Section 59:
The Euro Crisis: New Socio-Political Divisions, Mobility and Mobilisation

Panel
After the Bailout: Exit Strategies, Protest and Public Opinion in Crisis Hidden Europe

The Discreet Charm of Direct Democracy: Europe and Portugal and the representation crisis

(first draft: be clement!)

Goffredo Adinolfi (CIES-IUL)
goffredoadinolfi@hotmail.com
ECPR, Glasgow, 3-6 September 2014
Southern Europe is suffering a prolonged economic crisis that is being transformed into a social and thus a regime crisis. It has been particularly hard hit by the sovereign debt crisis and governments are finding it very difficult to devise exit strategies. Throughout the region European, public opinions surveys show high levels of disaffection and dissatisfaction regarding institutions and political parties and consistently declining electoral turnout levels.

Political theory on contemporary societies stresses one point almost unanimously: the fact that “public confidence and trust in and support for politicians, political parties, and political constitutions have eroded over the past generation” (Dalton, 2004). Thus, over the last decades the values underpinning representative democracy, although garnering broad support, are moving towards an increasing legitimation crisis. People perceive politics to be more distant and irrelevant to their lives, and politicians seem less capable, more impotent and all much more alike than they were in the past (Mair, 2013).

There has been a long period of crisis during which, at least until 2008, support for democracy per se seems to be greater than ever, and at the same time faith in its agents and institutions has declined (Inglehart, 1997; Putnam, et. al., 2000: 6). Lack of support for political parties and high levels of dissatisfaction with democratic institutions can be interpreted as a positive sign of the vitality of democratic regimes and growing citizen aspirations to overcome ‘democratic deficits’ (Norris, 2011).

The cause of negative feelings about politics in European societies is the growing gap between responsiveness and responsibility and the declining capacity of parties to bridge or manage that gap (Mair, 2013). In this context, support for mainstream parties may have a negative impact on the system as a whole, leading to a ‘bifurcation of a number of party systems and reinforcement of new forms of opposition’ (Mair, 2013). The consequences of this are twofold: citizens may seek representation elsewhere and opt for populist parties (Mair, 2013), or powerful anti-system parties may emerge that render democracies unstable (Lipset, 1956), a process that was the main cause of democratic breakdown during the past century (Linz, 1978).

In this context, the question is whether diffuse support for representative democracy is declining or faltering. Answering this question is not an easy task. As underlined by Richard Gunther and José Monetero, the notion of diffuse support is insufficient to give us a broad understanding of the citizens’ attitudes toward representative democracy (Gunther, Monetero, 2006). One can divide the concept of broad disaffection into three categories – disaffection, dissatisfaction and illegitimacy –
to gain a clearer understanding of the underlying dynamics. A different inputs, trigger, outputs and behaviours are relevant for each dimension.

The crisis of democracy is not a new topic in political science, but the 2008 economic crisis has triggered dramatic changes that require new research. In the 1990s, representative democracy seemed to have won the battle against populist parties or, more broadly, anti-system parties (Mair, 2013). In Italy, the Communist party and the Northern League (Mair, 2013, Albertazzi et. al., 2011) fully accepted democratic rules and become part of mainstream party politics. In the aftermath of the sovereign debt crisis, the capacity of representative democracies to assimilate anti-system parties seem to have been reversed.

While it appears that the diffuse support for democracy does not seem to have been severely shaken (Teixeira et. al. 2012), the truth is that the indicators show that satisfaction in the representative democracy has reached negative record levels never recorded before, in which significant decrease in electoral turnout is a clear sign of widespread disaffection (Magalhães, 2005; Martín, Urquizu-Sancho, 2012). On the one hand, people are unlikely to give a positive response when asked if they would like an authoritarian regime because of the stigma attached to an authoritarian attitude. On the other, it is important to determine whether the dissatisfaction with representative democracy reflects an authoritarian attitude or a genuine wish for a more effective democracy. However, as explained by Leonardo Morlino (Morlino, Montero, 1995), low levels of regime legitimation correspond a weakening of the regime. In other words low levels of democratic legitimation make the establishment of an authoritarian regime more likely. As stated by Alfio Mastropaolo the evidence provided by statistical data or surveys on discontent are still contradictory and the “glass is either half empty or half ful” (Mastropaolo, 2012, p 156). According to Pippa Norris, dissatisfaction concerning the functioning of democracy is a factor which should be perceived positively because it reveals a more critical and less apathetic attitude in relation to representatives (Norris, 2011). However, an excessive confidence in the institutes of direct democracy and mistrust in relation to representative democracy could lead to a consistent alteration in the paradigms of governance.

However, following Michel Dobry (Dobry, 1986), the stability of any given institutional-political configuration is dependent on the support it garners from the “multisectorial structure” as a whole. Transformations within a network of consolidation, a network made up of the acceptance or rejection of the constituent parts of a multisectorial society, can generate social processes that can lead to significant changes in how political institutions work. According to Michel Dobry, fluid junctures emerge during these phases of multisectorial mobilisation. These junctures are characterised by social dynamics and tactical games played by the actors involved, which make it
impossible to return to the status quo ante, to the routinzed binary system, or routine opposition. There are two factors that can transform the political field: endogenous and exogenous factors. An example of the former is the emergence of new parties or of new elites within already established parties that alter the balance in the political arena and therefore of the network of consolidation. Examples of exogenous factors – events external to the political field – include economic crisis, war, or a change in the international balance of power. Such events may challenge and force that field to react against or in defence of the status quo.

During the last European elections in May 2014, the mainstream parties suffered a very significant defeat. In this context the strong affirmation of the Italian Democratic Party represent could not be considered an exception. Even if the PD is clearly a mainstream party, the entire electoral campaign of his young leader Matteo Renzi was based on the necessity of deep restructuration on the political system and in the political elite. A common point, in particular, of many of these parties was the idea that in view of the failure of the representatives, the only possible solution leading out of the crisis would be a more directly exercised democracy.

In a more or less pronounced form, these parties include Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece, Livre and Partido da Terra in Portugal. However, the most well-known party which calls for direct democracy is the Five Star Movement (M5S). The M5S emphasizes its non-partisan, neither right nor left position. The main point is the strong refuse of the idea of representation, consequently policies should be decided by 2.0 referenda through the blog of the founder Beppe Grillo. In the Italian parliamentary elections of 2013, the M5S was the party which received most votes and the second most voted for in the European elections of 2014 with close to ¼ of total votes. In the Italian parliamentary elections of 2013, the M5S was the party which received most votes and the second most voted for in the European elections of 2014 with close to ¼ of total votes.

When representative democracy is given low levels of legitimacy, it may not lead necessarily to a breakdown but can make his alternatives more likely. In the last two years new forms of political participation have emerged, which were not formed from within the party or trade unions, i.e. self-organised through social networks such as Facebook. Based on post-materialist values, these supposedly bottom-up movements rejected the traditional forms of participation. More specifically, they do not recognise the basic principle of representative democracy or being represented by other persons. However the question is: can democracy without parties, trade unions and parliaments, still be called a democracy? Undoubtedly different from representative democracy, making a direct choice without going through representatives is perhaps a truer democracy. So we now have two main questions: do people still believe in democracy and, secondly, which kind of democracy do they prefer. The desire for direct democracy could be a consequence of what
Zygmunt Bauman called “liquid society” - a society in which citizens no longer accept being put in boxes such as parties, or more generically recognizing themselves in the framework made by the institutions of liberal democracy or even with a specific ideology.

Very strong feelings of disaffection and dissatisfaction appear to be increasingly accompanied by a less explicit but growing feeling of illegitimacy in relation to the fundamental principles of representative democracy (Adinolfi, 2014).

The studies on the crisis of democracy, of which there are many, have developed around two major stages. The first, around the specific/diffuse support cleavage, and the second relative to the cleavage between three different aspects: disaffection, dissatisfaction and illegitimacy. The two approaches appear to be based on the assumption that the only cleavage is between democracy and authoritarianism. We would argue that it is necessary to add a further level to this analysis, where the alternative to representative and liberal democracy is not exclusively authoritarianism but direct democracy, in other words, less liberal (separation of powers) and less representative (with more instruments of direct participation). Therefore, the study seeks to relate these three levels of research on the public opinion barometer in relation to democracy, while still maintaining the focus on the cleavage between on one hand authoritarianism and on the other hand representative, and direct democracy, attempting, in the first place, to see if the latter can be perceived as a more advanced form of the former, or, in contrast, if it should be interpreted as an alternative structure.

The European elections of May 2014 saw the emergence or growth of parties calling for a democracy less based on delegation (representative) and more based on participatory citizenship (direct democracy). Indeed, while Greece is the only case where authoritarian and anti-system parties achieved significant consensus (Golden Dawn), it also true that in the whole of Southern Europe satisfaction in relation to the functioning of representative democracy has never sunk to such low levels before (where the European average is 50 and that of Southern Europe is 31, (Eurobarometro 2013).

Structure of the paper

This paper is structured on two different levels. The first will focus on the support to representative democracy in Europe over the period from 2007, before the outbreak of the crisis, to 2013, with the latest available data.

The second part will address, in more detail, the topic of the crisis of representative democracy and the emergence of its alternatives, namely direct democracy and authoritarianism or anti-democracy, with particular respect to Portugal. Two of the major reasons for which Portugal is
a paradigmatic case in the European environment are: the sovereign debt crisis which afflicted the country at the end of 2010 and the request for a financial bailout in 2011. Secondly, concerning Portugal, two specific surveys were conducted to the population on the subject between 2008 and 2012.

**Hypotheses**

As almost unanimously emphasised by the literature, representative democracy has been undergoing a serious crisis of legitimacy especially in the past few years. The first working hypothesis aims to confirm this postulate:

H1: In Europe, confidence in representative democracy experienced a significant decline from 2007 to 2013.

Confidence in representative democracy is generally explained by two different factors. One, the first, by the economic performances:

H2: economic indicators *have a positive impact on trust in representative democracy*.

Secondly by the capacity of given political system to include his citizens. Distrust in political systems is also due to a failure of the political system in general, and a failure of the parties and political actors to meet the needs of the citizens, and parties which are perceived as distant: the political and cognitive structure:

H3: a greater inclusiveness of the political system is reflected in higher levels of confidence in representative democracy.

**Working hypotheses specifically about Portugal:**

The dichotomy between representative democracy and authoritarianism is not currently sufficient to explain the profound crisis of legitimation of representative democracy. What the studies indicate is that the mistrust in leadership has benefited the idea of more directly exercised governance (Diamanti, 2014; Adinolfi 2014):

H4: In Portugal, confidence in representative democracy experienced a statistically significant decline from 2008 to 2012.
H5: trust in representative democracy, support for direct democracy and support for authoritarianism are three distinguishable attitudes.

Based on the literature which has widely addressed the differences between dissatisfaction, disaffection and illegitimacy, it is necessary to cross these three dimensions with the dimensions relative to attitudes on the various types of regimes:

H6: greater level of illegitimacy has negative impact on trust in Representative Democracy and a positive on support for direct democracy and authoritarianism.

H7: greater level of discontent has neutral impact on trust in Representative Democracy and a positive on support for direct democracy and authoritarianism;

H8: greater level of disaffection has a positive impact on support for authoritarianism and negative on support for direct democracy and trust in Representative Democracy;

**Methodology**

The paper will examine the evolution of public opinion and political behaviour from the beginning of the economic crisis in 2007 to 2013. And is based on quantitative methods and multilevel analysis. Various data sets will be used in the research: on national and international surveys, with material from different agencies and countries. The most accessible and important surveys that will be used include the *European Social Survey; Eurobarometer* (yearly). Regarding economic aspects, the paper will use data from the *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe* (OSCE) and Eurostat data. The part specifically on Portugal is based on two surveys which were conducted on the Portuguese in March-June 2008\(^1\) and September-October 2012\(^2\) (N2008=1350; N2012=1209).

---

1. **Source**: Freire, André and Viegas, José Manuel Leite (coord.), “Inquérito à População Portuguesa – Base de Dados, 2008”, in Freire, André, Viegas, José Manuel Leite and Seiceira, Filipa (org.) (2009), *Representação Política em Portugal - Inquéritos e Bases de dados*, Lisbon, Sextante.
Europe and Representative Democracy throughout the crisis

As has been highlighted, democracy is generally a fluid concept, which can be interpreted or applied in different forms. However, what appears to be in a state of crisis is a specific form of democracy, liberal and representative democracy, that is a democracy whose fundamental bodies are the parties, the members of parliament and the power exercised by a government. Based on the data prepared under the Eurobarometer project, it is possible to analyse the confidence levels between 2007 and 2013 in the three main institutions of representative democracy: parties, government and parliament. An index was constructed using the averages of these three variables (dichotomous “tend to trust” and “tend not to trust”), which measured for each country and year, the average confidence in these three institutions. The working hypothesis that is to be confirmed is that with the crisis the confidence levels in representative democracy have undergone a statistically significant decrease.

Graph 1

Following the construction of an index with the three variables, graph 1 summarises the obtained results. The first conclusion which can be drawn is that the crisis of confidence did not affect all European countries in the same manner, either in terms of its initial levels in 2007, or concerning the stage at which it had reached in 2013. Graph 1 illustrates that only the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Sweden had growing confidence levels. With the exception of the case of Sweden, however, these are all Eastern European countries which are characterised by low confidence levels at the start and very timid growth. The second conclusion is that the PIIGS (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain), which until 2007 had reasonable confidence levels, experienced a virulent decline, which brought them down to similar levels as those of Eastern Europe.

The average confidence values among European countries are very differentiated, which reveals that the issue cannot be easily addressed with a single discourse for the entire continent. Two extremes: Eastern European countries, with the highest levels of lack of confidence, and Northern

---

3 Survey intervals from 2007 to 2013: 68, 70, 72, 74, 76, 78, 80. Downloaded from Gesis ZACAT
4 Countries in the models are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom.
5 Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.
European countries, which have the lowest levels of confidence although between 2007 and 2013 there had been a decrease in confidence levels on representative democracy (from 35 per cent to 26 cent), the difference is not statistically significant, that is the working hypothesis which was formulated at the beginning was not confirmed.

Due to the great variety among relatively homogenous geographic areas, it was decided that the variation in the levels of confidence in representative democracy should be analysed by blocks of countries: the so-called PIIGS, that is, the countries which due to problems of sovereign debt experienced the consequences of the economic crisis much more severely, the countries which in the last national or European elections underwent a profound change in the party system (France, Italy, United Kingdom and Greece). Lastly, the countries in the North, West, and East. There are countries that belong to more than one group: Italy and Greece (PIIGS and Political Earthquake), France and United Kingdom (West and Political Earthquake).

Graph 2 Here

The tests confirm the conclusions drawn from the graph, i.e., that the variation of the confidence levels in representative democracy in Europe is quite differentiated. The block of countries in East, West and North Europe maintain stable confidence levels, although with different dynamics between the countries of the East and those in the North and West. Almost tautologically the countries which underwent significant changes were the PIIGS and those that faced in the last European elections the emergence of a profound upheaval of their party system. Therefore, to conclude, it could be said that the first formulated hypothesis has been verified only partially in that it applies to part of Europe.

The second working hypothesis was that the economic indicators are an explanatory factor in the confidence levels in representative democracy. The concept of economic growth on its own is almost metaphysical, i.e., what it measures is the impact on other indicators such as GDP per capita and employment levels. But economic growth might not necessarily influence other economic indicators, which nevertheless have a direct and real impact on the citizen everyday life. This is the case of the percentage GDP that States reserve for public expenditure, and hence for the quality of services provided to citizens, and for the redistribution of income.

---

6 Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Norway and Sweden
7 Mean difference (One way Anova): F=1,781 (6; 201) p value = 0.105
8 Relationship between explanatory factors and dependant variable should be inverted, as low confidence levels in representative democracy determine changes in party systems.
9 Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and United Kingdom
10 Mean difference (Political Earthquake - One way Anova): F=9.877 (6; 28) p value = 0.000; mean difference (PIIGS - One way Anova): F=4.042 (6; 21) p value = 0.008
Therefore, we decided to analyse the influence on Trust in Representative Democracy of these indicators with a linear regression: growth indicator (World Bank data), inequality indicator (Gini Index, Eurostat data), GDP per capita (Eurostat), Employment rate (Eurostat) and Public Expenditure as a percentage of GDP (OSCE).

Table 1

The regression (Table 1) shows that the second hypothesis is not confirmed, as growth is not an explanatory factor of the confidence levels in representative democracy. However, the main consequence of economic growth, disposable wealth, is the factor which has most explanatory significance for the confidence levels in representative democracy. The model also illustrates that the indicators related to a more substantial democracy, i.e. a democracy which is not only defined by procedures, but which also plays a democratising role from an economic point of view, are important factors: employment levels, public expenditure and low income inequality levels contribute to raise confidence in representative democracy.

The third hypothesis aims to confirm the idea that a more inclusive democracy has higher confidence levels. Therefore, six indicators were chosen: the proportionality of electoral law measured by the Gallagher Index\(^\text{11}\), having voted in the last elections, feeling close to a particular party, having taken part in lawful public demonstrations in the last 12 months, being a member of a trade union or similar organisation and the Trust People Index\(^\text{12}\). These last four parameters were taken from the European Social Survey of 2004 (the survey with most countries included before the crisis), 2008, 2010 and 2012. Contrary to expectations (Table 1), what emerges from the values of the linear regression is that in our model, active participation does not influence the confidence levels in representative democracy: having voted, participated in demonstrations or being a member of a trade union are non-explanatory parameters of the confidence levels in representative democracy. Nonetheless the proportionality of electoral law is along with feeling close to a particular party, the factor which has most influence. In fact, the two components are interlinked as proportional laws favour identity parties with which it is easy to have close relationships (Lijphard,

---

\(^{11}\) The Gallagher Index measure the disproportionality of an electoral outcome, that is the difference between the percentage of votes received and the percentage of seats a party gets in the resulting legislature. This is especially useful for comparing proportionality across electoral systems.

\(^{12}\) The trust people index was built from three variables taken from the European Social Survey: “Most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful”, “Most people try to take advantage of you, or try to be fair”, “Most of the time people helpful or mostly looking out for themselves”
Lastly, also with certain coherence, the fact of having confidence in other people is an explanatory and positive factor. In this case, the hypothesis is confirmed as societies with the highest capacity for integration and trust among people are also those with the highest confidence levels in democratic institutions.

**Portugal: Representative democracy and its alternatives**

Although representative democracy is undergoing profound and constant erosion, it is necessary to verify if other regimes experienced more open support from their citizens. This requires expanding the range of indicators and hence we will focus exclusively on the Portuguese case, a country for which we have data which allows for more complex analysis.

» Graph 3

As can be seen in Graph 3\(^{13}\), having a democratic political system is of almost absolute value for the Portuguese, as the averages are above 4, very close to the maximum value of 5. Although a statistically significant negative variation of the averages was recorded from 2008 to 2012, the values remain high\(^{14}\).

Given the stigma to the authoritarian regimes, these results have low explanatory value of the phenomenon, and it is therefore necessary at a first stage to check whether there are any contradictions in the understanding of how democracy works and subsequently to verify empirically the possibility of distinguishing three different behavioural models in relation to the political regime: confidence in representative democracy, desire for a more directly exercised democracy and/or an anti-democratic regime, where the ruling class is not recruited within electoral processes and performs its duties outside the scrutiny of parliaments.

Analysis at this stage is based entirely on two specific surveys of the Portuguese population in 2008 and 2012. Among many variables, so as to have indications on the evolution of the three different levels - confidence in institutions, direct democracy and anti-democracy - eight were chosen (see Graph 1). Of these eight variables, six were recoded in order to make the brackets unidirectional, so that each minimal point corresponds to the absence of the phenomenon of the

\(^{13}\) To facilitate interpretation of the graph, the average values of the variables have all been standardised on a scale of 1 to 5

\(^{14}\) mean difference (One way Anova): F=11,702 (1; 2414) p value = 0.001
refusal of the values of representative democracy and the maximum point corresponds to the highest presence.

As in the first part, more generally on Europe, here the variables on representative democracy are also related to their principal institutions, i.e. parties, government and parliament. This time the variables are not dichotomous such as in the first part of this paper (tend to trust, tend not to trust), but are in a four point index: from no confidence (1) to high confidence (4).

For the second parameter, which aims to detect a positive attitude towards a more directly exercised democracy, three variables were selected:

“A certain number of citizens should be able to initiate a referendum”, “New mechanisms should be introduced so that citizens can participate in political decisions” and “The electoral system should be modified so that citizens can vote more for candidates and less for the parties”.

Lastly, so as to detect negative attitude towards the regime, two variables were selected:

“Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country”, “Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections”.

In this third parameter, it is necessary to underline the fact that detecting anti-democratic attitudes is not always immediate and that direct questions on the phenomenon should be avoided, even more so in the case of Portugal, where one of the institutions generally associated with authoritarianism, the armed forces, was primarily responsible for the democratisation of the country and thus, paradoxically, is a symbol of democratisation.

Graph 3 illustrates the contradictory attitudes in relation to democracy, because while to a direct question public opinion tends to express practically unconditional support, indirectly, however, it shows a lack of confidence in relation to its institutions - parliament, parties, and government - which were already weak in 2008 (parties: 2.95; parliament: 2.98; government: 2.96). In 2012, after 4 years of economic crisis, this becomes even weaker (parties: 2.19; parliament: 2.39; government: 2.12). The differences in the averages of the variables from 2008 to 2012 are statistically significant and negative\(^\text{15}\). Much more favourable are the levels of agreement with sentences related to the various forms of direct governance. In 2008, the possibility of citizens initiating a referendum had an average of 3.79, new mechanisms for citizens to participate in political decisions 3.87, and the modification electoral system so as to permit voting more for the people than the parties 3.69. In 2012 the averages were respectively 3.87; 3.95 and 3.82, with a positive variation in the three

\[^\text{15}\text{ mean difference (One way Anova) Parliament: F=}209,734 \ (1; 2456) \ p \text{ value } = 0,001; \text{Political Parties: F=}105,294 \ (1; 2497) \ p \text{ value } = 0,000; \text{Government: F=}463,534 \ (1; 2498) \ p \text{ value } = 0,000;\]
elements, and with a statistically significant variation of the averages\textsuperscript{16}. In other words, these figures of agreement are similar to those showing support to the democratic regime.

The third parameter is the most contradictory with respect to the desire shown to have a democratic regime. Regarding the first item “Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country” the average of agreement in 2008 was well above the central point, 3.44, but by 2012, the average grows even more, shifting to 3.57. The level of agreement with the item “Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections” is also quite high, 3.32, although by 2012 this fall to 3.11. In both parameters the average variations are statistically significant\textsuperscript{17}, though of opposing poles, in the first case positive, and in the second negative. While the basic principles of the mechanism of representative democracy may not be fully understood and while the idea of a more diffuse redistribution of political decision-making paradigms may be coherent with the democratic ideal, the average values of the variables show that, in fact, the support for representative and liberal democracy appears to be relatively weak in some dimensions.

To conclude this part, it could be said that finding very high levels of support for democratic regimes and at the same time for political decisions to be made outside of the representative democracy structure is essentially an oxymoron. The word democracy is associated with a positive value which however appears to a large extent lacking in specific univocal content. In fact, the growing distrust in the institutions of representative democracy make its alternatives more appealing: on the one hand the idea that a form of governance exercised in a more direct way, avoiding the parties, governments, and the parliament, and on the other hand, replacing actual governments with specialists.

\textbf{Factor Analysis – Principal Component Analysis}

Focusing our analysis on the 2012 survey, the group of variables should be slightly modified with respect to the second parameter “direct democracy” so as to make the model more efficient: “New mechanisms should be introduced so that citizens can participate in political decision-making”, “Duly trained groups of citizens should be called upon to discuss alternatives for the reform of the electoral system” and “New mechanisms should be created so that social movements can participate in political decisions”.

\textsuperscript{16} mean difference (One way Anova) “possibility of citizens initiating a referendum”: F=68.380 (1; 2326) p value = 0,000; “new mechanisms for citizens to participate in political decisions”: F=8.447 (1; 2404) p value = 0,004; “modification electoral system so as to permit voting more for the people than the parties”: F=17.804 (1; 2357) p value = 0,000;

\textsuperscript{17} mean difference (One way Anova) “Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections”: F=19.605 (1; 2187) p value = 0,001; “Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country”: F=10.382 (1; 2172) p value = 0,001;
The objective is to decide whether it is possible to extrapolate conclusions from elements analysed herein up till now to understand whether representative democracy, direct democracy and anti-democracy are three independent dimensions. That is: to verify if the model under preparation is statistically confirmed and if the seven selected variables represent three different attitudes for the two time periods under study.

Table 2

Factor Analysis, also referred to as Principal Component Analysis, was conducted (Table 2). The results confirm our working hypothesis that is, that there are three ways to define the attitude in relation to the political regime: confidence (or lack of it) in representative democracy, direct democracy and authoritarianism. Therefore, out of the eight variables, three components were built: 1) “confidence in the institutions of representative democracy”, with the three variables on parties, parliament and government. 2) “direct democracy”, with the three variables on “new mechanisms so that citizens and social movements can participate in political decisions” and “discussions by the citizens about the electoral regime”. 3) “anti-democratic” with two variables on “having a strong leader” and “having experts to rule”. The construction of the components was based on the average of the values for each item of the variables.

What is the underlying factor: illegitimacy, discontent or disaffection

In the preceding paragraph, through an analysis of the multiple components, three different attitudes were detected in relation to the functional principals of representative democracy. It is now necessary to understand, the last step in this journey through the crisis of representative democracy, what sort of feelings could be responsible for the attitudes towards the different political regimes. From the previously prepared model for these types of questions (Montero, and Torcal 2007) we know that it is possible to detect three kinds of feelings and that each one can be rebuilt from a certain number of indicators.

Illegitimacy

Illegitimacy is characterised as being a sentiment of refusal of the regime in itself. Two of the variables which were chosen to study this first parameter: Without parties there can be no democracy and Having a democratic political system.

Discontent
Discontent implies a negative evaluation exclusively of the performance of the regime, of its actors and mainly involves government performance. Three variables were chosen for this parameter:

What do you think of the economic situation in Portugal. Would you say that the situation of the economy in Portugal is?; On the whole are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in Portugal?; And Thinking about the overall performance of the current Government, how would you evaluate the work of this Government?

Disaffection

Disaffection is a sentiment related to cynicism and apathy in relation to the political regime. The following variables were selected: How interested would you say you are in politics? And Political parties criticise each other a lot, but in reality they are all the same.

Table 3

A linear regression was made of the seven variables for each of the parameters related to the political regimes, of which Table 3 shows the results.

Representative Democracy

Positive values were generally associated to the underlying confidence in representative democracy. Pursuant to the fact that a democracy should be based on parties, and that it is important to have a sturdy democratic political system, it could therefore be said that confidence is associated with a strong sentiment of legitimacy. Contrary to the hypothesis regarding the second parameter, discontent, we have values related to a positive evaluation of the performance of the political regime, be it related to democracy or the government in office. Positive values are also found in the third parameter, disaffection. In other words, being interested in politics and diversification between different parties is positively related to the confidence levels in representative democracy.

Direct Democracy

In the sphere of direct democracy concerning the first dimension of democratic illegitimacy, the fact of having a democratic political system is of even greater importance than in the case of representative democracy. With respect to the sentiment of discontent, the signs are all negative, although significant only regarding the evaluation of the Portuguese economy. While for the third
parameter, disaffection, values of rejection of parties were recorded, the combination with the parameter of interest in politics allows us to conclude that the propensity for direct democracy, as hypothesised, is related negatively with the feeling of disaffection.

**Anti-Democracy**

Concerning the anti-democratic sentiment, as expected, the signs of the values of the feeling of illegitimacy are mostly negative, although only significant with respect to the dimension of the parties. There are no values of significant discontent, except for in two items of the parameter of disaffection, regarding interest in politics and belief that all parties are the same.

Drawing some final conclusions on this part, we can observe that underlying the feeling of confidence in representative democracy there are positive values in the three parameters, in other words, negative values in relation to illegitimacy, discontent and disaffection. However, concerning discontent, we were expecting to find more neutral values, since what was being evaluated was the regime in itself, and not its performance. In the dimension of direct democracy, there is a mixture of contradictory elements, which despite everything, reveal what has been written in several parts of the article above. A democracy which is exercised beyond its traditional rules and institutions is perceived by citizens as a purer form of democracy than the representative kind. Thus, coherently, a greater sentiment of illegitimacy also explains greater support for direct democracy. Indeed, the feeling of discontent is a strong predictive factor, the consequence of which is a lack of confidence in the political actors and a desire to take part of the responsibility of decision-making procedures. A feeling of alienation and contrary cynicism underlies a more favourable feeling towards authoritarian solutions, which however is also coherent with the analysis presented in the first part of the article, where we observed that higher levels of lack of confidence in people are associated with high levels of lack of confidence in the political regime. Sentiments of illegitimacy are also relatively strong, although regarding the second item, having a democratic political system, the relationship is not statistically significant.

**Final considerations**

During the approximately seven years of economic crisis, the confidence levels in representative democracy, shown by those who tend to trust, measured based on confidence in its three main institutions, parties, parliament and government, decreased constantly each year, from 35% to 26%. However the confidence crisis did not reach Europe’s geographic areas equally. The institutions of
the countries in the North and West demonstrate greater capacity to maintain high levels of confidence from their citizens, as opposed to those in the East, which did not increase from low levels (those who tend to trust went from 21% to 18%). The change in average values was significant for the countries which most suffered from the consequences of the crisis, the so-called PIIGS (from 34% to 12%), and was also significant in the countries which underwent a profound alteration in their party balance, such as France, Italy, Greece and the UK (from 32% to 14%). As has been seen, underlying such differentiated values is a capacity to integrate citizens in society. This is, from an economic perspective: greater wealth, higher public expenditure, more redistribution of wealth and greater employment. From a political perspective: more proportionality in electoral laws, higher proximity with political parties and greater confidence in people. Contrary to what was hypothesised, economic growth and participation (voting, being registered in trade unions or participating in demonstrations) are not actually explanatory factors.

The relationship citizens have with “democracy” is contradictory, as analysed above in detail in the specific case of Portugal. On the one hand, the literature stresses that levels of support for democracy remain theoretically high in Portugal (Pequito, Tsatsanis and Belchior), suggesting that there is no rejection of the regime in itself (Freire, 2012, Lobo, 2013, Magalhães, 2013). However, concerning the paradigms underlying democracy (representative), public opinion does not have a linear attitude. The alternatives to liberal and representative democracy such as the institutions of direct or openly authoritarian democracy (although probably not perceived as such) appear to show a greatly superior strength to the original, and thus, implicitly, show even more flagrantly the weakness of the twentieth century model.

We have observed that lack of confidence in representative democracy, direct democracy and authoritarianism are three autonomous and independent attitudes. Very high averages were evident in support to direct democracy and to authoritarianism – that is, quite higher that the central point. Data which does indeed confirm the idea that when there are high levels of incongruence between the political elite and citizens, there is opportunity for new forms of political behaviour to emerge, which are not limited to a mere attitude of apathy (Mair, 2009). In this sense, parties with alternative values, compared to the mainstream, managed to obtain a thunderous acclamation in Europe, although only in the case of certain countries where, in fact, the issue of finding stable solutions of governance within the political system is starting to become very urgent. In other words, the consolidation network is being challenged and is entering a period of critical circumstances. However, the scenario is far from being crystal clear. We have seen how the prism through which public opinion assesses the performance of the political regime, and awakens or not its support, is above all that of discontent. As was expected, greater propensity for direct democracy
is associated to greater support for the democratic regime (without adjectives or nouns) and to a negative evaluation of the political elites and parties. More doubts were raised by the anti-democratic attitude which does not seem to be strongly associated to factors of contingent discontentment, but to more profound values of rejection of the regime in itself, of the parties and in general of politics, that is, a clearly disaffected behaviour.

What emerges from the analysed data is that behind the evaluation of the confidence in representative democracy, there is above all an evaluation of its capacity to offer answers more on a “micro” level than a “macro” economic and political level. In other words, to evaluate the capacity of the regime in integrating or not its citizens and for them to feel integrated. That is, people do not so much express value judgments on the regime per se, but rather on their own existential condition, in view of its erosion. There is also an erosion of confidence in the political regime and a search for new forms of understanding the citizen/power relationship.

Basically, our conclusion is that, while there are high levels of support for a fully theoretical idea of democracy, due to the economic crisis, and the consequent incapacity of governments to respond to citizens’ needs, its alternatives may become increasingly appealing. However, the lack of confidence in democratic institutions cannot be viewed in the same way across Europe. We have noted a very diverse range of responses from North and Western Europe (with the fundamental exception of France and the United Kingdom), which remains stable with high values of support, to the PIIIGS and Eastern Europe with values below 20%. The lack of confidence, above all in the most fragile countries, as Rosanvallon suggests, transforms the citizen from voter to controller. This is a very different way of interpreting the relationship with the political regime which marked the post-war period, based on interventions of direct scrutiny and a ruling class which prefers to be composed not of politicians, but rather of experts, or even figures who, in their decision-making procedures do not have to be concerned with an elected parliament.

References


