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«Economic crisis, value change and policy representation: a quasi-experimental test for the “representation from above” theory in Portugal »,
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Abstract

This paper examines the effects of the economic crisis on representation linkages between politicians and voters in Portugal. One central question we investigate is whether the move of the right-wing parties (especially the PSD) further to the right, in terms of their policy agenda, is reflected in the attitudes and behaviour of Portuguese political figures, in particular MPs. If so, are the same trends observed among voters? In other words, can a leadership effect be detected in the representation process (also described as «representation from above»). Or, on the contrary (i.e., if the right-wing parties moved to the right but the voters stayed in their previous positions or even move in the opposite direction), has the crisis led to a greater discrepancy between the representatives and the represented, accentuating the signs of a crisis in representation in terms of representation of substantive policy preferences (and underlying value orientations)? We have a very rich set of surveys that, although based on a single case study, can provide a crucial test for the “representation from above” theory in Portugal. Namely, we have two surveys on both voters and MPs, which were fielded right in the beginning of the 2008 economic crisis (March – July 2008) and after the effects of the crisis were deeply felt by both the voters and the MPs (October 2012 – March 2013). These surveys have extensive batteries on position issues which allow us to measure underlying value orientations at both the elite and voters level (the same questionnaires were fielded across levels and across time), and especially their change between 2008 and 2012-13. Thus, using the 2008 economic crisis as a quasi-experiment, these four sets of surveys will allow us to perform a crucial test on the effects of a deep economic crisis on value change and political representation, namely providing a crucial test for the «representation from above» theory.

Keywords:

Political Leadership, Representation, Elites, Voting, (Economic Crisis, Value Change, Policy Representation)
Introduction

On the legislative election of 27 September 2009, the centre-left PS (Socialist Party), which has been governing with an overall majority of seats in Parliament, lost a considerable number of deputies (see Freire, 2010; Magalhães, 2012). The second government led by the PS prime-minister José Sócrates was therefore a minority one. Its agenda presented some continuity with the goals of the previous mandate—the enhancement of the economy’s performance and reducing the unemployment rates, the modernisation of the country and, last but not least, the consolidation of public finances. The government also aimed to strengthen investment in healthcare, education, culture and science, as well as grant social protection to families and the poor at a time of economic crisis.

However, the deepening international crisis and its impact on the Portuguese state of affairs lead to an absolutely different pattern of government action vis-à-vis the original electoral manifesto. I.e., faced with that crisis situation, the government implemented a series of measures aimed at reducing public expenditure—the first Stability and Growth Programme (PEC—Programa de Estabilidade e Crescimento). President Cavaco Silva and the new leader of the centre-right PSD (Social Democratic Party), Passos Coelho, were supportive of such measures. A second set of measures was introduced in May. However, the Portuguese economy was still not healing, and the sovereign debt crisis became more problematic in the summer of 2010, when several rating agencies downgraded Portugal’s debt. After the summer, the government presented a third PEC aimed at reducing the Portuguese deficit to 7.3 per cent in 2010 and below the threshold of 3 per cent in 2012. The new austerity package for 2010–2011 included cuts in the salaries of public sector employees (that could be as high as 10 per cent); reduction of expenditure on social programmes; freezing of pensions and promotions; and an increase in VAT and other taxes.
The three consecutive austerity packages (PEC I-III) had a cost in terms of people’s expectations. Trust in government also suffered a decline, namely due to a series of political scandals involving the Portuguese prime-minister (see Magalhães, 2012). The second victory of the incumbent President in January 2011 was another setback for Sócrates. President Silva started his second mandate with a comfortable vote share and a large percentage advantage over the second placed candidate, the PS supported Manuel Alegre. Not needing to ensure institutional cooperation any more, the president increased his criticism of the government, the political position of which was already weak.

At the beginning of 2011, the austerity measures had still not had a strong positive impact on the economic situation (Magalhães, 2012). In March 2011, however, a fourth austerity package was announced by the minister of finances without the participation or knowledge of other parties or the President—a move that allegedly would cost the government the support of the PSD. The left-wing Left Bloc (BE – Bloco de Esquerda) was also a strong adversary of what was known as PEC IV, having presented a motion of no censure in the parliament on 10 March and having refused any collaboration with the government. On 23 March, following parliament’s rejection of PEC 4, Sócrates resigned.

Sócrates had openly avoided seeking external aid, a position viewed by some observers as serving not only his political interests, but, drawing on what had happened in Ireland and Greece, the nation’s interest as well. However, the odds of having to resort to external assistance were known to be very high should the government fall. In fact, in the spring of 2011, following Sócrates’s resignation, the country was targeted for a direct intervention from the Troika: the Portuguese bailout by the IMF, ECB, and EC. This agreement was signed by the PS, the PSD and the Social Democratic Centre-Popular Party (CDS-PP), while the BE and the Communist Party (PCP-PEV) refused to even attend the meetings prior to the agreement.
Cavaco Silva scheduled new elections for 5 June. The party manifestos were quite eloquent about the differences in the marketplace of political ideas in the 2011 electoral campaign. The PS manifesto emphasised the idea of defending Portugal and dedicated a considerable amount of space to the summary of the achievements of both of Sócrates’s governments. Afterwards, the PS presented seven strategic goals that were already present in their 2009 manifesto: to improve the qualifications of the workforce; to encourage energy efficiency; to improve the export sector; to invest in science; to extend the digital network to cover the entire country; and to increase the quality of the healthcare system and social infrastructures. On the other hand, the PSD produced a programme concerned with restoring international credibility and to develop Portugal by means of a series of cuts in state expenditure, privatisations, and cuts to the social security system. The deregulation of the job and rental markets was also part of this party’s manifesto.

The CDS-PP chose This is the moment as the title of its very to-the-point manifesto. The major concerns were to pay down the debt and strengthen the public finances (by selling the state’s assets), fostering economic growth (by deregulating the job market and stimulating the creation of self-employment), avoid social exclusion (in particular through the action of private institutions from the social and volunteer sectors) and allowing social mobility through meritocracy.

On the left of the ideological spectrum, the BE and the PCP defended the idea that the debt should be audited and renegotiated, since the current aid programme helps the owners of the nation’s debt rather than the country itself and would, in this way, harm national sovereignty.

**Insert Figure 1 around here**

Overall, the result of the 2011 election was a serious defeat for all of the parties on the left (for the centre-left, which had been in power since 2005, and the radical-left which proved itself incapable of cooperating with the PS), a defeat that paved the way for the
most neoliberal government in Portuguese history, especially due to a significant move to the right of the PSD. Additional and more recent evidence shows that the current right-wing government has been using this crisis and the Troika bailout as a “window of opportunity” to pass a radical neoliberal program that would have had much difficulty to enforced without the protection of Troika umbrella (Moury and Freire, 2013). This further move to right of the PSD, both in the 2011 elections and especially by the end of 2012 (the more recent mass survey), can be clearly witnessed in Figure 1. Based on representative samples of the adult population living in the mainland, in Figure 1 we can see that, according to Portuguese citizens’ perceptions of parties location on the left-right scale from 1978 until 2012, the PSD move to the right was already perceived as such by voters in the 2011 elections (average changed from 7.5 to 7.6), but was even more pronounced in late 2012 (average of 8.0, the furthest to the right ever for the PSD). Additionally, in late 2012 the PSD is even to the right of the conservative CDS-PP (7.6, one of the less rightist positions for CDS ever). The radical left (PCP/CDU and BE) move to left, especially if we consider the late 2012 survey as compared with 2009 (PCP: 2.9 to 2.5; BE: 3.0 to 2.6).

But in the 2011 elections voters also voted for stability: the right-wing parties have shown they can cooperate and that they are willing to do so: as expected, they formed a coalition government very quickly and in a very discrete and orderly fashion. On the other hand, on several occasions since the democratic transition (and since 2005) the left has shown that the different parties are unable and unwilling to cooperate with each other (March and Freire, 2012). Moreover, based on a preliminary analysis of the Portuguese National Election Study 2011, Pedro Magalhães (2012) showed that voters’ options were not so much based on policy preferences (which have been ever since shown to be mostly leftist in terms of the role of the state in economy and society: Freire, 2009) but much more based on (negative) performance evaluations of the incumbent (PS) government.
Considering the context just described, this paper examines the effects of the economic crisis on representation linkages between politicians and voters in Portugal. One central question we investigate is whether the move of the right-wing parties (especially the PSD) further to the right, in terms of their policy agenda, is reflected in the attitudes and behaviour of Portuguese political figures, in particular MPs. If so, are the same trends observed among voters? In other words, can a leadership effect be detected in the representation process (also described as «representation from above»). Or, on the contrary (i.e., if the right-wing parties moved to the right but the voters stayed in their previous positions or even move in the opposite direction), has the crisis led to a greater discrepancy between the representatives and the represented, accentuating the signs of a crisis in representation in terms of representation of substantive policy preferences? To theoretically frame the paper we rely on theories about crisis exploitation, about political representation and concerning «leadership democracy».

To test our hypotheses we have a rich set of surveys. Namely, we have two surveys on both voters and MPs, which were fielded right in the beginning of the 2008 economic crisis and after the effects of the crisis were deeply felt by both the voters and the MPs. Using the 2008 economic crisis as a «quasi-experiment», these four sets of surveys will allow us to perform a crucial test on the effects of a deep economic crisis on value change and political representation, namely providing a crucial test for the «representation from above» theory.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section we present the theories that will frame our paper and derive from them our hypotheses. In the third section we describe data and methods we use in the paper. The fourth substantive section analyze the changes in both MPs’ and voters’ value orientations, and how the representation link between the representatives and the represented evolved between 2008 and 2012-13, in terms of
substantive policy preferences (economic and non-economic issues). The paper ends with concluding notes.

**Theory and hypotheses**

Since we want to analyse the effects of the economic crisis on political representation, we begin to define crisis exploitation and framing (Boin et al., 2009; t’ Hart and Tindall, 2009). When faced with severe crisis political leaders/party leaders and their contenders are faced with five fundamental tasks: sense making, decision making, meaning making, terminating, learning, policy change (Boin et al., 2005). In the present paper, we concentrate on the second (sense making/framing) and the fifth (policy change/policy choice) fundamental tasks associated with a crisis that political leaders are faced with (see Boin et al., 2009; t’ Hart and Tindall, 2009).

When faced with a crisis, political actors produce different interpretations and frames to understand and deal with it which are constrained by the actors’ values, interests and positions. Three situations are possible. Crisis is defined as a non-event, i.e., there is a denial that the events represent more than an unfortunate accident (Boin et al., 2009: p. 84), which imply that there is no one to be blamed (Type 1). The second frame (Type 2) occurs when there is acknowledgment of the crisis, but it is understood as a critical threat to the collective good embodied in the status quo, and thus there is «a predisposition to defend the agents (incumbent office-holders) and tools (existing policies and organizational practices) of that status quo against criticism (Boin et al., 2009: p. 84).» This is the situation that can perhaps best be applied to the incumbent socialist government in 2011. Finally, the when the crisis is understood as a critical opportunity (Type 3), usually by the opposition, there is the tendency to focus the blame on status quo agents and dysfunctional policies, and try to mobilize support for their removal and/or substantial change. This is the situation that can perhaps best be applied to the right-wing opposition (PSD and CDS-PP) in 2011 and afterwards, as well as to the radical left in the 2011 elections.
Again bearing on the work by Boin et al (2009) and t’ Hart and Tindall (2009); we pass from crisis framing to the two crucial dimensions of crisis exploitation. First, “the political game”, i.e., the two interrelated issues of blame attribution (by the opposition, the mass media, the voters) – absolve versus focus - and assumption of responsibility by the incumbents – accept versus deny – and their political consequences. Here our position is that, in 2011, the right-wing opposition tried to focus the blame (almost exclusively) on the socialist incumbent (Moury and Freire, 2013). The latter accepted it in the beginning (with the new leadership, António José Seguro) but since late 2012 began to reject it. Second, there is the “policy game”, i.e., the interaction between orientations towards policy change (“press for policy paradigm shift” versus “press for incremental reform”) and the attitudes from status-quo players (“resist policy change” versus “contain policy change”) vis-à-vis change advocates. On the one hand, some change in the PS stance took place during the current term, namely some move from a “contain policy change” strategy to a “resist policy change” strategy (Moury and Freire, 2013). On the other hand, it has been shown that the right-wing parties, but especially the PSD, have been using the crisis and the Troika MoU as an opportunity for push forward neoliberal reforms that have low support among the population: “press for policy paradigm shift”.

But the fundamental focus of our paper is about how those ideological moves and strategic changes relate to political representation, namely to theories of «representation from below» and «representation from above»/«leader democracy». There is a branch of studies about political representation (see Powell, 2004) that follow the path laid out by Warren Miller and Donald Stokes in their celebrated article in the American Political Science Review (1963). These authors established a tradition of empirical research into political representation in which the underlying assumption is that the congruence between the political preferences of the elected representatives and those they represent, particularly when the preferences of the elected representatives correspond with the behaviour of the
legislators in parliament, is a key part of the quality of political representation. That is to say the greater the degree of congruence between the preferences of the electorate and the deputies, the greater the probability the electorate will feel themselves to be well represented and the greater the probability the legislators (and the government) will act in accordance with the people’s preferences, which is a basic axiom of any representative democracy (Manin, Stokes and Przeworski, 1999).

As with «the responsible party model» (see Thomassen and Schmitt 1999), the congruence model can also be accused of presenting a populist theory of democracy, particularly because of the bottom-up perspective it adopts in respect of the political representation process, which places a great deal of emphasis on the electorate’s preferences and on the need for congruence between the actions of the deputies and their constituents as a crucial aspect of the quality of political representation. However, some empirical studies have shown there is also a structuring of policy preferences made from the top down (i.e., by the elected representatives and the parties) which is a type of ‘representation from above’ (Esaiasson and Holmberg, 1996).

From a more theoretical perspective, the congruence model seems to provide an antagonistic perspective of the ‘non-imperative mandate’, and because of this it seems to suggest the elected representative is a kind of delegate of the voters, bringing into question the extent of the independence and autonomy usually associated with the concept of a ‘non-imperative mandate’ and the fundamental idea that deputies are elected to represent the nation and not just their constituents. An opposite view is rooted in the idea of the independent mandate (of the representative in the political representation process) associated with the concept of the ‘non-imperative mandate’, is fundamentally derived from the views expressed by Edmund Burke.

These different models of representation are not only related with different visions of the relations between the represented and the representatives, and of the role of the MP
in the representation link, they are also related with different visions of democracy and of the role that the political leaders have in each one of them. According to Körösényi (2009), who contrasted the major assumptions and the fundamental perspectives about the democratic process of two “visions of democracy”, the so-called “classical democracy” vision (or the “aggregative-pluralist democracy”: see Körösényi, 2005) and the “leader democracy” vision, the neglect of leadership in the “classical vision”/the “aggregative-pluralist democracy” is due to the fact that it contradicts some of its fundamental assumptions (see Körösényi, 2009; Femia, 2009; Slomp, 2009). More important for our objectives in the present paper is the element of “leadership democracy” vis-à-vis the “classical vision”. In the latter vision of democracy the political and electoral processes are mainly conceived as bottom-up processes: citizens’ preferences (i.e., “the will of the people”) are the fundamental input in the political-electoral process, and the representatives have first and foremost to take those preferences into account and at least, to a certain extent, act as “delegates” to enforce them in the legislative process. Responsiveness is thus the major function provided by the elections in the representative process. To the contrary, in “leader democracy” the political and electoral processes are generated by the political leaders, and “the popular will” is “an empty space” (i.e., it is not an exogenous element in the political and electoral processes) in a sense that it is shaped by the action of political leaders. Policy programs are presented by leaders not by citizens, political supply does structure public opinion, and voters are there mainly to select leaders and to make them accountable to the citizenry. Thus, according to “leader democracy”, to provide for accountability is the major function of elections in the representative process. To put it another way, the political and electoral processes are mainly conceived as top-down, from leaders to citizens, and not the other way around: “the political process itself is generated by the rivalry of political leaders. Leaders are initiators and persuaders who manipulate the political process. They strive to shape rather than follow public opinion and ‘the will of the people’. In this way, issue-vote
cannot be separated from their role, since instigation, agenda-setting and manipulation of preferences are among the primary roles of leaders (Körösényi, 2009: 99, italics ours).”

We see these two models of democracy as ideal-types; thus we believe that the two are not necessarily completely incompatible in practice. Considering what we said before in terms of ideological moves of the major parties in 2011 and afterwards (i.e., that since 2011 there has been a clear move to the right in terms of policy agenda by the right-wing parties, especially the PSD: the current right-wing government has been using this crisis and the Troika bailout as a “window of opportunity” to pass a radical neoliberal program; voters’ perceptions of parties’ locations on the left-right scale clearly show that the voters have a clear picture of those ideological shifts), we see four scenarios in terms of concurrent moves of the voters (Esaiasson and Holmberg, 1996: pp. 104-105).

First, if the position of MPs (2008 to 2012-13) moves towards that of the voters, and positions of the latter are either stable or reinforced in the same direction, we can talk about bottom-up/from below representation.

Second, if the position of voters (2008-2012) moves in a direction towards that of the MPs (2008), and positions of the latter are either stable or reinforced in the same direction, we can talk about top-down/from above representation.

Third, «confluential dynamic representation» is when both voters and MPs move close to each other in the opinion, departing from different starting points.

A final possibility is called «disconnecting dynamic representation» is when voters and MPs move in opposite directions, but departing from a similar initial position. As Esaiasson and Holmberg (1996: p. 107) argue “dynamic representation does not necessarily mean change. Unchanging opinion positions and stable relations between voters and representatives are of course theoretically possible (...) and should be characterized as ‘steady-state dynamic representation’”.

12
Based on these four scenarios, we formulate four major hypotheses. We believe that given the move of the right-wing parties (and probably their MPs) to the right, especially in terms of economic left-right values (see below for a theoretical and operational definition), the more probable situation is that (right-wing) voters either stay still or move in the opposite direction, thus a «disconnecting dynamic representation» scenario is the most probable on the right: Hypothesis 1 (H1). This expectation relies on two major facts of Portuguese politics. First, Portuguese voters, overall and across parties, have always displayed more leftist economic values (fighting inequalities, strong role of the state in education, health and social security, etc.), in the economic left-right dimension, and also more authoritarian (conservative) values, in the authoritarian-libertarian dimension (see Freire, 2008, 2009; Freire and Belchior, 2011 and 2013; see also Knutsen, 1997).

In terms of the move of the left-wing parties’ MPs, we expect a probable move to the left in terms of value preferences the economic left-right dimension, especially among the radical left parties (BE and PCP). Due to economic crisis and the dominance of neoliberal proposals as solutions espoused by both the Troika and the right-wing parties, we expect that the left-wing MPs will trend to stress core positions concerning inequalities and the role of the state in the education, health and social security (economic left value orientations). This might affect less the PS both it has been shown to be the most congruent party in terms of MPs-voters congruence concerning the economic left-right dimension (at least when we do not take into account voters’ heterogeneity); on the contrary, it has been shown the radical left parties are significantly to the left of their electorates (at least when we do not take into account voters’ heterogeneity) (Freire and Belchior, 2013: 10; Belchior and Freire, 2013: 281-282). On the contrary, the (radical left) voters are not only more moderate than their MPs (Freire and Belchior, 2013: 10; Belchior and Freire, 2013: 281-282), they are also much less sophisticated and ideological, and thus there are not much reasons to think that at least in the first years of the crisis voters will
react in a clear ideological way. Thus, our second hypothesis predicts also a «disconnecting dynamic representation» scenario on the radical left: Hypothesis 2 (H2).

Overall, these several elements incline us to predict an increase in polarization, across the economic left-right value dimension, at the elite (MPs)/party level but which is not matched with a similar move at the level of voters: Hypothesis 3 (H3).

Finally, considering that this crisis will give increasing salience in economic left-right issues (and underlying value divides), and will not give front stage to cultural values (like the ones related with the authoritarian-libertarian divide), we don’t expect much change across the authoritarian-libertarian value dimension of conflict. Thus, we don’t expect much change concerning this latter dimension, meaning that the right-wing MPs will remain clearly more aligned (more congruent) with their voters that the left-wing MPs vis-à-vis their constituents, as previous studies have shown (Freire and Belchior, 2013; Belchior and Freire, 2013): Hypothesis 4 (H4).

Data and methods
Our empirical investigation relies on the use four surveys conducted in Portugal in 2008 and in 2012-13. The mass surveys relied on multi-stage probabilistic samples of Portuguese citizens living on the mainland and aged 18 or over (N2008=1350; N2012=1209). Some weighting in terms of age, sex and education (2008 Survey: fieldwork April-July) and also in terms of region and habitat (2012 Survey: fieldwork September-October) was applied to move the sample even closer to the population profile. The same questionnaires were also used in the same years to surveys the Portuguese MPs (mid 2008; June 2012 - May 2013). In both cases, Since the response rate and pattern of responses to the MPs surveys (N2008=143/230=62.2 per cent; N2012=123/230= 53.5 per cent) resulted in some deviations vis-à-vis the Parliament’s composition, we weighted the sample by party and sex to give a closer profile of the population.
Insert Tables 1-4 here

To measure issue preferences and their underlying value orientations we asked both MPs and Electors to state their level of agreement or disagreement (scale 1 to 5) to several issue statements (see Tables 1-4). But before proceeding a definition of values is due. Values are not directly observable conceptions of the desirable world (Van Deth and Scarbrough 1995: 21–47). When forming an opinion, often they will rely on general ideological schemas and/or value orientations to evaluate specific issues (Gunther and Kuan 2007: 263–66). Thus, values are a kind of organization of general principles that help citizens save information costs, cope with the complexities of the political world and arrive at political decisions. In terms of the ‘funnel of causality’ metaphor for voting, values are said to be long-term predispositions and are located near the base of the funnel (Thomassen 2005: 7–17). On the contrary, issues are usually considered to be short-term factors. However, position issues ‘are often a reflection of the same domains of conflict as the value dimensions just discussed’ (Thomassen 2005: 17).

When talking about sets of conflicting values, a distinction is often made between value conflicts related to ‘old’ and ‘new’ politics. The value conflicts characteristic of ‘old’ politics are those related to the major industrial and pre-industrial cleavages, respectively class and religion: the conflict over what here we call «left-right economic values», and which others refer to as the division between «left and right materialism» (Knutsen, 1997), and the conflict between religious versus secular values, respectively. As for the value conflict embedded in the ‘new’ politics setting, some (Inglehart, 1997) argue about a major conflict between «materialist and post-materialist values» in modern societies, while others contend the major axis of value conflict characteristics in the ‘new’ politics setting is between «libertarians and authoritarians» (Flanagan and Lee 2003; Flanagan, 1987). What Flanagan calls libertarian value orientations and what Inglehart calls post-materialist value orientations are basically the same thing: emphasising personal and political liberty; the
defence of citizen participation in decision-making; equality; tolerance towards minorities, divergent opinions and alternative life-styles; emphasis on environmental protection; and issues related to the quality of life. Libertarians tend to vote for left-wing parties, and particularly for new-left parties (Flanagan, 1987). The differences between Flanagan and Inglehart revolve around the materialist pole. According to the former, materialistic values are characterized by the importance given to economic questions. Flanagan believes authoritarian values underlie attitudes, such as being concerned with law and order, having respect for authority, giving priority to discipline and duty, patriotism and intolerance towards minorities and being supportive of traditional moral and religious values. Authoritarians tend to vote for right-wing parties, and especially for new-right parties (Flanagan, 1987). We also stick to Flanagan’s framework.

Following the previous work by one of us in Freire & Belchior (2013), the issue statements referred above were arranged in two subsets that can be said to measure the underlying “economic left-right” and the “libertarian-authoritarian” value divides (Tables 1-4). We also used the same issues for both years (2008-2012/13) and levels (voters and MPs) to enrich and update our comparative analysis. All scales were recoded so that higher value means either economic right or authoritarian positions. After applying the Cronbach Alpha to each dimension, we have arrived at two additive indexes of position preferences. Please note that for the creation of both indices for some of the years we removed one of the variables in order to increase the internal consistency of the variables within the indices (see Tables 2-5). All the solutions are either good («economic left-right value» dimension for MPs) or at least reasonable/acceptable («libertarian-authoritarian value» dimension for MPs; «economic left-right value» dimension for voters). The only problematic situation concerns the «libertarian-authoritarian value» dimension for voters: serious doubts can be raised here about the existence of a latent variable, i.e., of an underlying value orientation. However, trying to come to alternative solutions with PCA (Principal Components
Analysis) we arrived to no better solution, and several tests were made (see data in Appendix). Considering this, as well as the fact that we need to compare similar sets of variables («value divides») both across levels and across time, we stick to the solution proposed in Tables 1-4.

**MPs’ and voters’ issue attitudes and underlying value orientations, 2008 to 2012-13**

**Voters’ and MPs’ positions on the Economic Left-Right Index**

There has been a long debate in political science concerning the content of the left-right divide, however there has always been a correlation, at least at the level of voters, between the left-right dimension and classical economic issues related to the class cleavage (e.g. Knutsen 1997; Freire, 2008). However, this correlation has been traditionally weaker in Portugal due to a number of factors, such as comparatively low levels of education, political interest, political sophistication and, above all, low polarization at the party level (Freire and Belchior 2013: 7; Freire and Belchior, 2011; Freire 2008). Nevertheless when comparing the positions of MPs and voters on the economic left-right index for the 2008 dataset, it was interesting to observe a high degree of congruence between representatives and the electorate (data not shown due to spatial limitations), especially on the left (Figure 2) (see also Freire and Belchior 2013: 9).

*Insert Figure 2 here*

This image is not reproduced in the case of the 2012 for the overall sample (data not shown due to spatial limitations): the masses remained pretty much leftist (mode of around 1,9 in a 1-5 scale); the MPs became more polarized (moved from a single mode, around 1,9, to bimodal distribution, with one mode around 1,5 and another mode around 3,2). Even though the positions of voters remain virtually unchanged, there is a marked move of MPs to more economically rightist positions. This seems to confirm H2 concerning more polarization at the elite level, but not at the mass level, in this first dimension. Examining
Figure 2 and the movements by party across this «economic left-right value dimension», it becomes clear that the rightward move among MPs can be attributed mostly to the MPs of PSD, which was the only parliamentary party group that exhibited a move to the right, and this was a statistically significant move (the only one relevant on the right). However, due to its size the entire MP sample appears to have moved rightwards in economic terms, confirming the perceptions of voters that have identified a move of PSD to the right. In other words, PSD appears responsible for a situation approximating a case of "disconnecting representation". A stark move to the right on economic issues by the major governing party that is not followed neither by the electorate at large nor by the parties' own voters. This seems to confirm H1 about the expected moves on the right (MPs and voters).

There is a similar situation reproduced by the other parties but in a different direction. Whereas the positions of voters for every single party remains stable from 2008 to 2012, MPs of PS, BE and CDU make significant movements to the left. In other words, the image of more polarization in 2012/13 vis-à-vis 2008 among MPs is confirmed in terms of the economic left-right value divide, even though no such dynamic appears to exist at the level of public opinion. Thus, H2, concerning the expected moves on the left (MPs and voters), is also confirmed. The same can be said about the confirmation of H3: economic left-right polarization increased between 2008 and 2012-13 but mainly at the elite level.

Voters' and MPs' positions on the Authoritarian-Libertarian Index

Moving to the 'authoritarian-libertarian' value index, the first observation that we can make is that both voters and MPs have moved closer to the libertarian pole in the 2012 sample in relation to 2008, even though the difference in the means of the two MP samples is not statistically significant (due to smaller sample size). This non-significant move in this
second dimension confirms the expectation concerning H4. As in 2008, in the 2012 study MPs are located closer overall to the libertarian axis in relation to voters, maintaining the statistically significant difference in their means (data not shown due to spatial limitations). In general, we detect a very common distribution for both MPs and voters across time following a unimodal pattern, skewed towards the libertarian axis. Given the general move towards more libertarian positions, one could be tempted to speak of the existence of "representation from above" in this instance, even though the findings are not robust enough to justify this characterization. 

**Insert Figure 3 here**

By looking at Figure 3, the analysis by party reveals at a first glance an image of stability and lack of differentiation for voters. The mean scores of the party base remain virtually unchanged from 2008 to 2012, even though the differences appear uniform in their direction (towards the libertarian pole) and, due to the larger sample size, also appear statistically significant in the cases of BE, CDU, PSD and PS. A great deal of more discrepancy can be observed among MPs, both in terms of time as well as between representatives of the different parties. In terms of comparison across the two studies of 2008 and 2012/13, only the means of CDS and PS appear to be statistically significant over time (both towards the libertarian pole), a move shared by CDU which does not appear to be statistically significant, however, due to small sample size. However the move of CDS towards a more libertarian position in 2012 has dulled the more stark differentiation that could be observed for MPs by party on the value axis. Nevertheless, the visibly greater degree of differentiation for MPs in relation to voters is perhaps the outcome of the relatively low degree of political sophistication of the Portuguese electorate mentioned above and the lack of politicization of issues that relate to underlying value orientations. Thus, there are some moves on the libertarian-authoritarian value dimension, especially at the elite level, which at least partially seems to contradict our expectation (stated in H4) of
overall stability concerning this libertarian-authoritarian value dimension. However, these moves are especially clear at the elite level, thus confirming H3. In any case, this finding seems to suggest that value change might be occurring outside the economic field.

Value orientations appear to be much more uniform across the electorate in relation to economic issue preferences. In terms of the differences between MPs and their voters in the 2012 study, it is clear that MPs for the parties of the left and centre-left (BE, CDU, PS) hold much more libertarian value orientations in relation to their voters that on average appear more moderate/conservative. To put it another way, already in 2008 MPs from left parties were more congruent vis-à-vis their voters in the economic left-right divide, but in terms of the authoritarian-libertarian divide right-wing MPs were more congruent with their voters than left-wing MPs (Freire and Belchior, 2013; Belchior and Freire, 2013). In 2012/13, incongruence is reinforced for the economic left-right divide, especially in the case of PSD. However, in terms of the authoritarian-libertarian divide, in 2012/13 the right-wing MPs remain more congruent with their voters than the left-wing MPs vis-à-vis their constituents and this pattern is even reinforced. Like in 2008, the results in 2012/13 reveal measuring congruence and polarization in terms of substantive issues/value divides and in terms of subjective left-right placement leads to different conclusions, at least in the Portuguese case.

Measuring Voters’ MPs’ congruence in terms of value orientations with measures that take into account the heterogeneity of the voters distributions

Since Achen (1978) and until Golder and Stramski (2010), passing through Belchior and Freire (2013), it has been shown that to measure «collective congruence» (groups of party elites versus groups of party voters) it makes a difference whether one uses relative or absolute measures. A summary of the existent measures, their characteristics, their strengths and their shortcomings is shown in Table 5. As can be seen in Table 5, relative
congruence is generally better in terms of the validity of the measurements, since it takes voter dispersion into account; this way it is possible to control for voter distributions within parties, and to better compare congruence across parties. Moreover, in terms of the relative measures of congruence «centrism» is the best one because it has the highest level of validity: it is the one that best controls for voter variance, especially when medians are used instead of means, as we will do in the rest of the paper. Considering the choice of «centrism» as our best measure of congruence, before passing to the data analysis we need to present the calculations. In the present paper, Centrism measures how MPs actually represent the political preferences of their median voter in the party (Belchior and Freire, 2013: 279). Centrism is composed of the combination of two different measures, calculated separately by parties: it is the difference between the measure of proximity (i.e., the difference between each individual voter and the median MP in each party, squared: only absolute differences are considered) and the variance with regard to the position of the electorate (between each individual voter and the median voter in each party). «Proximity refers to the similarity of the party's position to that of its voters. That is:

\[
\hat{S}_j = \frac{\sum (a_{ij} - r_j)^2}{n_j}
\]

where \(a_{ij}\) is the position of voter \(ai\) in party \(j\), \(r_j\) the mean (median) position of the elite in that party, and \(n_j\) the size of the sample; and,

\[
\hat{Y}_j^2 = \frac{\sum (a_{ij} - \bar{a}_j)^2}{(n_j - 1)}
\]

measures the variance for the electorate, where \(\bar{a}_j\) is the median position of the voters; and

\[
\hat{C}_j = \hat{S}_j - \hat{Y}_j^2
\]
is the measure of the *centrism* in party $j$. As in the previous measure and for the same reasons, for centrism we also disregard the signs and all values therefore become positive. High *centrism* values indicate a mismatch between the voters and the elite; low values indicate the reverse (Belchior and Freire, 2013: 279).¹

**Insert Figure 4 here**

**Insert Figure 5 here**

Using the measure of «centrism», we can see that in 2008 the left-wing MPs are clearly the more congruent representatives, vis-à-vis their constituents, in the «economic left-right value dimension»; the opposite is true in what concerns the «authoritarian-libertarian value dimension», i.e., in this case the right-wing MPs (especially the PSD) are clearly more congruent with their voters than the left-wing MPs (especially among the radical left parties). In 2012-13, this overall picture is not generally changed. On the «authoritarian-libertarian value dimension», the right-wing MPs (especially the PSD) remain more congruent vis-à-vis their constituents than the left-wing MPs (especially among the radical left parties). Thus, concerning this value divide the measures of «relative congruence» confirm H4: there is not much change in the non-economic value divide. However, in the «economic left-right value dimension» there are some relevant changes. First, the PSD is less congruent party. Second, the radical left MPs are less congruent in 2012-13 than in 2008, like the PSD, and this decrease in congruence seems to be the result of an elite increase in polarization (radical left vs. PSD) not matched by similar move of

¹ Although we follow Achen (1978) very closely in measuring «centrism», like in our previous paper (Belchior and Freire, 2013) «we consider the median position of citizens instead of the mean in order to overcome the bias that the latter might introduce if the distribution is removed from the normal, which is potentially the case when it comes to citizens (Belchior and Freire, 2013: 286, note 4)». 
their constituents. This confirms H1 (right) and H2 (radical left). Three, now the left (BE, PCP, PS) in general is more congruent than the PSD, but not always more congruent than the CDS-PP (BE vs. CDS-PP: practically equal; PCP vs. CDS-PP: right less congruent; only the PS is more congruent than the CDS-PP). Thus, the situation in 2012-13 is more complex in the case of the «economic left-right dimension of value conflict».

Conclusions

The present study has revealed that to the extent that a disconnect between representatives and voters has emerged since the outbreak of the economic crisis in Portugal ("disconnecting representation"), in terms of substantive issue preferences and their underlying value divides, caused mainly by the departure of conservative MPs (especially of PSD) towards a more economically rightist direction (confirming H1). However, the «relative measures of congruence» (i.e., those that take into account the heterogeneity of each party voters) also reveal that the radical left is also more incongruent (due to moves to the economic left) vis-à-vis their voters (confirming H2, although not so clearly: not revealed by «absolute measures of congruence»). Moreover, this data revealed also that the increase in polarization (PSD vs. radical left, and PS to a much lower extent) is mainly a phenomena at the elite level that is not matched at the voters levels (confirming H3). Additionally, especially the «relative measures of congruence» reveal that not much change occurred in the «authoritarian-libertarian value divide», thus confirming H4 (there in not much change in terms of non-economic issues and their underlying values).

Unlike the 2008 study (see Freire and Belchior 2013), the incongruence between MPs and their voters is no longer observed primarily in terms of subjective left-right self-placement (data not shown due to spatial limitations) but also in the economic left-right axis over concrete economic policy preferences and their underlying value orientations. In addition, there are signs of a growing distance between the right-of-centre MPs (PSD) and
the MPs of PS and the two smaller leftist parties, especially in the case of the latter. Movements both in the economic left-right axis as well as in the subjective left-right self-placement axis (data concerning the latter was not shown) indicate a growing polarization among representatives which is not reproduced at the level of voters, confirming H3.

The authoritarian-libertarian cultural axis appears to be the one where there is more uniformity in trends and that a top-down "representation effect" might be under way. In general, the economic crisis appears to have a greater impact on MPs rather than the electorate, which appears to be demonstrating mass stability during exceptional times both in terms of ideological preferences as well as underlying value orientations. However, the movement towards the right by the MPs of the major governing party on economic policy (already clearly perceived by voters as shown in Figure 1) threatens a full-blown representation crisis due to increasing levels of incongruence in policy preferences between MPs and their constituents. This trend is exacerbated by a countermovement of the opposition parties, contributing to a growing polarization inside the political elite in Portugal, which negates a projected image during the early stages of the crisis of a political culture among elites based on consensus and mutual accommodation.

References


26


Table 1. Battery of issues named Economic Left-Right values (Economic Left-Right Index 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electors</th>
<th>MPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people.</td>
<td>Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education should mainly be provided by the State.</td>
<td>Education should mainly be provided by the State.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care should mainly be provided by the State.</td>
<td>Health care should mainly be provided by the State.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The present levels of social protection must be kept the same even if it means an increase of the taxes.</td>
<td>The present levels of social protection must be kept the same even if it means an increase of the taxes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bigger efforts would have to be made to reduce the income inequalities.</td>
<td>Bigger efforts would have to be made to reduce the income inequalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic growth is more important than balancing the state budget.</td>
<td>Economic growth is more important than balancing the state budget.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: authors own calculations based on the data from the 2008 and 2012-13 Mass and MPs surveys (Freire et al research projects referred in the text).

Notes:

1) Electors Index - Cronbach's Alpha: 0.681 (after removing the variable for the creation of the Economic Left-Right Index 2008 “The present levels of social protection must be kept the same even if it means an increase of the taxes.” Cronbach's Alpha: 0.754)

2) MPs Index - Cronbach's Alpha: 0.691 (after removing the variable for the creation of the Economic Left-Right Index 2008 “Bigger efforts would have to be made to reduce the income inequalities.” Cronbach's Alpha: 0.714)
Table 2. Battery of issues named Authoritarian-Libertarian values (Authoritarian-Libertarian Index 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electors</th>
<th>MPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stronger measures should be taken to protect the environment.</td>
<td>Stronger measures should be taken to protect the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same-sex marriages should be prohibited by law.</td>
<td>Same-sex marriages should be prohibited by law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences.</td>
<td>People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants are good for Portuguese economy.</td>
<td>Immigrants are good for Portuguese economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women should be free to decide on matters of abortion.</td>
<td>Women should be free to decide on matters of abortion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: authors own calculations based on the data from the 2008 and 2012-13 Mass and MPs surveys (Freire et al. research projects referred in the text).

Notes:

1) Electors Index - Cronbach's $\alpha$: 0.011

2) MPs Index - Cronbach's $\alpha$: 0.573 (after removing the variable for the creation of the Authoritarian-Libertarian Index 2008 “Stronger measures should be taken to protect the environment.” Cronbach's $\alpha$: 0.614)
Table 3. Battery of issues named Economic Left-Right values (Economic Left-Right Index 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electors</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: authors own calculations based on the data from the 2008 and 2012-13 Mass and MPs surveys (Freire et al research projects referred in the text).

Notes:

1) Electors Index - Cronbach’s Alpha: 0.443 (after removing the variable for the creation of the Economic Left-Right Index 2012 “The present levels of social protection must be kept the same even if that means an increase of the taxes” Cronbach’s Alpha: 0.528)

2) MPs Index - Cronbach’s Alpha: 0.850
### Table 4. Battery of issues named Authoritarian-Libertarian values, 2012-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electors</th>
<th>MPs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stronger measures should be taken to protect the environment.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: authors own calculations based on the data from the 2008 and 2012-13 Mass and MPs surveys (Freire et al research projects referred in the text).

Notes:

1) Electors Index - Cronbach’s Alpha: 0.009
2) MPs Index - Cronbach’s Alpha: 0.667

### Table 5. Measures of collective congruence: a synthesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Validity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of agreement (and</td>
<td>Low (rough measure; little information)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>differences)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute congruence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means and means difference</td>
<td>Low (biased in distributions with outliers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>measure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative congruence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized mean differences</td>
<td>High (controls for variance at the party level; bias can still occur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrism</td>
<td>High (controls for voter variance; more accurate if the median is used)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Belchior and Freire, 2013: 278.
**Figure 1.** Left-Right placement of Portuguese parties according to voter perceptions, 1978-2012

*Source: 1978-2008: Freire (2010); 2011 PNES; 2012 Mass survey (Freire, Viegas, and Belchior research project refereed in the text)*
Figure 2. Voters' and MPs' positions on the Economic Left-Right Index of value orientations by party

Source: authors own calculations based on the data from the 2008 and 2012-13 Mass and MPs surveys (Freire et al research projects referred in the text).

T-tests for population means (variances unknown and unequal):

a) Voters 2008-Voters 2012:
   - BE: $T=1.77$, $v=31$ (critical value of $T_{31, 0.025}=2.04$)**
   - CDS: $T=0.95$, $v=14$ (critical value of $T_{14, 0.025}=2.15$)**
   - CDU: $T=1.32$, $v=68$ (critical value of $T_{68, 0.025}=1.99$)**
   - PSD: $T=0.30$, $v=126$ (critical value of $T_{126, 0.025}=1.98$)**
   - PS: $T=1.66$, $v=236$ (critical value of $T_{236, 0.025}=1.96$)**

b) MPs 2008-MPs 2012:
   - BE: $T=2.88$, $v=6$ (critical value of $T_{6, 0.025}=2.45$)*
   - CDS: $T=0.01$, $v=8$ (critical value of $T_{8, 0.025}=2.31$)**
   - CDU: $T=2.51$, $v=8$ (critical value of $T_{8, 0.025}=2.31$)*
   - PSD: $T=3.56$, $v=20$ (critical value of $T_{20, 0.025}=2.09$)*
   - PS: $T=3.42$, $v=33$ (critical value of $T_{33, 0.025}=2.03$)*

c) Voters 2012-MPs 2012:
   - BE: $T=4.19$, $v=8$ (critical value of $T_{8, 0.025}=2.31$)*
   - CDS: $T=2.92$, $v=15$ (critical value of $T_{16, 0.025}=2.13$)*
   - CDU: $T=4.72$, $v=8$ (critical value of $T_{8, 0.025}=2.31$)*
   - PSD: $T=8.49$, $v=52$ (critical value of $T_{52, 0.025}=2.01$)*
   - PS: $T=3.38$, $v=33$ (critical value of $T_{33, 0.025}=2.03$)*

* Reject the null hypothesis ($H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$)
** Does not reject the null hypothesis ($H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$)
Figure 3. Voters' and MPs' positions on the Authoritarian-Libertarian Index of value orientations by party

Source: authors own calculations based on the data from the 2008 and 2012-13 Mass and MPs surveys (Freire et al research projects referred in the text).

T-tests for population means (variances unknown and unequal):

a) Voters 2008-Voters 2012:
- BE: $T=4.29, v=35$ (critical value of $T_{35,0.025}=2.03$)*
- CDS: $T=1.52, v=17$ (critical value of $T_{17,0.025}=2.11$)**
- CDU: $T=4.34, v=70$ (critical value of $T_{70,0.025}=1.99$)*
- PSD: $T=4.61, v=114$ (critical value of $T_{114,0.025}=1.98$)*
- PS: $T=10.65, v=238$ (critical value of $T_{238,0.025}=1.96$)*

b) MPs 2008-MPs 2012:
- BE: $T=1.00, v=7$ (critical value of $T_{7,0.025}=2.37$)**
- CDS: $T=2.61, v=8$ (critical value of $T_{8,0.025}=2.31$)*
- CDU: $T=1.67, v=7$ (critical value of $T_{8,0.025}=2.37$)**
- PSD: $T=0.06, v=21$ (critical value of $T_{21,0.025}=2.08$)**
- PS: $T=5.53, v=36$ (critical value of $T_{36,0.025}=2.03$)*

c) Voters 2012-MPs 2012:
- BE: $T=6.95, v=7$ (critical value of $T_{7,0.025}=2.37$)*
- CDS: $T=0.33, v=15$ (critical value of $T_{15,0.025}=2.13$)**
- CDU: $T=7.13, v=7$ (critical value of $T_{7,0.025}=2.37$)*
- PSD: $T=0.63, v=50$ (critical value of $T_{50,0.025}=2.01$)**
- PS: $T=11.47, v=36$ (critical value of $T_{36,0.025}=2.03$)*

* Reject the null hypothesis ($H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$)
**Does not reject the null hypothesis ($H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$)
Figure 4. The level of congruence between MPs and voters in terms of «economic left-right» and «authoritarian-libertarian» value orientations, 2008 – taking into account the heterogeneity among voters («centrism»)

Source: authors own calculations based on the data from the 2008 Mass and MPs surveys (see Freire, Viegas and Seiceira, 2009).
Figure 5. The level of congruence between MPs and voters in terms of «economic left-right» and «authoritarian-libertarian» value orientations, 2012-13 – taking into account the heterogeneity among voters («centrism»)

Source: authors own calculations based on the data from the 2012-13 Mass and MPs surveys.