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A Political Reconsideration of Social Movements: The Case 15M Movement in Spain

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Abstract

The contemporary wave of protests and occupy-style mobilisations has been very influential in different parts of the world. Yet, though the economic accounts are available, not many studies have looked at the political factors behind the social movements. Analysing the case of 15M Movement in Spain, this paper aims to explain the emergence of protest movements from a political perspective by providing a party politics account. It contends that one of the central factors behind mass protests, if not the only one, has been the crisis of representation resulting not only from the lack of voter-party congruence, but also from the failure of political parties to meet the demands of responsiveness and responsibility – the core requisite of the party government model. After all what legitimizes the party government model has been governing party's ability to balance the demands of responsiveness and responsibility at the same time. As such, in accounting for the question of what factors brought about popular disaffection in Spain, it provides a rather neglected party politics perspective.

Keywords: *Social movement, political parties, Spain, party government*

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Siyaset Perspektifinden Toplumsal Hareketleri Anlamak: İspanya'da 15M Hareketi Örneği

Öz

Günümüzde toplumsal hareketler dünyanın birçok bölgesinde etkisini göstermektedir. Fakat, bu hareketleri anlamak için ekonomik nedenler analiz edilirken, siyasi faktörler yeteri kadar incelenmemiştir. Bu çalışmanın amacı İspanya'daki 15M Hareketini inceleyerek, toplumsal hareketlerin ortaya çıkış nedenlerini parti sistemini inceleyerek siyasi açıdan analiz etmektedir. Temel argümanı kitlesel protestonun ortaya çıkmasındaki önemli faktörlerden birinin temsiliyet krizi olduğudur. Temsiliyet krizi bir taraftan seçmen-siyasi parti arasındaki uyuşmazlıktan, diğer taraftan ise partilerin yanıt verme ve sorumlu olma gibi parti hükümet modelinin gerekliliği olan iki fonksiyonu dengeleyememesinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Literatürde yoğunlukla tartışıldığı gibi parti hükümet modelini meşru kılan iktidardaki partilerin bir yandan kendi seçmenin taleplerine cevap verirken (yanıt verme) bir yandan da toplumun ortak çıkarını korumalarıdır (sorumlu olma). Bu iki işlev arasındaki dengenin bozulması parti hükümet modeli için bir krizi işaret etmektedir. Makalenin temel argümanı bu çerçevede İspanya'da siyasetin bir temsiliyet krizi içinde olduğu bu temsiliyet krizinin de hem ana akım partilerin seçmenle bağının kopmasından hem de iktidar partilerin yanıt verme ve sorumlu olma işlevlerini dengeleyemediklerinden kaynaklandığıdır. Bu çalışma İspanya'daki kitlesel muhalefeti analiz ederken bugüne kadar ihmal edilen parti siyaseti perspektifi sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Toplumsal hareketler, siyasi partiler, İspanya, parti hükümeti*

Introduction

The contemporary wave of protests and occupy-style mobilisations in Europe and beyond have pointed to the fact that there are grave shortcomings in the representative democracy of many nations, and citizens are dissatisfied with these prevalent power structures that leave no space for the direct participation of individuals in decision-making processes. As a result, they call for '*real democracy*'. Long before the occupation of public spaces in Madrid, Athens and Istanbul, several studies had already demonstrated that a certain level of distrust in relation to the principles of representative democracy had been a prevalent undercurrent among citizens and political elites alike (see Gray and Caul, 2000; Blais, 2000; Wattenberg, 2002). Election turnouts, party membership, party identification and trust in parties have all experienced a steady decline – all of which indicates that there is widespread disaffection with not only the institutions, but also the processes of representative democracy (see Dalton, 2003; Pharr and Putnam, 2000; Norris 1999). However, only a small number of these studies have predicted that popular disaffection with parties and elections would lead to anti-system, popular mobilisations in several parts of the world questioning the efficacy of representative politics.

Essentially, as the major slogan of the protests, "They don't represent us" (see Acedo, 2012; Macia, 2013), ably demonstrates, this paper contends that one of the central factors behind these mass protests has been the crisis of representation resulting not only from the lack of voter-party congruence, but also from the failure of political parties to meet the demands of responsiveness and responsibility – the core requisite of the party government model. Whilst responsiveness refers to a party's ability to fulfil the demands of the population, particularly their own constituency, responsibility requires acting prudently and consistently in policymaking (Mair, 2009: 11-12). The logic behind this notion is that since political parties are the key agents of democratic representation, linking citizenry to the state and mediating the processes of accountability and representation (see Thomassen, 1984), understanding the dynamics behind recent deployments requires a careful analysis of the functioning of party systems.

In order to illustrate its claims, this paper analyses the case of 15M Movement in Spain which received extensive support from different segments of society. In accounting for the question of what factors brought about popular disaffection in Spain, I provide a party politics view and argue that crisis of representation which is resulted from political parties' inability to balance the demands of responsiveness and responsibility has led to popular protest in the country.

1. Party Government Model

Under party government model, political parties are considered to be the only legitimate agents with direct means to state power in a democratic polity (Mainwaring et al., 2006, p.30). There are three

major reasons behind this assertion. First, political parties provide voters with information shortcuts which make electoral judgment much easier (Downs, 1957). Secondly, they are crucial for accountability in the sense that political parties are responsible from the successes and/or failures in governing, and therefore they provide more institutionalised mechanism in comparison to a system in which transient individual officeholders would govern. Finally, distinguished from interest groups, civil society organisations or trade unions, political parties are the only institutions that offer direct means to state power (Mainwaring et al., 2006, p.31). From this perspective, a rational citizen tends to give autonomy in decision-making to representatives (parties) on the grounds that representatives have greater expertise on specific issues (Dahl, 1970, p.145) in exchange for responsiveness, responsibility and accountability (see Cox et al., 1999; Ferejohn, 1999). So although the conditions of party government mainly focus on the ways in which the processes of governmental decision-making function, what makes governing by parties legitimate is conditioned by the extent to which they manage to sustain the demands of responsiveness, responsibility and accountability. While how accountability works has implication on the inclination of parties to be representative and responsible, since it pertains to the fixed intervals through which parties held accountable (Bardi et al., 2014, p.237), this paper is more concerned with the question of responsiveness and responsibility.

The discussions around responsibility and responsiveness have been one of the dominant themes of representation studies as the major paradox of party government model. Indeed, in responding to the question of how representatives should behave, there has been a dispute over whether representatives should favour the policies supported by their own specific constituents or whether they should act in line with general public interests. Within this perspective, the general agreement has been that political parties as the agents of representation should balance the demands of two. Fundamentally, political party is considered to be the only agent capable of aggregating, representing and governing at the same time. Much more importantly, party government is considered legitimate only if it serves responsively and responsibly at the same time.

Responsiveness refers to the tendency of political leaders or governments first to listen and then to respond the demands and wishes of citizens and groups (Mair, 2009, p.140). Bardi et al. (2014, p.237) also suggests that responsiveness can be identified as political parties' and leaders' responding to immediate expectations of voters either for "re-election, organisational discipline, and ideological commitment". Accordingly, responsiveness stipulates policy-makers to meet the demands of citizens.

The term *responsibility*, on the other hand, has been much more controversial and used differently by various scholars. According to Downs (1957, p.105), conversely, responsibility involves predictability and consistency at the same time. In his words, a party is responsible "if its policies in one period are consistent with its actions (or statements) in the preceding period" and so "the absence of responsibility

means party behaviour cannot be predicted by consistently projecting what parties have done previously" (cited in Mair, 2009). Listing the functions of representation, Birch (2007, p.140) claimed that one of the major functions is "providing for both responsibility and responsiveness." Here, he defines responsible government as the governments acting in prudence and consistency when making decisions. According to Birch, responsibility requires that "those in charge of policy making shall be responsible to the wishes and interest of the *general public*" (2007, p.140). He goes on to argue that "…a government will be regarded as irresponsible if its policies, however popular at the time they are formulated, proved to be imprudent or inconsistent in the long-run" (2007, p.140).

The important question here is how do these two notions interact? As aforementioned discussion on representation has clarified, citizens would delegate their rights to a representative on the condition that representatives act in a manner responsive to their own demands. However, if representatives only meet the demands of their own constituency, this would run the risk of disregarding long-term public interest at the expense of short-term group interests. On the other hand, if political parties act responsibly with clear policy goals serving to general public without responding to their constituency's demand then they might turn into "public utilities" (see van Biezen, 2003) with limited or no link to civil society. As Mair argues this might lead to a democracy without demos wherein political parties become state apparatus (Mair, 2005). This is why from the very beginning party democracy or party government model of representation is legitimised on the premise that political parties links society to the state, providing for both responsiveness and responsibility.

Accordingly, defining representative democracy as a democratic form of representation in which voter chooses agents (political parties) to represent their interests in a democratic regime and in return parties as representatives (whether to be in government or in opposition) provide for both responsiveness and responsibility, the contention here is that a crisis of representation occurs when

1. Certain segments of society feel unrepresented and lose their trust in agents (political parties) in representing their interests

2. They do not believe that their representatives are acting responsive and responsible at the same time.

Therefore, they negate the role of intermediates in policy-making processes and search for new ways of political participation such as mass demonstrations. The argument here is that this is actually what has happened in Spain.

2. A Brief Look into 15M Movement

In Spain particularly after 2008 global financial crisis, the population were largely affected by the housing bubble.[1] Suffering from a highly indebted banking sector, huge unemployment rate (rising up to 51.5% among youth), and high level of total deficit corresponding to 8.5% of the GDP (BBC, 2012) together with the failure of party system to respond the economic crisis effectively have created widespread popular disaffection in the country. In February 2011, university collectives were organised around a forum called "Youth without Future" (*Juventud Sin Futuro*) through social media outlets. On the other hand, in March 2011 an organization named "Real Democracy Now" (*Democracia Real Ya*) was founded by young people, who have proper jobs but also not sure about their future. Unsatisfied with the failure of democratic politics in including wider segments of population in decision-making processes, these two groups have organized a mass demonstration on the 15th of May 2011 against the ineffective two party system, the corruption in the banking sector, and incapable trade unions.

With the slogans "Real Democracy Now!" (¡*Democracia Real Ya!*), "They don't represent us!" (*¡Que No Nos Representan!*) and "We are not the puppets of politicians and bankers" (*No somos marionetas / mercancía en manos de políticos y banqueros),* the demonstrations received widespread popular support. The protests took place in several cities all around Spain and more than three million people joined demonstrations. Although the triggering factor behind the demonstrations seems to be the economic turbulence the country has been experiencing for the last couple of years and many analyses approach the question on the basis of the economic crisis, the underlying motive of protestors is also related to the long-lasting disaffection with the electoral politics. As such, according to the majority of the population, elections have failed to function as a mechanism for inclusive democratic representation which in turn has made people search for other ways of making their voices heard (Kselman, 2013). Therefore, as the slogans of these protests such as '*no nos representa'* ('you don't represent us'), '*la lucha esta en la calle*' ('the struggle is in the street') and '*democracia real ya'* ('real democracy now') point, the political roots of the protests needs to be contextualised.

3. Party System in Spain

With the end of the period of the Franco dictatorship in 1975, the process of democratic transition began in Spain which had been an elite-led process mostly shaped by negotiation and consensus rather than intense competition and conflict (see Chari and Heywood, 2008; McLaren, 2008). The wide agreement on the rules of the game among different groups in Spain and high levels of political consensus in the absence of anti-system parties made constitutional settlement a smooth process (Pridham, 1990).

[1] Housing bubble refers to massive growth of real estate prices observed. Between 1996 and 2007, the prices of property tripled and after the bubble was popped they experienced steady decline leaving millions of over-indebted home-owners.

The major political actors of the process of democratic consolidation from 1986 to 2000s have been the PSOE and the PP, and throughout this period party system in Spain is stabilised and consolidated as a moderate two-party system wherein the political competition is mostly centripetal. Here, the position of regionalist-nationalist parties also needs to be clarified. One of the greatest achievements of Spanish democracy has been its ability to contain regionalist-nationalist parties in the political system (Pallares and Keaten, 2003). Although total vote share of two major parties is around 75-80% in general elections, around 10 to 12% of total vote is received by several regionalist parties whose votes are concentrated in regional strongholds (Magone, 2009, p.149).

Smooth transition to democracy has facilitated consolidation process in Spain and party system which was previously defined by extremism and polarization has become a symbol of political moderation in the post-Franco period. According to Encarnacion (2008, p.51), three factors account for the transformation of Spanish party system from contention to moderation. First, past experiences of extreme polarization made party leaders from both left and right stay away from ideological rigidity. Secondly, the transformation of Spanish left from rigid Marxism into what is called Euro-communism or social democracy made it easier for socialist party to appeal wider segments of population. Finally, troubled by the civil war and its devastating consequences, from the very beginning of democratic transition Spanish electorate has demanded the moderation in politics as well as pragmatist politics and denied radicalization and radical changes.

Understanding the maladies of Spanish politics require a careful examination of the 2000s when the seeds of social and political unrest have been planted and the inability of two major parties in responding the demands of population became evident leading to mass public withdrawal from conventional political structures.

The 2000s began with the PP's electoral success who managed to gain absolute majority of seats in the parliament in the 2000 general elections. According to Colomer (2001, p.490), three major factors account for the PP's success: "the governing record of the PP, the disproportionality in representation produced by the electoral system, and strategic mistakes by the main opposition party, the PSOE". First, following an economic policy of liberalization, under the PP government, Spain enjoyed sustainable growth levels together with lower unemployment rates all of which facilitated the process of joining the euro in 1999 (see Powell, 2003). Accordingly, the macroeconomic success achieved under Aznar paid off with substantial electoral support for the PP. Moreover, despite its vigorous nationalist identity, the PP government also formed better relations with regionalist-nationalist parties and particularly the tense relations with ETA were appeased and ETA "maintained a cease-fire lasting fourteen months, the longest period without political killings in recent Spanish history" (Colomer, 2001, p.491). This in return demonstrated that the PP denied its Francoist past and adopted a moderate centre right position.

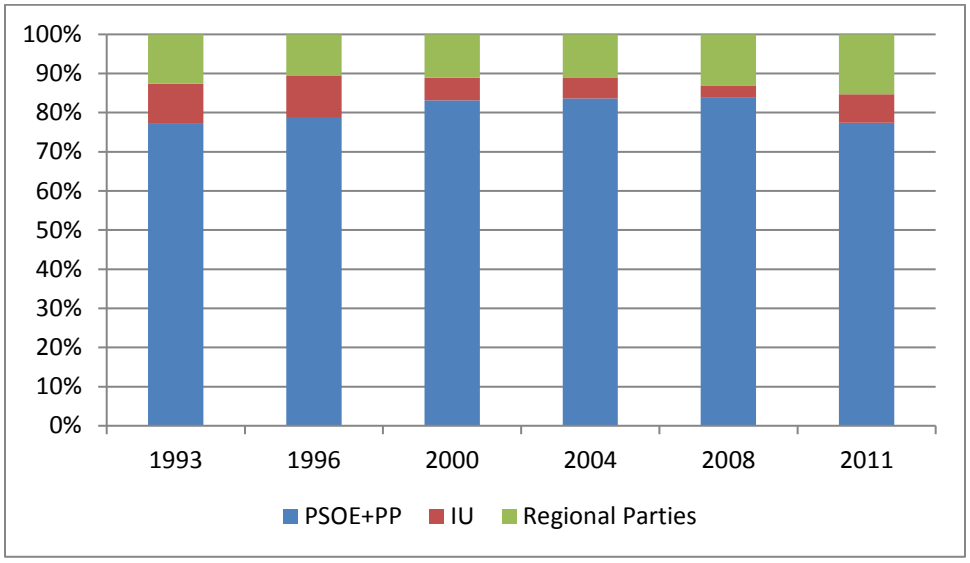
Conversely, two major issues challenged the position of the PSOE as a credible alternative in the 2000 elections. First, the party failed to select a widely supported and credible leader (2001, p.491). Although Joaquin Almunia failed to win primary elections, he became the PSOE's prime ministerial candidate due to corruption scandal that forced Jose Borrell, winner of primaries, to resign (2001, p.491). Secondly and much importantly, just before the elections the PSOE formed an electoral coalition with the IU that affected the PSOE's electoral fortunes adversely. Coalition with the IU was regarded as a shift in PSOE's ideological position from centre, centre-left towards radical left and this, in turn, alienated centrist voters who voted for the PSOE in the previous elections and these voters switched to the PP (Magone, 2009).

However, all these votes and even more returned to the PSOE in 2004 general elections. According to elections results the PSOE emerged victorious receiving 42.59% of the votes and the PP garnered 37.71% of total votes. Although many claims that the major factor behind the historic electoral defeat of the PP in 2004 was the Madrid bombings occurred on the 11 March just three days before the elections, Blakeley (2006) rightfully argues that the change of government was resulted from a myriad of political developments though the bombings acted as a catalyst. He relates the PP's electoral defeat to two factors: "a growing disdain for public opinion and an increase in manipulation" by the PP government (2006, p.332). While "by disdain for public opinion" Blakeley points to the PP government's disregard of popular opposition particularly to the Spanish involvement in Iraq War, manipulation refers to the ways in which the government manipulated information about certain events (such as the Iraq War and Madrid bombings) and instead preferred to follow a strategy of providing disinformation in order to delegitimize opposition by using state television channel (2006, p.332).

Here, the impact of Aznar's decision to join Iraq War next to American forces, in particular, played a significant role (see Rigo, 2005; Chari, 2004). While population at large (around 90%) was against military intervention in Iraq and sending of Spanish troops to Iraq (Blakeley, 2006), Aznar insisted on Atlanticist foreign policy and sided with the US, leaving aside traditional European Union foreign policy stance of Spain (Woodworth, 2004). Essentially, this was one of the major points upon which the PSOE built its electoral campaign. With a new programme named 'Spain in the world', "a key pledge of the PSOE, which was popular amongst voters, was to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq" (Blakeley, 2006, p.338). Needless to say, the role of Madrid bombings should not be underestimated which reinforced and intensified already existent uneasiness with Spanish intervention in Iraq and therefore had enormous impact on the election results (Colomer, 2005, p.152). Moreover, the PP government's way of dealing with bombings, which insisted that the ETA was behind the disaster without any evidence that points to that direction, also created further outrage and decreased credibility of the PP government in the eyes of people (Blakeley,

2006). The outcome was a clear electoral victory for the PSOE led by a new leader, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero.

Table 1: Concentration of Vote Share in the Spanish Party System



The first striking move of the PSOE government was to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq rapidly which cost a clear electoral defeat to Aznar. In his first term, Zapatero initiated an ambitious progressive reform programme (Field and Botti, 2013). First, the government introduced a gender equality act, same-sex marriages are legalized (Encarnacion, 2009), autonomy of political regions has been expanded (Field and Botti, 2013), historical memory of Republican side during the Civil War was acknowledged (Martín and Urquizu-Sancho, 2012), and various social policies were introduced (Field, 2009). All these developments received substantive support from population at large. Several commentators have argued that Spain has experienced a 'second transition' under Zapatero (see Encarnacion, 2009; see Field, 2009 for opposite view). But with regards to the economy, though Zapatero government was aware of the problems with Spanish economy which was mainly based on consumption and construction, the Socialist government was reluctant to act on these problems and rather "preferred to prolong the period of economic expansion" (Field and Botti, 2013, p.2). Accordingly, economic success together with better social policies increased government's approval rates.

Within this positive environment, the PSOE enjoyed another election victory in 2008 and managed to form a minority government once again. The results of 2008 elections were particularly important in the sense that both the PSOE and the PP increased their vote share, and therefore highest vote concentration was achieved since transition to democracy (2013, p.3; see also Torcal and Lago, 2008). This suggests that two-party system in Spain was further entrenched by the 2008 elections and two centrist parties have dominated Spanish political landscape which demonstrates the extent to which Spanish politics is cartelized. In its second term, the PSOE government faced with the worst economic crisis of last 80 years

which adversely affected international economy as a whole. Spanish economy was one of those economies that have been challenged most because of the country's structural economic weaknesses, such as low productivity and competitiveness, and also because of the economic model followed for the last decades mainly based on construction and consumption (see Royo, 2009; Molina and Godino, 2013). All in all, Spanish economy has almost collapsed leading to high levels of unemployment and economic recession. Most strikingly, youth unemployment rate in Spain has increased enormously since 2008 reaching up to 56.40% in 2013 (Ottaviani, 2014).

Though the PSOE was in power during the economic crisis and Zapatero has been criticized for his failure to respond the crisis on time and for underestimating its impact, Field and Botti suggest that Spain's economic model was not the invention of the PSOE only but both the PP and the PSOE were behind this policy and therefore have equal responsibility (Field and Botti, 2013, p.5). This was also the general sentiment among population that started to perceive two major parties as incompetent and incapable of representing public's interests. The best behavioural demonstration of disaffection with politics was the emergence of the 15M movement in March 2011, four months before the general elections. Normally elections were planned to occur in March 2012 but Zapatero decided to call for an early elections in July 2011 not only because economic problems forced government to take an action, but also because the decreasing popularity of Zapatero extremely harmed the PSOE therefore the best move for the party was to enter the elections as soon as possible with a new and more popular party leader, Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba – the Interior Minister of the PSOE government (Chari, 2013).

Table 2: 2011 Election Results

	Votes			**Seats**	
Party	Number of Votes	%	± %	Won	+/-
PP	10.866.566	44,6	+4.69	186	+32
PSOE	7.003.511	28,8	-15.11	110	-69
IU-LV	1.686.040	6,92	+3.15	11	+9
UpyD	1.143.225	4,7	+3.51	5	+4
Amaiur	334.498	1,37	New	7	+7
Compromís-Q	125.306	0,51	+0.39	1	+1

Needless to say, the key issue that dominated 2011 elections was the severe economic crisis the country has been experiencing. Although after two elections losses in 2004 and 2008 the PP under Mariona Rajoy was the favourite, starting from 2011 high levels of distrust and disaffection with both parties were apparent among general public. However, leading the country for the last 7 years the PSOE was the major actor at the forefront of criticisms and electorate lost their confidence to the party. The PP, on the other

hand, was seen as a relatively credible alternative having side-lined from governing in the previous period. Nevertheless, it has to be underlined that though Rajoy built his electoral campaign on the promise of solving the problem of economic crisis, he was also unable to state how the PP would manage to do this and preferred not to respond important issues such as "how the PP was going to attain its promised levels of public spending without raising taxes" (2013, p.378). The PSOE, conversely, focused on defending government's take on the crisis and accused the PP for having a secret agenda aimed at cutting social spending (2013, p.379).

In the elections the PP received 44.6% of votes while the PSOE's vote share decreased down to 28.7%, the worst result the party has experienced since transition to democracy. Although looking at results one might suggest that electorate continued to rely on mainstream parties in the sense that the PP, one of two major parties, managed to win majority, the very fact that smaller parties such as the IU, Union Progress and Democracy (*Union Progreso y Democracia*, UPyD), Amaiur, and Commitment Coalition (Coalicio Compromis, COMPROMIS-Q) also received unexpected support indicates that electorate started to search for other alternatives. Accordingly, the decrease in vote concentration also manifests dissatisfaction with two-party system. While the rise of the IU is not so unexpected keeping in mind that the party has always increased its vote share whenever the PSOE's vote percentage decreases, the UPyD's success, a progressive party which denied to place itself on either left or right, particularly points to electorate's cry for different actors. Moreover, the turnout level was 71.7% which also suggests that an important portion of voters preferred to stay away from the ballot box.

Accordingly, several scholars suggested that the PP did not win the elections but the PSOE lost in that the PP managed to get around 500.000 more votes than previous elections while the PSOE lost half of its votes corresponding to approximately 4.300.000 votes (Martin and Urquizu Sancho, 2012). In other words, while one of the major parties is rejected, the other one could not receive all of the gains (Chari, 2013, p.378) and this signifies that two-party system is not able to respond the demands of population anymore. Even the PP's success should be analysed by keeping in mind the electoral rules and regulations in Spain which favour larger parties and were designed to prevent fragmentation with closed D'Hondt, low district magnitude and 3% electoral threshold and thereby limit the role of new actors in political landscape.

Towards the end of 2000s, in Spain both subjective and behavioural components of citizen disaffection from politics has become apparent, on the one hand, large number of citizens were unhappy with the existing political parties and they lost their belief that representatives are acting on behalf of their constituents (Mainwaring et al., 2006, p.33), and on the other, they started to withdraw from participation, voted for new parties (for instance UPyD or Podemos in European elections), and organised popular mobilisation.

4. Crisis of Representation: No Los Representan

4.1. Identifying the Gap in Spanish Politics: All Parties Alike

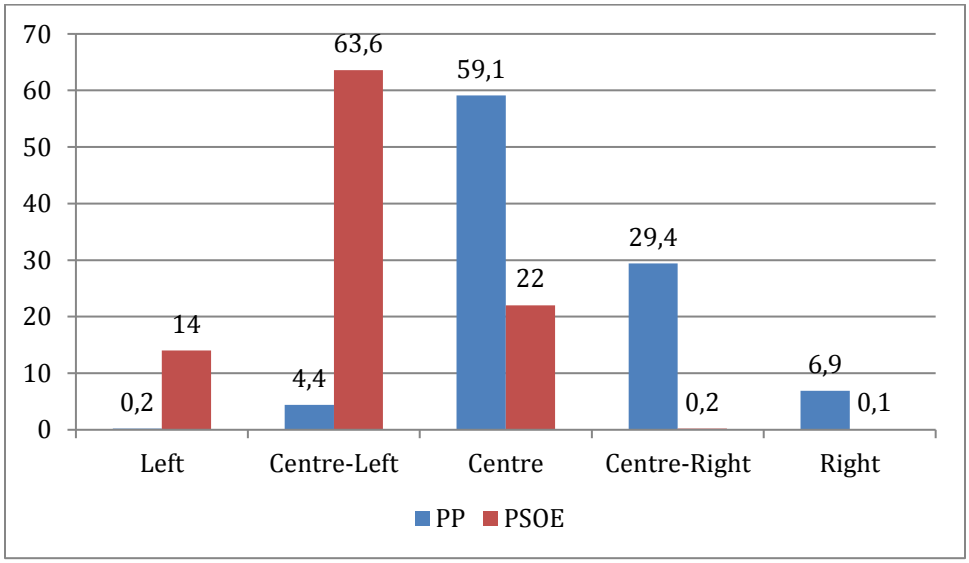
From the early years of democratic transition onwards, Spanish politics is largely shaped by politics of consensus wherein the centripetal competition has been a defining feature of party system. Gunther et.al. (1988, p.390) argue that six factors characterise the Spanish party system:

> (1) the interaction of voters' attitudinal predispositions with their perceptions of each parties' ideological stance; (2) voters feelings towards party leaders; (3) the effects of electoral laws; (4) the effects of each party's infrastructural organization; (5) the nature of the post-Franco transition to democracy; and (6) the advantages of incumbency and the politics of consensus.

Particularly, voters' attitudinal predispositions, the effects of electoral laws and the nature of the post-Franco transition to democracy seem be the major factors behind high levels of centrism in Spanish politics. Keeping in mind that the electoral laws are designed during transition, we can analyse three factors under two major headings: institutional design and public demands. On the one hand, during the transition to democracy, with horrors of the Civil War in mind elites aimed to create a system based on compromise and consensus. Conversely, the Spanish public has always yearned for consensual politics, supported centre politics and denied any form of radicalism.

Several scholars of democratization also argue that institutional design constitutes the most appropriate tool for managing existing social divisions (see Bastian and Luckham, 2003; Lijphart and Waisman, 1996; Power and Gasiorowski, 1997). As discussed previously, in the case of Spain elites played the key role in the democratic transition and they were determined to consolidate the power of executive in order to prevent any possibility of fractionalisation (Blakeley, 2006, p.331). Therefore, in the process of transition designers of the electoral system sought to prevent fraction and contention in society by limiting proportionality of the system. As d'Hondt system becomes less proportional the smaller the constituency, they managed to decrease proportionality of the system through creating smaller electoral constituencies based on fifty provinces of Spain plus North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla (Magone, 2009: 134). Accordingly, although the electoral system of the new Spanish democracy is based on proportional representation, thanks to low district magnitude, closed list d'Hondt, high levels of over-representation of rural provinces and 3% threshold for each magnitude, it is "one of less proportional electoral systems in Europe" (Chari, 2013, p.378). Needless to say, while this electoral system favours larger parties such as the PSOE and the PP as well as regionalist-nationalist ones, it adversely affects smaller nation-wide parties like the IU (Magone, 2009). In other words, the institutional system itself has reinforced less fragmented system and therefore played a key role in the creation of two-party system.

Table 3: Distribution of the PP and the PSOE Voters on a Left-Right Scale in 2000



Source: J.M. Magone (2009) *Contemporary Spanish Politics*

However, this institutional explanation needs to be supported with sociological approach mainly because movement toward the centre among the PSOE and the PP cannot only be understood by looking at the institutional structure. Experiencing one of the worst civil wars of the European continent, Spanish public has always been apprehensive of any kind of extremism and this embraced consensual politics. That is why high levels of centre tendency among the population have also pushed parties towards centrism. Accordingly, when we look at the data on the distribution of the PP voters together with the data on the distribution of the PSOE voters, what we see is that in 2000 almost 90% of the PP voters are centre-centre right and more than 85% of the PSOE voters belong to centre-centre left of the political spectrum. This data can also be supported by the European Social Survey data according to which average ideological position among Spanish public is 4.55 (on a scale from 1 to 10) in 2008 (ESS 2008). Furthermore, as Figure 1 demonstrates, according to Latinobarometer from 1996 to 2010 on average more than 40% of Spanish electorate can be defined as centre voters. All these data demonstrate that the demand for centrism was quite strong among Spanish public and this fact has also played a key role in the emergence of centripetal political competition in the country.

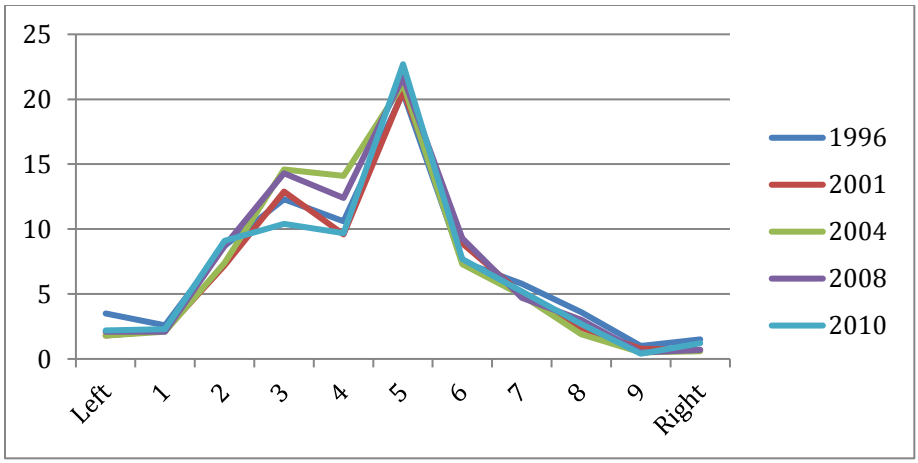


Figure 1: Placement of Voters on Spain's Left-Right Spectrum

Source: Latinobarometro 1996-2010

Here it is also important to refer the limited impact of social cleavages on voting behaviour in Spain (see Barnes et al., 1985; Gunther et al., 1988). Although Chibber and Torcal (1997) argued that this has changed and the PSOE managed to turn social class into a salient political division towards the end of 1980s, when we analyse the general trend in Spanish politics throughout 1990s and 2000s what we see is that social cleavages do not have significant impact on party politics and both the PP and the PSOE managed to attract voters across social divisions (Magone, 2009, p.47-48). Accordingly, within this period of time, centre turned into a position where most voters stand and both parties compete for (2009, p.181).

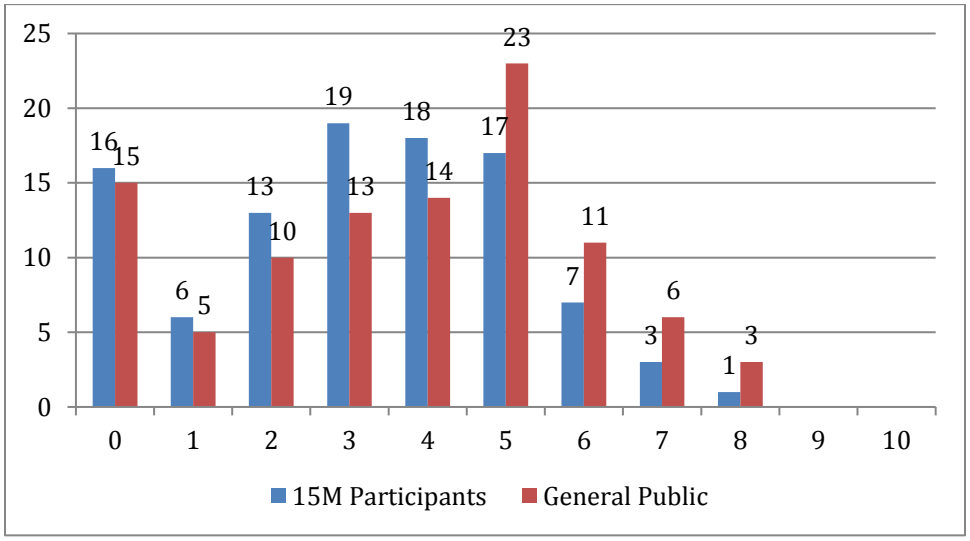
As such, both institutional and sociological factors account for the PSOE's and the PP's race to the centre wherein it becomes more and more difficult to differentiate main contenders from one another. However, this type of politics which is named as "adulterated party system" by Hopkin (2005, p.13) leads to two major problems. On the one hand, since they consider all parties alike voters systematically drift apart from political parties and political processes (Torcal et al., 2002). On the other hand, as this trend has further entrenched due to cognitive mobilisation, parties become less capable of responding diverse demands and expectations of population.

According to Dalton (1984) cognitive mobilisation involves two developments: first, the abilities of individual citizens in processing political information increases thanks to higher levels of education and political sophistication, and second the cost of political information decreases. Both developments create individualised society whose demands and expectations are much complex than before and therefore it becomes extremely difficult for parties to respond population. Magone (2009) argues that Spain actually constitutes a perfect example wherein high levels of cognitive mobilisation led to growing individualisation of society as well as growing dissatisfaction from politics, and therefore one stagnant point on conventional left-right ideological spectrum is not capable of responding this diversified electorate. The words of one of

the 15M activists, interviewed by the Centre for Sociological Investigations (*Centro de Investigaciones Sociologicas*, CIS) in Spain, affirm the situation:

> *Well I think that politicians should be trustworthy... and I wish that any party would be brave enough to analyse what we are asking for and that they would realize that many of the things we are asking are feasible... political parties nowadays have a new public to nurture and besides it is very clear to them what they want.* (Male 25-35 years, 15M activist, Madrid) (CIS, 2011)

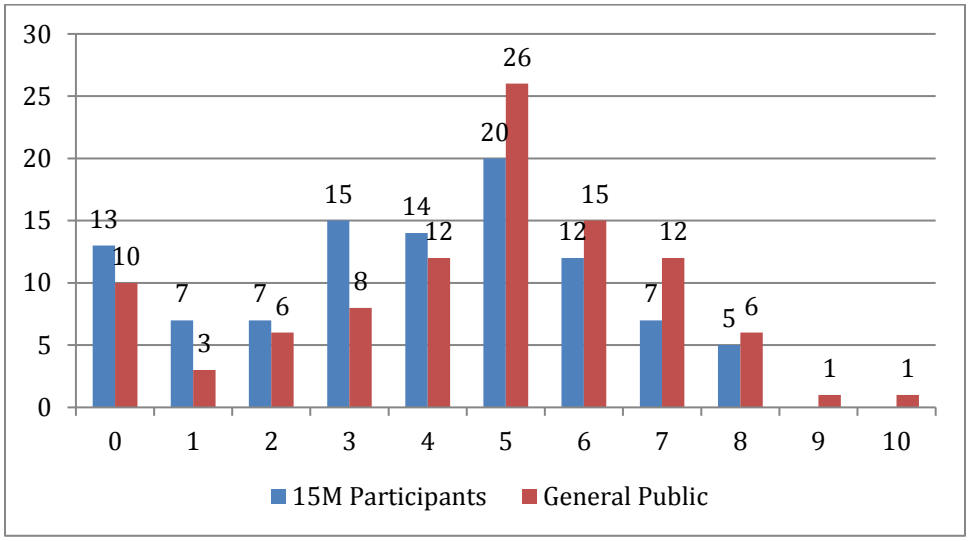
Table 4: Confidence in political parties (15M Participants and General Public)



Source: CIS 2012, cited in J.M. Sarciat Marcia (2013) *15M, Made in Spain: El 15M: un movimiento social de vocacion politica*, Universidad Internacionale de Rioja.

Looking at the most widely used placards in the 15M protests, discomfort with convergence of parties becomes explicit: "PPSOE= PP + PSOE", "None, neither PP nor PSOE" "[*Nini (Ni PP, ni PSOE)*]" and "Neither A nor B we want to change the platform" "[*Ni cara A, ni cara B, queremos cambiar de disco*]". These slogans clearly manifest dissatisfaction with two-party system. Moreover, comparing the data on trust in party among 15M participants with population averages also shows that 15M protestors have greater disdain from existent political contenders: 72% of protestors gave less than 5 to political parties (Table 4). Likewise, confidence in Spanish parliament is also much lower among 15M participants (Table 5).

Table 5: Confidence in Spanish parliament (15M Participants and General Public)



Source: CIS 2012, cited in J.M. Sarciat Marcia (2013) *15M, Made in Spain: El 15M: un movimiento social de vocacion politica*, Universidad Internacionale de Rioja.

Interviews with protestors conducted by CIS also point to similar direction:

> *Politicians... well I don't know because I have no idea, but from what I see, I don't know what they do because I don't see it. They fight against each other. I know they are fighting against each other but afterwards they are good friends and they go together for a drink in one's or the other's place. I don't know what they do but this is the situation* (he is referring to the budget cuts in health and education services) (Male 45-55 years, supporter of 15M, Barcelona) (CIS 2011)

Needless to say, he is not happy with the fact that although in front of public several discussions between the PP and the PSOE occur on certain policy issues such as budget cuts in health and in education services, these discussions do not seem to be real. Actually, he tries to point to cartelisation of political parties in Spain which is characterised by "the interpenetration of political parties and state and also by a pattern of interparty collusion" (Katz and Mair, 1995, p.17). Katz and Mair (1995) argue that particularly in party systems wherein a tradition of inter-party competition goes hand in hand with state support for political parties, the emergence of cartel parties is more likely.

This is also the case in Spain where party competition, since transition, has been characterised by high levels of inter-party cooperation and accommodation and also where state subvention has been the major source of party funding (van Biezen, 2003). In these party systems party programmes becomes dissimilar so voters are forced to elect from a list of similar political factions; and as parties turn into partnership of professionals, politicians start to see "their political opponents as fellow professionals" (Katz and Mair, 1995, p.23). The problem with the cartelisation of politics is that in cartel model "democracy

ceases to be seen as a process by which limitations or controls are imposed on the state by civil society, becoming instead a service provided by the state for civil society" (1995, p.22). Since the act of representation and the role of political parties as representatives is legitimized only when political parties link state to civil society, the extent of crisis of representation under these circumstances becomes palpable.

4.2. Responsible but not Responsive

As a member of the European Union, Spanish politics has become less and less capable of responding electorate though certain level of consistence in policy making exists. Constrained by the demands of globalisation and Europeanisation the Spanish political parties have lost their control over public policy-making which is largely designed and forced by global actors and in that sense the policy differences between political parties particularly with regards to economy have disappeared.

Essentially, as the process of European integration has accelerated and deepened the policy-making processes have started to operate within the framework of 'multi-level governance' (see Hooghe and Marks, 2001) which means that now in the EU policy-making is determined through cooperation between distinct governmental levels (local, subnational/regional, national, European, transnational) (Papadopoulos, 2007). However, within this complex network of public-policy making, the national governments' capability to shape policies has declined extremely which in turn had detrimental effects on democratic accountability and responsiveness. Accordingly, the question of who is to blame or reward for policy-outcomes is not easy to answer anymore as parties or party governments are not the only actors of decision-making procedures even though they are the only ones who are authorised by people as such (Papadopoulos, 2010).

Therefore, although multi-level governance through policy networks can enhance inclusiveness and pluralism, it certainly creates an accountability gap and according to Papadopoulos leads to a divorce between "the sphere of '*politique des problemes*' (dominated by problem-solving governance arrangements) and the sphere of '*politique d'opinion*' (the arena of party competition)" (2010, p.1034). This is wherein the root causes of problem lies: the party government model requires that parties to be the only actors behind public-policy making and political parties' representativeness is legitimised only when they provide for responsiveness and responsibility at the same time.

Under these circumstances, though parties might be considered responsible, if responsibility is defined as acting in prudence and consistency over time, they certainly cannot be responsive to national public demands as various other (local, regional, international transnational as well as public and private) actors involve in policy-making processes and their control over decision-making is limited. Needless to say, this leads to a "loosening grip of representative democracy on acts of governing" (Bekkers et al., 2007, p.308) and thereby citizens/principals withdraw from conventional political practice as parties/agents are not representing them anymore; thus the contract of representation between citizens and political parties

which constitutes the basis of representative democracy is dissolved, thereby creating a crisis of representation.

Likewise, in Spain since the country integrated in the EU more and more, governments' ability to shape public policy has decreased. Although with regards to social and cultural policies, member states' capabilities are not exhausted having certain degree of control over them; economic policies are largely shaped and imposed by the EU particularly in times of crisis.

When the economic crisis erupted, the Zapatero government was slow to respond but in time the government began to take action and initially came up with Keynesian policies, trying to adapt moderate counter-cyclical fiscal stimulus measures (Field and Botti, 2013, p.5). However, in 2010 the crisis was deepened with detrimental effects on European and international markets as a whole and the fears of default led to the euro sovereign debt crisis (see Alessi and McBride, 2015). This development in turn forced European institutions to take action and impose certain policies to countries with problematic fiscal positions (Field and Botti, 2013). Accordingly, in May 2010, in the Eurogroup and Ecofin meetings, as one of the most affected member states Spanish government was forced to implement strict austerity-based adjustment measures such as "a 5 % reduction of the salaries of civil servants and a freeze on wage increases in the forthcoming years; non-application of the cost-of-living indexation of pensions; the ending of the cheque bebe (an allowance of 2500 euros to families with newborn children), and a significant reduction of public works and investment" (Molino and Godina, 2013, p. 112). These changes have created high levels of resentment among population, particularly among the disadvantaged ones and young people who now have to struggle with enormous levels of unemployment.

In short, in an era of neoliberalism as a member of the EU, Spain was under extreme pressure from the European institutions and international markets to adopt austerity measures based on social spending cuts and the decrease of public employees' salaries (Field and Botti, 2013, p. 6). Needless to say, the very fact that the EU and international organisations were behind these reforms has demonstrated the incapability of national governments in shaping public policy and intensified the view that executives are not accounted to people but to some kind of international or supranational interests. Although the Spanish population at large have always been supportive of the European integration, they were irritated by the fact that national executive is overseen and monitored by supranational institutions (Molina and Godino, 2013, p. 113-114). Particularly the idea that Spanish economic policy is run by Germany and France who have been the leading powers of the Union, or the so-called *Mercozy*,[2] was unacceptable to Spanish public (Field and Botti, 2013, p. 9). This, in turn, has deepened already existent disaffection with party politics and led to the questioning of Spanish government's democratic legitimacy.

[2] The term Merkozy refers to the duo of Angela Merkel, chancellor of Germany, and Nicholas Sarkozy, the president of France until 2012.

The 15M Movement emerged under these circumstances and protestors were also reacting to the limited responsiveness of government to public demands as they observed that Zapatero government accepted all policy changes designed by unaccountable technocrats of the EU at the expense of people. Several scholars also argue that the emergence of the Indignados or 15M movement was a response to this context. In other words, the economic crisis has revealed incompetence of the governments and signified that party democracy is not working anymore since constrained by broader commitments parties fail to act responsive to public demands, leading to a crisis of representation.

Conclusion

This paper mainly examines the questions as to what explains the emergence of the 15M movement in Spain. The lasting two-party system that dominated politics from democratic transition onwards has started to lose its appeal as two major parties, the PSOE and the PP, have become alike. The convergence of two parties in the political spectrum, once again, has left certain segments of society unrepresented mainly because these parties have failed to come up with alternative policy proposal for meeting the demands of diversified electorate. On the other hand, forces of Europeanisation and globalisation have limited parties' ability to control policy-making, particularly in economic policy, and this in turn has further alienated voters as parties have neglected responsiveness. As such, a crisis of representation resulted from party failures is the major factor behind the 15M movement if not the only one.

After the popular protests, a brand new political party, the Podemos, was established. The Podemos reflects the 15M movement in terms of its ideology, organisation, leadership style and decision-making procedures. As such, this popular mobilisation has introduced a new actor into the Spanish political system that has already started to change the way politics is conducted in accordance with the expectations of the movement with major impact on Spanish politics.

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