
Unpacking EU contestation: Europeanization and critique in Germany and Spain

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The rise of populist contenders in Western Europe in the aftermath of the euro crisis has led to an increasing critique of the project of the European Union (EU). This critique has been frequently encapsulated in the label 'Euroscepticism' and its softer or harder gradations. This article proposes to revisit this phenomenon from a different angle: the discursive and historical exploration of EU contestation in its context. This paper argues that the forms of EU contestation must be studied together with the symbolic orders about Europe and the EU at the national level. Drawing on the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD), this article delineates the diverse representations and problematizations of EU-contesting discourses in Western Europe studying the cases of Germany and Spain. The findings show greater power to constrain (*power in discourse*) EU contestation in Spain than in Germany, the latter country being a more suitable terrain for critique of the EU. These divergences are connected to the historical processes of Europeanization in each country and their particular symbolic orders.

Keywords: Populist contenders, Euro crisis, Symbolic orders, Discourses, EU contestation.

Introduction

The European Union (EU) is under increasing stress. This is a shared diagnostic among academics and political commentators (Bulmer and Joseph, 2016; Marhold, 2017; Hoboldt, 2018). To explore this stress, much research has been conducted on EU politicization (Kriesi, 2016; Hutter et al., 2016), Euroscepticism (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2002; Pirro & Taggart, 2018), or the emergence of fringe or radical parties (De Vries & Edwards, 2009). The particular perspective presented in this article seeks to illuminate the historical formation of contesting discourses on Europe and the EU, looking especially into the relations of power/knowledge that configure their contexts of emergence.

Discourse-oriented research is generally concerned with the interplay between power and knowledge as a form to explain the prevalence of certain hegemonic discourses or the emergence of novel discursive configurations in the public or political sphere (Diez, 2001; Keller, 2009; Stavrakakis, 2018). Following several scholars, the study of the discursive practices of certain actors must be embedded in their contexts, to correctly grasp the formation and effects of such discourses (Wodak, 2001; Van Dijk, 2009, 2015). Accordingly, the contestation of the EU cannot be analyzed in a vacuum but must be connected with an ongoing discursive struggle about Europe and the EU and the prevalent symbolic orders about this subject (Diez, 2001). In this vein, this article explores the modes of contestation

in Western Europe in their symbolic contexts. It argues that the symbolic orders about Europe and the EU are formed through processes of “horizontal Europeanization”; that is, processes of diffusion, construction and contestation of the representations and problematizations of Europe and the EU at the domestic level (see Radaelli, 2003, 17).

To allow for an in-depth investigation of this topic, this paper explores two cases: Germany and Spain. Although these cases cannot exhaust the diversity of EU-contestation in Western Europe, they entail important implications for the remaining southern and northern Western European countries. The rationale behind the case selection has to do with the particular characteristics of these countries in relation with Europeanization. First, Germany and Spain pertain to different categories according to their political economy (Borras et al., 1998; Streeck, 2012; Hall, 2017). Germany pertains to the coordinated market economies of northern European countries (see Hall, 2017, 4) and it is generally considered as the most powerful member state of the EU (Jeffery & Paterson, 2003; Beck, 2012; Schweiger, 2014). Spain, by contrast, is a Mediterranean market economy of the southern periphery which has played a subaltern role since its accession to the EU, and especially after the euro crisis (Moreno, 2013; Magone, 2016). This diverging power over material and symbolic resources at the EU level is expected to result in distinct processes of Europeanization and symbolic orders about Europe and the EU. This comparison, therefore, allows for an exploration of these different forms of Europeanization in relation to the symbolic orders and forms of EU contestation. Furthermore, the two countries can be compared in regards to the emergence of new political contenders in the aftermath of the euro crisis: The Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany and Podemos in Spain. Although these parties exhibit particular forms of EU contestation, they both share a critique of the political management of the euro crisis and a critical view of the EU. Hence, this study allows one also to compare the divergent ways of EU contestation in a northern and a southern country and by so-called left-wing and right-wing populist parties.

The main question addressed in this article interrogates how the forms of EU contestation are anchored and interact with previous symbolic orders about the EU at the national level. This article argues that the modes of EU contestation are not primarily related with the ideology, identity, or preferences of the actors; rather, EU contestation is connected to the historically contingent transformations of the relation between *power in discourse* and *power through discourse* (see Schmidt, 2017, 11). This research draws mainly on the theoretically-informed methodological toolkit offered by Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD). SKAD offers a coherent analytical package to explore the content side of discourse and at the same time allows for a delineation of the symbolic orders in which discursive practices draw. In regard to textual analysis, it provides various categories to reconstruct representations, argumentations and problematizations mobilized by particular actors (Keller, 2013; Keller et al., 2018).

The article is structured as follows: first, the concept of Europeanization and its application to this study are clarified. Second, I present this article’s approach to the study of discourse, power, and EU contestation. The next section concentrates on the methods and data used for the study of these two cases. The central part of this article presents the empirical analysis of the cases of Spain and Germany. I finally conclude with some remarks on the implications of this research for the study of EU contestation in Western Europe.

1. Europeanization and symbolic orders

As in many other research areas in political science, there is no unique and uncontested definition or approach to Europeanization but several perspectives to its study. Europeanization has been conceived of, similarly to European integration, as the process of constitution of EU structures of governance (Risse et al., 2001, 3). By contrast, other scholars define Europeanization as the top-down process to transfer policies from the EU level to the domestic level (see Siedentopf & Ziller, 1988; Radaelli, 2004). Recently, a more comprehensive approach to Europeanization as a multifarious, complex and circular process has gained ground within EU studies. In this last vein, it is conceived of as

“processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’ and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies”. (Saurugger & Radaelli, 2008, 213)

Knill & Lehmkuhl (1999, 3-5) identify three possible forms of Europeanization when describing such multilevel interrelations between the EU and domestic contexts: positive (when the EU prescribes policy directly), negative (when the EU dismantles member states regulations) and framing Europeanization (when the EU alters the beliefs, expectations, and discourses at the domestic level). These three forms are not separate instances of Europeanization; rather, rules, regulations and policies (in a positive or negative form) function as “infrastructures” related to discourse (Keller et al., 2018, 37). Hence, in this study Europeanization is conceived of as a complex political process in which certain historically constituted assemblages of discourses, regulations, policies, and practices at the EU level affects the governance of a given polity.

In analyzing the impact of Europeanization it is crucial to bear in mind, as it has been wisely noted by Bache (2008, 16), that “EU frameworks and policies have no absolute existence, but are subject to interpretation” (also noted by Dyson, 2003, 16). This observation stresses the importance of the thorough analysis of the responses, appropriations, and re-elaborations of EU-induced discourses or norms by specific actors in the public or political sphere at the domestic level. Radaelli refers to these processes as “horizontal Europeanization”:

“The EU may provide the context, the cognitive and normative ‘frame’, the terms of reference, or the opportunities for socialisation of domestic actors who then produce ‘exchanges’ (of ideas, power, policies, and so on) between each other” (Radaelli, 2004, 5; see also Radaelli, 2003, 17)

Therefore, to analyse the forms of contestation to the EU is paramount to take into account the “EU-induced environment” in which the actors under study operate. In a singular take, this article explores this topic within an interpretivist framework that permits us to capture processes of EU contestation as competing “problematizations” interpreted by the researcher (Yanow, 2014; Bevir, 2015). In the following section, I illustrate how the analysis of horizontal Europeanization and EU contestation can be operationalized according to the questions addressed in this study.

2. Horizontal Europeanization, contesting practices and power

Horizontal Europeanization refers to the interactions between multiple actors at the domestic level revolving around EU-induced norms, discourses, or policies. However, this does not mean that there are no relations of power in these processes. As Saurugger and Radaelli have rightly argued “no matter how complex the causal processes are, and no

matter how much learning may be produced by the contacts between the national level and EU policies, these processes are bound to create power” (2008, 214). In this sense, this article argues that horizontal Europeanization must be primarily understood as relations of power/knowledge between asymmetrical positions of social actors.

Following Foucault (1977; 2003), power is not merely the ability to repress or impose something on somebody but it deploys also as a productive network across the social body. Thus, a first distinction emerges between coercive and facilitating mechanisms of power. The former can be exemplified with the pressures and impositions (*power over*) to implement austerity measures in southern European countries; the so-called “coercive Europeanization” (Magone, 2016, 93 -94). It is possible also to distinguish among actors with diverging capacities and with more or less power over material and symbolic resources (Van Dijk, 2015; Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). On the other hand, the logic of power without coercion can be traced exploring the *power in discourse*, that is, the systems of knowledge that are historically legitimate and that constrain the production of new discourses (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016, 329; see also Bache, 2008, 11). There is a last type of power that can be called *power through discourse* (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016, 321) and refers to the discursive struggles not only over the best argument but also over alternative paradigms, representations and problematizations promoted by particular social actors. In the case of Europeanization, the power through discourse is illustrated by the member states negotiations to impose a specific economic paradigm. Furthermore, the power through discourse is also mobilized by the new representations and argumentations about Europe and the EU put forward by parties or movements at the domestic level. Hence, the forms of EU contestation of diverse actors are dependent on the power through discourse of which those actors are capable. These actors are contesting the EU in particular contexts in which processes of horizontal Europeanization take place through the interaction between power in discourse and power through discourse.

3. Methods and data

This comparative discourse study concentrates on two cases (Germany and Spain) that represent two instances of southern and northern European countries. As discussed above, these two countries show divergences in terms of political economy, political culture, and historical relations with the EU (Featherstone & Kazamias, 2000; Hall, 2017). According to the theoretical background of this study, it is expected that the symbolic orders in relation to the EU differ in Germany and Spain and, consequently, the processes to contest them. There are various reasons why this comparison is fruitful. First, it allows one to contrast the diverging forms of EU contestation in relation to the symbolic orders and processes of Europeanization in northern and southern Europe. Second, these two countries share the emergence of two challenging populist parties with singular interpretations of Europeanization and the EU in the aftermath of the euro crisis. The challenging parties are Podemos in Spain and the AfD in Germany. Although these parties differ in several aspects, they are considered in the literature a left-wing and a right-wing populist party, respectively (see Sola & Rendueles, 2017; Salgado & Stavrakakis, 2018; Lees, 2018; Havertz, 2018). The current analysis, therefore, shines also a light on the diverse forms of contestation of right-wing and left-wing populist parties. Finally, the emergence of these prominent contesting actors in the political sphere exhibits a parallel time line in Spain and Germany. Podemos was founded in 2014 and the AfD in 2013. By contrast, other western European countries have witnessed the emergence of populist parties much earlier such as Italy, France, the Netherlands, and Austria. Hence, these two countries are especially suitable for a diachronic discourse analysis of EU contestation.

To explore the discursive practices at the political sphere this study draws especially on the analytical categories offered by SKAD but it relies also on other discourse researchers, especially Van Leeuwen (2008). SKAD provides several theoretically-informed analytical categories to examine texts and reconstruct the discourses in which such texts draw through sequential analysis (a systematic line-by-line exploration of a textual corpus). This paper mainly focuses on the representations, argumentation schemes, and problematizations produced by political parties in particular historical periods. Representations are the particular ways of selecting and excluding specific elements in the classification or identification of actors, events or processes (Van Leeuwen, 2008, 6, 28). Political actors promote specific representations of Europe and the EU and disregard others. These actors also mobilize specific argumentation schemes to prescribe actions in regards to an object, in this case Europe or the EU (Schünemann, 2018, 95). Finally, problematizations or phenomenal structures in Keller's words (2018, 33-4) are symbolic ensembles of representations and argumentations that in more general terms define salient political problems, its properties, causes and effects, and the possible solutions or reactions in regards to them. These symbolic structures (representations, argumentation schemes and problematizations) can be captured in specific discursive events and/or textual manifestations. They are connected with organized and hierarchical discourses that produce a certain symbolic order and stocks of knowledge to go on with the world. Following SKAD, the analysis of various textual manifestations and discursive events allows us to reconstruct symbolic orders and interdiscursive relations (Keller et al., 2018).

The coding and classification of the textual material have been conducted with the software ATLAS.ti 8.0. The textual corpus is selected from two different sources: the main corpus is selected from the ratification debates on the various EU Treaties in the Bundestag in Germany and the Congress of Deputies in Spain from 1992 to 2011. In absence of ratification debates after the emergence of the new populist parties in Spain (the leftist Podemos) and Germany (the rightist AfD), the discursive practices of these actors are explored on the basis of manifestos and speeches between 2014 and 2017. Notwithstanding its limitations, the time span is significant inasmuch as it covers the so-called "constraining dissensus" period (Hooghe & Marks, 2009), where debates about the EU are expected to be more visible and tense. The Parliament is considered a site of research to explore how horizontal Europeanization takes place in the two countries' political spheres under study. The analysis seeks to capture the discursive struggles and hegemonic discourses about the EU and Europe.

4. Europeanization in Spain

4.1 The modernization ethos: Europe 92 in Spain (1986-1996)

During the second government of the social democrat Felipe González (1986-1989), Spain entered into a period of great transformation inspired in part by the European Economic Community agenda (Balmaseda & Sebastian, 2003; Ruiz Jiménez & Egea de Haro, 2010). The reforms of the government focused on the economic liberalization of the common market and sought to prepare Spain for the accession to the European Monetary System in 1989 (Milward, 2005, 25-26). The Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 established a consistent path of convergence and integration that marked also the governance in Spain (Balmaseda & Sebastian, 2003, 128). The main reforms concentrated on the inflation, fiscal deficit control, and the labour market. Spain adopted a "policy paradigm in which competitiveness was the fundamental objective" (Boix, 2000, 170). The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), as the ruling and strongest party in the Congress of Deputies, presented Europe and its unity as a positive and necessary goal.

“Without the European Union we will not be able to maintain, consolidate or increase the prosperity that we have achieved in Europe - and also in Spain - and which, let us not forget, is the greatest ever known in the history of the continent”. (Congress of Deputies, 1992: 11098)¹

Europe was depicted as an abstract ideal of unity, prosperity and modernization in contrast with an isolated and underdeveloped Spain. In this sense, the PSOE emphasised “the position that we have managed to occupy in the international context after so many decades of isolation” (Ibid., 11098). Europe appeared also connected with the ideas of solidarity and peace (Ibid.).

The conservative People’s Party (PP) portrayed Europe as a positive union but composed by “diverse peoples with their particularities and a free market” (Ibid., 11084). This party integrated the free market as a crucial phenomenon to define Europe.

“We believe that Europe must be built through the union between its peoples, we believe that this construction must be based on national identities and we believe, finally, that an integrated free market economy, with all the necessary solidarity resources, draws the only viable type of society.” (Ibid., 11084)

The mainstream parties (the PSOE and the PP) referred to Europeanization processes as necessary reforms. There was a prominent argumentation of danger or threat: *If we want Spain to be safe from isolation, underdevelopment and war, Europe is necessary and within Europe, Europeanization processes.* The pro-Maastricht bloc, therefore, problematized the isolation and underdevelopment of the “old Spain” and Europe was presented as the solution. The PP included the discourse topics “nationalism” and “free market” as crucial elements of its representation of Europe.

4.2 Neoliberal Europeanization (1996 – 2004)

During the two PP conservative governments (1996-2000/2000-2004), Europeanization processes operated under the form of facilitated coordination. These Europeanization processes followed the parameters established in the Treaty of Amsterdam and the convergence requirements for the incorporation into the single currency. The government implemented successive public spending cuts, inflation controls, and reductions in the interest rates (Powell, 2003: 102). The Aznar government used a similar argumentative strategy as González did to justify these reforms. In the ratification debates on the Amsterdam Treaty, the interests of Spain were again linked to the European construction:

“It is precisely in Spain's interest to make more Europe and not less Europe, that is, to strengthen the mechanisms of solidarity and cohesion, while at the same time re-constituting European unity, broken by the now fortunately defunct Berlin Wall.” (Congress of Deputies, 1998a, 9215)

The PP abandoned the nationalist discourse and embraced a civic conception of the state in representing Europe. Accordingly, they mobilized an intergovernmentalist view of the EU with the nation-states as essential units. During this period, the PSOE put forward the discourse topic of the “United States of Europe” (Congress of Deputies, 1998b, 9887). In contrast to the PP, this view represented the future Europe linked to a strong social model, the European Social Charter, and the territorial cohesion of the EU.

¹ The translations from Spanish and German to English are my own throughout the article.

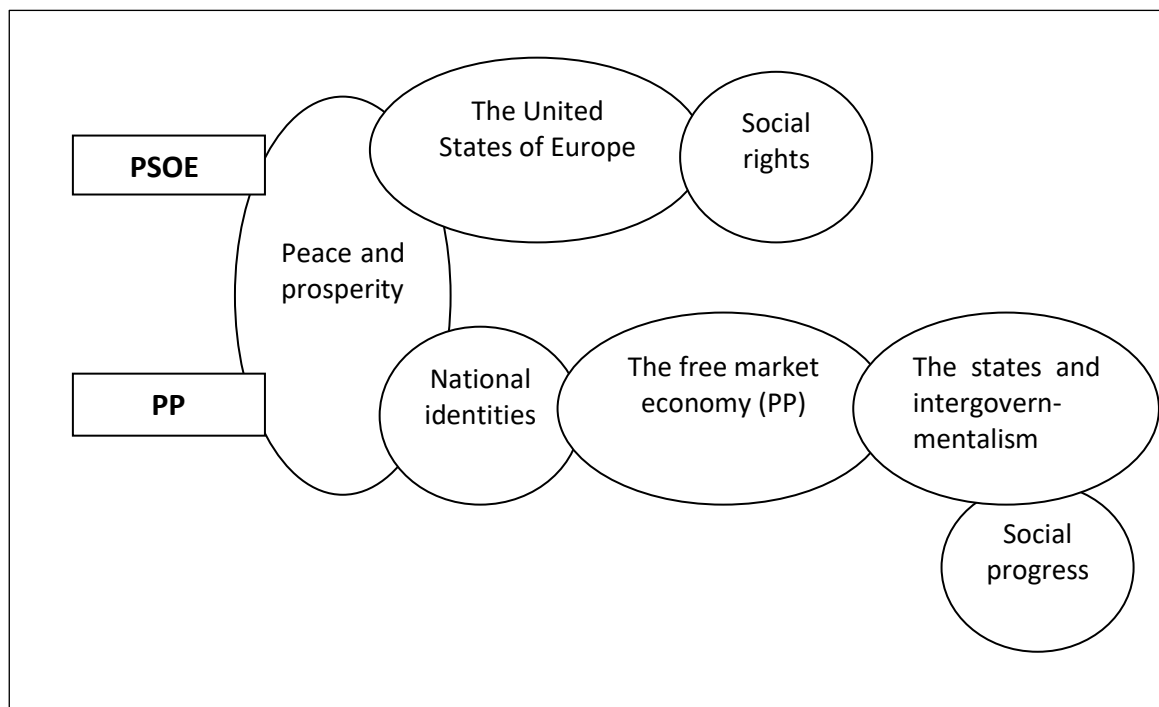
4.3 The European Constitution and the Euro crisis (2004- 2010)

Zapatero (PSOE), the new elected Spanish president in 2004, moved again to a supranational view of the EU and was able to defend this view in the debate on the European Constitutional Treaty in 2005. The PSOE government represented again European Integration as a guarantee against the atrocities of war, suffering and underdevelopment:

“If we want to be fair to our recent past, we must not forget that European integration has enabled us to consolidate peace and democracy in Europe and to eradicate war and dictatorship in our countries once and for all”. (Congress of Deputies, 2005, 4259)

The PSOE made a distinction between a Europe reduced to the free market and a “Europe beyond the single market” (Congress of Deputies, 2008, 15). During the ratification debates on the Lisbon Treaty in June 2008, the PP also depicted Europe in positive terms: as a “dream” (Ibid., 26) and as a guarantee of peace, democracy, and prosperity (Ibid., 27).

Figure 1: Representations of the main government parties



Source: One representation

To summarize, during the period 1992-2008, Europeanization operated through mechanisms of facilitated coordination, downloading policies and paradigms from the EU to the domestic level. The pro-EU bloc (mainly formed by the PSOE and the PP) mobilized several representations and problematization about Europe and the EU. There was a prominent problematization of Spain as isolated and underdeveloped country in contrast to the positive representation of Europe. Europe was linked to modernization, democratization and progress. As it can be seen in the Figure 1, in the view of the PSOE, European integration was a process to construct a supranational community, whereas in the case of the PP it was rather a cooperative area for the interrelations between nation states.

4.4 EU critique and contestation in the Spanish party system

The left-coalition IU (the United Left) was the most prominent actor at the level of the party system showing certain Euro-criticism during the period 1992-2008. In the debate on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, nine out of its 17 Members of the Parliament (MPs) abstained while the other eight MPs voted in favour. However, the IU self-defined as pro-European (Congress of Deputies, 1992, 11088).

The left coalition IU portrayed Europe in connection with different processes and events, emphasizing the European Social Charter instead of the free market. Europe appeared depicted as fractured and divided into two 'souls': the Europe of the unequal development and territorial asymmetries and the social Europe (Ibid., 11089). In the debate on the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1998, the IU criticized the direction of the European project arguing that "the concern for stability and convergence, now lasting, is always above Europe's social concerns and social cohesion" (Congress of Deputies, 1998b, 9886). The left-wing coalition proposed one EU turn consisting of:

"The democratization of economic decision-making, what has come to be called an economic government that does not leave the European Central Bank in a vacuum of political legitimacy, so that it becomes an instrument in the creation of active employment policies". (Congress of Deputies, 1998a: 9203)

The opposition bloc to the Amsterdam Treaty in 1998 only garnered 15 votes against the Amsterdam Treaty and 287 deputies voted for the ratification, due in part to the weakening of IU, which dropped from 21 seats to only nine. During the Treaty of Nice ratification debate, the new IU party leadership adopted a different view on EU issues, closer to the perspective of the PSOE and the idea of the "United States of Europe". The IU criticized "the insufficient Europeanism of Aznar, the government and the EU" (Congress of Deputies, 2001, 4959). They demanded an impulse of the EU towards a federalist and constitutional political union (Ibid., 4960). The IU did not vote against but abstained in the ratification of the Nice Treaty.

During Zapatero's governments (2004-2011) the contestation of the EU remained similar although a new prominent contesting actor emerged: the left-wing nationalist party Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC). It became the main contesting actor passing from one to eight seats in the Spanish parliament (the IU obtained only five seats in the 2004 election). The ERC rejected the Constitutional Treaty in 2005 because it did not recognize the nations without states. This party represented the EU also as lacking participatory and democratic mechanisms (Congress of Deputies, 2005, 4264). The IU remained in its soft criticism against the insufficient Europeanism of the EU and the absence of fiscal and social coordination and cohesion.

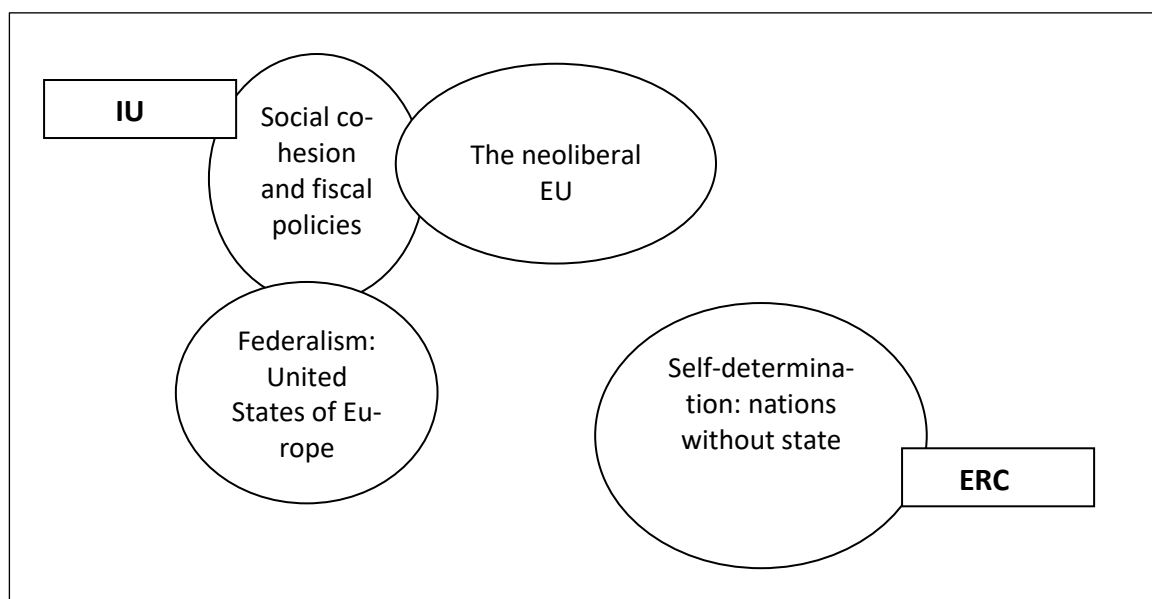
"That critical European expression, of Europeanism that wants to go further, of Europeanism from the left, is taking place today in France, and is expressed mostly, in a remarkable way, among the left voters." (Ibid., 4268)

During the Lisbon Treaty ratification debates (2008), the left-wing groups were even weaker as a result of the January 2008 general election. The IU and the ERC were forced to join in order to form a parliamentary group due to their bad electoral results (the IU only obtained two seats). The criticism of the EU was formulated in similar terms, emphasising the neoliberal direction of the European project and lamenting the abandonment of a political and social perspective (Congress of Deputies, 2008, 20).

All in all, the EU-contesting discursive practices, headed by the left coalition IU, were based on the combination of several representations and argumentations. In 1992, the

representation of territorial and social imbalances was prominent. The argument behind this representation was a critique of neoliberalism (Schünemann, 2018, 100) and a definition of the EU as linked to a neoliberal political project. An additional representation of Europe can be considered 'federalist'. The critique behind this representation was concerned with the specific policies and orientations of the EU rather than with the whole EU project as linked to neoliberalism. The development of the European Social Charter and a different fiscal policy were the measures proposed to remedy this wrong orientation of the EU policies. In 1998 and 2001 the representation of the territorial imbalances of the EU disappeared and the emphasis was placed on the lack of social cohesion and the lack of policies in this direction.

Figure 2: Contesting representations of Europe and the EU



Source: Own representation

It can be concluded that there were two problematizations of the EU: first, the phenomenon of neoliberalism as a project enshrined with the EU construction was the main problem to fight against in the early times of Maastricht. In a second period, the problem was not a class-based wide-world project such as neoliberalism but rather the unwise implementation of certain policies, leading to inequality, lack of cohesion and progress. The problematization of ERC was the oppression of the nations without states that was consolidated with the EU construction.

4.5. Coercive Europeanization, crisis, and the emergence of Podemos

Since 2009, the effects of the financial turmoil in Europe derived into political and social consequences for Spain, and the room to manoeuvre of the Zapatero government was drastically reduced. This was the starting point of what Magone (2016, 93 -94) calls "imposed or forced Europeanization."

The forced Europeanization in Spain changed the political and social environment and altered the symbolic order about the EU in the country. The anti-austerity protests of the 15-M movement criticized the political measures implemented by the government in response to the crisis. The public sentiments about the EU and Europeanization were also transformed during these years. In 2007, 73 per cent of Spaniards had a positive view of EU membership. By contrast, in 2011 this was only the case for 32 per cent of Spaniards, six points below the EU average (European Commission, 2007, 16; 2011, 47).

The credibility of the government deteriorated further when in 2010 it was forced to implement austerity measures imposed by Brussels (Petkanopoulou et al., 2018; Buendía, 2018). Europeanization in Spain turned from a modality of ‘facilitated coordination’ to other of ‘coercive conditionality’ when Spain “encountered difficulties in refinancing its debt in the financial markets” (Buendía, 2018, 65-66). The EU requirements focussed on decreasing labour costs, reducing the size of the public sector, and replacing welfare with workfare with measures such as reducing dismissal costs and unemployment benefits (Ibid, 66). The reform of Article 135 of the Spanish Constitution in August 2011 is the paramount example of this turn of Europeanization processes in Spain. This reform consisted of a balanced budget amendment that in practical terms implied the priority of the Spanish debt payments over social spending. The reform was approved with 316 votes in favour and only five against.

In this context, the PSOE represented Europe again as the source of solidarity, peace and opportunities and appealed to the responsibility and sacrifices of the Spanish population:

“The economic and fiscal integration of the Eurozone requires partners to share structural deficit and debt criteria in order to gain European solvency as a whole. European solidarity, ladies and gentlemen; in order to guarantee the stability of the Eurozone as a whole and the welfare state.” (Congress of deputies, 2011, 15)

The main opposition party, the PP, used similar arguments to support the reform and portrayed Europe as “the greatest opportunity” but “also one of our main responsibilities” (Congress of Deputies, 2011, 13). The IU, with only two MPs in the Spanish parliament, confronted this interpretation and denounced what they considered the usurpation of the sovereignty of the Spanish people in a populist fashion:

“We understand that this is a hard blow to the current Constitution, opening a period of restoration and democratic involution dictated by foreign governments and institutions not democratically endorsed by our citizens, replacing in practice the sovereignty of the people by the sovereignty of the financial markets, to which de facto the constituent power is transferred.” (Congress of Deputies, 2011, 7)

The dramatic emergence of Podemos in 2014 changed the balance of forces in the Spanish political sphere. The new party entered the European Parliament in May 2014 with eight per cent of the votes and it consolidated as the third political force in Spain with 21.1 per cent in June 2016 after two general elections.

Initially, Podemos represented Europe as a fractured entity divided between South European countries and North European countries, resuming the early depiction of the IU in 1992. The party directly alluded to Angela Merkel and Goldman Sachs as part of the elite that destroys Europe and uses the European project for the benefit of a minority.

“We love Europe if Europe means freedom, equality and fraternity; we love Europe if Europe means social rights; we love Europe if Europe means human rights. The problem is not Europe, the problem is that the name of the president of the European Central Bank is Mario Draghi and he was representative of Goldman Sachs in Europe [...] Europe's problem is called Durão Barroso [...] that's why we say along with other southern Europeans that we want to recover the dignity and the future of our peoples and our countries”. (Iglesias, 2014)

There is, therefore, a first problematization that depicts ‘the elites’ threatening the idea of Europe and implementing policies against ‘the people’ and the countries of southern Europe. This antagonistic structure corresponds to what can be called a populist problematization of the EU. However, in the run up to the December 2015 general election the

representations of Europe and the EU became more nuanced. A second depiction of Europe associated with prosperity and social rights emerged, in connection to an open defence of the European project:

“To defend social rights, public services, sovereignty and an idea of Europe associated with prosperity. I say this very clearly: either they take the hand of the pro-Europeans who understand that Europe without prosperity, without human rights, without civil rights, without social rights is not sustainable, or they will have to negotiate with Marine Le Pen.” (Iglesias, 2015)

This excerpt illustrates the new dominant representation of Europe mobilized by the party Podemos. Europe appears as an essentially positive project in which the pro-Europeans should be united against the anti-Europeans (Marine Le Pen). The problematization here is based on an argument of threat in regards to the right-wing movements and the disintegration of Europe. The solution for Europe is to expand the social and civil rights. Europe operated as a positive reference in comparison with Spain and Podemos used it to legitimate demands such as the “convergence with 60 per cent of the average salary as established by the European Social Charter” (Podemos Manifesto, 2016, 38). On this basis, it is possible to identify a connection between the representations of Podemos and the symbolic order in the Spanish political sphere. The idea of prosperity linked to Europe and the strengthening of its social dimension resemble especially the representations mobilized by the PSOE. The populist portrayal of Europe is notably less salient than in the early times of the party, although it still persists as a minor representation:

“Democracy is a movement that distributes power, a movement that tells whoever is in power, being the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the private investment funds, or multimillionaires that in a democracy power has to be in the hands of the people”. (Iglesias, 2015)

To conclude, the power through discourse of Podemos to counterbalance the hegemonic representations of Europe was inspired in its early times by the anti-Maastricht appeal of the IU. However, the power in discourse of the symbolic order on Europe and the EU influenced the further representations and problematizations of the party. Hence, the low saliency of Europe and the dominant representations put forward by the party can be explained by the power in discourse and the reduced power over material and symbolic resources of Spain in the EU context.

5. Europeanization and EU contestation in Germany

5.1. Maastricht and ordoliberalism

Although Germany has been considered in the literature a semi-sovereign state or a “tamed power” (Katzenstein, 1988; Bulmer and Paterson, 1989), it had a prominent role in the design of the EU. Its economic preponderance and its strong position after reunification (although it also implied serious economic problems) gave Germany a dominant role in terms of *power over* material and symbolic resources in relation to the EU. Thus, Europeanization in Germany took during specific periods the form of *Germanization* when the uploading mechanisms were dominant (Dyson, 2003; Beck, 2012). In fact, the Maastricht Treaty was, following several authors (Dyson, 2003; Bulmer and Paterson, 2010; Jeffery and Paterson, 2003), the result of an uploading process to the EU of the German economic model. The State Secretary in the Finance Ministry (Köhler, 1992) referred to it as a way of “exporting this fine piece of German identity to Europe” (in Dyson, 2003, 17).

In December 1992, the German government – formed by the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU), its counterpart in Bavaria (CSU), and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) -

gathered considerable support in the German Bundestag for the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty with only 17 'no' votes. The government parties represented Europe as an achievement related to freedom, peace and prosperity. The CDU/CSU saw Europe and European Integration as a victory:

"This yes to Europe is a victory; a victory for our country, a victory for the people. [...] If cooperation in the European Union becomes our guiding principle for action, then it must also make a contribution to solving the problems." (Bundestag, 1992, 10811)

European Integration was portrayed as a positive process compatible with other important processes: the defence of the German interests and the expansion of the German project beyond its boundaries: "Europe has adopted the stability culture of the Deutsche Mark, and has done so successfully. For us, this is a reason for satisfaction." (Ibid., 20242). In the view of the CDU/CSU, Europe was the way to face the contemporary main challenges of the German society: first, the economic globalization (Ibid, 1998, 20243) and second and related to the former, the security and illegal immigration:

"Amsterdam is making the greatest progress in internal security, in the fight against organised crime across Europe, in protection against criminals and smugglers, in asylum and visa policy - all of which are burning issues for our citizens [...] the European Union is taking Community action against organised crime and trafficking with human beings and protecting itself against illegal immigration." (Ibid., 20242)

Hence, Europe is presented as a guarantor of peace and prosperity but it is also and primarily conceived of as a vehicle for the 'German victory' and the expansion of its values and socioeconomic model. There is an underlying *normative argument* in favour of Europe and also an *advantage argument* by which *if the German interests and the German values are expanded, then it is positive to belong to the EU*. There is an additional *argument of threat* or fear that can be summarized in the following terms: *Being within the EU we can protect us better from the dangers of globalization, uncontrolled migration and crime*. Europe, thereby, emerges within a problematization of the existence of Germany in the world and how this position in the world can be strengthened.

The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) presented Europe positively as opposed to the bad, destructive and racist tendencies of the German nation in the past. They refer to this past as "the old evil spirit":

"But I know: that if European integration falls behind or even fails and Germany is left to its own devices, the old evil spirit would once again become socially and politically capable on a large scale. European integration is also an anchor for Germany's political stability." (Bundestag, 1992: 10813)

Therefore, in the case of the SPD Europe appears not only as a 'vehicle' to implement the German interests but also as a contention against its own evils. Europe was related with peace and economic and social stability. Europe was also portrayed by the SPD as the best way to face the globalization challenges (Ibid., 10814).

5.2. From Germanization to Europeanization (1998-2005)

The period covering the two governments of Gerhard Schröder (1998-2005) implied a turn from *inertia* in the Germany-EU relationships (Maastricht as the German model) to a period of absorption of the EU guidelines (the policy paradigms and frameworks that were created and modified in Brussels (see Dyson, 2003, 12-24; Bulmer and Paterson, 2010, 1054)). After internal tensions within the SPD, in July 2000 the Schröder government

implemented various reforms, such as a tax reform and a radical budget consolidation programme (Dyson, 2003, 21).

The SPD presented the EU as “the greatest story of success of the 20th century” (Bundestag, 2001, 18981). The EU was primarily seen as catalyst for reforms and a vehicle to face the challenges of globalization. The main processes related to the EU were security, terrorism and globalization:

“Today, the European Union has a dense network of trade relations, direct investment and other transactions. Without this interdependence, Europe had never been able to achieve such a strong position in competition with the United States or Japan.” (Ibid., 18983)

This connection between the EU and globalization was combined with a representation of Europe as a “model of society” (Ibid., 18983). “Europe stands for an economic, social, cultural and ecological balance” (Ibid.). In the 2005 debate on the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, the SPD depicted the EU as a guarantor against the atrocities of the past, similarly to prior representations. The party suggested looking at the European Constitution from the eyes of those “who witnessed and were victims of the devastations of the 20th century” and that would have dreamt with a united Europe (Ibid., 16349). There was, therefore, a primary argument related with the challenges of globalization and other *argument of threat* related with the atrocities of the past.

The CDU/CSU represented Europe as an entity in relation with globalization processes and especially with security and terrorism, in similar terms as the SPD. In the aftermath of the 2001 September terrorist attacks, the party referred to the EU in the following terms:

“[...] it's not just the money that counts. We also have to ask ourselves why the balance sheet of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, which does exist, is so flagrant; why there has not been yet a single initiative by the European Union to stabilize crisis regions outside the European Union, for example.” (Bundestag, 2001, 18985)

Angela Merkel (CDU/CSU) mobilized the representation of Europe as a site of peace and security arguing that “there is no alternative to strengthening Europe as a community of peace and values” (Bundestag, 2005, 16351). The CDU/CSU linked Europe also with freedom, equality and solidarity (Ibid., 16352) and with a community that ensures the principle of subsidiarity and the preponderance of the member states. Edmund Stoiber (CSU president and Minister President of Bavaria) stressed that “the Member States - this is decisively enshrined in this Constitutional Treaty - remain the ‘masters of the Treaties’.” (Ibid., 16364). He defended the need of a critique of European politics and rejected the easily attributed labels of populist or anti-European (Ibid., 16635). Therefore, the argument of Europe as a guarantor of peace and security in the world was combined with an intergovernmental view of the European model: ‘yes’ to Europe because Europe allows the States to be the masters of international politics.

5.3. Merkel and the Euro crisis

Europeanization in Germany took again an uploading profile after the euro crisis, the unstable situation in the Eurozone, and the increasingly important role played by Germany (see Bulmer and Paterson, 2016, 2-3; Schweiger, 2014, 16). This turn in the balance of power among EU member states in the design and direction of the EU resulted in what Ulrich Beck has dubbed as “the German Europe” (2012). There were two different Europeanization stages under the two Merkel governments (2005-2009/2009-2013): The period after the failure of the Constitutional Treaty and the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007

and the period of the euro crisis especially since 2010. In 2008, the Lisbon Treaty was passed in the German Bundestag with a majority of 515 to 58 votes. In the ratification debates, the CDU/CSU presented Europe again in connection with the phenomena of security, globalization and border control (Bundestag, 2008, 16451). Europe was also contrasted with the important role of the nation states:

“This ensures our understanding of Europe as a close political community, which is not and will not be a state, but a sui generis entity, a unique entity (Ibid.) [...] I believe that in the future we will have to face more strongly the task of deciding how to achieve the right balance between national tasks and European tasks.” (Ibid., 16453)

In late 2009, however, the situation in the Eurozone changed, and the need for a coordinated action to stabilize and save the Euro was gradually more apparent (Crawford and Rezai, 2017, 96-7; Schweiger, 2014, 24). The dilemma of taking part or not in a direct action to find a solution to the euro crisis concluded in May 2010 with a first financial aid-programme for Greece. This marked the beginning of a new relationship between Germany, the EU, and the rest of member states (Bulmer and Paterson, 2010, 1062).

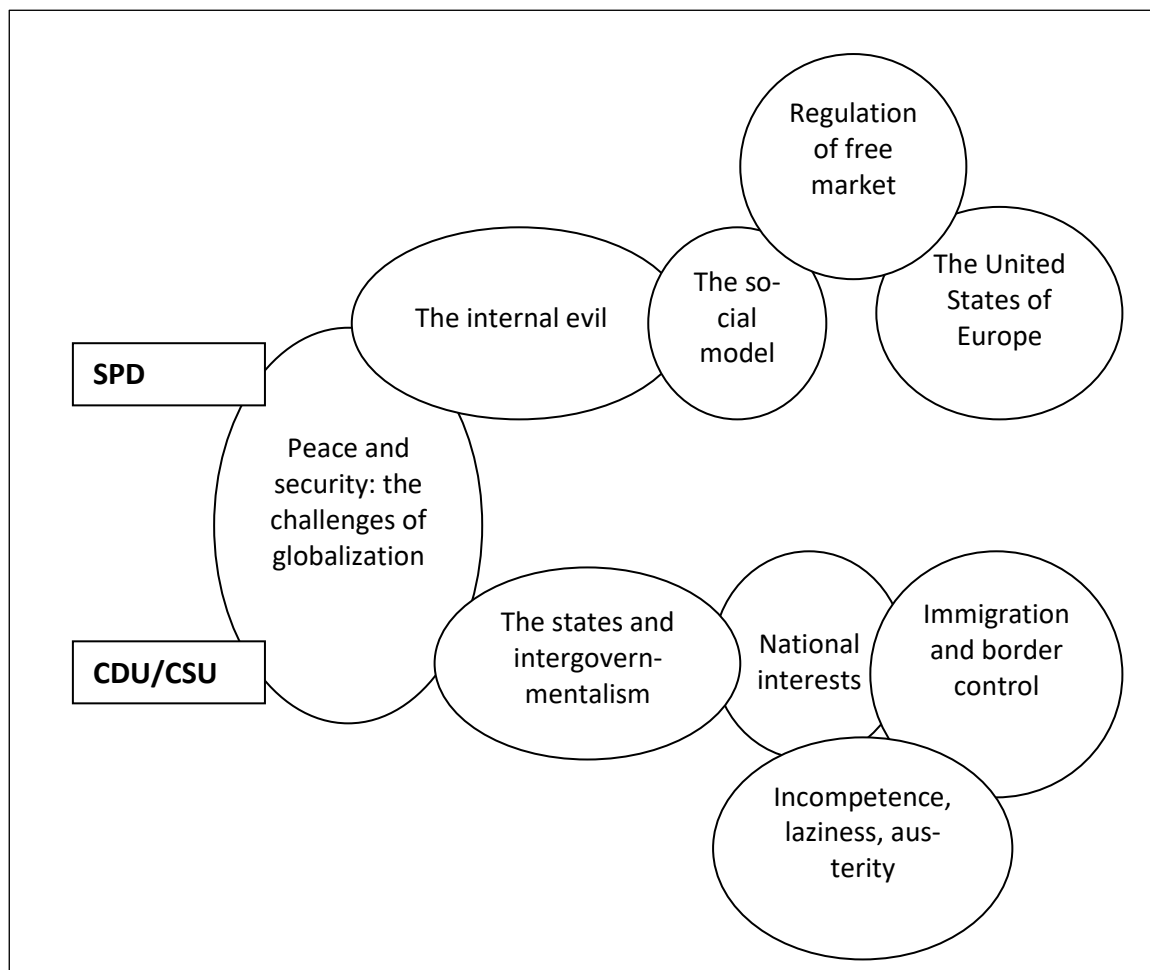
In the Bundestag debates in 2010, the CDU/CSU presented the financing assistance to Greece as a path without alternatives: the Greek bailout was the best solution for a problem affecting Germany and the EU and threatening the stability of the Eurozone (Bundestag, 2010, 3990). There was an argument of disadvantage in relation with certain incompetent countries and the costs of having an alliance with them. Thus, specific countries were portrayed as unable to reform themselves:

“We're throwing Greece a life preserver. It has to swim to the saving shore itself. If it swims in the wrong direction, it lands on the open sea or even in Turkey.” (Ibid., 3991)

The SPD, in a government coalition with the CDU/CSU in 2008, defended enthusiastically the Treaty of Lisbon but reaffirmed its willingness to move towards the “United States of Europe” (Bundestag, 2008, 16457), and materialize the ‘vision’ of a European Constitution. In the midst of the euro crisis and the financial aid package to Greece the SPD emphasized the need of financial market regulations:

“For a Europe that makes itself strong and gives itself the necessary resources to ensure that it is no longer driven by wildly speculating financial actors in the future.” (Ibid., 3993).

Figure 3: Representations of the main ruling parties



Source: Own representation

5.4. EU-Critique and contestation in Germany

The EU contestation has been championed by the Party of Democratic Socialism/The Left (PDS/Die Linke), although there were also critiques coming from the right side of the political spectrum in Germany. In the ratification debates on the Maastricht Treaty the 17 MPs of the PDS voted 'no'; there were also eight abstentions from the coalition Alliance 90/the Greens (the Greens). Due to its historical anchor in East Germany (the old German Democratic Republic), the PDS criticized the Western bias of the construction of the EU.

"Our objective is a peaceful, non-Militarist, democratic, constitutional, social and ecological Europe. When we say 'Europe', we mean 'Europe' and not just part of it, a continent on which states, peoples and regions work together voluntarily and on an equal footing." (Bundestag, 1992, 10819)

The PDS presented the Europe of Maastricht as a bureaucratic and centralised supranational statehood that endangered democracy, social rights and cultural identity:

"The people do not want a Europe of bureaucratic centralism, of political elites, but a Europe of creative diversity and regional identity, a Europe of citizens and democracy." (Bundestag, 1992, 10820)

In the debates on the Amsterdam Treaty in 1998 the contestation of the EU gained prominence due to the ascendance of the Greens and the PDS. The Greens' 40 MPs abstained in the voting process, whereas the 30 MPs of the PDS voted against the Treaty. During the Amsterdam Treaty debates, the PDS held consistently its position and represented an alternative Europe with institutions centred on fighting unemployment and inequality. By

contrast, the current Europe was depicted as the Europe of security and police promoted by the CDU/CSU government.

“Clear progress has been made with the police; no progress has been made in fighting mass unemployment and in establishing social standards. This by itself requires our ‘no’ to the ratification of this Treaty.” (Bundestag, 1998, 20255).

The democratic deficit of the EU was other of the issues raised by the PDS during the Amsterdam Treaty debates (Bundestag, 1998, 20255). Similarly, the Greens portrayed a Europe with important lacks in terms of democracy, social rights, and environmental protection (Bundestag, 1992: 10822).

With the participation of the Greens in the two Schröder governments (1998-2002/2002-2005), the opposition bloc to European Integration weakened. Only the PDS voiced at the German Bundestag an alternative to the type of European construction promoted with the Nice Treaty in 2001 and the Constitutional Treaty in 2004. Against the securitization of the EU borders, the PDS proposed a peaceful approach to the EU:

“In your approach to the fight against terrorism, it is precisely the military dimension that you give absolute priority to. Other options for solving the problem remain behind.” (Bundestag, 2001, 18995)

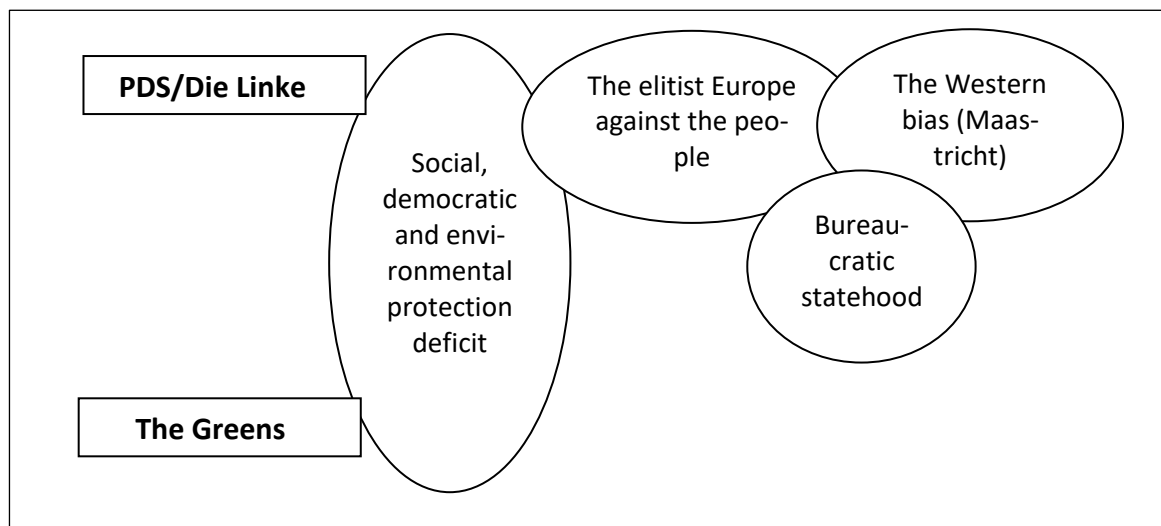
The PDS rejected also the European Constitutional Treaty because of the lack of solid social measures and the democratic deficit (Bundestag, 2005, 16675). In the debates on the 2008 Lisbon Treaty, the new party Die Linke² was the unique opposition, with 54 votes, and it exhibited similar critiques of the democratic and social deficits of the EU. They emphasized, however, with more intensity their commitment with Europe: “Die Linke is committed to a Europe of peace, freedom, democracy, social and environmental security and solidarity” (Bundestag, 2008, 16460). Die Linke strongly criticized the bailout package and the austerity policies promoted especially for the debtor countries of the EU since 2010.

“In Greece, wages and pensions are being drastically cut. The IMF and the European Union are demanding that the Greeks implement all the neoliberal nonsense that has caused so much damage not only in our country.” (Bundestag, 2010, 3996)

Die Linke considered these measures an attack to the “working people, pensioners and unemployed people all over Europe” (Ibid.). In a more markedly populist tone, Die Linke asked Merkel: “Who do you actually make politics for, Mrs Merkel, for the markets or for the people?” (Ibid.). In sum, the PDS/Die Linke problematized Europe as a Western project initially. This was gradually substituted with an anti-neoliberal argumentation and a critique of the lack of social and democratic measures. Finally, Europe was depicted as a project of the elites protecting the interests of the financial markets.

² This party was the result of the merging of the PDS with WASG in 2007. The latter was a party formed in 2005 by left-wing activists as a response to the policy approach of the Red-green government of Schröder.

Figure 4: Contesting representations of Europe and the EU



Source: Own representation

The approval of the first bailout package for Greece was followed by more rescues and conditionality measures for the southern and debtor countries within the EU. Against this background, in 2013 the anti-Euro and anti-bailout AfD was close to enter into the Bundestag with 4.7 per cent of the votes. In the following, the impact of this party on the symbolic order on Europe and the EU is explored.

5.5 The euro crisis and the *Alternative für Deutschland*

After the failed attempt in the 2013 federal election, the AfD gained 7.1 per cent of the votes in the 2014 European Parliamentary election. This was followed by several successful performances in the German *Ländern* elections and the AfD finally consolidated at the federal level in September 2017 as the third political force with 12.6 per cent of popular support. The AfD militated primarily against the euro and the EU in its early times. The EU was represented as “an artificial state remote from the citizens” (AfD Manifesto, 2014, 25). As Lucke stated:

“This means that the European Union should have a serving function for the member states and not a dominating function”. (Lucke, 2014)

Throughout the different stages of the party a distinct representation of Europe more related with the German nation emerged. The AfD also presented Europe in positive terms as an entity that can coexist with Germany as a sovereign nation state. This is opposed to a negative representation of the “United states of Europe” (AfD Manifesto, 2016: 10). In fact, Europe and Germany have common enemies and common threats in the view of the AfD. Among these threats, uncontrolled migration from ‘Islam countries’ is one of the most prominent:

“Demographers [...], estimate that from the Islam arc of Africa up to 240 million are pushing towards Europe and by 2050 possibly up to 1.1 billion people will sit on their suitcases. Every migrant who comes to us costs us 13.000 Euros according to calculations by the German Institute for Economics”. (Gauland, 2017)

The AfD takes up the classical representation of the national interests and the national identity in relation to Europe that was previously put forward by sectors of the CDU/CSU. One of the party arguments, indeed, is built on the threat of a European statehood and the dissolution of the subsidiarity principle. The classical argumentation related with EU

border control is further elaborated on and transformed into a harder 'othering'; a negative representation of the Islam and the uncontrolled migration in Europe.

6. Discussion, comparison and concluding remarks

This paper has shown how Europeanization matters to understand and explain the various forms of EU contestation in Western Europe. In regards to Spain, this country entered into a new configuration of power/knowledge at the EU level and adopted a subaltern position within the EU since its accession. This was accentuated with the impact of the euro crisis in Spain that reduced even more the room to manoeuvre of this country and the ability to mobilize power to negotiate at the EU level. In the case of Germany, the country gradually gained a prominent and central position in the design of the EU that was based on a greater power over material and symbolic resources at the EU level, as the Maastricht Treaty exemplifies. Europeanization/Germanization processes functioned primarily as a way to channel the national interests in a globalized world. Although this powerful position changed in the late 1990s, with the difficult economic and social situation of Germany, after the failure of the Constitutional Treaty in 2005 and especially since 2010, Germany recovered again the dominant position within the EU.

This different *power over symbolic and material resources* at the EU level was related with the forms in which *power in discourse* influenced and constrained the debates on Europe and the EU in Spain and Germany. The hegemonic representations and problematizations of Europe in the case of Spain consisted of an established idea of prosperity, progress, and modernity linked to Europe. The interests of Spain in relation with Europe (or in contrast to) only appeared marginally during the debates on the Maastricht Treaty. The dominant problematization was the isolation and underdevelopment of Spain in relation to Europe. By contrast, in Germany the national interests and the problematization of the role of Germany in a globalized world were dominant in the historical discursive constellation.

The political actors, in order to develop their *power through discourse* advancing new representations and problematizations of Europe were forced to interact with these symbolic orders on Europe at the political sphere. Thus, in Spain, the critique of the EU and Europe has been confined to the different responses to the problem of isolation and underdevelopment. Both the IU and most recently Podemos attempted to articulate a novel representation of Europe as fractured by the north/south divide and the elite/people divide. This problematization emerged in the debates on the Maastricht Treaty and in the early times of the party Podemos. It tended, however, to be dissolved and subordinated to a more 'reformist' critique of the EU: the critique of the democratic and social deficit, more consonant with the dominant representations of the PSOE and the dominant discourse on modernization/democratization. In Germany, the classical critique of the EU was mobilized by the PDS/Die Linke putting forward a critique of the neoliberal model and the democratic and social deficit. However, the more resonant critique against the EU has been advanced by the AfD connecting with the classical problematization in Germany of its role in the world. The AfD reproduced and rearticulated, therefore, a dominant representation and problematization of Europe and Germany. This consisted of a joint articulation of the conservative idea of border control (CDU/CSU) and the novel 'islamophobic problematization' of the current state of Europe.

These results have several implications for the study of EU contestation. First, it implies that the reproduction and rearticulation of symbolic orders are paramount to explain EU contestation. It reveals the limits of conceptions of Euroscepticism as restricted to fringe or extreme parties with novel ideologies alien to the mainstream parties. The particular

representations and problematizations of emerging and contesting parties always draw to a certain extent on prior established discourses. Second, the penetration and scope of EU contestation have to do with the distribution of power at the EU level and the room to manoeuvre of the states to put forward action related with the prescriptive discourses of contesting actors. In connection with these two points, it can be concluded that there is a greater potential for the discursive contestation of the EU in Germany than in Spain. However, this ultimately hinges on the power through discourse of emerging parties and movements in these two countries and their ability to rearticulate or transform the current symbolic orders on the EU.

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