Chapter 3

Democratic Legitimacy and Trust in Political Institutions in Portugal before and after the Great Recession

Transitory or Lasting Effects?

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INTRODUCTION

In the past decades, the topic of the legitimacy of the democratic system has widely preoccupied political scientists. This has been an important topic as, on the one hand, since at least the 1970s, there has been an increasing trend toward disaffection with politics as well as heightened levels of political cynicism among electorates in most Western democracies. Even though initially scholars tended to focus on single countries and their national particularities (the first and best known example being the literature on the impact of the Vietnam War and Watergate in the USA; e.g., Nye et al. 1997), recent scholarship acknowledges the cross-national dynamic of the phenomenon.

Furthermore, the occurrence of events of transnational importance such as the economic crisis which originated in the USA in 2008 but quickly migrated to Europe has reinforced incremental changes that are associated with longer-term societal transformations. It becomes harder to deny that the decline of citizens' trust in political institutions, for example, across different Western countries (Bosco and Verney 2012; Belchior 2015; Teixeira et al. 2016) needs to be attributed to a significant extent to processes and experiences that transcend circumstances of solely national importance.

Following previous work that looked at the effects of the crisis on democratic legitimacy and trust toward political institutions in Portugal (Teixeira et al. 2014, 2015, 2016), the present chapter focuses on the aftermath of the economic crisis. To reach this goal, we compare Portuguese citizens'

attitudes at three different moments: before the emergence of the economic crisis, at the peak of the crisis, and in the postcrisis period.

Our research questions are the following: Does the multidimensionality of political support hold after the crisis? What is the trend in the different dimensions of democratic support following the end of the crisis? What was the impact of the economic crisis on different age cohorts in terms of their support for a democratic regime? What is the impact of social modernization on diffuse support? And can short-term fluctuations in specific support be attributed only to economic and performance factors or are there political-ideological factors at play also?

This chapter first briefly presents some seminal theoretical and empirical contributions on different types of democratic support and then proceeds to discuss the data and methods used, the empirical findings, and the final conclusions.

DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY AND TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS: DIFFUSE AND SPECIFIC DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT

The changing relationship between citizens and politics has manifested in a lot of different ways. There are both attitudinal and behavioral aspects of change in contemporary democracies, leading some people to ask if all these changes carry consequences for the sustained support of the citizenry for existing forms of representation and government. Behavioral changes include lower turnout in elections (Franklin 2004), declining party membership (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Van Biezen et al. 2012) and party identification (Dalton 2000), partisan dealignment (Franklin et al. 1992), declining associational membership (Putnam et al. 2000, 2006), and rise of unconventional political participation (Teorell et al. 2007). The fact that during this same period, the behavioral changes have been accompanied by growing political disaffection and mistrust (Pharr and Putnam 2000) makes it reasonable to assume that all these trends are manifestations of the same underlying phenomenon: the growing indifference, if not hostility, of citizens toward politics, at least in its conventional form of representative party politics and mainstream centrist governments (Hobolt and Tilley 2016). So, even though these phenomena have possibly distinct origins and often different correlates, there is always a tacit or explicit tendency to link each one to the broader question of the legitimacy of the political system and its central institutions.

Given that some of the attitudinal trends have intensified since the beginning of the economic crisis in 2008, one of the questions that political scientists have been trying to answer is to what extent the crisis has accelerated or

set in motion processes of regime delegitimization in tandem with preexisting, longer-term developments (e.g., Teixeira et al. 2014; Armingeon and Guthmann 2014; Cordero and Simón 2016). When concentrating strictly on the attitudinal dimension of democratic legitimacy, the question that has puzzled social scientists more generally is whether fluctuations in levels of support for the institutions of democratic governance reflect changes in underlying political values or whether they are simply a response to short-term economic trends (or shocks) and perceived government performance in select policy domains.

David Easton (1965, 1975, 1976) was the first to propose a qualitative distinction between types of political support.[1] More specifically, Easton distinguishes between diffuse and specific support, which in their concrete manifestations tend to correspond to different objects of support. Diffuse support is directed to the fundamental aspects of the political system, such as the constitutional order and political institutions in the abstract. Specific support is directed at the officeholders themselves (political authorities) and is closely related to questions of performance and outputs. Therefore, diffuse support tends to be more durable and stable because it derives from deep-seated political values and attachments, typically cultivated during early political socialization. Conversely, specific support is contingent on perceptions and evaluations of performance and policy outputs, thus it tends to be in synch with the political ebb and flow and prone to short-term fluctuations. Support for specific parties (government or opposition), as well as attitudes toward leadership elites and authorities, is expected to fluctuate over time in response to short-term and medium-term contextual factors, such as the performance of particular governments, major shifts in public policies, leadership changes, or merely the cycles of the economy.

The concept of diffuse support is closely associated with the concept of regime legitimacy. Martin Seymour Lipset defined regime legitimacy as "the capacity of a political system to engender and maintain the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate and proper ones for the society" (Lipset 1983, 64). In other words, regime legitimacy exists only when the governed believe a particular system of government is preferable to all others from a normative point of view. This normative foundation is assumed to exist independently of the policy outputs of the government of the day, even though Easton has conceded diffuse support can also be affected by later experience and is thus not completely unaffected by retrospective evaluations of performance (Easton 1975, 446; see discussion in Magalhães 2014, 78–80). To put it another way, the underlying theoretical argument proposed by Easton, and later explored empirically by other political scientists, is that the expression of support for democratic institutions ("system support," in Easton's abstract language of system theory) is composed of at least two

dimensions. This implies that a person can be a committed democrat and yet display remarkably low levels of trust toward the institutions of representative democracy or the democratically elected political personnel (see also Klingemann 2013).

The findings of comparative analyses by Norris (2011) and Dalton (2004) confirm the distinction between diffuse and specific support holds true not only conceptually but also in the minds of citizens across different political systems. Even though in most consolidated democracies support for democracy as a system of government is overwhelming, satisfaction with the way democracy works in one's country is far more volatile. Norris went a step further, initially challenging the notion that a growing trend of political disaffection was ubiquitous and, to the extent that it is present, constitutes a negative development. She argues that growing dissatisfaction with democracy is a product of rising public aspirations of citizens who push for the improvement of democracies. In other words, dissatisfaction with democracy does not mean citizens are becoming less democratic, but are simply more demanding democrats: "critical citizens" (Norris 2011) or "assertive citizens" (Klingemann 2013). To use the language of markets, the diagnosed "democratic deficits" should not be entirely attributed to changing political supply but also with changing political demand which the existing political supply cannot meet. In other words, democratic deficits result from the increasing expectations and the cognitive awareness of "critical citizens" who are dissatisfied with the supply side of democratic governance (e.g., process and policy performance, and power-sharing arrangements). There are a host of symptoms to corroborate this thesis: civic engagement is declining, conventional political participation is eroding, and people are becoming unsatisfied with and skeptical about political institutions, parties, and politicians (Schmitt and Holmberg 1995; Pharr and Putnam 2000; Teorell et al. 2007).

DIFFUSE AND SPECIFIC SUPPORT OF DEMOCRACY IN PORTUGAL BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE CRISIS

Portugal is one of the European countries where declining satisfaction with the way democracy works in the country began to decrease in the 1980s (Freire 2003). In Portugal, growing political *discontent* has been accompanied in the last few decades by high levels of political *disaffection* (i.e., lack interest in politics and political efficacy), which has been remarkably high even by the standards of other third-wave South European democracies. Both phenomena, however, have been distinct from regime *illegitimacy*

(Magalhães 2005), that is, lack of diffuse support. The latter has remained high throughout the post-authoritarian period and has facilitated the process of democratic consolidation following a tumultuous 2-year period after the Carnation Revolution in 1974.

The 2008 international economic crisis eventually forced Portugal in 2011 to negotiate a bailout deal with the European Union (EU) and the International Monetary Fund. The austerity program that was imposed as a condition for the loans created a downward spiral of recession, growing unemployment, falling state revenue, persistent budget deficits, new austerity measures, and deeper recession. Unsurprisingly, this development signaled the beginning of a period in which positive evaluations and sentiments toward government and other political institutions follow a steep downward trajectory in Portugal as in other countries across the European periphery where the same spiral was being reproduced with varying intensity. The gap between diffuse support for democracy and dissatisfaction with its performance reaches its maximum at the time when Portugal was the subject of international rescue, between 2011 and 2014 (Teixeira et al. 2019), corresponding to the period when the country received external financial support and to the application of harsh austerity measures by the government, which led to a severe worsening of the living conditions of the population. Recent years have witnessed a widespread softening of the severity of austerity policies in these countries and some revitalization of the economic indicators. Portugal was among the most afflicted countries by the economic crisis, but since 2015 the situation significantly changed with the election of a new socialist government. The latter replaced the former center-right coalition and was formed with the parliamentary support of the two small radical left parties substantially alleviating previous political austerity measures, allowing a gradual return to standards of living that were comparable to those prior to the crisis.

Explaining Levels of Diffuse and Specific Support: Hypotheses

In attempting to gauge whether the economic crisis left lasting effects on the levels of democratic support in Portugal, the present research builds upon a set of relevant findings of previous studies including the Portuguese case (Teixeira et al. 2014, 2016, 2019), which complement the few studies that had been conducted in previous years (e.g., Morlino and Montero 1995; Freire 2003; Magalhães 2005). These studies found that the distinction that Easton made between diffuse and specific support held true even under extreme economic conditions. Factor analyses indicated that citizens were making the distinction between the regime in the abstract and its concrete manifestations and performance (both in 2008 and 2012). Therefore, we expect that the

structure of support for the political system also holds after the peak of the crisis has passed. Our first hypothesis, thus, reads as follows:

H1: Diffuse and specific support continue to form distinct dimensions of political support after the crisis.

Previous research suggested that Portugal experienced an acute "democratic deficit" during the economic crisis which did not appear to translate into antidemocratic backlash: diffuse support remained roughly steady between 2008 and 2012 even though specific support plummeted (Teixeira et al. 2014, 2015). In a new context where the economic crisis finally seems to be moving in the rearview mirror, it is worth examining again whether the "democratic deficit" that existed before and that peaked during the economic crisis persists or whether it has subsided.

Given that economic indicators had already improved by the time the fieldwork of the third survey used in this study was conducted (2016) we expect that specific support will have recovered to a significant extent. Conversely, we expect that diffuse democratic support levels will have remained high as they have been throughout the previous years. Our second and third hypotheses are as follows:

H2: Diffuse democratic support levels have remained stable during and after the economic crisis in Portugal.

H3: Specific democratic support, including trust in political institutions, has rebounded after the crisis.

Are any of the observed trends at the aggregate level really uniform across the electorate or are they more pronounced for particular sociodemographic groups? For the latter question we contrast explanations that have become prevalent in the literature. The explanations offered to account for the previously observed "democratic deficits" are a mixture of long- and short-term factors. On the one hand, changing aspirations are attributed to long-term societal forces of modernization that lead to lasting cultural change. The argument here is similar to the one posed by Inglehart (1977, 2018) concerning the rise of post-materialist and self-expression values. On the other hand, perceptions of democratic performance are shaped by actual democratic performance, but this evaluation can be mediated by certain factors, such as media coverage and framing, comparisons between one's own country and other countries, the existence or not of clear lines of accountability (Norris 2011, 4), but also the psychological effects of partisanship and ideology on the understanding of political events.

We will assess the explanatory power of demand-side theories that focus on enduring cultural shifts (Inglehart 1977, 2018) and cognitive mobilization (Dalton 1984) and supply-side theories that emphasize the public dissatisfaction with the policy performance of democratic governments (Weatherford 1987; Finkel et al. 1989). Specifically, we will assess the relative explanatory power of social modernization approaches that attribute dissatisfaction with democratic performance to rising democratic aspirations in long-term processes of human development, especially growing levels of literacy, education, and cognitive skills, leading to emancipatory values. In this view, the processes of societal modernization and human development encourage the growth of self-expression values in postindustrial societies, which have been linked to political liberalism and demand for more participatory and democratic forms of governance. Previous findings appeared consistent with the social modernization and "critical citizen" thesis, namely that high levels of dissatisfaction coexisted with strong support for democratic regime, especially for the educated young. This trend is in line with the literature on democratic legitimacy that since the middle of the 1990s has suggested that a strong support toward democratic institutions coexists with a growing dissatisfaction with their performance (Dalton 1996; Norris 1999; 2011; Putnam et al. 2000; Dalton 2004; Torcal and Montero 2006).

These claims will be tested by examining the relative impact of sociodemographic variables such as education, but also political interest and self-expression values, all of which are expected to be positively associated with diffuse democratic support. Finally, we will examine the impact of the economic crisis and, more generally, the assumption that dissatisfaction with democracy is just a symptomatic manifestation of perceived poor policy performance of democratic governments or filtered through the perceptual screen of partisanship. Consequently, it may be expected that:

H4: Diffuse support is better explained by factors associated with cognitive mobilization and social modernization (education, interest in politics, self-expression values—H4a,b,c).

H5: Specific support is better explained by factors associated with short-term factors (evaluation of state of the economy—H5a) and conditioned by political orientations (identification with party-in-government—H5b).

In the political socialization literature there is a common argument that coming of age in an authoritarian regime significantly reduces the chances of acquiring democratic values, whereas individuals that are socialized in fully democratic regimes are more likely to consider democracy as the "only game in town" and prefer it to alternatives (Voicu and Bartolome Peral 2014,

554–555). The crucial period during which citizens are supposed to form the basis of their political attitudes is considered to be the "impressionable or formative years" between childhood and adulthood, that is, between the ages of 17 and 25 years old (Neundorf and Smets 2017, 4; Jennings and Niemi 1981). Others have argued that political attitudes are crystallized during the preadult period, meaning between the ages of 10 and 17, and remain quite stable during adulthood (e.g., Sears and Valentino 1997). There is no definitive consensus concerning which, exactly, are the "formative years"; research shows that it can stretch from early adolescence to early adulthood. As young citizens have not yet developed political habits and deeply held convictions, they can be more easily influenced by external factors (Flanagan and Sherrod 1998; Sears and Levy 2003). Social, political, as well as personal changes affect young citizens disproportionately, thus creating generational differences in patterns of political attitudes and behavior. It follows, therefore, that strong long-term generational differences will persist in the transition from authoritarianism to democracy as a result of socialization (Neundorf 2010, 1096).

The literature on socialization effects would predict that democratic values are more resilient among cohorts that have been socialized in fully consolidated democracies and during a time of relative economic prosperity and development. Different generations among the citizens are therefore exposed to socialization effects related to both political and social changes. In the third-wave democracies, individuals born around or before the mid-1940s ("silent generation," i.e., born before 1945) were old enough to go through their socialization process under authoritarian rule. At the same time, this period was, for the most part, a period of rapid growth and modernization in the Portugal and Southern Europe in general. Among older people, memories of the authoritarian past may be inextricably intertwined with pleasant recollections of their own youth or with processes of economic growth and modernization of the postwar era (Morlino and Montero 1995, 234). Conversely, cohorts that have been socialized in consolidating or fully consolidated democratic regimes ("baby boomers" born between late 1940s and mid-1960s and "Generation X" born between mid-1960s and late 1970s) are expected to have more fully internalized democratic values in relation to their parents' generation (but also in relation to "millennials," the younger generation born after 1980 that had less time to forge strong attachment to democracy) and, therefore, no form of governance other than democracy can be fully legitimated in their eyes.

Furthermore, based on previous observations for Portugal and other Southern European countries (Morlino and Montero 1995, 245), and considering the right-wing authoritarian legacies in the region, we expect to see a relationship between ideology and diffuse democratic support. Our final hypotheses are therefore:

H6: Cohorts that were socialized under democracy (baby boomers, generation Xers) will tend to display higher levels of attachment to democracy in relation to cohorts socialized under authoritarianism (silent generation) or millennials that had less time to forge strong attachment to democracy.

H7: Left-wing individuals will tend to display on average higher levels of diffuse support (legacy of authoritarianism).

DATA AND ANALYSIS

The analysis is based on three nationwide mass surveys administered in Portugal before, during, and after the economic crisis of the early 2010s. The first survey (N = 1,350) was fielded at the beginning of the financial crisis (March–July 2008) but before it transformed into a sovereign debt crisis in Europe in 2010, first in Greece, and then in Portugal and Ireland. The second survey (N = 1,209) was fielded at a time when the effects of the crisis—through the austerity policy response—were starting to deeply affect the Portuguese population (September–October 2012). The third survey (N = 2,897/weighted by gender, age, and education) was fielded in the aftermath of the economic crisis (May–July 2016). We consider that the latter ended once Portugal exited the 3-year bailout program in June 2014.

The nested nature of our data compels us to run mixed-effects models for both diffuse and specific democratic support. The dependent variables in our models are two additive indices, one for diffuse democratic support and one for specific democratic support. The former relies on four items that were used in the three surveys and are identical to the items used in the World Values Survey to gauge support for democratic and nondemocratic political systems. Specifically, the respondents are asked to evaluate four different ways to govern a country: a democratic system, a system with a strong leader that does not have to bother with parliament or elections, rule by the armed forces, and rule by technocrats. By reversing the preferences in the latter three items, the higher values on the 12-point scale represent increased diffuse support for the democratic system (recoded 0–3). The index of specific support relies on six common items that are included in all three surveys: one that measures satisfaction with the way democracy works in Portugal and five items that measure trust in national institutions (the government, parliament, political parties, the presidency, and the justice system). In the 18-point additive index (recoded 0–3), the higher values represent increased specific democratic support.

The independent variables include a series of sociodemographic variables as controls (gender, age, level of education, rural residence), an item that

captures interest in politics (4-point scale, recoded 0–1), left-right ideology (11-point scale, recoded 0–1), an index of self-expression values (7-point scale based on items that measures attitudes toward homosexual marriage and abortion rights for women, recoded 0–1), identification with party or parties in government at the time of study (binary variable, 0 for no identification, 1 for identification), evaluation of the national economy in the previous twelve months (5-point scale, recoded 0–1), as well as four different dummy variables that capture four different cohorts (the "silent" generation, i.e. those born before 1950; the "baby boomers," i.e. those born between 1950 and 1964; "generation Xers," i.e. those born between 1965 and 1979; and the "millennials," i.e. those born after 1979). In the analysis, the "silent" generation is used as a reference category.

FINDINGS

The first hypothesis that we examine is whether diffuse and specific support continue to constitute distinct dimensions of political support. In order to accomplish this task, we perform a principal components analysis on the same items that were included in the previous studies of political support in Portugal (Teixeira et al. 2014, 2015, 2016). In order to gauge support for democratic regime at the abstract level, we employ indicators concerning the preferred regime type (whether democracy constitutes the best form of government and support for alternative regime types—rule by the army, by experts, and by a strong leader unhindered by parliament and elections). Respondents get to evaluate each regime type from "very good" to "very bad," including the in-between options of "good" or "bad." Further down the list of items we encounter satisfaction with the way democracy works in Portugal (four possible answers, running from "very satisfied" to "not at all satisfied") and confidence to different Portuguese political institutions, with the four possible answers ranging from "a lot of confidence" to "no confidence at all."

We see a repetition of the pattern observed in 2008 (Teixeira et al. 2014, 2016) and 2012 (Teixeira et al. 2015), namely that satisfaction with democracy and the items that tap confidence in institutions form a separate dimension following the principal components analysis (table 3.1). As in 2008 and 2012, the different regime support items form two separate dimensions, with the item that measures preference for democracy forming one dimension and the three items that capture preferences for alternative forms of political rule forming another (albeit rule by experts loads above 0.3 on both factors). The failure of preference for democracy to form a single dimension with preference for alternative forms of government can be attributed (once more) to

Table 3.1 Components of Political System Support, Portugal (2016)

	Factor I	*Factor II*	*Factor III*
Survey Items	*Regime—Performance and Institutions*	*Regime—Prodemocratic Principles*	
Democratic system good			0.750
Strong leader rule bad		0.596	
Technocratic rule bad		0.372	−0.540
Army rule bad		0.672	
Satisfaction with democracy	0.324		
Trust in the Presidency	0.318		
Trust in Government	0.444		
Trust in Parliament	0.459		
Trust in the legal system	0.389		
Trust in political parties	0.460		
Percentage of variance explained	30.1%	14.8%	12.9%
Total % of variance explained		57.7%	

Note: The numbers represent item loadings on each of the three factors returned after performing a principal components analysis using varimax rotation.
Source: Freire et al. (2016). (The table is author generated using data from the sources indicated.)

the skewed distribution of the answers on this item. As we will see below, a very high percentage of the sample once more chooses to state that democracy constitutes the best form of government regardless of whether they also state a preference for nondemocratic forms of political rule. This lack of variation can account for the failure to observe two neatly separated forms of democratic support, one diffuse and one specific, even though the distinction remains as valid as before. As in the 2008 and 2012 surveys, we can see that support for particular political institutions and the evaluation about the present-day functioning of democracy can be separated from more abstract forms of support for democratic rule. In that sense, we can say that H1 is, for the most part, confirmed using a representative sample of the Portuguese population following the exit of Portugal from the bailout program and the effective end of the economic crisis in the country.

Looking at some descriptive analyses of the main components of diffuse and specific support, we see that in general there seems to be a picture of relative stability when it comes to diffuse support and of partial recovery of specific support in 2016 compared to the peak of the crisis in 2012. However, diving into the examination of separate indicators we can identify some distinct patterns. For example, the share of respondents that concur with the statement that democracy is the best form of government (agree and strongly agree) has continued to slide since before the crisis hit Portugal hard. It was 95.4 percent in 2008, dropped to 91.3 percent in 2012, and continued its decline to 85.9 percent in 2016. Even though the percentage of the population

that considers democracy to be the best form of government still constitutes the overwhelming majority of the Portuguese population, it has decreased by nearly 10 percentage points within the space of less than a decade. At the same time, there are no alternatives to democracy that picked up support in the same 2008–2016 period. Specifically, the percentage of respondents who agreed (and strongly agreed) that army rule is the best way to govern Portugal was a mere 17.2 percent in 2008, 18.1 percent in 2012, and just 16 percent in 2016. Support for rule by experts has also remained relatively stable (65.7 percent in 2008, 72.9 percent in 2012, 68.3 percent in 2016), whereas support for rule by a strong leader that does not bother with elections and parliament has declined since 2008 (58.4 percent in 2008, 51.6 percent in 2012, 46 percent in 2016).

Previous research has indeed demonstrated that the countries with Troika intervention show stronger diffuse support for democracy than the other Eurozone countries (Cordero and Simón 2016, 316–317). This suggests that the crisis has not undermined the regime legitimacy (Kriesi 2018), which is consolidated by the fact that less favorable evaluations of the functioning of the economy in bailed-out countries do not tend to lead to a reduction of the support to democratic values, but rather to an increase (Cordero and Simón 2016, 317–318).

Moving to specific support, as stated above, there is an overall picture of partial recovery in the postcrisis period following the precipitous drop in specific support between 2008 and 2012, as demonstrated for Portugal (Teixeira et al. 2014). That drop in specific support has as well as been generally found for the 26 EU, with particular significance for the countries most severely hit by the crisis and some Eastern European (Armingeon and Guthmann 2014, 431–433).

Focusing on individual indicators, we see that the percentage of Portuguese citizens that are satisfied and very satisfied with the way democracy works in Portugal decreased from 28.5 percent in 2008 to 10.6 percent in 2012, to partially recover to 18.4 percent in 2016. Moving on to the items that tap confidence in institutions, we observe that respondents that with (some and a lot of) confidence in parliament dropped from 48.5 percent in 2008 to 23.1 percent in 2012, to slightly recover to 30.7 percent of respondents in 2016. Similarly, confidence in government plummeted from 46 percent in 2008 to 15.3 percent in 2012, to rebound to 36.1 percent in 2016. Confidence in the presidency dropped from 73.4 percent in 2008 to 32.5 percent in 2012 to recover to 63.5 percent in 2016. Confidence in the justice system constitutes an exception to the overall trend as does confidence in political parties. The former dropped from 50.3 percent of respondents in the 2008 study to 35.7 percent in 2012 and has failed to recover with just 37.3 percent of respondents claiming to have a lot of confidence or some confidence in the justice system

in 2016. The latter dropped from 30.5 percent in 2008 to 17.1 percent in 2012 and has continued to slide to a mere 12.9 percent of respondents in 2016 stating that they have some or a lot of confidence in political parties.

In the multivariate model this picture is to some extent reproduced in the sense that there is some rebounding of specific support in 2016 in relation to 2012 but still considerably lower in comparison to 2008 when controlling for all the individual-level variables. Diffuse support (which does not include the "democracy is the best form of government" item) appears to be higher in 2016 in relation to 2008 and lower in 2012 in comparison to 2008 when controlling for all the other variables. Looking at both the descriptive and multivariate analyses, we can argue that H2 and H3 are partially confirmed.

Moving on to the competing explanations for diffuse and specific support (figure 3.1) we do indeed see that diffuse support is explained by factors associated with cognitive mobilization (education, interest in politics) and social modernization (self-expression values) more than anything else. So, H4 (and its consisting sub-hypotheses) is confirmed, even though interest in politics has a comparable positive effect on specific democratic support as well. These findings are consistent with previous research on the Eurozone countries that found that education and interest in politics were among the most relevant individual-level variables explaining diffuse support for democracy (Cordero and Simón 2016, 315–317). Conversely, the factor that explains specific support far better than any other is evaluation of the state of the economy, as also

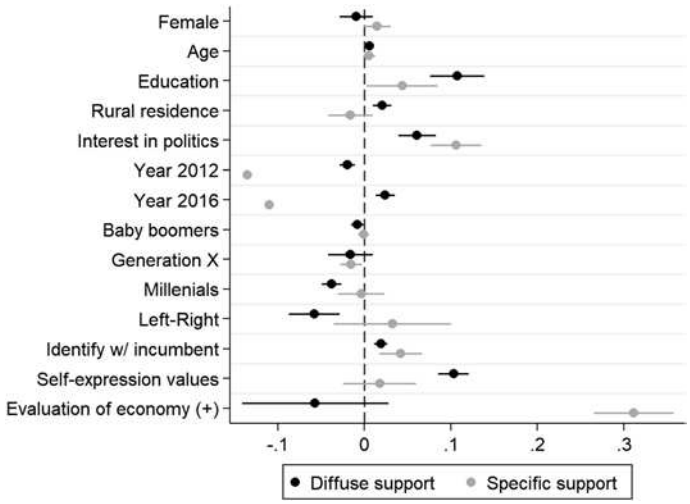

Figure 3.1 Mixed-effects Models for Diffuse and Specific Support (2008, 2012, 2016). *Source*: Freire et al. (2016). (The figure is author generated using data from the sources indicated.)

demonstrated for Europe during the crisis (Armingeon and Guthmann 2014), confirming that short-term factors are far more important in determining specific than diffuse support (and therefore fully confirming (H5b). Identification with the incumbent party (or parties in the case of the PSD/CDS-PP coalition government) is also positively associated with specific support but its effect is much more modest in relation to evaluation of the economy. As a proxy for partisanship we can also use left-right ideology, given that the governments since 2008 have either been left or right-of-center.

For example, when interacting ideology with year (not shown here due to lack of space), right-wing ideological identification is positively associated with specific support in 2012 when PSD and CDS-PP are in government, and negatively associated with specific support in 2016, when PS created a minority government with the support of CDU and BE.

In terms of the legacy of authoritarianism, H7 is indeed confirmed, in the sense that diffuse support for democracy appears to be higher for left-wing individuals as in other Southern European countries (Morlino and Montero 1995; see also Freire and Kivistik 2016). However, H6 is not confirmed as the cohorts that were socialized during the democratic transition ("baby boomers") or under a consolidated democratic regime ("generation Xers") do not seem to display higher diffuse support in relation to either the cohort that was socialized under authoritarian rule (the "silent generation") or younger "millennials" that had less time to fully identify with democracy and democratic values. When interacting the different cohorts with the year of the study (figure 3.2) we observe that only in 2008 "baby boomers" and "generation Xers" displayed higher levels of support in comparison with

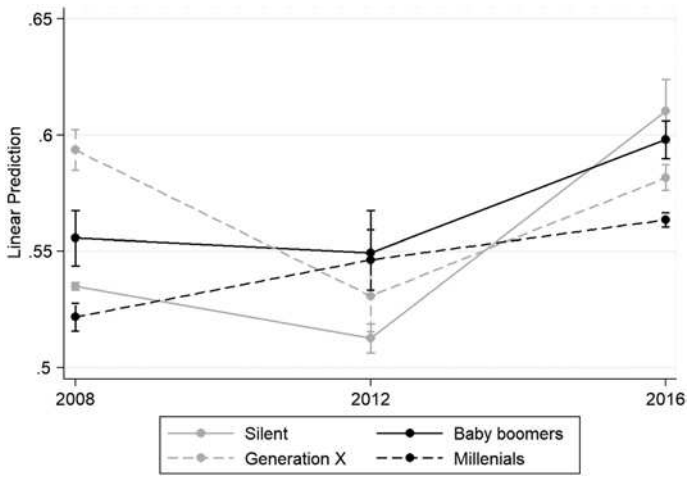

Figure 3.2 Predictive Margins of Diffuse Support of Different Cohorts by Year (2008, 2012, 2016). *Source*: Freire et al. (2016). (The figure is author generated using data from the sources indicated.)

the other cohorts, but since the onset of the crisis that distinction no longer holds. "Millennials" display the lowest levels of diffuse support both before and after the crisis, which is somewhat alarming but not enough to confirm H6.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, to the extent that it existed, the period effect of the crisis on democratic support in Portugal appears to be gradually dissipating. First of all, the distinction that Easton made between diffuse and specific support continues to hold, at least to the extent it did in previous studies. The levels of specific democratic support have been recovering since the lows at the peak of the crisis. Levels of diffuse support (in the form of preference for democracy over other alternatives) remain relatively stable and largely unaffected by the period effect of the crisis. While positive evaluation for democratic form of government has slightly decreased, no nondemocratic alternatives appear to benefit. As generally found for the European countries most affected by the economic crisis, the perceived poor performance of the economy does not seem to have eroded the support for democracy, but rather to have strengthened the attachment to democratic values (Cordero and Simón 2016; Kriesi 2018). As put by Kriesi, "by creating 'critical citizens', the economic crisis contributes to the strengthening of democratic principles" (2018, 79).

These findings have important implications for the study of democracy, showing, on the one hand, that the evaluations that citizens do of the regime's performance are mainly conditional on the economic context, being significantly volatile over time as a result of the ups and downs of the economic performance. On the other hand, such evaluations of democracy are largely independent of the legitimacy of the regime, which tends to remain essentially unchanged over time, regardless of whether the country is experiencing an economic recession, such as the one Portugal went through in 2009, or an economic expansion.

As expected factors associated with cognitive mobilization and social modernization (education, interest in politics, self-expression values) appear the best predictors of diffuse support whereas specific support appears more sensitive to short-term factors, such as evaluation of the national economy, and conditioned by the perceptual filter of partisanship and more general political orientations. The legacy of authoritarianism seems more evident on the relationship between left-wing ideology and diffuse democratic support. Cohorts effects on democratic support are negligible, as democratic values seem well entrenched across all cohorts.

NOTE

1. The passage on Easton's work is largely based on the discussion of the dimensions of democratic support in Teixeira et al. (2014: 503–504).

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