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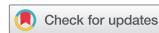
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## Challenging business as usual? The rise of new parties in Spain in times of crisis

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### ABSTRACT

The two-party system in Spain collapsed in the aftermath of the Great Recession with the appearance of two new parties, Podemos and Ciudadanos. How are we to understand the sudden emergence of these new formations? Using 2015 and 2016 post-electoral survey data to map the ideological space and model voting behaviour, it is shown that economic voting is only part of the story. This article contends that the transformations in the Spanish party system are best understood through the prism of the crisis of representation that unfolded alongside the severe economic crisis. It is dissatisfaction with the political system that drives the vote for both new parties. The results also show that a unidimensional ideological structure and a generational divide cut across these critical attitudes. The young and politically dissatisfied are more likely to vote for new parties, each on different sides of the ideological spectrum.

**KEYWORDS** Podemos; Ciudadanos; political crisis; Spain; new parties; crisis of representation

The 2015 Spanish general elections put an end to the two-party system that had existed since the country's transition to democracy. The two traditional parties that had dominated the Spanish political arena for over 30 years, the conservative *Partido Popular* (PP) and the social democratic *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE), obtained their worst electoral results ever. Together, they took just 50.7% of the vote, a significant drop from the 2011 elections (73.4%). The decline from the 2008 elections (83.8%) was even more pronounced. The vote share of the two traditional parties was captured by two emerging formations, a populist left-wing party, *Podemos* (20.7%), and a centre-right liberal party, *Ciudadanos* (13.9%). The drastic political changes that the polls had been foretelling finally consolidated. Why did close to 35% of the electorate choose to vote for new parties in the general elections of 2015? Most importantly, what do the answers to these questions tell us about the magnitude and type of political change that is underway in Spain?

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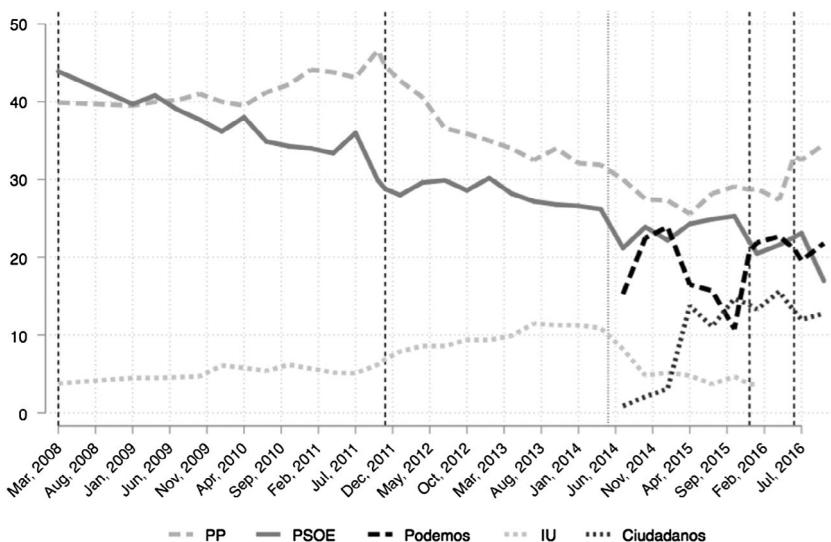
While theories on economic voting predict the punishment of incumbent governments during times of economic crisis, they shed little light on the political consequences of a wider sense of political dissatisfaction with the overall political system. The mass mobilisations in the protest arena that took place in May 2011 with the ‘Indignados’ movement, and the widespread mistrust of both national and European political institutions appreciable in public opinion polls, indicate the need to consider alternative explanations beyond reward and punishment models based on economic performance. Using the 2015 and 2016 post-electoral survey data from the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (CIS) to conduct an empirical analysis of voting behaviour, I argue that the theoretical prism of a ‘crisis of representation’ provides the best approach to understand the emergence of the two new parties in Spain.

The empirical analysis reveals that the economic voting approach does not reveal the full story. Although Podemos voters are more negative in their perceptions of the economy, neither pocketbook nor sociotropic evaluations seem to clearly distinguish the voters of new parties from voters of the mainstream parties. Instead, it is the attitudes of dissatisfaction towards the political system and the desire for political regeneration that make a difference. Moreover, examining the voters of new parties shows that they do not substantially differ in traditional economic and cultural issue positions when compared to the mainstream parties, and that the demand-side structure of political conflict remains largely unidimensional. In this unidimensional structure, Podemos capitalises on the critical voters on the left while Ciudadanos does so on the right. Lastly, there is an important general divide: it is those concerned with the political situation, but especially the young, who are more likely to vote for new parties.

While it may be too early to talk about lasting or durable patterns, focusing on Spain as a case study contributes to our understanding of the political consequences of economic shocks, which might allow us to grasp broader political transformations in the shadow of the Great Recession. The article is structured as follows. The next section contextualises the Spanish case and reviews theories on the emergence of new parties, economic voting and crises of representation, leading to a set of expectations on the ideological structure and vote characteristics of new parties. The methodology and operationalisation are then briefly discussed before introducing the results. Finally, some concluding remarks are presented.

## **Party system breakdown and the emergence and success of new parties**

The evolution of the Spanish electoral arena during the crisis, as illustrated in Figure 1, underwent a two-step process: (1) the punishment of the incumbent



**Figure 1.** The emergence of Podemos and Ciudadanos in the polls.

Notes: Dotted vertical lines indicate elections: general elections 2008; 2011; European elections 2014 (light grey); general elections 2015 and 2016. From May 2016, United Left forms a coalition together with Podemos called Unidos Podemos, thus they are represented together. Podemos also includes regional parties such as Marea (Galicia), En Comú Podem (Catalonia) and Compromís (Valencia).

Source: CIS Barometer Databank.

in favour of the mainstream opposition; and (2) the emergence of two challenger parties. In the first crisis election (2011) we observe that the mainstream opposition (PP) benefited from the punishment of the incumbent (PSOE), eventually obtaining a clear majority of the votes. In the second crisis elections (2015), however, it was not the mainstream opposition (PSOE) that capitalised on the punishment of the incumbent for the deteriorating economic situation, nor was it ultimately the extreme left Izquierda Unida (IU). Instead, two new parties on the left (Podemos) and the centre (Ciudadanos) suddenly emerged to challenge the stable Spanish two-party system. The fatal blow was dealt in the 2016 elections.<sup>1</sup> The Spanish case perfectly fits the predicament of Hernández and Kriesi (2016), who claim that ‘the cumulated effect of the Great Recession goes far beyond the short-term punishment of incumbents’, where ‘other mainstream parties which habitually govern hardly benefited from the predicament of the incumbents’ (Hernández and Kriesi 2016: 19).

How can we explain these unexpected changes in voting behaviour? Most research focusing on the emergence and success of new political parties has relied on one of three distinct analytical approaches. The first are *institutional* in focus, and refer to the type of electoral system, electoral rules or the structure of the state, among others (Abedi 2002; Harmel and Robertson 1985; Hino 2012; Jackman and Volpert 1996; Ladrech 1989; Müller-Rommel 1998). The second

set are *sociological explanations* that focus on socioeconomic conditions (Dalton *et al.* 1984; Franklin *et al.* 1992; Knigge 1998; Lubbers *et al.* 2002), the value orientations of the society (Golder 2003; Inglehart 1997), or cleavage structures (Kriesi *et al.* 2006, 2008, 2012). Finally, *spatial strategic models of party competition* (Harmel and Svasand 1997; Meguid 2005; Rohrschneider 1993) tend to follow a Downsian perspective, whereby the strategic actions of the parties enhance or hamper opportunities for new parties to emerge. For instance, the emergence and success of New Left parties, as well as of the Populist Radical Right (PRR), has been explained on the basis of socioeconomic explanations such as the 'enlargement of the tertiary sector, the substantial expansion of educational opportunities during the past two decades, the increasing usage of mass media, and the significant increase in geographical and social mobility of voters' (Rohrschneider 1993: 683). Other studies have found that economic variables such as unemployment increase the probability of the PRR's success (Knigge 1998; Lubbers *et al.* 2002).

Most notably, Kriesi *et al.* (2006, 2008, 2012) have gone a long way in explaining the emergence of a new cultural cleavage (integration–demarcation) that reshapes party systems in north-western Europe (NWE). According to the authors, two waves of transformations rendered a new structure of conflict by which to understand the emergence of the New Left and the PRR: (1) endogenous socioeconomic transformations that weakened traditional class and religious cleavages; and (2) exogenous processes such as globalisation and EU integration. The story of the new cultural cleavage proposed by Kriesi and his colleagues, however, does not travel well to southern Europe, where equivalent transformations did not occur. Arguably, the fascist legacies and other supply-side factors in these countries weakened the opportunity structures for the emergence of a new populist right (Alonso and Rovira Kaltwasser 2015), while class struggles sustained the competition between social democrats and communists, thus diminishing the structural opportunities for the New Left. In short, the attenuation of classic cleavages that is appreciable in NWE contrasts with a story of the prevalence of traditional cleavages in the south. In this regard, the structure of conflict would be more similar to central and eastern Europe than to NWE (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2012).

In the case of Spain, the traditional left–right cleavage has been shown to be particularly strong among voters. Rovny and Polk (2014) show that there is a high correlation between sociocultural and economic issues that can be understood under a single dimension, speaking against the emergence of a new cultural divide. Fernández-Albertos (2017) suggests that this remains the case despite the emergence of new parties. If the structure of conflict indeed remains unidimensional and issue preferences are correlated under a single dimension, we can conclude that the emergence of new parties is not due to new parties offering different configurations of issue 'packages' as is the case for the emergence of the New Left and PRR in NWE. A first hypothesis can thus be formulated:

**H<sub>1</sub> – Structure of conflict:** The demand-side structure of political conflict in Spain remains unidimensional despite the emergence of new parties.

Instead, the success of Podemos and Ciudadanos might be better understood by looking at the political consequences of the economic crisis in the short term. I thus focus on the evolution of the political landscape and the strategic reactions of voters and parties to the economic crisis as an external shock. To that end, the following sections review theories of economic voting and crisis of representation that might provide a more suitable explanation for the emergence of new parties in Spain.

### Economic voting: evaluations of economic performance

Following the classic reward and punishment logic whereby citizens hold their representatives accountable for their actions (Key and Cummings 1966), literature on economic voting provides some explanations as to the electoral consequences of economic shocks. Incumbent governments, the story goes, will be punished electorally when macroeconomic conditions worsen and rewarded when the economy performs well (Lewis-Beck 1990). To explain variation in the degree of punishment of the incumbent, several conditions have been identified that mediate the strength of the relationship, such as the *clarity of responsibility* (Anderson 2000; Powell and Whitten 1993) or the *constraints placed on governments* insofar as they are capable of blame-shifting strategies (Hellwig and Samuels 2007). In southern Europe, for instance, Lewis-Beck and Nadeau (2012) show that the effect of economic voting is stronger than in other NWE countries, arguably due to less complex government coalitions and overall worse performing economies. Although their analysis only covers the period until 2008, more recent research confirms that this trend has continued over the economic crisis. For instance, Hernández and Kriesi (2016) show that economic punishment can be systematically observed throughout western Europe in the shadow of the Great Recession.

While macroeconomic studies of economic voting predict strong correlations with the punishment of the incumbent, it is important to look at individual-level economic voting to disentangle the effects on voting behaviour. At the individual level, two types of economic voting can be distinguished. First, voters might evaluate the performance of the economy in general – that is, sociotropic evaluations. These evaluations are, however, often shaped by partisanship. It is expected that supporters of the incumbent government will have better evaluations than those supporting any other party in opposition (see also Balcells *et al.* 2015; Evans and Pickup 2010). Second, negative evaluations of the personal economic situation might influence voting behaviour – that is, pocketbook evaluations. A deterioration of the personal economic situation has been shown to have a significant effect in explaining the vote for new challenger parties from both the left and the right (Hobolt and Tilley 2015).

However, as rightly pointed out by Hobolt and Tilley (2015), negative evaluations of the personal economic situation do not shed light in explaining why voters might turn to a challenger party instead of the mainstream opposition. One of the arguments developed in the next section is that both mainstream parties in Spain introduced austerity measures, leading to a situation of brand delusion (Lupu 2016) or neo-liberal convergence (Roberts 2017). Following this argument, evaluations of the personal economic situation should reflect a dissatisfaction with the consensus of mainstream parties in the economic management of the crisis. As such, we would expect that individual-level pocketbook voting reflects a divide between mainstream and new parties, while sociotropic evaluations merely reflect the incumbent-opposition nature of competition. Thus the second hypothesis:

$H_{2a}$  – *Sociotropic economic voting*: Negative evaluations of the economy in general lower the probability of voting for the incumbent, but do not increase the probability of voting for new parties as opposed to mainstream parties.

$H_{2b}$  – *Pocketbook economic voting*: Negative evaluations of personal economic circumstances (pocketbook evaluations) increase the probability of voting for new parties as opposed to mainstream parties.

Existing literature on the determinants of votes for Podemos and Ciudadanos in relation to economic voting is somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, Fernández-Albertos (2015) speculates that Podemos is becoming the party of the economically excluded. This would suggest that pocketbook economic evaluations are strongly significant in explaining the vote for Podemos. On the other hand, Orriols and Cordero (2016) present evidence showing that pocketbook evaluations do not explain the vote for either Ciudadanos or Podemos, while positive sociotropic evaluations increase the probability of voting for PP and reduce the probability of voting for PSOE. Moreover, Bosch and Durán (2017) show that those more critical of the overall economic situation tend to vote for either Podemos or Ciudadanos, while they only find evidence that those with worse personal finances are more likely to vote for Podemos (Bosch and Durán 2017: 7). In any case, economic voting might only be part of the story. In the next section, I argue that a crisis of representation unfolded alongside the economic crisis, suggesting that the reasons for the two new parties to emerge might be also found beyond economic factors.

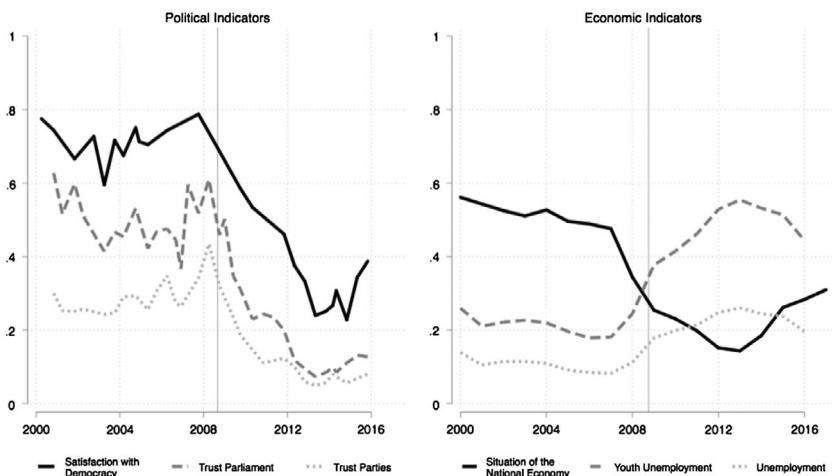
## The crisis of representation: critical and dissatisfied

Democratic representation consists of a principal–agent relationship between the voters (the principals) and politicians (the agents) that establishes channels for interests to be represented institutionally. Elections are thus the mechanism whereby voters put trust in politicians hoping they will defend these interests, which might take different forms, such as delivering material advantages (clientelism) or the pursuit of policy programmes (programmatic) (Kitschelt 2000; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). It is precisely through the failure of these

linkages between the electors and parties that a crisis of representation occurs and a window of opportunity for new parties opens (Morgan 2011). From a theoretical standpoint, the failure of linkages between voters and politicians will destabilise party competition. But how are we to recognise a crisis of representation?

Mainwaring (2006) distinguishes two dimensions that constitute a political crisis or crisis of representation: an *attitudinal dimension*, involving citizens' perceptions; and a *behavioural dimension*, which encompasses 'actions by citizens rejecting existing mechanisms of democratic representation' (Mainwaring 2006: 15). The attitudinal dimension, also referred to as latent political potentials (Kriesi 2015: 3), constitutes the degree to which citizens are dissatisfied with the political system and (do not) feel represented by democratic institutions. It is therefore an indicator of the extent to which there is fertile ground for a political crisis to emerge. The latter only erupts when it is manifested in the behavioural dimension – that is, when there is an overt manifestation (Kriesi 2015). The behavioural dimension is concerned with the manifestations in both the formal (electoral volatility, changes in the party system, emergence of new parties) and informal (protests) political arenas. In the case of Spain, both dimensions are observable, as explained below.

Indicators of political trust towards the key representative national and European political institutions, as well as indicators of the levels of satisfaction with democracy, are particularly revealing for understanding the attitudinal dimension that preceded the emergence of two new parties in Spain. Figure 2



**Figure 2. Political and economic crisis indicators in Spain, 2000–2016.**

Notes: Vertical lines indicate the beginning of the financial crisis (September 2008).

Sources: All indicators are standardised in percentages (0–1). Political indicators are obtained from biannual Eurobarometers (April and October). Situation of the national economy is a monthly indicator obtained from CIS (for details on the methodology see [https://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/ES/11\\_barometros/metodologia.html#ISE](https://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/ES/11_barometros/metodologia.html#ISE)). Unemployment and youth unemployment is a quarterly measure obtained from Eurostat.

illustrates the changes in political and economic indicators in Spain from 2000 to 2015. Since the beginning of the economic crisis in September 2008, these indicators followed a remarkably similar pattern (see also Muro and Vidal 2016). The average degree of satisfaction with the way democracy works in the country decreased substantially after 2008, reaching some of the lowest levels recorded since the transition to democracy. According to Eurobarometer data, while in 2007 77% of Spaniards claimed to be very or fairly satisfied with the way democracy works, only 22% did in 2014. Distrust towards the national parliament and political parties followed an almost identical trend. Although distrust towards political parties had been considerably lower than towards parliament, the levels converged to another historical low in the period after the outbreak of the crisis: less than 10% of the population claimed to trust these institutions. Compared to the levels of trust towards parliament prior to 2008, the decrease is nothing short of spectacular: while close to 50% of respondents trusted the national parliament before the crisis, less than 10% of respondents trusted the national parliament at its height.<sup>2</sup>

While the changes in the political indicators appear to be strongly correlated with changes in the perceptions of the economy (i.e. national economic circumstances) and with objective economic indicators (i.e. unemployment, especially youth unemployment), the economic malaise seemed to trigger far deeper discontent beyond questions of incumbent performance.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in the cases of Spain and Portugal, the effect of economic indicators on political mistrust has been found to be rather limited when compared to the effect of the perception of political responsiveness and corruption scandals (Torcal 2014). A simple reward–punishment mechanism based on the performance of the economy alone thus seemingly cannot explain the indiscriminate dissatisfaction with the political system that spread in Spain during the crisis. Instead, as first pointed out by Krastev (2002) for the Balkans, and later applied to southern Europe by Bosco and Verney (2012), it is the situation of a ‘democracy without choices’ that produces frustration with the democratic process and aggravates the crisis of political representation. This situation is the outcome of what is best described by the growing tension that governments face between acting ‘responsibly’ versus ‘responsively’<sup>4</sup> (Mair 2009); or in other words, in dealing with the gap between democracy and efficiency (Scharpf 1999). Under the external constraints of the European Monetary Union (EMU), the governments of the crisis-ridden south were pressured into adopting a set of fiscal consolidation policies and structural reforms with the objective of reducing debt and regaining access to international credit markets. Incumbents on both sides of the ideological spectrum introduced these unpopular measures to different degrees, claiming to act ‘responsibly’ at the cost, especially for the left, of being ‘responsive’ to both their constituencies and ideological principles. A lack of clarity of responsibility for these policies and reforms stems from the multi-level governing structure of the EU. This further contributed to the widespread

and seemingly indiscriminate attribution of blame to all political institutions (Hobolt and Tilley 2014).

In the case of Spain, the PSOE announced significant welfare cuts<sup>5</sup> and structural reforms as prescribed by the European Central Bank during Zapatero's government,<sup>6</sup> such as labour reform (Field and Botti 2013), but it also agreed with PP to change the constitution to cap the budget deficit (Tremlett 2011). Although the retrenchment policies would be much harsher with the PP government in the following years, the decline in effective political competition between mainstream parties arguably led to a situation of neo-liberal convergence. This convergence was similar to that discussed by Roberts (2013) in explaining the collapse of the party system in the case of Latin America (see also Roberts 2017). In short, when major political contenders participated in the process of market liberalisation – that is, when centre-left governments either supported or directly introduced reforms in line with the neo-liberal orthodoxy – then programmatic dealignment occurred, leading to a situation of neo-liberal convergence. The crisis of representation that unfolded in Spain, however, was not limited to the programmatic convergence of the mainstream parties. It was also closely linked to political corruption.

The surfacing of corruption scandals became a key issue on the Spanish political agenda in the years following the financial crisis. By November 2014, concern over corruption and fraud had become the second most worrying problem for Spaniards (slightly below unemployment). At this time, 63.8% of Spanish citizens claimed that corruption and fraud was one of the three most important problems facing the country. In March 2008, only 0.2% had agreed with this claim (i.e. the concern was essentially negligible). Reported perceptions of corruption also shifted, with Spain's score in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) falling one point between 2007 and 2016 (from 6.7 to 5.8). Three large corruption scandals linked to the PP (i.e. the Gürtel case, the Bárcenas papers and the 'black credit cards' of the savings banks Caja Madrid/Bankia) shifted public attention to the issue of corruption (Orriols and Cordero 2016: 6), though there were many others affecting parties of all colours, especially at the regional and local levels (see also Riera *et al.* 2013: 520).

Political corruption is closely linked to dissatisfaction with representative institutions. Several studies have found positive correlations between corruption scandals and political discontent (Ares and Hernández 2017: 2), especially when there are no side benefits to them (Fernández-Vázquez *et al.* 2016). Moreover, perceptions of corruption are conditional on the economic context (Zechmeister and Zizumbo-Colunga 2013), heightening during times of economic hardship. Other case studies on crisis of representation have shown that in times of economic crisis corruption scandals erode voters' confidence in representative institutions and magnify discontent by highlighting perceived state deficiencies (Mainwaring 2006). Moreover, recent studies of Spanish voting behaviour show that being preoccupied with corruption increases the

probability of voting for Podemos (Bosch and Durán 2017). This suggests that corruption played an important role in the Spanish crisis of representation and the resulting transformations in the electoral arena, which were first reflected in the protest arena.

Massive mobilisations in the protest arena followed the politics of austerity and corruption scandals. Two small network organisations, Real Democracy Now! (*Democracia Real Ya!*) and Youth Without Future (*Juventud Sin Futuro*), successfully triggered mass demonstrations in May 2011, giving birth to the *Indignados* protest movement. Neo-liberal reforms, welfare cuts and the corrupt political class became the movement's most visible targets (della Porta 2015). The participants, who were younger, better educated and less politically involved than in other demonstrations, were also sceptical of traditional political actors such as labour unions and political parties (Anduiza *et al.* 2014). Despite rejecting the existing political choices, however, the movement also shared a criticism over political apathy, positively affecting attitudes towards voting (Galais 2014). The so-called 'Spanish Revolution' thus opened a window of opportunity for new formations capable of connecting with the discourse of change that was being voiced in the squares. The message was largely transversal. A survey by Metroscopia<sup>7</sup> conducted in July 2011 showed that 81% agreed that the movement had good reasons to protest, while 84% claimed that it raised problems affecting the whole of society. The claims of the protestors, it seems, crossed ideological frontiers and largely connected with Spanish society. All of this suggests that the emergence of new parties might be contingent upon the feeling of discontent towards the Spanish political system. Following on from previous literature suggesting that politically dissatisfied citizens tend to have a higher probability to vote for challenger and protest parties (Hooghe and Dassonneville 2016; Hobolt and de Vries 2016), and the discussion of corruption and neo-liberal convergence in the Spanish case, we can therefore specify a new hypothesis based on the political crisis:

H<sub>3</sub> – *Political crisis voting*: The higher the voter's perception of political crisis, the higher the probability of voting for new parties.

Yet, while the drive behind the emergence of these two new parties might be closely related to critical attitudes towards the political system, the question remains as to why two new formations emerged instead of just one. In fact, if we consider the programmatic dealignment for the centre-left as the reason for the collapse of the party system, we would expect a new party to emerge only on the left. Rodríguez Teruel and Barrio (2016) argue that the reasons for Ciudadanos' emergence are twofold. On the one hand, it took a position against predominant nationalism in Catalonia facilitated by the weakening of the Catalan branch of PSOE (PSC). On the other hand, it capitalised on 'unsatisfied demands for political renewal, transparency and democratic regeneration' (Rodríguez Teruel and Barrio 2016: 2). Recent research has also pointed to

the possibility that stealth democracy attitudes – that is, different preferences on democratic political decision-making procedures – produce an important divide between these two parties. What we see then is Podemos calling for participatory procedures and Ciudadanos calling for moderate democratic reforms (Lavezzolo and Ramiro 2017). While the territorial dimension and stealth democracy attitudes might partly answer the question of the emergence of Ciudadanos, it cannot not tell us why a second party was able to capitalise on political dissatisfaction. This is especially striking when we consider Podemos' early attempts to shun ideological labels.

One possible answer might be found in the ideological structure of conflict. If the nature of this structure has remained unidimensional, as suggested by hypothesis 1, a deeply rooted ideological cleavage might have limited the transversality of parties in capitalising on political discontent. If so, we might expect that it is those concerned with the political crisis and on the left of the ideological spectrum who vote for Podemos, while it is those most concerned with the political crisis on the right who vote for Ciudadanos. Thus, we can formulate an interaction hypothesis between ideology and critical attitudes towards the political system:

$H_{3a}$  – *Political crisis + ideology*: Those who sit on the left of the ideological spectrum and are concerned with the political crisis have a higher probability of voting for Podemos, whereas those on the right who are concerned with the political crisis have a higher probability of voting for Ciudadanos.

Beyond ideological structures, it hardly comes as a surprise that a youth organisation triggered the mobilisations and that the crowd in the 15-M protests was younger than usual. The effects of the choices taken to manage the economic crisis were felt particularly keenly by the youth, who suffered from disproportionately high levels of unemployment (up to 55.48% in 2013, see Table 2). The weak labour position of young people is partly explained by market segmentation produced by deregulation of temporary contract work, combined with strict job security provisions for those in permanent contract positions (Noelke 2016: 476). These profoundly dire circumstances encountered by the youth, combined with the exposure of corruption scandals affecting the political class, led young Spaniards to 'echo the crisis to a greater extent than the rest of society' (García-Albacete *et al.* 2016). Thus, we can expect a generational divide to be reflected institutionally with the emergence of new parties. This expectation is also substantiated by most research on the determinants of votes for Podemos and Ciudadanos, which has provided evidence of such a generational divide (Fernández-Albertos 2015; Orriols and Cordero 2016; Rodríguez-Teruel *et al.* 2016). Bearing this in mind, we can hypothesise that there is an interaction effect between the perceptions of political crisis and age:

$H_{3b}$  – *Political crisis + age*: Amongst those concerned with the political crisis, the probability of voting for new parties declines as the age of the voter increases.

## Data and methodology

The empirical analysis relies on a pooled dataset of the 2015 and 2016 post-electoral survey study conducted by the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas*.<sup>8</sup>

To test the hypotheses outlined above, multinomial logistic regressions are employed, where the dependent variable is the party voted for in the last elections<sup>9</sup>: (1) PP, (2) PSOE, (3) Podemos, (4) Ciudadanos, (5) Other and (6) Abstention. Table 1 summarises the main categories for the dependent variable.

To test the first hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) on the structure of political conflict, I employ a battery of questions included in the surveys on different issues that capture the economic, cultural and territorial dimensions. These include (1) Public services vs tax; (2) Multiculturalism; (3) Security and freedom; and (4) Territorial organisation.<sup>10</sup> To test for the ideological structure, I first analyse the correlation between the different questions using the left-right scale. Then the average positions of the voters are plotted with fitted lines to observe the correlations between parties in the ideological structure.

To test the second hypothesis ( $H_2$ ) on economic voting, two variables are included in the models. First, to capture pocketbook economic voting, a Likert-scale question on the evaluation of the personal economic circumstances ranging from 'Very good/good' to 'Very bad' is used. Second, to evaluate the effects of sociotropic voting, an index that combines position and salience is created. The argument is that combining both provides a more accurate reflection of the degree of concern with the economy. Position is determined based on a Likert-scale question on the general state of the economy that again ranges from 'Very good/good' to 'Very bad'. The salience variable is constructed hierarchically based on whether the individual claims that the economy or unemployment are the first, second or third most important problems facing the country. These two variables are combined to produce a normalised 'sociotropic' index.

To test the third hypothesis ( $H_3$ ) on the political crisis, a similar index is constructed combining position and salience. The positional variable is based on a factor that combines the level of satisfaction with democracy with the level of trust towards parliament and political parties.<sup>11</sup> This is a proxy for being critical of the overall political situation of the country. Once normalised,

**Table 1.** Parties and number of observations in the CIS survey, 2016.

Party	N party voters in sample	Proportion of voters in sample	Party's score in last election (June 2016)
PP	2438	19.63	33.03
PSOE	2212	17.81	22.66
Podemos*	2083	16.78	21.10
Ciudadanos	1167	9.40	13.05
Total	3829	61.2	89.84

\*From May 2016, United Left forms a coalition together with Podemos called Unidos Podemos, thus they are represented together. Podemos also includes regional parties such as Marea (Galicia), En Comú Podem (Catalonia) and Compromís (Valencia).

this variable is then weighted by salience. Similarly, salience is measured hierarchically based on whether the individual claims that corruption is the first, second or third most important problem facing the country. This produces an index where at the one extreme we find those who are most dissatisfied with the political situation and claim that corruption is the most important problem, and at the other those who fully trust the political system and see corruption as no threat. This same index is also used to test the interaction with ideology ( $H_{3a}$ ) for which a variable on ideological self-placement ranging from 0 (left) to 10 (right) is used. Similarly, the political crisis index is interacted with age to test for generational effects ( $H_{3b}$ ).

The models also control for a range of socio-structural and attitudinal variables, including the level of education, gender, region, size of town/city, social class,<sup>12</sup> region, employment situation, political interest and personal income. A dummy variable is also included to control for the fixed effects of the time when the survey was conducted. Table 2 presents detailed summary statistics of all variables and constructed indices.

## Results

To recapitulate, the first hypothesis concerned the structure of political conflict in Spain. The theoretical section discussed the possibility that the emergence of new parties in Spain were possible thanks to the opening of new dimensions of conflict similarly to the emergence of the New Left and the PRR in NWE (see Kriesi *et al.* 2008, 2012). Against this hypothesis, Rovny and Polk (2014) suggest that there is a unidimensional conflict structure in which the sociocultural and economic dimensions are strongly correlated in the case of Spain. It could be, however, that this changed with the irruption of Podemos and Ciudadanos. This does not seem to be the case. Figure 3 shows how the average positions of the voters for different combinations of policy issues fall under a single dimension.

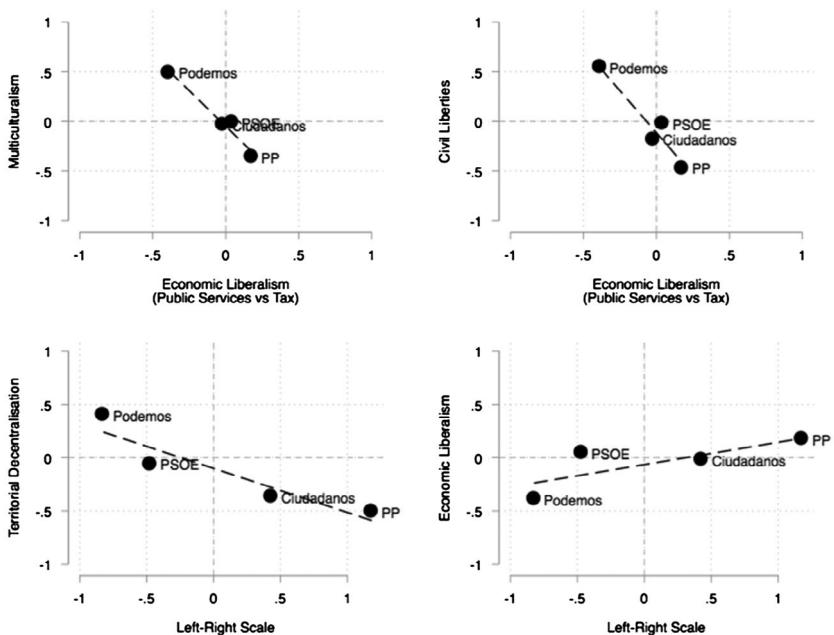
The demand-side ideological structure appears to be composed of two extremes and two intermediate positions. The extremes are covered by Podemos on the left, combining strong multicultural attitudes with preferences for territorial decentralisation, civil liberties and economic redistribution.<sup>13</sup> The PP on the right at the other extreme, combines the exact opposite issue preferences. PSOE and Ciudadanos adopt intermediate positions on the centre-left and centre-right, respectively. Conducting a pairwise correlation further suggests that all the issue positions are significantly correlated with the left-right scale (see Table A3). The results confirm that both economic and sociocultural issues, particularly the latter, remain strongly correlated with the ideological left-right scale. These results are also in line with the findings of Fernández-Albertos (2017).

The second hypothesis ( $H_2$ ) is concerned with economic voting. Two variants were specified. First, we expected sociotropic economic voting to be driven by

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Categories
Age	12,417	50.01	17.81	18	98	
Gender	12,417	0.517	0.5	0	1	0 = Male; 1 = Female
Size town/city	12,417	3.774	1.664	1	7	1 <= 2000; 2 = 2–10 K; 3 = 10–50 K; 4 = 50–100 K; 5 = 100–400 K; 6 = 400–1000 K; 7 => 1000 K
Education	12,382	1.953	0.678	1	3	1 = Low; 2 = Middle; 3 = Higher
Ideology (left–right)	10,547	4.626	2.004	1	10	1 = Left; 10 = Right
Economic liberalism	11,645	3.843	2.300	0	10	0 = More public services at the cost of more tax; 10 = Less tax at the cost of less public services
Multiculturalism	12,085	3.855	2.638	0	10	0 = Nativism; 10 = Cosmopolitanism
Civil liberties	11,811	5.304	2.460	0	10	0 = Law and order; 10 = Civil liberties
Territorial organisation	11,502	3.183	1.191	1	5	1 = Centralisation; 5 = Decentralisation
Unemployed	12,367	0.161	0.367	0	1	1 = Unemployed
Income	9,456	3.833	2.010	1	8	1 = None; 2 = <300; 3 = 300–600; 4 = 600–900; 5 = 900–1200; 6 = 1200–1800; 7 = 1800–2400; 8 = 2400+
Interest in politics	12,380	2.357	0.967	1	4	1 = None; 2 = Little; 3 = Quite; 4 = A Lot
Abstention	12,417	0.120	0.325	0	1	1 = Abstained in previous elections
Sociotropic	12,358	0.478	0.234	0	1	[Normalised] 0 = Good/v. good; 0.33 = Average; 0.66 = Bad; 1 = Very bad. <i>Weighted by sociotropic salience</i>
Sociotropic salience *(concern economy or unemployment)	12,417	4.468	1.691	1	7	1 = Neither mentioned; 2 = None and third; 3 = None and second; 4 = Third and second; 5 = First and none; 6 = Third and first; 7 = First and second
Pocketbook	12,367	0.304	0.264	0	1	[Normalised] 0 = Good/v. good; 0.33 = Average; 0.66 = Bad; 1 = Very bad
Political crisis	12,320	0.375	0.271	0	1	Based on factor analysis (see Table A1) and weighted by political crisis salience
Political crisis sali- ence/concern of corruption)	12,417	2.246	1.117	1	4	1 = Not mentioned; 2 = Third problem; 3 = Second problem; 4 = First problem
Region	12,417	8.045	4.800	1	19	A dummy for each autonomous community in Spain
Social class	11,964	4.991	2.195	1	8	See Figure A1 for details.

Notes: \*The question about the most important problem facing the country offers two answers on the economy: unemployment and the economy in general. Thus, salience considers both possible answers in hierarchical order (first, second and third most important problems), which renders seven possibilities as they cannot both be selected together.



**Figure 3.** Average position of voters of main parties in Spain according to various ideological dimensions.

Notes: Dotted lines represent the linear fit. All variables have been normalised for simplification purposes.

partisanship and thus not shed much light on the emergence of new parties ( $H_{2a}$ ). Second, the evaluation of personal economic finances was speculated to drive the vote for new parties as a proxy for the rejection of the economic consensus that took place during the management of the economic crisis ( $H_{2b}$ ). Table 3 shows the marginal effects of three different models based on multinomial logistic regressions for the different parties. Let us for now consider the coefficients on the sociotropic and pocketbook evaluations.

For the sociotropic evaluations, the results are mostly as expected. The probability of reporting that the economic situation of the country is positive significantly increases the probability of voting for the incumbent government – that is, the PP (models 1.A and 3.A). On the contrary, the probability of voting for both PSOE<sup>14</sup> (model 1.B) and Podemos (models 1.C and 3.C) increases to a similar degree if the individual claims that the economy is not performing well. All models show that the results are statistically insignificant for Ciudadanos. With these results we can conclude that, as expected, sociotropic evaluations of the economy are driven by incumbent–opposition dynamics and do not shed much light on the divisions between the electorates of mainstream and new parties.

For the pocketbook evaluations, the results are mixed. As expected, reporting worse personal economic circumstances significantly lowers the probability of voting for the mainstream parties (models 1.A, 3.A, 1.B and 3.B).

**Table 3.** Marginal effects of multinomial logistic regressions on vote.

Variables	PP				PSOE				Podemos				Ciudadanos			
	Model 1.A	Model 2.A	Model 3.A	Model 1.B	Model 2.B	Model 3.B	Model 1.C	Model 2.C	Model 3.C	Model 1.D	Model 2.D	Model 3.D				
Age	0.002*** (0.000)	0.002*** (0.000)	0.002*** (0.000)	0.004*** (0.000)	0.003*** (0.000)	0.004*** (0.000)	0.003*** (0.000)	0.003*** (0.000)	-0.003*** (0.000)	-0.003*** (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.000)				
Gender	-0.007 (0.008)	-0.006 (0.006)	-0.009 (0.008)	0.041*** (0.010)	0.036*** (0.008)	0.034*** (0.010)	-0.040*** (0.009)	-0.026*** (0.008)	-0.026*** (0.009)	-0.026*** (0.008)	-0.026*** (0.008)	-0.026*** (0.008)				
Size town/city	-0.005** (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.005** (0.002)	-0.004 (0.003)	-0.005* (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)	0.015*** (0.003)	0.013*** (0.003)	0.014*** (0.003)	0.005** (0.003)	0.005** (0.002)	0.004* (0.002)				
Education (Ref. higher)																
Low	-0.023 (0.014)	-0.015 (0.012)	-0.012 (0.014)	0.097*** (0.020)	0.097*** (0.017)	0.094*** (0.020)	-0.060*** (0.018)	-0.035*** (0.015)	-0.032* (0.018)	-0.032* (0.015)	-0.051*** (0.015)	-0.058*** (0.012)				
Middle	-0.005 (0.011)	-0.002 (0.009)	0.003 (0.011)	0.049*** (0.014)	0.047*** (0.012)	0.047*** (0.014)	-0.020 (0.013)	-0.008 (0.011)	-0.007 (0.012)	-0.007 (0.011)	-0.027*** (0.011)	-0.023*** (0.010)				
Ideology	0.096*** (0.009)	0.096*** (0.009)	0.096*** (0.009)	-0.050*** (0.002)	-0.051*** (0.002)	-0.051*** (0.002)	-0.051*** (0.002)	-0.087*** (0.002)	-0.080*** (0.002)	-0.080*** (0.002)	-0.079*** (0.002)	-0.079*** (0.001)				
Unemployment	-0.003 (0.010)	-0.003 (0.010)	0.002 (0.010)	0.005 (0.013)	0.005 (0.013)	0.005 (0.013)	0.009 (0.013)	0.006 (0.012)	0.006 (0.012)	0.006 (0.012)	0.005 (0.012)	0.005 (0.011)	0.012 (0.011)			
Income	-0.004* (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)	0.003 (0.012)	0.003 (0.012)	0.003 (0.012)	0.002 (0.012)	0.005** (0.003)	0.005** (0.002)			
Interest politics	0.014*** (0.003)	0.013*** (0.004)	-0.004 (0.004)	-0.004 (0.004)	-0.004 (0.004)	-0.004 (0.004)	-0.004 (0.004)	0.054*** (0.003)	0.054*** (0.003)	0.054*** (0.003)	0.059*** (0.004)	0.059*** (0.003)	0.016*** (0.003)			
Abstention	-0.079*** (0.010)	-0.079*** (0.011)	-0.079*** (0.011)	-0.124*** (0.011)	-0.124*** (0.011)	-0.124*** (0.011)	-0.131*** (0.011)	-0.131*** (0.011)	-0.131*** (0.011)	-0.131*** (0.011)	-0.001 (0.014)	-0.001 (0.014)	-0.001 (0.014)	0.005 (0.010)	0.005 (0.010)	
Economic voting																
Sociotropic	-0.034*** (0.015)	-0.051*** (0.015)	0.042*** (0.020)	0.027 (0.019)	0.037*** (0.020)	0.037*** (0.018)	0.037*** (0.018)	0.066*** (0.019)	-0.006 (0.016)	-0.006 (0.016)	-0.006 (0.016)	-0.006 (0.016)				
Pocketbook	-0.036** (0.015)	-0.027* (0.015)	-0.060*** (0.019)	-0.049*** (0.019)	-0.049*** (0.019)	-0.049*** (0.019)	-0.049*** (0.019)	0.034** (0.017)	-0.032** (0.017)	-0.032** (0.017)	-0.032** (0.017)	-0.032** (0.017)	-0.026* (0.015)			
Political crisis	-0.068*** (0.012)	-0.085*** (0.013)	-0.083*** (0.015)	-0.083*** (0.017)	-0.075*** (0.017)	-0.075*** (0.017)	-0.075*** (0.017)	0.081*** (0.013)	0.081*** (0.016)	0.081*** (0.016)	0.030** (0.012)	0.030** (0.013)	0.029** (0.013)			
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes											
Observations	7323	9202	7280	7323	9202	7280	7323	9202	7280	7323	9202	7280	7280	7280	7280	7280

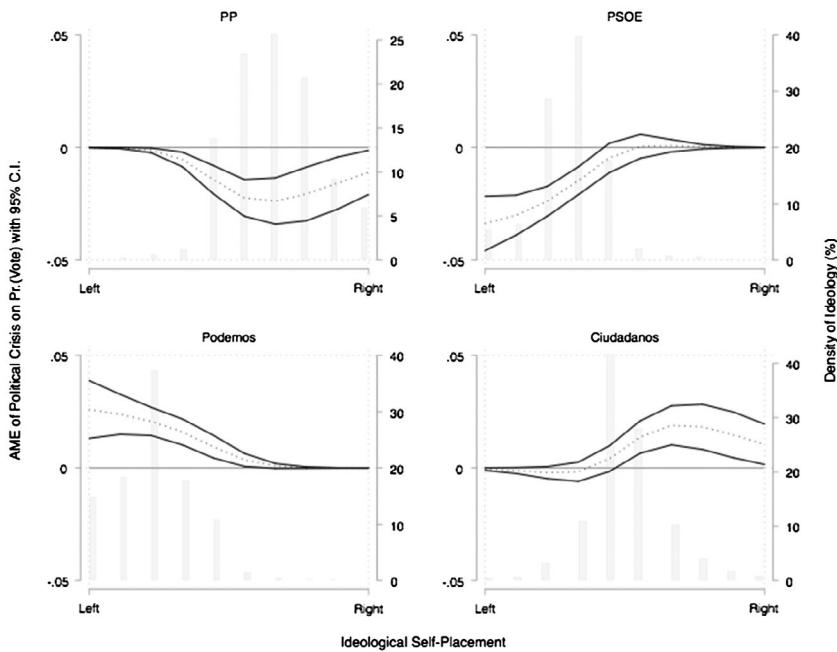
Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. Levels of statistical significance:

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*  $p < 0.1$ .

Substantively speaking, this is more pronounced for PSOE than for PP (see also model 3 in Tables A5 and A6). Also as expected, we find the opposite effect for Podemos. Worse pocketbook evaluations produce a higher probability of voting for Podemos (model 3.C; see also Model 3 in Table A3).<sup>15</sup> However, the results for Ciudadanos defy the expectations, as worse pocketbook evaluations produce a negative coefficient (models 1.D and 3.D, see also model 3 in Table A4). These results suggest that, while the vote for Podemos is consistent with the expectations for hypothesis H<sub>2b</sub>, it does not follow for the other new party, Ciudadanos. Therefore, the results only tell part of the story; negative pocketbook evaluations produce a higher probability of voting for Podemos, but not Ciudadanos.

The third hypothesis (H<sub>3</sub>) concerned the crisis of representation. According to the theory, we could expect that the emergence of new parties answered to a perception of general dissatisfaction with the political system. Let us now focus on the coefficients for the political crisis variable in Table 3. In all cases, the results are statistically significant and as expected. In all models, critical attitudes towards the political system render a higher probability of voting for new parties, whereas they render a lower probability of voting for mainstream parties. Substantively speaking, Podemos seems better at capturing votes from those dissatisfied with the political situation. This is also confirmed if the different components of the political crisis indicator are run separately in the regressions (see Table A2). In sum, the third hypothesis can be confirmed. The vote for new parties, as opposed to mainstream parties, seems to be driven by an overall dissatisfaction with the political situation.

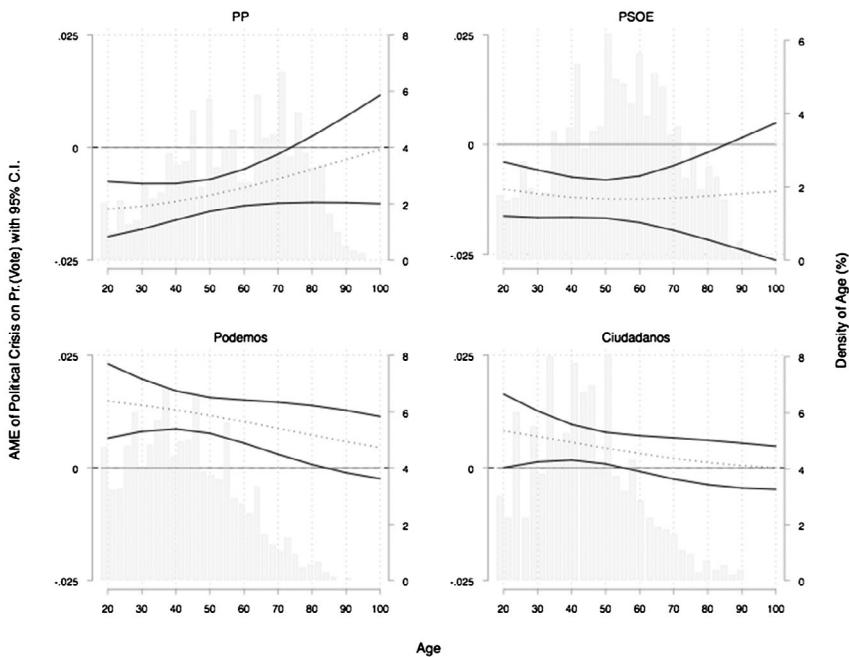
If the concern over the political situation is the prime driver of the electoral punishment of old parties, why then might we expect the emergence of two new challenger parties and not just one? Given that the ideological structure of political conflict remains unidimensional, as tested by the first hypothesis, a variant of the third hypothesis (H<sub>3a</sub>) suggested that, in this unidimensional structure, voters on the left of the ideological spectrum and dissatisfied with the political system would have a higher probability of voting for Podemos, whereas those on the right would be more likely to vote for Ciudadanos. The argument here is that the ideological cleavage cuts across the critical attitudes towards the political system. Figure 4 shows the marginal effects of the interaction between the political crisis index and ideology. The results confirm the expectations.<sup>16</sup> The perception of the political crisis is mediated by ideology in explaining the vote for new parties. It is worth noting that Podemos seems to attract those most dissatisfied around the centre, though it is unable to reach those on the right who are disaffected, which the strategy of shunning ideological labels had been expected to achieve.



**Figure 4.** Average marginal effects of interaction between political crisis indicator and ideology on probability to vote for PP, PSOE, Podemos and Ciudadanos.

Notes: Based on results from Model 6 in Tables A3, A4, A5 and A6.

Given the dissimilar impact that management of the economic crisis had on the different generations in Spain, the final expectation was that there is a significant generational divide that also cuts across perceptions of the political crisis ( $H_{3b}$ ). Specifically, it was hypothesised that the vote for new parties is driven by those most concerned with the political situation but especially amongst the young. Figure 5 shows the marginal effects of the interaction between the political crisis index and age. As expected, the probability of voting for new parties amongst those who are most dissatisfied with the political situation increases as age declines. Again, this effect is substantially stronger in the case of Podemos than with Ciudadanos. Being critical of the political system and being younger, on the contrary, dramatically lowers the probability of voting for mainstream parties.<sup>17</sup> Thus, while age is in itself a significant predictor of the vote for new parties,<sup>18</sup> those who are young and critical of the political system are especially likely to vote for new parties.



**Figure 5.** Average marginal effects of interaction between political crisis indicator and age on probability to vote for PP, PSOE, Podemos and Ciudadanos.

Notes: Based on results from Model 7 in Tables A3, A4, A5 and A6.

## Conclusion

The collapse of the party system in Spain, observed during the general elections of 2015 and the emergence of two new parties, raises important questions that speak directly to the literature on the crisis of representation and cleavage politics. How can we make sense of these transformations and what do they tell us about the ongoing changes in the structure of political conflict in southern Europe in the shadow of the Great Recession? This article has argued that the key to understanding the emergence of both new parties in Spain is through a *crisis of representation* that unfolded alongside the economic crisis. In order to get to that conclusion, different hypotheses on the structure of political conflict and economic voting theories were tested using individual-level survey data from the 2015 and 2016 post-electoral survey studies of CIS.

The findings can be summarised in five points. First, the structure of political conflict in Spain – for state-wide parties – remains unidimensional despite the emergence of new parties. This suggests that, unlike the New Left and PRR in north-western European countries, the emergence of new parties in Spain is not a consequence of new dimensionalities of conflict. Second, economic voting approaches only tell part of the story. Sociotropic voting, as expected,

only reflected incumbent–opposition dynamics. Pocketbook evaluations, on the other hand, distinguished mainstream parties from Podemos, but not from the other new party, Ciudadanos. It does not seem that evaluations of the personal economic situation are the key feature driving the vote for new parties. Third, dissatisfaction with the overall political system drives the vote for new parties and reduces the probability of voting for mainstream parties. This is consistent with the unfolding of a crisis of representation and its institutional translation. Fourth, the unidimensional ideological structure cuts across these critical attitudes insofar as those critical and on the left vote for Podemos, whereas those critical and on the right vote for Ciudadanos. Fifth and finally, there is a strong generational divide that also accounts for the emergence of new parties. It is those critical of the political system, but especially the young, who have a higher probability of voting for new parties.

Despite the inherent limitations of case studies, these results constitute a first step to better grasping the political and structural transformations in other countries in the shadow of the Great Recession. The general implication that transcends the Spanish case is that the dimensionality of party competition and socio-demographic divides moderate the behaviour of parties and the response of voters to the economic malaise. Although much remains to be done in comparative perspective, the underlying mechanism presented here is that the impact of the economic crisis – understood as an exogenous shock – will result in political (re-)configurations that are mediated by pre-existing, demand-side political structures. These political outcomes are, of course, not exempt from other supply-side and contextual factors.

For instance, to stick to two other southern European examples, the reconfiguration of the Greek party system appears to have been strongly mediated by the issue of the European bailouts and a much more severe economic crisis that tears apart existing clientelistic linkages (Hutter *et al.* 2015; Katsanidou and Otjes 2015). In Portugal, different pathways to democracy (Fernandes 2015), the lack of structural space on the left covered by the communist party (PCP), changes in the leadership of the social-democratic party (PS), and the economic struggles the country already faced before the economic crisis, are all factors that might have contributed to the seeming stability of the party system in the aftermath of the Great Recession (Ferreira and Mendes 2017). Future research should further explore the extent to which supply, demand and contextual factors explain the different cross-national political outcomes of one of the most significant episodes of economic turmoil in modern history.

## Notes

1. For an analysis of the differences between the 2015 and 2016 elections see Simón (2017).
2. European political institutions also did not go unpunished and suffered an almost identical drop in trust compared to national institutions, suggesting

- that the increase in mistrust was not limited by national borders (Muro and Vidal 2016). It is important to note here that domestic issues over reforms of the domestic political system had much more visibility than issues related to Europe during the post-crisis electoral campaigns (see Hutter *et al.* 2015).
3. It is important to note, however, that these attitudes do not necessarily mean an increase in the perceptions of the illegitimacy of democracy as a regime, as pointed out by Magalhães (2005) in the case of Portugal.
  4. This divide is also brought up in Rohrschneider and Whitefield's (2012) notion of the strain of representation, which explores the ideological congruence between partisans and independents. The authors conclude that especially in north-west Europe, parties still offer policy alternatives and that they are rooted in their social characteristics.
  5. For a list of the welfare cuts and reforms in May 2010, see (in Spanish): [https://elpais.com/diario/2010/05/13/espagna/1273701601\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/2010/05/13/espagna/1273701601_850215.html)
  6. See letter that the ECB sent to Zapatero in 2011 asking for reforms: <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/pdf/other/2011-08-05-letter-from-trichet-and-fernandez-ordonez-to-zapateroen.pdf?e5c1a67f9627c5f087d5c7f02168e0da>
  7. These numbers also include voters of PP. See the survey results here: <https://metroscopia.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/INFORME-Clima-Social-24a-Oleada-junio-2011.pdf>
  8. The 2015 post-electoral study 3126 was conducted from 7 January to 19 March 2016 and includes 6242 interviews. The 2016 post-electoral study 3145 was conducted from 2 to 21 July 2016 and includes 6175 interviews. Both surveys are representative at the national level, stratified and using quotas of gender and age. The interviews were all conducted face-to-face.
  9. Last elections refers to the general elections in December 2015 for barometer 3126, and June 2016 for barometer 3145.
  10. Details on the operationalisation can be found in Table 2.
  11. A factor analysis of these three indicators shows that all three variables load on a single factor, suggesting that they largely capture the same attitudinal dimension. See Table A1 in the Online Appendix for the results of the factor analysis. For robustness purposes, I have also conducted the regressions for each indicator separately weighted by corruption salience (see Table A2 in the Online Appendix). Although coefficients vary in the size of the effect, they all report the same direction and level of statistical significance as the overall measure.
  12. Social class is constructed based on Oesch's (2006) class scheme. See Figure A1 in the Online Appendix for more details.
  13. Note that support for enlarging the welfare state and redistribution are not exactly the same, as pointed out by Fernández-Albertos and Manzano (2012) in the case of Spain.
  14. Note that the coefficient for sociotropic evaluations becomes insignificant for PSOE once the political crisis index is included. This suggests that once the effects of the political crisis are controlled for, sociotropic evaluations become an insignificant predictor.
  15. Note that the coefficient for pocketbook evaluations in Table 3, Model 1.C is insignificant. However, in two other models: either controlling for the political crisis (Table 3, Model 3.C), or running a regression with pocketbook evaluations alone (Table A3, Model 2), the results show statistical significance.
  16. See Model 6 in Tables A3, A4, A5 and A6 for the marginal effects of the interaction at the mean of ideology.

17. See Model 7 in Tables A3, A4, A5 and A6 for the marginal effects of the interaction at the mean of ideology.
18. Note that all coefficients of age produce a statistically significant, lower probability to vote for new parties and a higher probability to vote for mainstream parties in all models.

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