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Coordinators

IBERIAN ELITES AND THE EU:
PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
PROCESS IN POLITICAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC ELITES
IN PORTUGAL AND SPAIN

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THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS IN POLITICAL
AND SOCIOECONOMIC ELITES IN PORTUGAL AND SPAIN

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FOREWORD

The serious financial and economic crisis of the last years has severely affected not only the national spheres but also and increasingly the relationship between member states and the European Union and the support of public opinions for the process of supranational integration. As the impact of the crisis has been particularly hard for the countries of Southern Europe it is very important to explore with sufficient details the attitudes of public opinion and strategic elites toward Europe during this period.

The book by Miguel Jerez-Mir and associates, devoted to a systematic analysis of this theme in Portugal and Spain and to a comparison of the two countries with the rest of Europe, is thus a welcome addition to the scholarly efforts to understand what is happening to the European Union in this difficult period.

What is the nature of support for the process of European integration? To what extent a European identity has developed side by side with the persisting national identities? How compatible are the two levels of identification? Is support for a delegation of competencies to supranational authorities the same in all policy areas or the opinions differ significantly if welfare policies are involved instead of immigration or environment? How high is the level of trust in the European institutions? These are some of the crucial questions that need to be answered if we want to understand the complexities of pro- or anti-European positions. And these questions must be repeated diachronically in order to fathom the transformations under the impact of the crisis.

The book offers a broad and articulate exploration of all these themes and provides for the first time a systematic view of the attitudes of public opinion at large but also of different sectors of the social and political elites towards the European Union in the two Iberian countries. The authors of the book exploit fully the rich set of data produced by the research project IntUne (Integrated and United ? A Quest for Citizenship in "an Ever Closer Union") financed under the European 6th Framework Program, but also other important empirical sources (such as the Eurobarometers) and

engage in a mature conversation with the main theoretical discussions of the recent literature on European integration.

The chapters of the book are organized according to a clear scheme focusing on the main dimensions of Europe's (identity, representation, policy scope). After an introductory chapter presenting the themes dealt with in the book and the empirical sources it will use, the second chapter provides a more long-term view of the relationship between the two Iberian countries and the process of European integration enabling thus to assess more carefully the meaning of recent transformations. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 cover systematically and in depth the three main themes—the relationship between national and European identities, the role of the European institutions in the process of representation, and the preferences about allocating to the European level competencies in different policy fields such as health care, employment, environment, immigration, foreign affairs, etc. Then chapter 6 analyses more explicitly to what extent the impact of the crisis has changed the views about Europe in Portugal and Spain.

The book is very important to understand the crucial problems lying ahead for the European Union in a moment when the asymmetric impact of the crisis has significantly transformed the support of citizens and elites for the process of supranational integration in countries which used to be among its strongest supporters. How can European institutions and European decisions regain for the future a stronger confidence? This book should be carefully read in Brussels (and Berlin).

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PREFACE

The European Union faces a number of challenges: some of these are connected to world-wide problems of our times while others are inherent in the EU economic and political system. Unsurprisingly, academic literature has reflected the salience of these issues.

This volume is unique in several respects. In the first place, it has a particular focus on the two Iberian countries—with occasional outlook on other South-European country cases and deploying a broad comparative framework. With this clear focus the volume bypasses broad generalizations that tend to reflect on all member states as well as the often self-reflecting genre of single country studies. The South European focus is particularly rewarding because the analysis can explore how EU legitimacy, EU attachment and trust prevail or erode in an originally EU-enthusiastic group of countries over time.

Second, this volume is built on an exceptionally complex, and sound empirical basis. A large bulk of its empirical background comes from a systematically built database rooted in a European Framework Project (IntUne) in which genuine comparative information was collected on more than a dozen EU member states. In addition, the chapters utilise other international comparative data sources.

Moreover, the volume is written by a group of scholars who feel their region at the end of their fingertips. Their analysis and insights far exceed “academic” knowledge. The chapters provide a vivid and colourful picture about the Iberian countries’ European agenda: how did they evolve around rival international considerations and often conflicting economic interests three decades ago as new entrants still with a common understanding concerning the European project, and on what grounds and to what degree has this understanding been transformed in the two countries more recently?

In presenting the past, present and possible future prospects of the European project in Spain and Portugal the chapters apply diverse research methods, most importantly, elite and public surveys with comparable questions. These surveys systematically explore the dimensions of representa-

tion, identity and governance. The success of the EU project will largely depend on the strength of the representative linkage, on the power of European attachment, and not the least on broad common governance.

The chapters examine these dimensions in detail, nicely knit them together and demonstrate that the European Union as a project of the lives of European citizens can only be successful if a European polity with all these dimensions develops in a complex way.

The chapters also offer rich comparison: between Spain and Portugal versus other member states and comparison between them; between elite and public perceptions; between the views of different elite groups; between the pre-crisis years and the process of crisis evolution. Despite the diversity of comparative approaches and research dimensions each chapter follows a similar structure and leads the reader nicely through well thought out steps: first the theoretical background and the theoretical implications of the research question are clarified, then the empirical background is presented in relation to Spain and Portugal in the first place to be followed by a relevant broader comparative context, and the chapters are finished with the analytical implications.

Overall, the volume succeeds in combining seemingly contradictory features: it is focused on Iberian countries, but it is also wide-ranging and provides an all-EU comparative framework. It is built on rich empirical grounds while it leads the reader to the substantial theoretical questions of the European project on this basis. It deploys survey techniques but proves to be much more than the mere introduction of attitudes, beliefs and opinion, which here have real exploratory and explanatory potentials to help our understanding of the potentials, as well as of the constraints of the EU project.

Like probably all books that deserve reading, this volume does not end on the last page. It urges the reader to continue thinking about the issues raised and their implications, about the possible scenarios that might follow—both in the South European countries and even more broadly in the entire European project. We are left with the major question whether convergence or divergence will define the prospects of the European Union. This question has often been raised during the EU history of the two Iberian countries but this is indeed the final question about the EU rationale as a whole. Are the member states coming closer to each other or in these

harder times divergence will be the way the countries will choose and follow? The answer will depend on how the issues of representation, identity and governance will develop, which in turn will depend on elite views and intentions, as well as on public responses at the same time. The reader can only hope that this complex research agenda could continue.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: IBERIAN ELITES, THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE INTUNE PROJECT¹

MIGUEL JEREZ-MIR | RAFAEL VÁZQUEZ-GARCÍA | JOSÉ REAL-DATO

The interest in the perceptions of European issues among elites and public opinion, in Portugal and Spain, emerges from a general context of a progressive politicization of different topics related to European Union (EU) public policies, and discussions concerning the democratic legitimacy of the European Union (Thomassen, 2009; Lucarelli, Cerutti, and Schmidt, 2011). During the last couple of years, the EU integration process has brought to the debate an extensive list of questions about the existence or lack of a “common European vision” that could serve as a vessel for understanding within the vastly diversified European arena. Citizens of Portugal and Spain are characterized by a high rate of pro-European positions before and during the entire period of EU membership. In addition, the general consensus has been on positive identification with Europe and its institutions. This has been maintained since the end of the first decade of the current century. Furthermore, the Portuguese and Spaniards have demonstrated their support for the meaningful legitimacy of the EU as a supranational institution for shared governance (Green, 2000; Fuchs, 2011). However, public opinion surveys indicate that the coming of the Eurozone crisis in 2010 has greatly affected both Iberian countries, which has put into question this common consensus, at least among the general public. The Eurobarometer series have clearly shown an outstanding decrease in the level of confidence toward the EU in both Portugal and Spain. In 2007, two thirds of Spaniards declared to trust the EU; the same

1 The editors would like to acknowledge the assistance of Aleksandra Sojka (University of Granada) in the editing of the manuscript.

percentage of support which was observed in Portugal. However, five years later, 72% of Spanish population and 60% in Portugal presented at least minor distrust towards the EU (Standard Eurobarometer 78, November 2012). Contrastingly, a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center last March–April 2013 among eight EU countries (including Spain but not Portugal), showed that the financial crisis has set off a significant wave of distrust within the populace, towards the economy and the future of the Union, as well as notorious scepticism regarding the assumed benefits of the economic integration implied by the EU membership.²

In this book we aim to shed light on the basis of support shown by Iberian elites towards the EU, by focusing on three dimensions: 1) identity (how Iberian elites perceive themselves as citizens of the EU and EU citizenship); 2) representation (attitudes towards the institutional architecture and the functioning of the EU); and 3) scope of governance—their perception of the power reach of the EU. These are the three dimensions covered by the project IntUne, which provides the bulk of the data we use in the book.

In this brief introduction we present some considerations about the relevance and singularity of the book, followed by a presentation of the IntUne Project, and finally sketching a rough summary of the chapters that form the volume.

A Rationale for the Comparison of Iberian Countries

Spain and Portugal, the two countries in the study, share an important set of common features that justify a joint analysis. Two main points of convergence could be stressed: historic and regional. On one hand, despite some notable differences—particularly the traditional Atlanticist position of Portugal and the influence of nationalist cleavages in Spain—the political histories of both countries share significant parallels. During the 19th and 20th centuries both countries suffered from the Napoleonic wars, they both had early liberal regimes with absolutist restorations followed by a further consolidation of liberalism. They were second-order colonial countries (in clear decline in the case of Spain), they experienced constitutional

2 *The New Sick Man of Europe: the European Union*. Pew Research Center Report, May 13, 2013.

instability and regime changes, and long right-wing dictatorships between the 1930s and the mid-1970s. In this decade, both countries also experienced transition processes to democratic regimes. These interactions were only strengthened with their joint inclusion into the European Economic Community in 1986 (Martín de la Guardia y Pérez, 2011). On the other hand, despite the Atlantic geographical position of Portugal, both countries belong to the so called “Mediterranean Europe,” together with Italy and Greece. The four states share a core of values and political patterns (weak civil societies and states, particularism, great influence of the church in private life and public affairs) (Gunther et al., 2006; Magone, 2003; Malefakis 1995). In the recent past of the EU, these countries demonstrated strong support for European integration. However, more recently, the emergence of the Eurozone crisis proved to have adverse effects on their perception of membership within this community, which is exacerbated by the erosion of their image as European states, to the extent that they are now categorized with the pejorative label of PIGS (acronym for Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain).

Despite these similarities, in the field of comparative political science, apart from those area studies works focusing on Southern Europe (i.e. Gunther et al., 2006, 1995; 2001; Linz and Stepan 1996; Tavares et al., 2003; Diamandouros and Gunther, 2001; Gunther and Higley 1992; O’Donnell et al., 1996), there are only a few works explicitly comparing both Iberian countries (see Magone 2003; 2001; Magalhães 2003; Colomer 2002; Durán 2000). This book is intended to be a contribution to this branch of literature, by focusing on the Iberian elites’ attitudes and perceptions towards the EU integration process.

In contrast with the abundant literature on public opinion support for the EU (Loveless and Rohrschneider 2008), research on the national elites’ attitudes towards the EU of national elites has been less frequent. Together with the greater difficulty to access the necessary data, a main reason for this—particularly until the 1990s—has been the view dominant theories of European integration (either functionalism or intergovernmentalism) have assumed about the role played by national elites in this process. For these theories, national elites (particularly governmental ones) were both drivers of the process, as well as legitimating mediators before national citizens, offering consensual support (Haller, 2008). In the 1990s, as supranational

integration went deeper, this ‘permissive consensus’ paradigm gave way to a new context where EU issues became more integrated into national political agendas (Hooghe and Marks, 1999). This attracted more attention to the attitudes of domestic elites on European integration, particularly regarding their twofold role as cueing agents of the general public, as well as their influence in the formation of national political positions (particularly in the case of political elites integrated within parties) (see, for instance, Katz and Wessels 1999; Aspinwall 2002, Evans 1998, Hug and König 2002, Johansson 2002, Jolly 2007, Ladrech 2002, Marks *et al.* 2002, Netjes and Binnema 2007, Ray 1999; Best *et al.*, 2012).

Our intention in this book is, precisely, to shed light on that twofold role (as drivers and legitimating actors) played by Portuguese and Spanish elites regarding European integration. Some questions we are interested in are: to what extent do Iberian elites support the EU integration process? How does this support manifest itself in identity terms? To what extent do they trust EU institutions? What degree of support they show towards the Europeanization of domestic policies? Are elites’ preferences similar to those of their fellow citizens? In addition, we are interested in the existence of similarities or differences between the two countries, as well as their specificity among the rest of member states of the EU.

Our data: The IntUne project

The legitimacy of democracy in the European project, especially citizens’ perception of it, is entrenched in the most prevalent challenges than EU has faced during the last decade. The IntUne Project, *Integrated and United? A Quest for Citizenship in an ever closer Europe* (IntUne),³ was clearly designed and framed in this context. The main goal of the project was to analyse changes in perceptions of the EU building process among public opinion and elites.

3 The IntUne project was one of the few Integrated Projects on the subject of Citizenship funded by the European Union within the scope of the 6th Framework Programme. IntUne is a four years project which officially started on the 1st September 2005 and was coordinated by Centre for the Study of Political Change (CIRCaP) at the University of Siena. It involved 29 European institutions and over 100 scholars across Eastern and Western Europe.