

Surfing the hurricane: Iberian leaderships during the Debt Crisis from biographical and interpretive perspective

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ABSTRACT Introduction: Through an interpretative perspective, we investigate how Spanish and Portuguese politicians managed the 2008 and 2016 debt crisis. Specifically, we explore their political career and the actions of two prime ministers of Spain (Zapareto and Rajoy) and two from Portugal (Sócrates and Passos Coelho) with intent to check how their biographies influenced the way which they dealt with the crisis. **Materials and methods:** From a qualitative study from these four cases, we highlight the prime minister's life choices and compare their *habitus*, mental frame, political capital, the political field and their respective actions under a structuralist constructivist perspective and the New Leadership theory. **Results:** The initial denial of the economic crisis in the public speech of these leaders harmed their command capability, lowered their political trust, and was the reason for incoherence between their speeches and actions on implementing austerity policies. Usually, political leaders that implemented these economic policies faced serious continuity problems in their seats, regardless of their ideological orientation. **Discussion:** The political and institutional crisis caused by the overlapping of the national policies of these two countries, and the political orientation of the European Union narrowed the autonomy of the Spanish and Portuguese prime ministers. We conclude that sincere leaders, capable of distinguishing responsibilities, and able to communicate with voters have greater chances to survive politically.

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I. Introduction: a breakdown of the debt crisis in Mediterranean countries

The world financial crisis experienced by North America and Europe since the middle of 2007 caused a series of drastic changes in the supranational governability of institutions like the European Union (EU). This situation also affected the other countries of the EU and their national and sub-state governability (Bosco & Verney, 2012). Such a context of crisis was characterized by budget constraints, economic adjustment programs, an increase in unemployment, a decline in political-institutional confidence and a social crisis in the Mediterranean countries, where the adverse effects of what was initially called an 'economic slowdown' and/or 'economic recession' were most severe. Undoubtedly, Greece is the country which suffered the European Union impositions the most and represents the most severe episode among all intervened countries¹, as a result of the risks at which its debt placed the Eurozone (BBC, 2015).

It is therefore essential to understand that the European and national policies have become closely intertwined as governments became more receptive to public pressure regarding the European integration (Hooghe & Marks, 2009). The effects of the economic crisis in the Mediterranean countries included the bailout of Portugal; the conditions imposed on banks in Greece, together with several bailouts of this country; the creation of governments friendly to plans of Brussels, such as Mario Monti's in Italy; and the budget-deficit cap written into the Spanish constitution. Not since the transfer to the EU of a series of powers in matters of economic and monetary policy by EU member states had there been such interference in the national sovereignty of these countries.

¹ With the decline of traditional parties and Syriza's rise led by Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, negotiations with community authorities were a complete failure for the Hellenic country. In summer 2015, the Greek government was forced to implement capital controls, limit cash withdrawals by individuals and apply for an economic adjustment program worth EUR 86,000 million.

This intervention, based on the law and communitarian authority, had detrimental effects on national democracies. As Matthias Matthijs has pointed out, not only was more demanded from Southern European countries than from Northern ones, but (Matthijs, 2017, p. 289): “the EU crisis response made euro membership in the periphery even less compatible with national democratic choice and only served to further deepen the EU’s existing democratic deficit”. The argument that there is a trade-off between the technocratic solutions and democratic quality of Brussels is not merely a rhetorical position (Angelis, 2017; Branco et al., 2019; Moury & Afonso, 2019). Given the simplicity of their classifications and their tendency to assess longer periods of time², the Freedom House and Polity IV indicators do not sufficiently reflect the trend. Nonetheless, there are other indicators that reveal this reality for shorter periods of time. The Economist’s Democracy Index scores for 2016 showed a number of significant trends regarding the process of economic adjustment (Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index, 2017), the first of which was a decline of democracy in Italy, Greece and Portugal, which were considered “defective democracies”, with Spain still classified as “full democracy”. In this regard, it is not mere coincidence that the degree of political and/or economic intervention in the three first was higher than in Spain. Indeed, it can be diachronically verified that democracy weakened in the former three countries since 2010.

² Freedom House only distinguishes three categories based on democracy scores and Polity IV Project does not take into account moments of imbalance. For instance, in Italy, Berlusconi’s era is considered fully democratic. This has been questioned from both theoretical and empirical Political Sciences (Crouch, 2004).

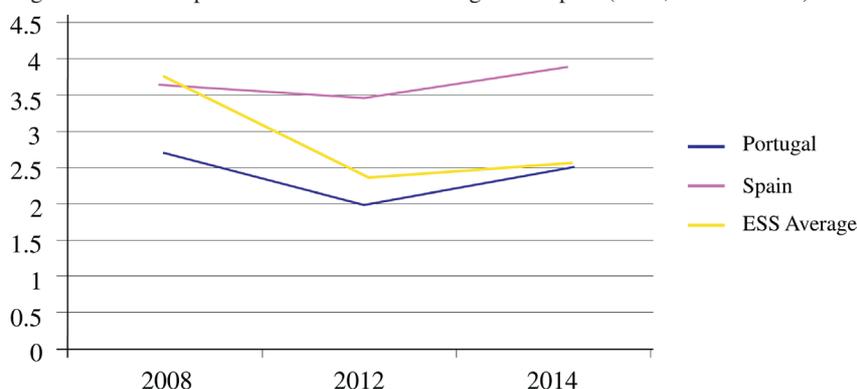
Furthermore, criticism of the opacity and low democracy scores of European bodies has intensified to the point that Klaus-Heiner Lehne, President of the European Court of Auditors, warned in 2015 that “European institutions have lost the trust of the citizens of the European Union” (European Court of Auditors, 2016). In this regard, a number of Spanish newspapers and scholars have analyzed the significance of the European Union in an environment marked by dissonance between positive macroeconomic figures and a negative microsocial reality³, as well as a rather uncertain political-electoral situation translating into political fragmentation, polarization and electoral volatility (Simón, 2019).

³ In 2016, Spanish citizens’ trust in public institutions showed a decline caused by the economic crisis, to the point that “economic recovery has not managed to restore it, remaining at levels clearly below those of 2007. From 2008 to 2016, the trust in parliament and political institutions has decreased by more than 30 percentage points and sits at incredibly low levels” (Fernández de Guevara et al., 2015).

A comparative analysis of the loss of political trust (in government, parliament and parties) in Portugal and Spain, during the debt crisis, shows a deeper fracture in the first country (Rodrigues Sanches et al., 2018) (see Figure 1). The subsequent recovery of trust came about at a time of change in leadership in the executive branch for both countries.

On the one hand, in the context of the political management of the sovereign debt crisis between 2011 and 2014, the Spanish and Portuguese cases are relevant. They show “the growing difficulty faced in producing public policies at the national level when the conditionality resulting from integration into the su-

Figure 1 - Trust in political institutions in Portugal and Spain (2008, 2012 & 2014)



Source: Rodrigues Sanches et al., 2018, p. 279.

pranational decision-making structures of the European Union becomes more intense” (González Begega & Luque Balbona, 2015, p. 11).

On the other hand, “levels of trust in representative institutions are strongly affected by the context. Proximity to elections, political scandals as well as economic and international crises are all factors that have a direct impact - positive or negative - on confidence levels” (Alonso, 2014, p. 39). Alonso argues that the political management of the financial crisis in the EU produced a “democratic fracture” between the countries on the periphery of Europe (including Spain and Portugal), in which there was a deep decline in trust in the political institutions, and the core countries of the EU, which maintained high levels of institutional confidence throughout the crisis. Indeed, there was “a 38% gap in confidence in national governments, a 36% gap in confidence in the national parliament and a 27% gap in confidence in parties”, between countries on the periphery and core EU countries (Alonso, 2014, p. 39). Trust in representative institutions fell sharply between 2010 and 2013 in the countries on the periphery of Europe (Spain, Greece, Portugal, Italy and Ireland, i.e., the GIIPS). Thus, in these countries “trust in the national governments and parliaments suffered a spectacular fall, especially since the first bailout to Greece in 2010” (Alonso, 2014, p. 41).

As a result, institutional trust becomes a key factor in understanding the effects of the financial crisis on leadership and the political arena. In Spain, the decline in institutional confidence began in 2004, when Spanish politics became tense and agitated following the consequences of the 11-M attacks in Madrid, and later intensified with the start of the economic crisis in 2008 (Estefanía, 2010; Jiménez-Díaz, 2013; Llera-Ramo, 2012; Paramio, 2015; Sánchez-Cuenca 2012, 2013). For this reason, this decline is associated with a growing distrust in the main political leaders which predated the economic crisis.

Therefore, the financial crisis in the EU caused two related phenomena. In the first place, it widened the economic gap between the core members and the periphery of the Eurozone; in the second, these two groups diverged in terms of the strength of their national democracies and their levels of political trust. This divergence, in turn, resulted in remarkable differences in the quality of democracy in the states on the periphery of the EU: while Spain maintains its qualification as a “full democracy”, Portugal, at least since 2017, came to be categorized as a “defective democracy” (Costa Pinto et al., 2013; De Sousa et al., 2014; Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index, 2017; Miguel & Martínez-Dordella, 2014). It had several consequences for democracies on the periphery of the EU, one of the most obvious being the redefinition of the political field in which public leaders operate and their respective room for maneuver as national and European political actors. In this regard, national leaders on the periphery appeared devoid of democratic legitimacy before their citizens, who came to believe that they could “vote but not choose” (Alonso, 2014) due to the economic agreements imposed by the EU.

Considering this situation, this article provides a qualitative and interpretive analysis of the leadership of Spanish and Portuguese prime ministers during the management of the debt crisis. The text is organized into five sections: the first is this introduction; the second section deals with research questions regarding national leaders; the third lays out the approaches of structuralist constructivism and New Leadership theory, as well as the biographical and interpretive methodology applied; the fourth develops an analysis of the life stories of the prime ministers and their comparison, with reference to analytical concepts; and the final section includes our conclusions and final remarks.

II. Research objectives: the Iberian national leaders in crisis

In analyzing the debt crisis, the need arises to study its management from the perspective of political leaders, especially those whose countries were particularly affected (De Clercy & Ferguson, 2016). National leaders had to make decisions, legitimate them and, therefore, develop frames of meaning for the crisis which they would not have adopted otherwise. All of it was undertaken in the midst of a financial besides an economic crisis intermingled with an increase in social unease, a loss of democratic quality in addition to a growing decline in trust in political institutions and leaders.

Political leaders' room for maneuver differs depending on the degree of political-electoral legitimacy achieved in their countries. Their negotiating positions change as the political field in question is transformed, once it acts as a field of forces and struggle between actors with unequal political and symbolic capitals, and with disparate material powers (in this case the economic strength of the country, and its rating by international financial agencies). Spain is a relevant economy in the EU and has suffered a downgrade in its ratings during the debt crisis. For its part, Portugal is among the last EU economies in economic power and, as previously mentioned, was subjected to an economic adjustment program. In this context, Spanish leaders probably had more maneuverability than the Portuguese leaders, due to Spain's economic strength within the EU. However, the political and symbolic capital of a leader refers to soft power, which can be mobilized with discourse, the ability to use discursive frames in every context, charismatic legitimacy, and the capacity for persuasion in the political field in which he operates.

In this regard, a leader's credibility plays an essential role in the development of frames of meaning for the crisis. In fact, leaders must be trustworthy to be effective in the communication process that a crisis implies. Hence, it has been argued that if 'leaders are trustworthy, their actions and words are more easily perceived as sincere, competent, and reliable. Where confidence is broken, all agents involved will scrutinize the leader's words and actions; it will be less likely that they believe official announcements, or act in accordance with them' (Boin et al., 2007, p.102). In this regard, some authors have argued that the decline in confidence in national leaders implies an increase in the trust placed in EU institutions (Curtice, 2016; Zaller, 1992).

Given these unusual circumstances, there is scientific and political interest in knowing how the prime ministers of Iberian nations coped with them, how the situation affected their campaigns and what the outcomes of their decisions for their respective countries were. This article focuses on answering the following questions from a comparative perspective, applying a biographical and interpretive approach:

- How did the prime ministers of these countries execute their leadership with regards to the debt crisis?
- What was the result of their performance in terms of their political continuity and/or career?

Thus, this article aims to offer a close-up, qualitative and interpretive approach to national political leadership in the European Union's Iberian countries. Although their situations were different, these countries' formulas of intervention share specific features. Firstly, these countries have the same administrative tradition, acting within the Napoleonic and/or the Mediterranean model, and both have parliamentary systems of government (Ongaro, 2010). Secondly, both were audited by the European Union with legal, political, economic and social consequences, and indeed Spain and Portugal were among the

European countries which most suffered the adverse effects of the financial and economic crisis at the turn of the century. Third, these countries have had a similar historical and political development in recent decades, having experienced person-centered dictatorships and a later process of transition to democracy between the seventies and eighties, in the context of what became known as the third wave of democratization (Huntington, 1994).

III. A comparative, biographical and interpretive approach and methodology based on structuralist constructivism and New Leadership theory

In its broadest definition, leadership is an interdisciplinary concept. Indeed, it has been analyzed from within the fields of Management Science, Political Science, Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy, Anthropology and History. This clearly highlights the effect of leaders, whose lives and actions penetrate the various strata of politics, economics, society and culture. Indeed, difficulties in reaching an agreement regarding the implications of the concept have only increased as a result of research into the idea of leadership.

Within the field of Political Science, political leadership represents an object of study which may be examined from different perspectives: from the most objectivist and quantitative observations, focused on citizens' assessment of leaders' performances, to the most subjectivist and qualitative perceptions, based on the qualitative speeches written by leaders. In fact, leadership analysis can be broken down into those who emphasize the person and those who have stressed the circumstances. Our own approach to leadership allows us to understand and examine the practices and discourses of leaders (micro-level) in the context of the political institutions and social structures (macro-level) in which such leaders work. Thus, our approach, as we shall lay out in the following section, makes it possible to study three linked and interdependent processes in the social construction of the leader: socialization, legitimization, and institutionalization (Jiménez-Díaz, 2008). According to this perspective, a leader's political trajectory is historical in character and is a social-biographical construct which develops in three stages: socialization (training and/or experience prior to their political life), legitimization (candidacy and first victories) and institutionalization (consecutive victories in the same executive position).

Our analysis of the national leaders who governed the Iberian countries during the economic crisis adopts the perspective of New Leadership theory (Bryman, 1992; Delgado, 2004; Elgie, 2015; Kirkpatrick, 2004) and an analytical position based on the theoretical concepts and emerging paradigm of structuralist constructivism (Bennister et al., 2014; Bourdieu, 2012; Harrison, 2018; Joignant, 2012). This approach has been extensively described in a previous article by the authors (Collado-Campaña, Jiménez-Díaz & Entrena-Durán, 2016) and applied to several research projects (Collado-Campaña, 2019; Collado-Campaña & Jiménez-Díaz, 2011; Jiménez-Díaz & Collado-Campaña, 2011). From the perspective of the New Leadership theory, a political leader would be a person capable of conveying a political objective or goal to his followers through a vision or project and of mobilizing them (Linz, 2019). From the point of view of structuralist constructivism, which attaches special importance to the symbolic dimension of power (Bourdieu, 2000; Parsons, 2010), the theoretical elements for our qualitative analysis of the Spanish and Portuguese leaders are:

1. Frame: the internal agenda of the leader, which manifests itself in a set of cognitive and evaluative *schemata* of reality, with the capacity to interpret the socio-political context and establish an order of priorities based on his own political vision.

2. *Habitus*: the ordered, stable and united set of schemata that allows the political actor to coordinate and execute his thoughts and actions, that is, the social ability necessary to interpret reality through his ideas and his acts. Political ideology is in the background of *habitus*, and conditions it.

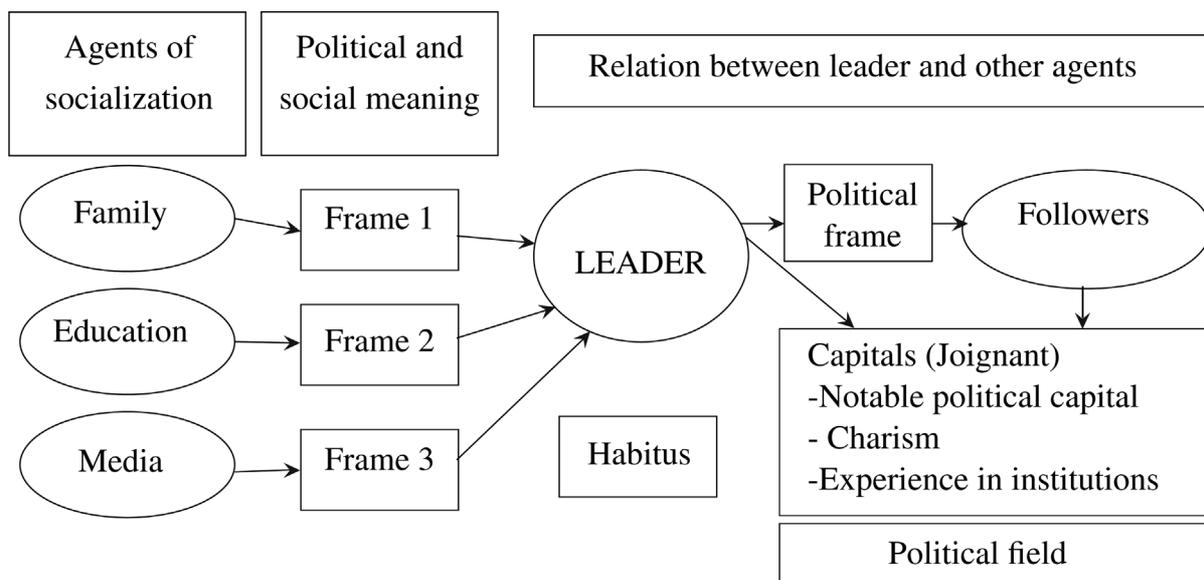
3. Political capital: the resources, merits and recognitions which the leader accumulates in competition with other actors. This political capital can be classified into three types: notability (notable political capital), crisis management (epic capital or charisma) and experience in political institutions (institutional political capital or political capital by delegation).

4. Political field: this competition takes place in social spaces (parliament, political party, institutions, etc.) with defined rules and where each actor occupies a hierarchical position, according to the type of capital at stake. Also, political actors may deploy social capital from other fields, including professional, social or cultural ones.

The general hypothesis is that the discourse and practices of political leaders are conditioned by two interdependent elements: their discourse frames, which are adapted to the context; and their *habitus*, which is the result of socialization processes (Figure 2). Both elements act as “incorporated mediations” through which leaders connect to the political field. This is a scenario of confrontation of objectives, programs, and political visions in which leaders deploy their political and symbolic capital in order to achieve the legitimacy and maneuverability to carry out their aims.

During the management of the financial crisis, the maneuverability of the prime ministers of the peripheral countries of the European Union (EU) was limited by demands for adjustment policies and budget cuts imposed by the EU. However, the ability to maneuver may have been greater in those leaders who represented countries with greater economic strength in the context of the EU, above all, if this was accompanied by significant electoral support and national political legitimacy. In this regard, the specific hypotheses are two. First, that the survival of prime ministers after managing the economic crisis was very

Figure 2 - Diagram of New Leadership theory and structuralist constructivism applied to leadership



Source: diagram designed by the authors.

⁴ The main source for the life stories of these political leaders is the CIDOB Biographies of Political Leaders (CIDOB 2017), a database including up-to-date information about a number of

limited in those leaders who had initially denied the existence of the crisis (Socrates and Zapatero), as this could discredit them and eventually lead to their resignation. Second, that prime ministers who began their mandates by taking over the management of the financial crisis (Rajoy and Passos Coelho) may have enjoyed some political stability, especially if they had previous political capital and baggage, but this did not in itself guarantee that they would be able to remain in their positions after implementing adjustment policies and budget cuts.

The methodological techniques used in this article are the development of the prime minister's life stories (Bevir & Rhodes, 2015; Bertaux & Kohli, 1984; Lambricht & Madison, 2011; Pujadas, 2002; Shamir et al., 2005) and the application of the comparative method between these cases (Sartori & Morlino, 1994; Tardivo & Fernández, 2017). As for the biographical method, we have developed brief life stories of the prime ministers of these two countries from two types of sources. The first type is the biographical data from the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs⁴ about political leaders (CIDOB, 2017) and the biographies of the analyzed prime ministers in the Encyclopedia Britannica (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020). In addition, this biographical data is completed by a second category of sources, which is a selection of prime ministers' biographies and autobiographies published in their own countries (these books are stated in the bibliography). This methodology allows for the reconstruction of a comprehensive narrative on the social extraction, ideological characterization, the political-institutional performance and the stages of these leaders' public careers. Thus, it allows for the synchronic and diachronic comparison between the leaders above for the period spanning from the start of the crisis in 2008 to 2016.

IV. Executive leaders in the debt crisis in Spain and Portugal

IV.1. The Spanish prime ministers

IV.1.1. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2004-2011)

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero was born in Valladolid in 1960. He grew up in a middle-class family in the city of León; his father was a lawyer of the city council and belonged to a family with a Spanish Republican past⁵. Zapatero attended various private⁶ education centers, and became affiliated with the Juventudes Socialistas from a very early age⁷, becoming its provincial secretary general in 1979; he went on to become secretary general of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) in León in 1987 (CIDOB, 2017). When he finished his secondary studies, he studied Law at the University of León and obtained his bachelor's degree with an end-of-degree project on the statute of autonomy of Castilla y León; and from 1983 to 1986 he worked as an assistant professor of Constitutional Law at that university. In 1986 Zapatero obtained a seat in Parliament, which he kept uninterruptedly until he became prime minister. He started his political career with a *habitus* of negotiation, using power softly, avoiding conflicts which affected him directly and exhibiting a political instinct focused on obtaining personal predominance⁸ (CIDOB, 2017; Martí & Pettit, 2010). Moreover, as the starting point of his career, he had a critically important inherited family capital, cultural capital as a result of his education and political capital obtained from his experience inside the partisan structures of the PSOE.

In the second half of the nineties, with the decline of Felipe González and the rise of José María Aznar (PP) to Prime Minister of Spain, Rodríguez Zapatero began his phase of legitimization as a candidate for the 2004 general election (CIDOB, 2017). The vacuum left by the end of Gonzalez's leadership sunk the PSOE into a deep crisis, with infighting between "guerristas" and "reformists",

⁵ Zapatero's paternal grandfather, Juan Rodríguez Lozano, was a captain in the Republican armed forces and was executed by firearm for his loyalty to the Republic in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939); this recollection has been part of his political memory from his childhood.

⁶ His elementary education was developed at the Colegio de las Discípulas de Jesús and he studied his baccalaureate at the Colegio Leonés.

⁷ His affiliation took place in the seventies, when he attended a speech delivered by Felipe González which greatly impressed him, feeling called on by the values of social democracy and the leadership of the historic socialist politician.

⁸ As pointed out in other works, Zapatero did not mind getting rid of his closest

followers; only a small number of them accompanied him throughout his three decades of political career.

⁹ Among the candidates who competed against Rodríguez Zapatero to become Secretary General of the socialist federation at the 35th Conference held in the year 2000 were José Bono, President of Castilla-La Mancha between 1983-2004; Matilde Fernández, who had been Minister of Social Affairs with González; and Rosa Díez, member of the European Parliament and charismatic figure in the fight against ETA.

¹⁰ With the support of important experts in public marketing, Zapatero turned his own surname into a brand: ZP. This increased the degree of personalisation of his candidacy, his initials becoming more relevant than those of his party. This trend would continue in 2011 with the socialist candidacy of Rubalcaba.

¹¹ Among the components of this program was 'Plan E', which provided municipalities with EUR 8,000 million to revitalize local economies.

and socialist leadership has since been “a field in dispute” (Delgado & Cazorla 2017, p. 270). In 2000, after a complex internal process⁹ characterized by the emergence of several socialist leaders in short succession (Joaquín Almunia and Josep Borrell), Zapatero became Secretary General at the 35th Conference of the PSOE with his “New Way”. This candidacy included young socialist politicians distanced from the Felipe González era and with close ties to the Catalan Socialist Party. He won 41.7% of the vote by socialist delegates (CIDOB, 2017). During the period from 2000 to 2004, Zapatero originally led a soft opposition until the end of 2002. By this year, a series of issues such as the sinking of the *Prestige*, Spanish support for the United States in the Iraq War and Catalan nationalism toughened his position towards the decisions of the Spanish government. Thanks to this, he became a media figure and his approval ratings improved.

In the 2004 general election, Zapatero’s political communication campaign, projecting a primary frame based on his own personality¹⁰, together with an electoral turnover prompted by the March 11th Madrid train bombings, granted the PSOE a clear victory against the PP (Picarella, 2014). His first term in office was marked by the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq, debate around the Spanish national framework, negotiations for the disarmament of ETA and the promotion of policies implying advances in social rights (the medical termination of pregnancy act, the same-sex marriage act, etc.). His followers and members of his ministerial team included María Teresa Fernández de la Vega, Carme Chacón, José Bono, Jesús Caldera, José Antonio Alonso and Magdalena Álvarez. Polling shows that trust in Zapatero’s government was high at the beginning of his tenure, with only 6.2% not granting him any confidence. This figure reached 40% by the end of his second term in office.

In the campaign for the 2008 general election, when his institutionalization as prime minister was at stake, Rodríguez Zapatero came up as a candidate against Mariano Rajoy, the candidate for the opposition. In the year 2007 and the beginning of 2008, some leaders of the opposition and expert economists had warned of the negative state of the economy in Spain, describing it as a “The Great Recession” (Field & Botti, 2013). Rodríguez Zapatero’s *habitus* strengthened thanks to the management of his first term, based on a primary frame focusing action on social aspects and civil rights, and on a political capital based on his personal reputation. Yet this *habitus* was to face an imminent breakdown in a changing political-economic context (Álvarez, 2014, p. 13). Zapatero won the aforementioned general election by a simple majority. Nonetheless, being unable to project a frame for the new circumstances, his discourse and political action ranged from denial of the effects and/or the existence of the crisis to the acknowledgment thereof by the end of 2008, all while attempting to rely on the confidence that his political capital aroused. It has been shown that the economy weighed more heavily on Spanish voters in that election year, than later in the 2011 General Election (Fraile & Lewis-Beck, 2014). At the end of 2008, Zapatero implemented a policy aimed at encouraging spending and the reactivation of employment as a means to combat the economic crisis. This policy consisted of a total public investment of EUR 11,000 million¹¹. During his second term in office (2008-2011), cabinet reshuffling became common practice, with Fernández de la Vega and Carme Chacón remaining his most loyal collaborators and others joining the cabinet later on, such as Bernat Soria or Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba, who had already been a minister with González.

The anti-cyclical plan put in motion by the Spanish Government failed to deliver the expected results, creating debt and a public deficit increase. Moreover, the risk posed by the Greek economy to the Eurozone in 2009, together with a sharp rise in unemployment to above 20%, created an unprecedented climate of unease which would also converge on the 15-M movement (CIDOB,

2017). Among his followers, the one who paid the highest price for his economic decisions would be the minister of the Treasury, Pedro Solbes, who left office that year.

In 2010, the EU and the IMF pressed Rodríguez Zapatero to implement a policy to reduce public spending in order to decrease the deficit. The reform included making a budget-deficit cap mandatory by writing it into the constitution in 2011, with the support of the leader of the PP, Mariano Rajoy. From 2009 to 2011, Zapatero's popularity and trust decreased steadily (for instance: from July to October 2011, those claiming little or no trust in Zapatero increased from 81.5% to 84.9%). This forced him to undertake a series of ministerial changes and, finally, to call an early general election in November 2011, introducing Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba as the socialist candidate (Rodríguez Zapatero, 2013). Nonetheless, this experienced socialist leader did not improve on Zapatero's popularity and political confidence, and the latter index would plummet to around 6.3% by October 2014 (Delgado & Cazorla, 2017).

IV.1.2. Mariano Rajoy (2011-2018)

Mariano Rajoy Brey was born into an upper-middle class family in Santiago de Compostela in 1955. His father was a judge and his mother a housewife. Given his father's job, he spent his childhood in several cities, living in Pontevedra, Oviedo and León (CIDOB, 2017). In his childhood, he attended the Colegio de las Discípulas de Jesús in León¹². Finally, he studied baccalaureate at a high school in Pontevedra and earned a degree in Law at the University of Santiago de Compostela. One year after finishing his university studies and his bachelor's degree in Law, he passed the public examinations to Registrar and started to work as such in Villafranca del Bierzo (León). His *habitus* was marked by a shy, introspective, disciplined, and earnest character, a conservative ideology, a great memory and a prestigious professional capital (Álvarez, 2014). His ambitious character brought him closer to Alianza Popular, where he obtained a seat as a member of the Galician autonomous Parliament in 1981. Later, he became the president of the Provincial Government of Pontevedra between 1986-1991, the vice-president of the Galician Council of Ministers between 1986-1987 and eventually earned a seat as a Member of Parliament. Coinciding with the restructuring of Alianza Popular into the Popular Party (PP), and thanks to a political capital of notability and by delegation, he became a member of the National Executive Committee of the PP and General Vice-Secretary of electoral action. Despite his differences with party founder Manuel Fraga, Rajoy was able to forge an ascending political career, especially in national politics (Palomo, 2011, p. 95-96).

¹² Rajoy and Zapatero studied at the same religious school in León. In fact, their fathers, who both worked in the legal field, had a close relationship (Palomo, 2011, p. 88).

The new leader of the PP, José María Aznar, was elected Prime Minister in 1996, marking Rajoy's entrance into the national political field, first as Minister of Public Administrations (1996-2000) and, during Aznar's second term, as Minister of the Presidency, Interior Minister and First Deputy Prime Minister. Having accumulated capital by delegation, he was appointed the PP presidential candidate for the 2004 general election¹³. Thus began his legitimization as a candidate, which would extend for almost a decade, after the 2004 Madrid train bombings (also known in Spain as 11M) and the rise of Rodríguez Zapatero to Prime Minister made him leader of the opposition between 2004-2011. After his second electoral defeat, he faced an internal dispute to seize leadership, mainly against Esperanza Aguirre, until he renewed his position as party president in 2008 at the PP Conference held in Valencia, with the essential support of Javier Arenas and Francisco Camps¹⁴. After this, Rajoy rid himself of the team he had inherited from José María Aznar and chose people of his trust, such as Cospedal, Sáenz de Santamaría and González Pons, to occupy key positions.

¹³ His appointment as candidate to prime minister was probably also connected to his successful management of Aznar's campaign in 2000.

¹⁴ Aguirre, Arenas and Camps were relevant regional leaders of Popular Party.

From 2008 to 2011, apart from showing his firm opposition to Rodríguez Zapatero's economic measures, he consolidated his leadership within the party.

In the 2011 general election, Mariano Rajoy faced the socialist candidate Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba, projecting a primary frame focused on economic policy and austerity, winning an absolute majority despite high levels of social unrest¹⁵. His new team included his former followers, as well as Luis de Guindos and Cristóbal Montoro (CIDOB, 2017). He reached an agreement with the EU on a public deficit reduction, more significant than the one agreed to by Zapatero. His economic policy was based on large budget cuts, the unification of government agencies and ministries and a tax hike¹⁶, going against what he had said in his electoral campaign. In 2012, he extended these cuts to departments as sensitive as Education and Health, worsening the climate of social protest and an increase in unemployment which had already taken off in the previous decade (Field & Botti, 2013). With the rise of the Spanish risk premium, European authorities demanded cuts, leading Rajoy to implement a more severe austerity plan quantified in EUR 65,000 million and a bailout of the Spanish banking system sponsored by the European Central Bank. Other issues present in the political agenda during his tenure included a series of corruption scandals in connection to the illegal funding of the PP, as well as the Catalan sovereignty process.

Between 2014 and 2015, macroeconomic figures indicated an improvement of the Spanish economy. Nonetheless, the existing climate of political and social unrest, which was voiced by *Movimiento 15-M* (the 15-M movement), favored the rise of two new parties, *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos*, located respectively on the political left and right. In the 2015 general election, Rajoy was again the PP candidate, running on the economic success he had achieved

and winning by a simple majority (Rajoy, 2019). Nevertheless, this was not enough to rule in coalition with the other center-right party, *Ciudadanos*. Thus, the emergence of two new parties and a loss of votes prevented him from forming a government until a repeat general election was held in 2016. He then became Prime Minister with the support of *Ciudadanos*, marking the start of his institutionalization as a leader. In this regard, the cabinet adhered to an economic policy of fiscal discipline. Rajoy defeated a motion of no-confidence in 2017, but was ultimately ousted when he lost a second vote of no-confidence in 2018. This motion, however, was based on the National Court ruling regarding the illegal funding of the PP, and thus not justified on grounds of the government's austerity policies.

IV.2. The Portuguese prime ministers

IV.2.1. José Sócrates (2005-2011)

José Sócrates was born in 1957 in Oporto, within an upper-middle class family. His father, Fernando Pinto de Sousa, was an architect and leader of the Social Democratic Party (PSD). In his childhood, he studied in Covilha, district of Castelo Branco (CIDOB, 2017). After his parents' divorce in 1974, Sócrates stayed with his father, while his mother and siblings moved to Lisbon. Being guided by his father's political ambition, he was one of the first members of Juventud Social Democrata of Covilha (JSC), but he would resign later on. In his youth, he moved away from politics when he started his studies as a Civil Engineer, with a major in Health, at the Higher School of Engineering of Coimbra. His phase of socialization resulted in a *habitus* marked by a social democratic ideology, tremendous political ambition, a disciplined character and great loyalty towards his political mentor, António Guterres¹⁷. Moreover, he

¹⁵ Regarding the degree of confidence in the case of Rajoy, the category "no confidence" showed the greatest intensity at the beginning of his tenure in 2011 compared to other Spanish prime ministers, and increased to over 50% by his first year in government in 2012.

¹⁶ Among other taxes, he increased the VAT, the corporation tax and the Personal Income Tax.

¹⁷ António Guterres (1949) is

a Portuguese politician of the PS who has been Prime Minister of Portugal and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2005-2015). He has been Secretary General of the United Nations since 2017.

¹⁸ Mario Soares (1924-2017) was the Prime Minister of Portugal between 1974-1976, during the country's transition to democracy, and the President of the Republic between 1996-2006. He was a historic leader of the fight against the Salazar dictatorship and a member of the Socialist Party.

¹⁹ João Barroso Soares (1949), lawyer, was the mayor of Lisbon from 1995 to 2002 and the Minister of Culture between 2015-2016.

²⁰ Manuel Alegre (1935) is a poet and a Portuguese politician who ran as a candidate in the 2006 presidential elections. He had been an opponent of the Salazar regime and was exiled in Algeria for years. Later, he founded the Portuguese Socialist Party, becoming the vice-president, and was a member of the Assembly of the Republic.

was in possession of a moderate academic capital, together with the recognition inherited from his paternal family.

His phase of legitimization developed from 1981 to 2005, from the moment he returned to his village to his rise to Prime Minister. When he returned to Covilha, he joined the Socialist Party (PS), mainly because he was not satisfied with the conservative drift of the PSD. He positioned himself within the *Juventud Socialista* and the local administration of the party, where he worked as an engineer (Maio, 2008). He met António Guterres, who was National Secretary of the PS and whom he supported. When he was only 25 years old, he became president of the socialist federation through a pact with Mário Soares's¹⁸ supporters. When the PS was dealt a severe blow in local politics, with many of the party's mayors losing power throughout the country, he decided to make the jump to the national arena. In 1987, he ran for parliament in an election won by the PSD, earning a seat in the Republican Assembly together with Guterres, spokesperson of his parliamentary group. In his period as leader of the opposition, he stood out for his effectiveness and drew the attention of the party when he overtly spoke about AIDS in the chamber of Parliament. One year later, Sócrates was named outstanding member of Parliament by the newspaper *Expresso News*. During 1990, he worked in the private sector, but he soon moved away from it. In 1991, he joined the PS National Secretariat and National Committee.

His political mentor, António Guterres, became the president of the Socialist Party in 1992. In the 1995 general election, the PS, led by Guterres, won 43.9% of the vote and Sócrates became a member of his ministerial team (CIDOB, 2017). He later became the Minister for the Environment and Territorial Planning. In this capacity, he achieved tremendous social repercussion between 1999-2002 for his willingness to confront pressure groups and the criticism of environmental activists. After the decline of his political mentor, and still as a member of Parliament in the opposition, Sócrates became a frequent television talk show commentator as a specialist in current affairs. Furthermore, he started paying careful attention to his public image and appearance and drew closer to the social democracy outlined by Tony Blair, taking a cue from his Spanish counterpart Rodríguez Zapatero (Maio, 2008). In 2004, after a scandal, he faced former mayor of Lisbon João Soares¹⁹ and historic socialist leader Manuel Alegre²⁰ in a successful bid to become the Secretary General of his party. Sócrates won 80.1% of the vote.

In the 2005 general election, he projected a frame defined by Europeanism, his willingness to maintain Portuguese troops in Iraq and his war on poverty, while his opponent Pedro Santana portrayed him as corrupt. Finally, he won 45.04% of the vote and the absolute majority of the chamber. This enabled him to form a government without the need for a coalition with other forces. Among his most prominent political actions was a program to bring budget spending under control, reduce the civil service and reform the public sector, which allowed Sócrates to ratify his continuity as the Prime Minister with a second victory in 2009 - despite losing his absolute majority - and led to the institutionalization of his leadership. Nevertheless, subsequent plans to continue implementing public sector cutbacks eventually began to undermine his leadership.

In the first decade of the 21st century, Portugal emerged as a model economy in Western Europe, although certain sectors of the public cast doubts on this version despite Sócrates's insistence (RTVE, 2017). In 2011, the press published information showing that Portuguese democratic governments had promoted excessive spending, fostered economic bubbles through public-private partnerships of dubious transparency and increased expenditure in civil ser-

vices. This led the European Commission and its Eurogroup counterparts to exert strong pressure and force the introduction of austerity measures early in 2011. In this context, Sócrates proposed a new package which was rejected by a majority in parliament. Given this situation, Sócrates resigned as Prime Minister in March 2011 and requested a EUR 78,000 million adjustment program from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the EU.

IV.2.2. Pedro Passos Coelho (2011-2015)

Pedro Manuel Passos Coelho was born in 1964 in Sé Nova, a municipality of Coimbra. He grew up in a well-off family, but when he was five, he had to move to Silva Porto (nowadays, Kuito), in Angola; Passos Coelho was educated there until the age of 10 (CIDOB, 2017). In 1974, when Angola started to become independent, his family went back to Portugal and he continued his studies at the National High School Castelo-Branco, where he finished his secondary studies. When he was 14, he joined the *Juventud Social Democrata*. In 1980, having stood out in local sections of this organization, he entered the National Council. Two years later, he became part of the National Political Committee, and in 1984 he was elected secretary general. He was able to combine this with his studies in Mathematics and continued delivering private lessons and lectures on public relations (Aureliano, 2015). He stood out in politics because he held a seat as a member of parliament for Lisbon between 1991-1994; as a result, he was ultimately unable to graduate. Therefore, his political socialization provided him with a *habitus* marked by ambition, an early political vocation, a neoliberal ideology and a rapid public career. Due to his experience, he had notability and political capital by delegation, accumulated throughout his early period in the legislative chamber.

His legitimization phase developed from 1996 to 2015. In 1996, Coelho became the vice-president and the spokesperson of the PSD parliamentary group in the opposition. Between 1997 and 2001, he served as a local councilman in Amadora. From 2000 to 2010, Coelho combined his activity in the political field with his academic and professional life (Aureliano, 2015). In the political arena, he belonged to the PSD national executive between 2005-2006; he co-founded the *Movimiento Pensar Popular*²¹ and he was the councilor of *Vila Real* since 2005 (CIDOB, 2017). Regarding his education and professional development, Coelho graduated in Economics from the Lusiada University of Lisbon in 2001, while working for a series of consultancy firms such as LDN Consulting, URBE and FomentInves Group and carrying out analyses for the media. In 2004, he delivered lectures at the Higher School of Education Sciences of Odivelas.

In 2008, he ran for president of the PSD on a neo-liberal platform. Nevertheless, he was defeated by Manuela Ferreira²², who subsequently lost the parliamentary election against José Sócrates in 2010. After this, Coelho launched the think tank *Construir Ideias* (Building Ideas); published a book titled “Mudar” in which he outlined his political message; and successfully ran as a candidate in the 2010 internal party election to become the president of the PSD.

In the 2011 early election, Passos Coelho won, thanks to the loss of credibility of the PS after their management of the crisis which allowed him to form a government in coalition with the conservatives. Between 2011 and 2015, the action of the new cabinet complied with the conditions of the adjustment plan signed by his predecessor, José Sócrates (RTVE, 2017). His central reforms thus included budget cuts in the areas of health, pensions and education, together with a hike in the VAT and other tax rates. This negatively affected his approval ratings, as the public saw the Prime Minister dig deeper into his neoliberal political agenda with the support of international actors interested in

²¹ A platform composed by a variety of experts, professors, entrepreneurs and intellectuals who sought to discuss the main challenges facing Portugal in the 21st century.

²² Ferreira is an economist and was the first woman to lead a Portuguese party with her PSD candidacy to prime minister in 2010.

maintaining and/or going further with Portuguese economic reforms (Moury & Standring, 2017). Throughout those years, Passos Coelho's leadership was defined as moralist and neoliberal. At the same time, citizens' views of social services and the welfare state became increasingly polarized, with effects in the electoral field (Magalhaes, 2014).

In 2015, Passos Coelho won the parliamentary election as head of the PSD, but the majority left-wing parliament was not favorable to him. Though supported by a minority coalition government established that year, the cabinet proposal program failed to garner the support of members of parliament (López, 2015). After only eleven days in power, the minority government of Passos Coelho was overthrown when the Socialist Party (PS) turned to its left by reaching an agreement with the Left Bloc (BE) and the Communists (PCP) to reject the vote of confidence and to form a minority government. It should be mentioned that this was the first time the communists, an orthodox party which had always accused the socialists of being traitors to the left, decided to join forces with the socialists (El Mundo, 2015). The ensuing socialist government of António Costa led to an important break with austerity policies.

IV.3. Comparison between Spanish and Portuguese leaderships during the debt crisis

The perceptions, mental frameworks and political action (*habitus*) of the four leaders have in common their political ambition and shared ideologies between the social democrats and the conservatives in each country (Table 1). It is worth noting that Zapatero exhibits a considerable dose of Machiavellianism compared to the other prime ministers, as well as a weaker sense of political discipline towards his political party. In contrast, Rajoy, Sócrates and Passos Coelho, despite being leaders of their respective forces, maintain a leadership within the parameters of their parties, without producing breaks or internal conflicts. Finally, the two Portuguese prime ministers exhibit a *habitus* involving a greater focus on their personalities (creation of movements, mediatization of politics, etc.) than can be found in the case of Zapatero.

The projected frames show similarities between leaders of similar ideologies, with the exception of Sócrates' pre-crisis discourse regarding the reform of the public sector. This discourse and its vision are to be understood within the context of the size of the Portuguese public sector, whose reduction was considered necessary. Therefore, these frames should be interpreted as an expression of the political coordinates in which these leaders acted in the medium and long term. With the exception of Zapatero, the other three prime ministers implemented downsizing measures in, accordance with the political and economic context. In this sense, there was a correspondence between the political discourse and the action of the leaders analyzed, with actions proportional to the austerity policies imposed from abroad - with the exception of Zapatero, who had denied the need for such measures at the start of the crisis. In the case of the Portuguese PM Passos Coelho, this primary frame allowed a leader whose ideology and mindset were in tune with neoliberal reforms to introduce his proposals and move ahead in that direction with the support of international actors, simultaneously implementing his own agenda and that of external stakeholders.

The political capital the four leaders have in common is political capital by delegation, accumulated in previous roles as political representatives and within their parties. In addition, the four share a capital of notability from an increase in their media visibility through various mechanisms, whether thanks to external support for their figure as in the case of Passos Coelho, or due to their own emergence as new leaders of the opposition, as with Zapatero, Rajoy and Sócrates. Only Rajoy enjoyed successful crisis-management political capital,

Table 1 - *Habitus*, frames, capitals, fields, and performances of Spanish and Portuguese prime ministers during the debt crisis (2008-2016)

Spain		Habitus	Primary frames	Capital	Fields	Crisis response	Result
J.L. Rodríguez Zapatero (2008-2011)	Machiavellian	Social democracy	Capital by delegation	National politician	Denial of crisis Plan to increase public expenditure	Resignation (2011)	
	Negotiator	Social rights	Notability	Organic politician			
M. Rajoy Brey (2011-2016)	Social democracy	Conservatism	Capital by delegation	Regional politician	Austerity policies	Continuity 2016 – Motions of no confidence 2017 (failed) and 2018 (successful)	
	Political ambition						
	Personalist style						
	Conservative						
	Discipline	Economic adjustment	Notability	Local politician	Greatest budget cuts in Spain		
	Political ambition		Successful crisis management	National politician	Boost to reforms		
				Organic politician			
				Professional			
Portugal		Habitus	Primary frames	Capital	Fields	Crisis response	Result
J. Sócrates (2005-2011)	Attention to image	Europeanism	Capital by delegation	Academic	Austerity policies Denial of crisis	Resignation (2011)	
	Discipline	Reform	Notability	Local politician			
	Loyalty	Administration		National politician			
	Personalist style	Social democracy		Organic politician			
P.M. Passos Coelho (2011-2015)	Political ambition	Economic reform	Capital by delegation	Academic	Austerity policies	Motion of no confidence 2015 (successful)	
	Social democracy			Local politician			
	Discipline	Neo-liberalism	Notability	National politician	Boost to reforms		
	Neo-liberalism			Organic politician			
	Political ambition			Professional			
	Personalist style						
	Political vocation						

Source: based on empirical work and the use of life stories by the authors.

following the resolution of the conflict between former Aznar supporters and Rajoy ones, after the party's second electoral defeat in 2008.

In reference to their political fields, all four leaders have a long history in organic political fields. This similarity is connected to the ones between the two countries, in terms of party structure and candidate selection processes. The Portuguese prime ministers were characterized by their greater involvement in academic fields, whereas Rajoy and Passos Coelho also had some work experience outside of politics. Most of them had had prior professional experience in sub-state institutions, with the exception of Zapatero, who served as a member of the national parliament, from the beginning of his career without having had previous experience in other fields. In the case of the other three leaders, the transition from sub-state to national politics was related to the accumulation of experience in sub-state political arenas, while in the case of Zapatero, it was exclusively correlated with his control and dominance of the party structure in his district.

The response to the crisis shows similar results in those prime ministers who initially denied its existence. Consequently, Zapatero and Sócrates ended up resigning from their posts due to the discredit they had brought upon themselves, although there is a difference between the two. The Spanish Prime Minister denied the existence of the crisis and subsequently had to adjust his social democratic and pro-expenditure discourse to another one, vindicating the austerity policies demanded by supranational organizations. On the other hand, Sócrates had already launched an austerity program prior to the onset of the crisis, which was made more serious by the implementation of the measures imposed by the European Union. In the case of conservative leaders Rajoy and Passos Coelho, they applied austerity policies according to international measures. Both governments were brought down by motions of no confidence, although the arguments and timeline differed between the two cases. With Rajoy, the motion he faced in 2018 (several years after the end of the European sovereign debt crisis) was justified on the basis of a corruption case affecting his political party, which brought together the parliamentary opposition. In the case of Passos Coelho, his ousting resulted from the decline of his public perception due to the application of austerity policies in 2015, together with a weariness towards these policies that united the parties of the left wing.

V. Conclusions and final remarks: on the leadership of Spanish and Portuguese prime ministers during the debt crisis

Our research confirms the original hypothesis that the political orientation, actions and ideas of leaders, together with their acquisition of political resources in various political spaces, have a direct result in their political life.

Although none of the cases analyzed present a successful leadership and political career, it is easier to understand the negative elements that have influenced them (Müller-Rommel et al., 2020, p. 244). The four cases analyzed include two instances of failure caused by the resignation of prime ministers who had initially denied the reality of the crisis and two others produced by motions of no confidence, justified by the effects of austerity policies in the case of Passos Coelho and by a case of political corruption one, in the case of Rajoy. Prime ministers in Spain and Portugal are limited by parliamentary majorities (Mourao & Domingues Martinho, 2020, p. 19), but majorities and/or coalitions that seek to bring down a cabinet need a hard and clear frame, explaining to the public the reasons for a motion of no confidence. In all four cases, the strategies implemented by these leaders to survive the economic crisis were limited by external demands. However, there were different responses and differing results among the four cases.

This comparison confirms the first specific hypothesis and shows that coherence between a leader's discourse and political actions as well as the context of economic crisis was not necessarily a positive element guaranteeing the survival of his leadership, yet incoherence could by contrast have negative effects, leading to his discredit and ultimately to his resignation. Among the leaders who initially denied the crisis, Sócrates and Zapatero, we have shown how their discredit and their subsequent political resignation occurred. However, their contexts were different. Zapatero's political agenda, aimed at expanding rights and public spending, meant that the debt crisis brought about a drastic change in his policies and a clash between his political positions and the austerity measures, which he had to implement. On the other hand, Sócrates had maintained a policy agenda of budget control that maintained greater coherence with the austerity policies demanded by the IMF. Therefore, the discredit of the former was the result of the excessively slow adaptation of his discourse to align with the new context of austerity, whereas the discredit of Sócrates was due to the increasing weariness of broad swathes of society towards a prolonged series of reductions in the weight of the public sector.

Political capital did not necessarily guarantee the survival of leaders who started their tenure managing the crisis. Subsequently, his statement confirms the second specific hypothesis. In addition, the question arises of whether these political resources lose value when placed in critical contexts. Between the cases of Passos Coelho and Rajoy, who were defeated by motions of no confidence, there was a clear difference. The discredit of the Spanish Prime Minister was the only one among the four cases that resulted from a factor not connected to the economic crisis and austerity policies, as was a case of corruption, whereas Passos Coelho was ousted as a result of the left turn taken by Portuguese socialists and the decline of his leadership due to the austerity policies he had implemented. In this comparison, one can see how Rajoy had already had previous experience in managing a deep crisis during the conflict that occurred in his second electoral defeat. In contrast, Passos Coelho had no previous experience of crisis management, which led him to take on leadership during the debt crisis as a personal sacrifice that his party colleagues were unwilling to inflict on their own political careers. Coherence between his actions and political speeches, regarding austerity measures did not emerge as a guarantor of Passos Coelho's political survival, yet it did in the case of Rajoy, who was able to extend his leadership beyond 2016. How to explain these different results? Rajoy's leadership lacked the personalist style of Passos Coelho - one shared by Zapatero and Sócrates, both of whom had initially portrayed themselves as new figures in the political space of Spanish and Portuguese socialists, respectively. Therefore, a non-personalist style and low-profile leadership, together with coherence between his discourse and political action in a context of crisis, served as a successful strategy in the case of Rajoy.

Regarding the results of the prime ministers' responses, various outcomes can be observed, although they are all marked by an increase in political instability, besides economic and social unease. In the case of Spain, the acceptance of austerity measures brought about a remarkable improvement in macroeconomic figures, in labor and in the microsocioal reality of the country, as well as the continuity of Rajoy until June 2018. In the Portuguese case, the improvement of the Portuguese economy was not so much a result of the cuts introduced by Passos Coelho, but - interestingly - by the cabinet led by António Costa, not included in this article because his tenure did not begin until last year of the period under analysis. According to Talving, voters may penalize a government's austerity policies only moderately, if they are capable of teasing out the degree of political responsibility of the national leader *versus* that of supranational agencies (Talving, 2017). Focusing on the economy in order to understand lead-

ers' popularity (Veiga & Veiga, 2003) may explain the case of Passos Coelho, but not that of Rajoy. Nonetheless, most of the political failures documented in this article are the result of leaders' resignations or of motions of no confidence, rather than electoral defeats. Our position, as other research has also suggested, is that the political capital, political experience, and socio-political background of prime ministers are elements favoring their stability (Bright et al., 2015; Müller-Rommel et al., 2020), but that does not mean that they guarantee it in times of crisis.

Limitations to political action opposing the demands of the European Union were almost complete. Having said this, the concomitance between the prime ministers' leadership and the European austerity plans resulted in their political and/or electoral defeat, except in the case of Mariano Rajoy, who showed resilience in the preservation of his leadership throughout the management of the economic crisis. The Bourdesian concept of political field (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 21-22) helps to understand how the superposition of the European and the state field managed to invalidate background, training and experience as positive elements for Spanish and Portuguese prime ministers' leadership and careers, in a context of economic crisis. Following this reasoning, if we accepted the benefits of the profile and popularity of a prime minister for his survival (Druckman & Warwick, 2005) when European institutions overlap with state institutions, an interesting hypothesis could arise: would it be possible for certain types of frames or discourses connect leaders and citizens to promote leaders' survival in a context in which supranational organizations dominate over state structures? Undoubtedly, there a complex interplay of forces within the IMF, and European institutions - understood as political fields - have had decisive influence on the national political fields of both countries, leaving prime ministers who oppose these institutions' recipes with almost no room for maneuver.

To sum up, the economic crisis favored an increase in the extent to which individual actors involved in the European political field were able to influence the state and sub-state political fields of Iberian countries such as Spain and Portugal (as the case of Passos Coelho most visibly shows). In conclusion, it also imposed limitations on the performance of their prime ministers, who were left with only two options - austerity or non-austerity - in the face of a political agenda imposed from the outside.

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Uma perspectiva interpretativa sobre a liderança política na Espanha e em Portugal durante a crise da dívida

Palavras-chave: liderança política; primeiro-ministro; crise da dívida; carreira política; sobrevivência política

RESUMO Introdução: Investigamos, a partir de uma perspectiva interpretativa, a forma pela qual os políticos espanhóis e portugueses administraram a crise da dívida entre 2008 e 2016. Especificamente, exploramos a carreira política e as ações de dois primeiros-ministros da Espanha (Zapareto e Rajoy) e dois de Portugal (Sócrates e Passos Coelho) a fim de verificar como suas biografias influenciaram a forma pela qual eles geriram essa crise. **Materiais e métodos:** A partir do estudo qualitativo desses quatro casos, destacamos as histórias de vida dos primeiros-ministros e comparamos seus *habitus*, enquadramento mental, capital político, o campo político e suas respectivas atuações na perspectiva do construtivismo estruturalista e da teoria da Nova Liderança. **Resultados:** A negação inicial da crise econômica no discurso público desses líderes prejudicou a capacidade de comando, diminuiu a confiança política e foi a razão da incoerência entre fala e ação na implementação das políticas de austeridade. Geralmente, líderes políticos que implementaram essas políticas econômicas tiveram sérios problemas de continuidade no cargo, independentemente de sua orientação ideológica. **Discussão:** A crise político-institucional provocada pela sobreposição entre a política nacional desses dois países e a orientação política da União Europeia limitou a autonomia dos primeiros-ministros portugueses e espanhóis. Concluímos que líderes sinceros, capazes de distinguir responsabilidades e que sabem se comunicar com os eleitores têm maiores chances de sobreviver politicamente.



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