country's labor unions. Additionally, the regime sowed further discontent amongst the populace through drawn out colonial wars, a sluggish economy throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, and it was embargoed by OPEC during the Arab Oil Embargo.¹⁷⁸ While Salazar was able to maintain political stability, with an iron fist, the country political environment remained tense, especially as Salazar aged and became more sickly, especially after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage, and being unofficially out of power for nearly two years before his death in 1970.

¹⁷⁷ Gallagher 2021

¹⁷⁸ Ibid

Additionally, Salazar, made sure to emphasize the role of the catholic charge and Portuguese identity and language within society, to ensure the preservation of the *Estado Novo* (New State), the official name of Salazar's regime.

Nevertheless, despite a more benevolent approach to authoritarian rule than Franco and Spain, the Salazar regime remained oppressive, especially against left-wing dissidents. In many ways, this was in line with the broader narratives of the Cold War, as Salazar generally was aligned with the West and vehemently opposed the spread of communism in Europe and amongst the former colonies. Salazar was often well-commended by many in the West, especially in the United Kingdom and the United States, which remained grateful to Portugal for allowing them to use the Azores as a military base during World War II. Additionally, Portugal sought to balance itself on the world-stage, wanting to maintain its colonial possessions across Africa and Asia, while simultaneously seeking to avoid the ire of both the United Nations and the United States.

Unlike Franco, Salazar and his authoritarian regime was regarded with more open arms, especially by the West. Under Salazar's watch, Portugal was a founding member of NATO and an original signatory power of the Washington Treaty, which committed member-states to liberal democratic values, yet, Salazar's regime was distinctly non-democratic. Elections that were held in Portugal were vetted by the central state, and often resulted in those friendly to the incumbent regime winning. Meanwhile, leftist dissidents (and also those further to the right) were often pushed out of the conversation, in favor of what many labeled as the catholic right-wingers, loyal to the supposed "benevolent dictatorship" of Salazar.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, Salazar's Portugal was largely labeled as taking a "third way" to authoritarianism that rode a fine line in the middle,

¹⁷⁹ Gallagher 1984

currying favor with democratic allies and embracing free market capitalism, while simultaneously continuing to repress racial minorities and maintain a global colonial empire centered largely in Africa and Asia.¹⁸⁰

Portugal, under Salazar and even after his death under the rule of his successor Marcello Caetano, fought vociferously to hold onto its colonies, especially Angola, Mozambique, and Portuguese Guinea. Salazar's legacy damaged Portugal in several ways, especially in terms of the colonial empire he attempted to preserve. Portugal only relented following the collapse of the dictatorship in the Carnation Revolution of 1974, and immense pressure from many of its own NATO allies, chiefly the United States. For Salazar, the Portuguese empire and the legacy of colonialism was an integral part of his messaging, especially when he utilized phrases, such as "Portugal is not a small country" to justify expansion. Furthermore, as part of this narrative, Salazar went as far as to declare Timor-Leste, Angola, Mozambique, and the other colonies as integral provinces of the Portuguese Empire and declared those who lived there to be citizens or direct subjects of Portugal. In turn, the Portuguese colonial regime turned out to be one of the most brutal, which lasted nearly 13 years, and resulted in the deaths of approximately 26,000 anti-colonial fighters and 110,000 civilians.¹⁸¹ Moreover, the colonial wars facilitated the rise in collective guilt among many Portuguese citizens for many of the atrocities that the regime committed against colonial subjects.¹⁸²

In all, the violence committed in the Portuguese African colonies demonstrated the sheer scale the authoritarian regime was willing to go to maintain hegemony. Many of the crimes were so heinous that a generation guilt and memories of sadness pertaining to the Portuguese Colonial

¹⁸⁰ Pinto 2022

¹⁸¹ Figueiredo et al. 2011, 164

¹⁸² Ibid 169

Wars, which were broadly unpopular with the public and one of the reasons for the Carnation Revolution, with many Portuguese citizens looking at the country's past with immense shame.¹⁸³ Moreover, many Portuguese veterans of the wars in Angola and Mozambique recount the *Estado Novo*'s harsh policies as heinous, and they were often forced to carry them out against their will, especially as the government implemented a military draft.¹⁸⁴ The perpetuation of violence and the immense cost of the wars only intensified the horrors of the war and led to the slaughter of innocent civilians across the colonies and only further weakened Portugal, Angola, and Mozambique. Both Portugal and the colonies conscripted citizens living in the colonies, reorienting them, and often times, utilizing them and their villages as defensive positions directly involved in the war.¹⁸⁵ The lasting wound of the Portuguese Colonial is a critical part of the authoritarian legacy that remains in Portugal since the transition to democracy. The sheer fact that the Salazar regime continued a long and brutal war and enforced the participation of Portuguese civilians, especially through military conscription initiatives and drafts. Moreover, the regret expressed by former Portuguese soldiers, especially due to the atrocities they were forced to commit has had a lasting impact on Portuguese society. Ultimately, the political instability left behind after the Portuguese withdrawal spawned decades-long civil wars in both countries as former allied rebel groups turned on each other, especially as the Soviet-backed FRELIMO and MPLA attempted to consolidate power, much like the FLN. In Angola, following the signing of the January 1975 Alvo Accords with the new Portuguese regime, a unity government was formed as the Portuguese troops withdrew.

¹⁸³ Figueiredo et al. 2011, 168

¹⁸⁴ Campos 2008, 121

¹⁸⁵ Thaler 2012, 556-557

The colonial wars left the state both in financial and political disarray as the populace grew increasingly tired of the fruitless efforts of the *Estado Novo* to maintain its grip on colonies that had minimal impact on the life of the average Portuguese citizen. Nevertheless, both Salazar and Caetano justified the continued war efforts by appealing to nationalist sentiments and proclaiming that the colonial territories were an integral part of Portugal and the line “Portugal is not a small country” was coined.¹⁸⁶ Additionally, the government would enhance this message by manipulating messages produced on television, radio, newspapers, and other media that glorified the colonial wars and maintained a tight grip on the nation.¹⁸⁷ Subsequently, this continued poor economic policy only intensified anti-Salazar sentiments that would manifest after the fall of the regime. In particular, the IMF highlights loose fiscal policy and a bloated deficit that accounted for approximately 6 percent of the Portuguese GDP in 2007.¹⁸⁸ Salazar and Caetano’s attempts to cling onto power and envisioning the preservation of a global Portuguese Empire led to a lot of internal frustration that culminated in political outrage. Other actions of the Portuguese regime that including the censoring and exiling of political dissidents only intensified the growing public dissatisfaction. In turn, the anti-authoritarian legacy, that manifests today in the Left Bloc and its rebuke of Portugal’s past would come to fruition and produce a similar Iberian-style New Left political movement that is distinct from other European movements.

In all, unlike the Spanish case, in Portugal the authoritarian legacy is felt partially through the memory and guilt of the colonial wars. As several previous sources, chiefly Figueiredo et al (2011) and Campos (2008), have exemplified, many Portuguese citizens, especially veterans of the war continue to feel a sense of sorrow and regret for the actions of the regime that many of

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 370

¹⁸⁷ Ibid

¹⁸⁸ OECD 2008; Schwarz et al. 2013

them helped carry out. Additionally, other instances, such as the close cooperation with the Catholic Church created some discrepancies within society. Today, many political figures remain critical of the Church's complacency and tacit endorsement of the Salazar regime and its colonial ventures. Moreover, as some authors have indicated, the Catholic Church was a vital tool of the Salazar regime for helping to facilitate the "fascistization" of Portuguese society and assisting the government in some of its authoritarian advancements.¹⁸⁹ In turn, the involvement of the church has left a tarnished legacy that continues to remain present in politics, as noted by New Left criticisms of the regime. Additionally, the corporatist model of governance implemented by the Salazar regime directly tied corporations and the state together, and in turn, many companies lost their independence.¹⁹⁰ Additionally, similar to Spain, the Catholic Church played a prominent role in the *Estado Novo*, and the regime also followed the "strict limits of the social Catholic movement," combined with Salazar's technocratic rule.¹⁹¹

Returning to Schmitter, O'Donnell, Whitehead's seminal collection on the transitions to democracy across the world, Kenneth Maxwell highlights some of the critical factors that defined the Portuguese transition to democracy, and its key differences from other cases, especially its neighbor Spain. Maxwell is quick to point out that the transition to democracy in Portugal was more unstable than in Spain, and in the early days of the Carnation Revolution and the *coup d'état* as to whether or not a stable democratic system could actually be formed or if the military would attempt to maintain control, as many of the plotters believed that the military should have a "major role in the political process."¹⁹² Meanwhile, during the transition, the left-

¹⁸⁹ Pinto, Rezola 2007

¹⁹⁰ Pinto 2022, 10

¹⁹¹ Ibid 11

¹⁹² Maxwell 1986, 109

wing remained in relative disarray, having had no central organization prior to the buildup to the 1974 overthrow of Caetano. Additionally, authoritarian rightists began to threaten Portugal's transition to democracy, as the left continued to make tactical errors.¹⁹³ One of the lasting legacies within Portugal, alongside colonialism's scares, was the lack of a consolidated democracy and instability that persisted in Portugal during the transition's early years. Economic ruin and continued nationalist prominence within post-transition Portugal left many within the country dissatisfied with democracy, as many holdover policies and consequences of Salazar's regime continued to burden the country.¹⁹⁴ Interestingly, the transition to democracy also reshaped how Portugal approaches international relations and trade by simultaneously nationalizing several domestic industries and shoring up protections for foreign businesses operating in Portugal, in turn, bringing several firms that were once close allies of Salazar's corporatist regime under direct government control, and further muddying the transition and the prominence of authoritarian legacy.¹⁹⁵

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s these movements would continue to simmer as Portugal underwent the democratization process. Several left-wing forces would come and go over the years as parties continually contested election in the new proportionally democratic regime. Nevertheless, the protest culture and memory of Salazar's oppression sustained itself through these movements, while remaining largely to the margins of society, while the old hard-left Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) maintained its grip on left-wing Portuguese voters. The power of the Portuguese labor unions and other forces sustained the PCP as the primary far-left force, but it often left some on the left wanting more from socialist politics, especially as the

¹⁹³ Ibid 123-124

¹⁹⁴ Ibid 136

¹⁹⁵ Ibid 136-137

Socialist Party grew to be an increasingly mainstream political party. What especially broadened the appeal and need for a New Left force was the PCP's relatively social conservative stance that pushed many left-wing voters away.

The anti-authoritarian and anti-austerity New Left took hold in Portugal through the Left Bloc party, which was founded in 1999. It was founded as the People's Democratic Union, the Revolutionary Socialist Party, and the Politics XXI movement came together to form a New left force that was separate from the more socially conservative Communist Party of Portugal. Immediately, the new party embraced staunchly progressive social policies while adhering to traditionally left-wing principles, such as a robust welfare and social support system and general skepticism towards international trade and globalization. The Left Bloc remained on the margins of Portuguese politics until the Eurozone crisis and the imposition of austerity measures in Portugal during the fallout of the crisis. The Left Bloc differentiated itself from other left-wing forces in Europe by emphasizing its female leadership and distinctly feminist policies, an area that Caterina Martins, one of the party's leaders, says other New Left political movements are lacking.¹⁹⁶ Martins attributes the Left Bloc's feminist turn to Portuguese history, where many Portuguese men were sent abroad by the *Estado Novo* to fight in the Portuguese Colonial Wars alongside many other men seeking work in richer European countries. In turn, she implies, that the Left Bloc must now work to combat that legacy, through left-wing populism and feminism that is defined by a desire to renew Portugal.

As the party moved to make anti-austerity one of its core political tenants, it moved to make waves in 2015, by joining the Socialist Party and the Unitary Democratic Coalition (CDU) (Communist-Green alliance) to bar the center-right Social Democratic party from forming a

¹⁹⁶ Martins 2017, 36

minority government. According to Francisco Louçã, a Left Bloc party operative, this was primarily in response to the Social Democrat's role in accepting the Troika's demands and gutting many popular aspects of the Portuguese welfare state.¹⁹⁷ Additionally, the Left Bloc continues to emphasize that the repair of Portugal, from the Salazar regime and authoritarianism, is not complete, and cannot be fully fixed until old institutions are replaced with modern, more progressive ones.¹⁹⁸ In all, similar to *Podemos*, the Left Bloc finds itself at odds with a political system that it deems is rooted in the legacy of an authoritarian regime that continues to have an impact on modern politics. Moreover, the Left Bloc pays additional attention to Portugal's added legacy of colonialism that ravaged the economy of the country into the 1970s as the Salazar and Caetano regimes fought costly wars to hold onto colonies that sought independence.

The Left Bloc has remained both a sharp critic of the Portuguese government and the country's authoritarian legacy while also proving to be a critical supporter of Prime Minister António Costa's government in the mid- to late-2010s alongside the Communists and Greens.¹⁹⁹ Contrary to Spain and *Podemos*, Portugal's New Left had to contend with a more established old left-wing force in the form of the Communist Party of Portugal, and their allies the Greens, which had a longstanding legacy and influence amongst Portuguese labor unions. Nevertheless, both left-wing forces proved to be sharp critics of Portugal's political system. Additionally, the Left Bloc, unlike the Communists, puts special emphasis on social issues, similar to *Podemos*, that focus on feminism, LGBT+ rights, refugee settlement programs, among other things. Generally, the Left Bloc holds soft-Eurosceptic values, but does not call for the full withdrawal of Portugal from neither the Eurozone nor the EU as a whole. The Left Bloc also calls for

¹⁹⁷ Louçã 2015

¹⁹⁸ Martins 2017, 37

¹⁹⁹ Ibid

significant government intervention in the economy, support for the Portuguese welfare state, and strongly opposed the austerity measures imposed on Portugal by the Troika in the aftermath of the Eurozone crisis.

Moreover, the Left Bloc attempts to present itself as a further left-wing alternative to the mainstream, well-established Socialist Party and the old vanguard of the left-wing in the Communist Party. The Left Bloc has embraced many issue areas that are in line with other European left-wing movements, like Mélenchon's *France Insoumise* and the Dutch Socialists, while also utilizing the anti-authoritarian and anti-austerity measures utilized by *Podemos*, that struggles to contend with Portugal's authoritarian past. Additionally, the Left Bloc, alongside the Communists, have had relative stable political support over the years, rather than the dramatic electoral fluctuations that are typical of populist movements.²⁰⁰ In turn, this reveals that there is more to the messages propagated by the Portuguese left. Unlike the case of *Podemos*, the Left Bloc has seemingly taken more advantage of long-simmering issues of authoritarian legacy, and once the financial crisis took off, highlighted the issues it brought about and utilized it to increase its margins, and appeal to a broader selection of voters.

There are several potential explainers as to why the Left Bloc maintained stable support and often captured its own lane in Portuguese politics. Perhaps most importantly, in contrast to the Spanish case, left-wing activists in Portugal were not as oppressed and forced into exile as much as the Spanish Communists were. In turn, several pacifist and left-wing activists were around and played an active role in the Carnation Revolution, where a bloodless military coup occurred and democratic activists place carnations in the barrels of the soldiers' weapons. As Gallagher noted, the Salazar regime was much less systematically oppressive than the Franco's

²⁰⁰ Lisi 2013, 22

Spain.²⁰¹ In many ways, the “benevolent dictator” permitted limited levels of anti-regime beliefs in Portugal as long as it remained an insignificant threat. Nevertheless, some attempts were made on Salazar’s life by left-wingers and anarchists, but Salazar never noted the necessity for outright banishment of left-wing groups. In turn, several left-wing networks remained intact, and many would later go on to form the Left Bloc in 1999. The Left Bloc’s participation in government alongside the Socialists and Communists in 2015 also helped to mainstream the Left Bloc more, and grant it a louder platform for the anti-austerity and authoritarian and anti-colonial issues it campaigned on.

Furthermore, the Left Bloc finds itself attempting to differentiate itself a prominent force of the radical left, especially against its ideological neighbor of similar electoral strength, the Communist Party. Catarina Martins, one of the Left Bloc’s core leaders, argues that the Left Bloc offers a lot in terms of progressivism, while the Communists stand as more of a traditional left-wing force in Portugal.²⁰² The Communists focus on traditional Marxist-Leninist principles and primarily economic matters, with strong support of Portuguese labor unions, while the Left Bloc attempts to capture more from the progressive left-wing voter base, especially those dissatisfied with the Portuguese socio-political system, similar to *Podemos*. In all, the Left Bloc has been able to carve out its own identity on the left, different from that of the Communists, that adheres to a strictly democratic socialist position, and one that promotes social rights, contrary to the more socially conservative Communists. Moreover, the Left Bloc seeks to define itself as the principal opponent of austerity measure that Portugal was subjected to by the Troika, despite not having as dramatic of a housing market and public debt bubble as other EU member-states whom

²⁰¹ Gallagher 2021

²⁰² Martins 2017, 40

the Troika were strict with, such as Ireland and Spain.²⁰³ In many ways, Portugal's version of the crisis resembles Greece's, though to a much lesser extreme, that involved deficit spending and a failure to meet Eurozone standards of government spending. Portugal struggled with attracting foreign direct investment and struggled to grow economically. In turn, when the 2008 bubble burst and Portuguese public debt had accrued (unlike Spain), the Portuguese government found itself in dire straits financially. As a result, the Portuguese government received a €78 billion bailout from the EU and IMF, alongside the conditions for austerity. This in turn fueled populist sentiments against the EU and IMF, and drove some to support the Left Bloc. Eventually, New Left anti-austerity and anti-authoritarian sentiments would lead the party to the opportunity to join government. In turn, the protests that followed the financial crisis centered on combating austerity and fighting youth unemployment levels, which were at similarly high levels as Spain at the height of the debate in 2013 when levels reached a peak of 38.1 percent, and still remain relatively high at 23.1 percent.²⁰⁴ These high unemployment levels and broader dissatisfaction amongst younger voters prompt support for the Left Bloc and other populist forces with Portugal who claim to offer solutions to the problems that the mainstream parties fail to address.

Similar to *Podemos* and the *Indignados*, the Left Bloc surged in its public support following the financial crisis and widespread anti-austerity protests in 2011 and 2012. The Left Bloc remains critical of both the center-right Social Democrats and the center-left Socialists (though to a much lesser extent), about the conducive behavior toward the Troika and their blatant acceptance of all measures imposed on Portugal. The Left Bloc argues that following the European Union's rules was not worth sacrificing the Portuguese welfare state, which remains

²⁰³ Ibid 41

²⁰⁴ World Bank 2021

popular amongst the Portuguese population. The Left Bloc campaigned on and appealed to voters through the antagonization of the Troika, labeling them as having “impoverished” Portugal and eliminating the “basic social responsibilities” of the Portuguese state and gutting vital programs.²⁰⁵ Moreover, Portugal suffered a similar fate as the other southern European states, with low growth equilibrium that culminated in wage suppression and social spending cuts.

To a much higher degree than that of Spain, the Portuguese Left Bloc finds its vote heavily concentrated within urban areas. Nearly all of the Left Bloc’s seats won in the 2022 general election were from Portugal’s two primary metropolitan areas, Lisbon and Porto, with additionally notable support in the south-western coastal regions. Additionally, according to several exit polls, the Left Bloc saws its greatest levels of support amongst voters aged 18 to 24, in line with high levels of youth unemployment.²⁰⁶ Similar to *Podemos*, it is clear that the Portuguese New Left relies on younger educated and urban voters to solidify its political base. The party is able to tap into anger and dissatisfaction within the current system amongst these demographics, to cultivate political momentum, especially when highlighting the deeds of the Salazar regime, particularly in relation to the horrors of the colonial wars, where many Portuguese youth were forced into battle.

When the Left Bloc and the Communists agreed to support António Costa’s government, there were some expectations that Portugal may become slightly more Eurosceptic given the two junior partners’ scathing rebukes of the Troika, and Costa’s need to create a working majority, at least in terms of parliamentary confidence, to avoid another general election. Catalina Martins

²⁰⁵ Martins 2017, 41

²⁰⁶ Pitagorica 2022

expressed her surprise, after the Left Bloc agreed to provide confidence and supply to Costa, with the European Union's softer approach to Portugal. Martins attributes the EU's softer approach to be in direct response to the looming threat of the Brexit referendum,²⁰⁷ which at the time of the interview, was about 6 months into the future. In many ways, the rise of Eurosceptic forces, like the Left Bloc and *Podemos*, and the populist knee-jerk reaction of the voters to the Eurozone crisis, terrified the EU, making it more conciliatory to populist demands, and open to dialogue.

While supporting the Costa government, the Left Bloc achieved several key objectives that further its New Left platform. The Left Bloc particular touts its achievements in boosting funding for the Portuguese welfare state, advancement on social issues (including expanded abortion rights and same-sex couple adoption), and boosting public transport, all the while, continuing to combat Portugal's past and reconcile for atrocities committed by the Salazar regime.²⁰⁸ Additionally, the Left Bloc also disproved several rumors propagated by supporters of the center-right Social Democrats that insinuated that the Left Bloc and Unitary Democratic Coalition's support for Costa's government would result in Portugal's withdrawal from NATO and the EU, which it did not. This did not come to fruition as the left-wing junior partners instead chose to focus on social and economic policies rather than threatening withdrawal from Portugal's international alliances.²⁰⁹ Nevertheless, the alliance between the mainstream left, the Old Left, and the New Left persisted, and Costa was able to maintain a firm government mandate, while simultaneously implementing anti-austerity demands by the Left Bloc.

²⁰⁷ Martin 2017, 46

²⁰⁸ Ibid 49-50

²⁰⁹ Ibid 48

Similar to *Podemos*, much of the leadership in the Left Bloc are relatively young in age, and did not experience life under the rule of Salazar, despite consistently campaigning against Salazar's legacy. Catarina Martins herself is 49 years old, at the time of writing, born in 1973, one year before the Carnation Revolution and the fall of Caetano. Similar to Spain, the question arises surrounding generational memories of rebellion against a regime, with today's activists continuing to rail against the regime, despite lacking experience within the regime itself. When Communist and anarchist-affiliated assassins made an attempt on Salazar's life in 1937, Salazar reaffirmed his role by making religious attributions for his survival alongside seeking swift justice against the perpetrators.²¹⁰ In turn, the systemic campaign against detractors of the regime led to thousands of political dissidents being exiled, and the sowing of memories of oppression amongst many Portuguese activists that were passed onto younger generations. Continued appeal to youth protest culture remains an important part of the Left Bloc's base of support amongst younger and student voters, especially those holding "post-materialist" values.²¹¹ However, unlike Spain, Portugal has struggled more to garner youth voting participation (one study observed only a 29 percent participation rate, and in turn, the left Bloc has struggled more than *Podemos* in several key areas, especially in the 2022 election.²¹²

In turn, young activists and voters have had significant impact on Portuguese government policy, as during the era of the confidence and supply agreement, the Left Bloc and the Unitary Democratic Coalition maintained immense pressure on António Costa to ensure their demands were met. Moreover, austerity measures were heavily campaigned against, and the Troika and the policies associated with it became a pariah, especially within populist discourse, similar to

²¹⁰ Gallagher 2022

²¹¹ Lisi 2009, 131

²¹² European Commission 2019, 112

the case of *Podemos* and Spain. Additionally, several of the younger forces within the Left Bloc, seek to combat Portugal's colonial legacy and the Portuguese Colonial War. These sentiments would be felt throughout the events of the Carnation Revolution and afterward as the forces that would become the Left Bloc developed and eventually united in 1999.

The April 24, 1974, military coup that overthrew Salazar's successor, Caetano, was a pivotal moment for Portugal, as many average Portuguese citizens had become upset with the endless wars to hold onto the colonies. Despite the movement being set off by a military coup, unlike other coups, the populace played a pivotal role through actions of protest, as sentiment that remains prevalent in the Left Bloc. As previously mentioned, Portuguese citizens protested the old regime and supported the coup by placing carnations in the barrels of the soldiers' guns. Additionally, the new system put in place, was new radical form of democracy, that had the backing of the Communist Party and other significant forces in Portugal. The time was extremely turbulent as it was unclear if the new political system would be able to hold amidst the pressures of both the military and those would have remained loyal to the Salazar regime and wished to reimpose power.²¹³ The Portuguese transition was very different from the Spanish transition, and as a result, this creates slightly different dynamics in the ways that the Portuguese New Left in the Left Bloc differ from their Spanish counterparts in *Podemos*.

Nevertheless, the Left Bloc continues to attempt to ride European populist tides and appeal to the struggles of disillusioned voters and young people who feel left behind by the Portuguese political system. A combination of years of wasteful spending, as highlighted by the Troika, gutted social programs, perceived corruption and colonial legacies, alongside the economic crash drove people away from the Socialist and Social Democratic Parties. This falls

²¹³ Encarnación 2012, 182

directly in line with Cas Mudde and his interpretation of populism as a “thinly veiled ideology” that latches onto broader political families, which can be left, right, or center, to combat the established powers within a country’s electoral system.²¹⁴ Moreover, it conveys further interest as, much like the right-wing populists, Europe’s left-wing, including the Left Bloc and *Podemos*, have formed a broader alliance at the EU level, known as the Party of the European Left, that involves Germany’s *Die Linke*, the Greek Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA), the French Communist party, among other European forces.

Despite recent electoral setbacks, the Left Bloc continues to play a pivotal role as both a support for the Socialist government (when needed) and a voice of opposition that maintains some elements of soft Euroscepticism. In many ways, the Troika and other European forces remain at the heart of the Left Bloc’s continued campaign against austerity and perceived European political overreach into the domestic politics of the member-states. The party, alongside the Communist-Green CDU, continue to play a pivotal role in the opposition, despite having lost more than half of their seats in the Assembly of the Republic. In all, similar to the *Izquierda Unida* and *Podemos* in Spain, the Communists and the Left Bloc have been increasing their levels of cooperation in recent years. As previously mentioned, one of their most notable acts of a united populist left front, was in the lead up to formulation of the Socialist Party’s proposed budget for 2022. Prime Minister Costa failed to include specific policies within the budget that would keep housing prices low, and in turn, lost the support of both the Left Bloc and the CDU. As a result, an election was called, and the populist left paid the cost of their actions with a catastrophic electoral performance.

²¹⁴ Mudde 2015

Before the 2022 election disaster for the Left Bloc, polling numbers since the party had entered the confidence and supply agreement with Costa's Socialists in 2015 had remained relatively stable.²¹⁵ The party maintained a solid base and would occasionally pick up other people who were enticed by the parties socially liberal and left-wing approach to populism and Portuguese politics as a whole. Nevertheless, some of Left Bloc's policies remain controversial, and may hamper the party, such as the continued expressed desire by party leaders to eventually abandon the Eurozone and reestablish the Portuguese Escudo as the national currency, a move that would have seismic economic consequence and instability in the markets.²¹⁶ Moreover, the Left Bloc's economic mantra is defined by reinforcing government social welfare programs, challenging the European Union, and combatting austerity, as previously mentioned. Clearly, unlike *Podemos* in Spain, the Left Bloc seems to have stronger sentiments of Euroscepticism and appears ready to challenge the EU on several fronts, despite having also joined the mainstream Socialists in government, unlike the PSOE-*Podemos* alliance. While the party maintains its Eurosceptic stance, it also accepts the fact that the EU remains a relatively popular international institution in Portugal, and as a result, the Left Bloc does not campaign on a full Brexit-style withdrawal from the EU. Rather, the party emphasizes the need for the EU and Portugal's relationship with it to be renegotiated, with a focus on anti-capitalism. In several ways, since the Eurozone crisis, the Left Bloc seemingly sees itself as a pivotal opposition vanguard to many of the EU's policies and the continuation of Troika-imposed austerity.

In several interviews, the Left Bloc leadership seems largely satisfied with its participation in government from the 2015 election to the 2019 election. One of the party's

²¹⁵ Martins 2017 52

²¹⁶ Ibid 52

biggest accomplishments while in government was its ability to mobilize precarious employees of the state and integrate them into the broader Portuguese civil service.²¹⁷ Moreover, the leadership also acknowledged its continued protections for socially marginalized groups, particularly ethnic, religious, and LGBTQ+ minorities. Additionally, the Left Bloc saw itself as beginning to occupy the positions on the left, that were once occupied by the mainstream socialist and social democratic parties. The party feels the need to ensure that the Portuguese welfare state is upheld along with a progressive movement towards social equality and the continued emphasis on workers' rights and labor unions. Additionally, the Left Bloc emphasizes the need in Portugal for the New Left and other political forces to ensure that the populist right, *Chega* in particular, is not able to rise as far as it has in other countries, to ensure that the country does not backslide into the authoritarian legacy of the Salazar regime that continues to hang over the collective memory and protest culture within Portugal.²¹⁸

Similar to *Podemos*, within the case of the Left Bloc, we can observe a New Left party, being brought into the mainstream, cooperating with the center-left. Nevertheless, despite this fact, the New Left maintains many of its leftist positions, largely based on the tenants of democratic socialism, and continuing to combat the short-term issues spawned by the financial crisis. Additionally, these parties maintain their ardent campaigns against the authoritarian legacies within Spain and Portugal, despite many in leadership's minimal experience of actually living under the Franco and Salazar regimes. These factors of collective memory and financial distress drove voter turnout behind the Left Bloc's electoral success in both the 2009 and 2019 European Parliament elections and the 2009, 2015, and 2019 general elections where the Left

²¹⁷ Ibid 53

²¹⁸ Ibid 55

Bloc either made notable gains or held onto its position of leverage within the Assembly of the Republic. Without the position of influence over Socialist and Communist policies, several issue areas of policy-making may have had less of a New Left-wing perspective, and, in turn, the government may have been more conducive of austerity, as the Social Democratic government was.²¹⁹ Moreover, the Left Bloc rose to power, not only by combatting austerity, but also through tools of mobilization that took advantage of the expanding influence of social media.²²⁰ Leftist participation in government in many ways prevented further sliding into the austerity process that was begun by the center-right Social Democratic government in Portugal, despite Costa's more subtle austerity measures that came in the form of tax increases and defense cuts. Nevertheless, due to the legacy of the previous government, the Portuguese welfare state still face immense cuts and other issues that were brought on by austerity.²²¹ In all, the Left Bloc played a pivotal role in attempting to reverse the austerity measures implemented following the Eurozone crisis, which the New Left campaigned on, in order to maintain its political support.

The new Portuguese electoral system put in place after the end of the *Estado Novo* was more centralized than that of the revived Kingdom of Spain following the end of the Falangist/Francoist government in Spain. Portugal gave a lot less autonomy to the regions, which is to be expected, given Portugal is much more ethnically and linguistically unified than Spain. Moreover, the Portuguese Assembly of the Republic is a unicameral body, unlike the bicameral *Cortes Generales*, which contains both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Nevertheless, the regions of Portugal are allocated seats based on their populations, with Lisbon being the largest constituency with 48 seats and with Portalegre, Portuguese-European, and Portuguese-

²¹⁹ David 2018

²²⁰ Accornero, Pinto 2014, 492

²²¹ Petmesidou, Guillén 2014, 301

Overseas constituencies being the smallest with 2 seats each, with a total of 230 seats. When elections take place, seats are allocated to political parties based on proportionality, which is largely standard for most European countries, using the D'Hondt method of proportional representation, and having almost no real electoral threshold beyond what it takes for a party to win one seat. Currently, António Costa's Socialist Party holds the majority in parliament with 120 seats following the January 2022 snap general election that was called after the Left Bloc and Unitary Democratic Coalition reneged on supporting the previous Costa government's budget, citing concerns over funding for housing and other social programs. In turn, the Left Bloc and Communists paid a steep electoral price and were left with only 5 and 6 seats respectively.

The most recent general election proved to be a disappointing one for the Left Bloc, which lost a lot of its political momentum, as the party refused to support the minority government's budget, as originally planned, and in turn, the snap election was largely blamed on the Left Bloc and the Communists. In turn, the Left Bloc paid the consequences and lost 14 seats, having previously held 19 seats in the Assembly. Moreover, several voters seemed to have abandoned the New Left, in favor of either the Socialist Party and the right-wing *Chega* party (ideologically similar to Spain's *Vox*), both of which saw considerable gains. Overall, both the left-wing and the right-wing have taken advantage of the broader dissatisfaction with both the existing political system, created after the Carnation Revolution, and the handling of the financial crisis and austerity. In turn, fuel was provided for the Left Bloc, *Chega*, and others to campaign against a system was considered unjust by the populist party leadership and conveyed "the people versus the elite" message well.

the EU's role in protecting LGBTQ+ migrants and assisting Turkey in fast-tracking refugee requests for those who are in particular danger.²²⁸ In all, the issue areas of refugees and social progressivism continues to be a particularly troubling area for the Iberian New Left, but they have formulated several strategies that help to curtail many of these issues. Additionally, most migrants that arrive and subsequently stay in Iberia are most often from Latin America, which has the added benefit of embracing more socially liberal policies and already speaking Spanish and Portuguese.

²²⁸ Shakhsari 2014, 1002

shaped the policy priorities of these political parties that remains adamantly opposed to colonialism. Moreover, it also has driven these political parties to be pro-refugee, and open to their countries taking in refugees and other pro-immigration policies. However, in the case of Spain and *Podemos*, colonialism is a much less important issue, as the Franco regime maintained very few colonies, and largely gave them up as soon as pressure from Morocco and other countries increased as the Europeans decolonized Africa.

The authoritarian legacies in Spain and Portugal have redefined the political and cultural makeup in both countries. Regularly, as assessed in the previous chapters, both the Left Bloc and *Podemos* have campaigned against the Salazar's and Franco's legacies in Portugal and Spain. Both regimes were deeply seeded within Spanish and Portuguese society, especially within the day-to-day lives of the citizens, through propaganda tools, political suppression, and close cooperation with local institutions and churches.²³¹ The authoritarian regimes have both sympathetic admirers, who remember the relative state of economic stability under the regime, and detractors, often from the New Left, who remember a time of immense oppression and appeal to current protest cultures to continue to combat the legacy. This protest culture allowed these parties to entice voters who felt left behind by the incumbent political systems. Moreover, it created an environment that was conducive for mainstream political parties to be challenged by populist forces that made broad appeals to the electorate, that challenge the perceived political and economic elite. The rhetoric surrounding the narrative seeking to combat European elites would translate into stark electoral rebukes against the political mainstream across southern Europe, including in Spain and Portugal, where the previously bipartisan political systems between the center-right and center-left began to fractionalize.

²³¹ Solsten, Meditz 1988

Similar to other European New Left parties, both *Podemos* and the Left Bloc gained traction during the fall-out from the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent sovereign debt crisis that ravaged the Eurozone, and brought left-wing parties, such as Greece's SYRIZA to the forefront of European politics alongside *Podemos* and the Left Bloc who gained increased leverage against the mainstream center-left. While the populist right was able to make more substantial electoral gains, the New Left, across Europe was able to demonstrate a strong anti-austerity response to the perceived overreach of the EU in attempting to gut popular aspects of the welfare state. Additionally, the growth of the New Left across Europe has produced a new opponent to European integration that is different from that on the right. Rather than decrying a loss of national identities, the New Left forces generally embrace Euroscepticism in terms of combatting a loss of economic autonomy alongside the view of the EU as a neo-liberal institution that does not always have the best interest of the people as its top priority. This falls in line with the ideas perpetuated by Cass Mudde and other on their literature on populist rhetoric where the New Left is created economic scapegoats to justify the endless fight between the people and the elite.²³² These sentiments stemmed directly from the outrage created in the fallout from protest movements, such as the 15-M Movement, that sparked a widespread criticism of the political system across southern Europe, and especially in Iberia.

Within the European Parliament the Left Bloc, *Podemos*, and their allies have helped to pass major EU initiatives that have helped to redefine the EU's approach to critical issues such as immigration and the environment. Moreover, the Left in the European Parliament has moved to create a list of planks that it wishes to accomplish through the EU, despite relative Eurosceptic sentiments still held by some its member-parties. In terms of climate change initiatives, the Left

²³² Mudde 2004, 545-546

calls on the EU to cancel debt for poorer countries that are severely threatened by the intensification of climate change and the reimagining of European infrastructure (physical, financial, and technological) to better handle the effects of climate change.²³³ Simultaneously, the Left Bloc, *Podemos*, and their allies have routinely remained skeptical of other measures such as Troika-imposed austerity measures on member-states and efforts to further integrate the European economy, and they have been especially critical of the Eurozone, especially after the fallout of the financial crisis. Within the EU, both *Podemos* and the Left Bloc have found themselves able to coordinate with like-minded political movements and parties that has opened the door to broader policy successes. Furthermore, these parties contend that the best way to challenge the EU from a left-wing populist standpoint is to do so from within. Pressure applied in the European Parliament, from directly elected officials, allows the European New Left to maintain a voice on the European stage a promote their policies. Routinely, much like the right-wing populists, the European left-wing populist alliance often finds itself at odds with European elites and maintains its position as a contrarian populist opposition.

Broader financial and economic recklessness by the banks and the governments of the EU emboldened the New left movements across Europe. The blame landed on the banks for their reckless behavior and the government for its permissive nature and lack of regulation of the banking industry that led the EU to impose measures following a collapse in Southern Europe's ability to pay off debts. In turn, many of them were led to create plans to strong-arm both the EU and national governments, with threats against the Eurozone and integration, in order to achieve their political objectives.²³⁴ Moreover, these parties often sought threats these threats to spur the

²³³ The Left in the European Parliament 2022

²³⁴ Bortun 2022, 1427

EU to reform itself in line with New Left demands, that often planned to do away with the use of austerity as a condition for European aid and bailout packages, as both Portugal and Spain had been subjected to. Nevertheless, the Spanish and Portuguese leftist movements are unique, in that, there had never been a left-wing strong enough before they rose to prominence and participated in government in the years following the financial crisis. Additionally, these Iberian New Left movements pay particular attention to combatting the authoritarian legacies within Spain and Portugal and do so by appealing to memories of authoritarian rule and colonial ventures that haunt both countries.²³⁵

Additionally, the Iberian New Left stands out from many other New Left parties in Europe based on the age of the prominent New Left political parties. *Podemos* was founded in 2015 and the Left Bloc was founded in 1999, while parties such as the German *Die Linke* and the Swedish Left Party have existed since the Cold War, typically formerly in the form of a communist party. Meanwhile, the Left Bloc and *Podemos*, are defined by a young and charismatic leadership that actively focuses on social progressivism and democratic socialism, and less on traditional Marxist-Leninist tenets. In turn, this leadership often follows the cultures of protest that exist in both countries that have manifested since the end of dictatorship, and seeks to combat authoritarian legacies and ensure that neither country experiences a backsliding.

One particular area where, in an Iberian level context, that the New Left has been particularly strong is in highlighting and combating the conducive role that the Catholic Church played in the Franco and Salazar regimes. In both Spain and Portugal, the authoritarian governments had an extremely close relation with the Catholic Church, which often acted as a platform to boost the governments' message amongst the average populace. This factor was

²³⁵ Campos 2008; Groves 2012; Faber 2021

intensified by the relatively high levels of religiosity and church faithfulness amongst Iberian Catholics, especially due to the Church's long history in both countries. In Spain, Franco went as far as to declare the Catholic Church as the National Church of Spain and officially declared Catholicism to be the only religion in Spain with legal status. Additionally, in Spain, the Catholic Church enjoyed special privileges, alongside a restoration of Church powers that had been removed during the years of the Spanish Republic.²³⁶

The parties have often aligned themselves with other anti-authoritarian and left-wing forces, including smaller political parties, such as the aforementioned Spanish IU and Portuguese CDU. Through these alliances the parties have expanded their networks on the domestic side, alongside the European networks that they have formed. This has been especially successful for *Podemos*, due to Spain's network of regionalist parties within the Autonomous Communities. In turn, *Podemos* has aligned with Catalan, Asturian, Galicians, and other regionalist and progressive nationalist political parties across Spain. Working with ideological allies both at the regional, national, and the European level has allowed for the New Left to increase its voice and its opposition to several policies, most notably the response to the Troika's austerity measures. The New Left in Iberia represents an interesting left-wing pushback against the Troika and the history of Iberian regimes. However, mixed electoral results in recent years makes it hard to gauge if the Iberian New Left was able to push beyond those limiting barriers that exist for most populist parties to actually make solid policy differences and make a change. The parties have participated in government and gotten some concessions out of the political mainstream, so it is at least clear that the parties have not totally failed to deliver on left-wing promises to hold the EU, the banks, and the authoritarian holdover legacy accountable.

²³⁶ Solsten, Meditz 1988

Additionally, the Left Bloc and *Podemos* could be considered a product of the “mutation” of the European Radical Left that began to unfold following the end of the Cold War. Luke March and Cas Mudde emphasize that many of the leftist parties began to abandon traditional communist principles in favor of green politics, democratic socialism, social progressivism, and social populism.²³⁷ Both parties only recently rose to prominence following the financial crisis, before that, neither Spain nor Portugal had experienced a prominent New Left movement as other countries in Europe had. Additionally, the New Left was uniquely defined by the authoritarian legacies, in the sense that the leaders of both parties look back on the autocratic past of Spain and Portugal with sorrow and seek to continue to remove influences of the Salazar and Franco regimes from modern politics. Moreover, these “mutated” left-wing parties have generated their own uniquely Iberian brand by appealing to protest cultures and disavowing the wars fought during the Cold War to maintain Spanish and Portuguese colonies, primarily in Africa. For now, it remains unclear whether or not the New Left in Iberia will undergo the transformation, moderation, and mainstreaming that Green Parties have undergone elsewhere within the coming years.

However, it should also be noted that the European New Left, including the Left Bloc and *Podemos*, is moving toward a less politically radical route. While maintaining many populist elements and continuing their challenge against the EU, much of the New Left, as part of the “mutation” have shifted their ideology more toward social democracy, that the European center-left once occupied.²³⁸ In many ways, the New Left has taken its place as a significant contributor to the decline of the traditional European center-left and social democratic parties. However, in

²³⁷ March, Mudde 2005, 32-36

²³⁸ Ibid 43

work with other parties has helped the parties to leave the fringes of politics and be taken seriously by the mainstream political parties, unlike other populist forces across Europe. Nevertheless, these parties continue to sharply criticize the political mainstream and call out injustices within their countries' respective political systems.²⁴³ They continue to approach the EU with a soft Euroscepticism and maintain that Franco and Salazar's legacies are still alive and well within Spain and Portugal. They continue to point out both legal practices and the educational approach to their countries' histories as proof of an authoritarian legacy that is alive and well within the political and societal systems.

²⁴³ Acevado et al. 2012; Faber 2021

the vote. Meanwhile *Podemos*, through its bombastic populist and anti-establishment approach, easily won nearly 15 percent of the vote and even absorbed the IU into its own alliances. Moreover, the Left Bloc immediately sought to differentiate itself from the Portuguese Communists, who were less socially progressive, to attract younger and educated voters, while also continuing to support labor policies similar to those of the communists. From this we can determine that the rise of the New Left in Iberia stems from more than just the absence of a left-wing populist force, as they already existed in Spain and Portugal, and they are distinctly different from them. In all, though this counterargument seems enticing, it falls flat on the case of hard evidence of *Podemos* and the Left Bloc simply playing a role that has long existed in Iberian politics rather than a new role defined by uniquely Iberian New Left and an anti-authoritarian legacy approach.

Alternatively, some theoretical detractors would contend that the authoritarian legacies in Spain and Portugal hindered rather than helped the eventual formation of a New Left political force. Unlike many other European countries, Spain and Portugal did not have a substantial New Left political force until the events surrounding the economic crisis unfolded. Meanwhile, other countries, such as Germany and Sweden, had already had New Left political parties that had supported government legislation and had become an integral part of their countries' respective political makeup. While left-wing forces, such as the IU and the PCP have remained somewhat notable in Iberian politics, neither party has been able to truly break through Iberian politics, though the PCP, through its participation in the CDU with the Portuguese Greens, has garnered considerable support. The argument would contend that systemic repression of the left by the Franco and Salazar regimes resulted in a fragmented left-wing that was unable to form a New Left party. Nevertheless, the argument that the legacies have pushed the New Left back is

surrounding left-wing politics, New Left movements began to rise across Europe. In Iberia, they were slower to rise, but that is not due to the limits placed on them by the Salazar and Franco regimes. Rather, it was a phenomenon that remained to the political fringes in Spanish and Portuguese politics that only came to fruition when the chaos of the financial crisis ensued. Subsequently, this led to the message of the Iberian New left catching on, first through the form of protest movements, the 15-M Movement in particular, and eventually evolving into full-fledged political parties that were able to successfully contest elections with an anti-establishment message that challenged the existing party duopolies in Spain (PP and PSOE) and Portugal (PSD and PS).

In all several potential counterarguments against the ideas proposed in this paper do exist and offer up interesting alternatives. While many of them do offer some insight, for the most part, they do not hold. In particular, many of these potential counterarguments focus solely on smaller issues that are usurped by the broader picture associated with the rise of the Iberian New Left. Many fail to recognize the sheer importance of the two independent variables that I have observed in this project, the long-run effects of the authoritarian legacy of Franco and Salazar and the short-run catalyst effect of the financial crisis and austerity. These historical events acted as harbingers of outrage amongst the Spanish and Portuguese electorate, especially amongst younger and educated voters. In turn, the Left Bloc and *Podemos* saw themselves rise through the polls on a wave of protest and desperation. People wanted political change, as the mainstream center-right and center-left failed to provide, and the EU continued to enforce harshly imposed austerity measures. The outrage became protests and votes that translated into success. However, over time, as the political arena began to return to normalcy, the populist

surge began to die out, and not it remains unclear if the Iberian New Left will continue to maintain strong results.

Additionally, the biggest criticism of the EU from the New Left was that the EU did not give Spain and Portugal a chance to play an active role in making reforms following the fallout of the financial crisis. They claim that Spain and Portugal should have been given more autonomy and not had austerity forced onto them as a condition for the bailout. However, it should also be considered that had the Troika not intervened, even more catastrophic economic effects could have ensued.

The financial crisis had a tumultuous effect on the daily lives of Spanish and Portuguese citizens. Unemployment levels skyrocketed as austerity measures gutted social programs and the welfare state. The New Left promised to combat these measures, through the funding of government programs and promotion of social rights. The economic impacts of the financial crisis and the actions of the Troika forever left the Iberians with some taste for Euroscepticism. Both the Left Bloc and *Podemos*, despite their history of alliances with the mainstream left, have also been relatively critical of the EU and many of its “capitalistic” policies. Moreover, they often question many of the European Commission’s initiatives that are perceived to undermine some degree of national sovereignty.²⁵⁷ The Troika and its actions have left a distinct sentiment of dissatisfaction among many Iberian citizens that turned them to the aforementioned protest movements and eventually toward the New Left. The Left Bloc and *Podemos* were especially successful at attracting new supporters who were younger and often had some degree of a university education. These parties also appealed to protest culture sentiments that are prominent amongst the youth, especially those who are the children of activists who originally protested the Franco and Salazar regimes. New Left and academic critics of austerity, such as Mark Blyth, have argued that the Troika’s austerity measures have only worsened the economic situation,

²⁵⁷ Iglesias 2015; Martins 2017

raises many questions as to whether the New Left has abandoned the working class focus of the Old Left to focus on bringing in progressive university educated and urban middle class supporters.

In all, this study has revealed several pivotal and important factors pertaining to the Iberian New Left. Most importantly, it has demonstrated how the co-acting independent variables of the long-term authoritarian legacy and the instantaneous effects of the financial crisis stimulated the rise of the uniquely Iberian protest and left-wing political movement. In turn, these parties have been able to appeal directly to Iberian fears and concerns. Furthermore, the Left Bloc and *Podemos* have been able to combat right-wing political forces and admirers of the authoritarian legacies. Additionally, the Iberian New Left has successfully bargained with the mainstream political forces in an attempt to promote leftist political initiatives and promote progressivism. From all this, we can interpret that to some degree, the history of Spain and Portugal under the Franco and Salazar dictatorships did have a seismic impact on modern day politics, and it especially influenced the rise of a New Left political force that centered on a cultural protest against authoritarianism that was sparked by the financial crisis and enforced austerity measures. Overall, the case of the Iberian New Left is a unique political and social development that was guided along by historical precedent and a conducive political environment that stymied the abilities of the traditional (yet, unofficial) Iberian bipartisan system between the center-right (PSD and PP) and center-left (PS and PSOE).

In all, the New Left's participation in governing coalitions has had a monumental impact both in terms of policy implications and notoriety. The participation of the Left Bloc in a coalition with the PS and CDU and the decision of *Podemos* and its allies to support the PSOE government. During the time of the coalition, Iberian political dynamics and policies shifted

The future for the Iberian New Left seems uncertain at the moment, despite being able to participate in government, the parties have also declined some in opinion polls and recent elections. In some ways, due to their close cooperation with the Spanish PSOE and the Portuguese PS, much of the support and ideological fervor for *Podemos* and the Left Bloc has been captured by the mainstream, especially as political anger from the fallout of the financial crisis continues to die down to a certain extent. Due to close cooperation with the center-left, in many ways, it would seem that the New Left in Iberia has been coopted as an ally of convenience for the mainstream left, especially in the case of PSOE and *Podemos* deciding to renew their alliance ahead of the 2023 *Cortes Generales* elections.²⁶³ While the ultimate trend of recent decline in electoral performance for the Iberian New Left is not fully understood yet, there are several factors to consider. One important issue, especially in the case of Spain and *Podemos*, is the breakdown in unity amongst New Left leaders. In the November 2019 general election, one of *Podemos*'s founders, Íñigo Errejón, announced his cooperation with the regionalist *Más Madrid* party to launch a national level Green-aligned *Más País* party. Additionally, several political leaders and activists have become dissatisfied with *Podemos* under Pablo Iglesias's leadership, especially due to his accommodation toward PSOE and disappointing electoral performance. Another potential factor that could continue to hinder the electoral performance of the Iberian New Left is the rightward trends preset in Iberia. Recent opinion polling in both Spain and Portugal has shown that the center-right PP and PSD and the right-wing *Vox* and *Chega* have both seen recent gains in terms of public opinion and election predictions.²⁶⁴

²⁶³ Fresneda 2022

²⁶⁴ Resende 2022

Portugal, and these trends are likely to continue. The electoral systems of Iberia and Europe as a whole maintain a conducive environment for the multi-party-political system that sustains the New Left, based on Duverger's Theory. Additionally, if outrage and anxiety levels concerning economic matters remain high in Spain and Portugal, *Podemos* and the Left Bloc will continue to be able to sustain their numbers.

The Iberian New Left has become a unique political force that was born out of the financial crisis and fueled by a desire for true change in Spain and Portugal. These parties sought to remove the remaining vestiges of the Franco and Salazar regimes, that they and many of the protestors present during the early days of the 15-M Protests and other Iberian anti-austerity protests. Moreover, their movements have been fueled by a collective memory and a culture of protest, against what is perceived to be a government overreach that undermines the average person, particularly austerity measures, and this reminds many of the years before the *Transición*. As the financial crisis grows to become an increasingly distant memory in Spain and Portugal, it remains unclear how the New Left will shift its policy priorities and rhetoric to account for this. As it would seem, especially in Spain, immigration across the Mediterranean is becoming an increasingly more turbulent political issue, and the pro-migrant and refugee stance could prove to be fertile campaign ground for the New Left. Moreover, the importance of the authoritarian legacy also remains unclear, and would largely depend on if the generational protest culture, as is what inspired figures such as Caterina Martins and Pablo Iglesias, persists. If party leadership continues to pass on the culture of protest and anti-establishment sentiments, then the New Left could possibly sustain its electoral success. Finally, based on the current factors, the Iberian New Left remains an interesting case for future study.

