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# **EU MEMBERSHIP AND THE EUROPEANIZATION OF SPANISH POLITICAL PARTIES**

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# EU MEMBERSHIP AND THE EUROPEANIZATION OF SPANISH POLITICAL PARTIES<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

This article explores the extent to which Spanish political parties have been affected by the pro-European views of a wide majority of the Spanish electorate and by EU membership. It suggests that Spain's two main political parties, the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and the Partido Popular (PP), have become Europeanized as a result of both phenomena. Hence, socialists and conservatives have adapted their political discourse to reflect and satisfy the pro-European stance of most Spaniards and the demands related to EU membership. To prove the Europeanization of these parties, I analyze the electoral manifestos that PSOE and PP have used to communicate their political agenda to the Spanish electorate in national elections dating back to the restoration of democracy.

## 1. Introduction

The year 2011 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Spanish membership of the European Union (EU).<sup>2</sup> During this time, Spain became a fully fledged democracy, also becoming one of the ten largest economies in the world by size of GDP, and with one of the most comprehensive social and civil rights legislation in the EU. In short, Spain has become a modern country, no longer being an “exception” in Europe due to its authoritarian governments and outdated economy.

Membership of the EU has been one of the key drivers behind Spain's modernization. Economically, Spain has benefitted greatly from Brussels' regional, structural and development funds. In fact, Spain has been hailed as one of the member states to have made better use of these funds. Socially, membership of the EU has prompted successive Spanish governments to rapidly increase the scope and protection of social and civil rights. Spanish

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their comments on a previous version of this article.

<sup>2</sup> For the sake of simplicity, throughout this article EU will refer to the European Economic Community and the European Union indistinctively.

civil society, while still weaker than its Northern European counterparts, has been empowered. To sum up, Spain has Europeanized, with the term Europeanization being understood here as ‘domestic change caused by European integration’ (Vink 2003: 63). This is not surprising when considering that for decades Spanish elites and civil society equated modernization with achieving the economic, social and political standards of Western Europe.

This article argues that Spanish political parties have become similarly Europeanized as a result of the pro-European stance of the Spanish electorate and the demands coming from EU membership. The effects of EU membership on political parties have been relatively underexplored compared to other issue-areas such as foreign policy, economic policy or decision-making processes. However, a recent edited volume has come a long way in helping to address this shortcoming by providing a cross-national comparative analysis of the adjustment of national political parties to the challenges of multi-level governance in the EU (Poguntke et al. 2007).

In this article, however, I explore the Europeanization of Spanish political parties by focusing on the area of policy/programmatic content. This refers to modifications of party programmes and policies reflecting the role of the EU in domestic politics (Ladrech 2002). An indicator of the Europeanization of policy/programmatic content is the quantitative and qualitative measure of the impact of the EU on party programmes. Increased mention of the EU with regards to European and domestic policy, together with references to the EU as a factor when implementing policies following in the realm of domestic politics would point towards Europeanization of a political party (Ladrech 2002). In this article I will use this indicator to demonstrate the Europeanization of political parties by conducting content analysis of party electoral manifestos.

In my analysis I will only look at the parties that have led government since Spain joined the EU in 1986. Only the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and the Partido Popular (PP) have obtained a majority of the vote and have therefore been able to form government since then. Thus, in this article I will concentrate on these two parties to prove the Europeanization of Spanish political parties. To do so I will analyse the content of their manifestos in national elections dating back to 1977, the year in which Spain conducted its first democratic elections post-Francoism. The reason for focusing on the PSOE and the PP is that it is assumed that they have been better at representing the position of the Spanish electorate since Spain joined

the EU, given that they have alternated between being the most voted and second most voted party in all national elections dating back to 1982.

The rest of the article will be divided as follows. In the next section I will briefly review previous work on the Europeanization of political parties in EU member states. Afterwards I will look at the cases of the PSOE and the PP. I will then delve on the reasons explaining the Europeanization of Spanish political parties. A concluding section will summarize the main argument of this article.

## **2. The Europeanization of political parties**

The Europeanization of national political parties has been explored looking at different aspects. However, most if not all of them can be included within Ladrech's five-fold categorization: (1) policy/programmatic content; (2) organization; (3) patterns of party competition; (4) party-government relations; and (5) relations beyond the national party system (Ladrech 2002). Arguably, the first one is qualitatively different from the other four insofar it refers to the ideology of the party, to the beliefs and principles underpinning its identity and related worldview. The second to fifth categories are more mechanic in nature, focusing on institutional variables related to the inner workings of a party or political system.

When studying the Europeanization of political parties, the first element to account for is the indirect nature of the EU's impact on political parties. The EU does not provide resources that could help parties at the national level, nor does it legally require parties to interact with EU institutions or operate at the EU level. Hence, Europeanization does not provide any discernible benefits to national political parties seeking to maximize their share of the vote (Ladrech 2009). Thus, an increasing body of academic literature has focused on the four areas that I have referred to as more mechanic in nature, debating whether European political parties are becoming more Europeanized or not.<sup>3</sup>

Hix, for example, has studied the Europeanization of political parties beyond the national party system. He argues that voting patterns in the European Parliament is correlated to party

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<sup>3</sup> For an overview of this literature, see Ladrech, Robert. 2009. "Europeanization and Political Parties." *Living Reviews in European Governance* 4(1).

affiliation rather than nationality(Hix 2001). Scully (2005), however, disagrees, noting that there is no evidence to suggest that political parties might become more (or less) Europeanized as a result of their members being elected in the European Parliament. Nevertheless, this article, as already mentioned, explores the first dimension: policy/programmatic content.

A useful way to study the impact of the EU on the ideology of national political parties is provided by their acquiescence to the European integration project. In a wide-ranging study of the position of political parties towards European integration, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008) divided them according to their Euroscepticism. Szczerbiak and Taggart distinguished between hard and soft Euroscepticism. The former refers to resistance to the EU project per se, and the desire to overhaul it. The latter is related to disagreement with the way European integration is advancing, due to EU policies running counter to a party's ideology or a perceived dichotomy between the EU project and the national interest (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2008).

Hard or soft Euroscepticism makes more difficult for a party to become Europeanized in the area of policy/programmatic content at the level of policy positions. A party opposing the European project as a whole or one or more of its key policies cannot be considered Europeanized. The policies and programmes of said party will reflect its rejection of the EU as a concept or empirical project. Certainly, this does not preclude the possibility of eventually moving beyond Euroscepticism. But absent such a move, Euroscepticism should normally preclude policy/programmatic Europeanization.

Authors analysing the policy/programmatic dimension of national political parties have generally concentrated on party manifestos. Kritzinger, Cavatorta and Chari analysed the position towards Europe in five Italian parties by examining their national and European party manifestos from 1979 to 1999. They found out that European issues had become more prominent overtime, but they added an important caveat: European issues were central to party manifestos during European elections, but were hardly considered in national elections. The authors also found out that Europeanization at the level of salience of EU issues had not taken place. Rather, it had taken place at the level of policy positions, which had become more European insofar they were justified or followed in terms of belonging to the European space. (Kritzinger et al. 2004)

In a similar study of the party manifestos of parties in Austria, Finland and Sweden following the accession of these countries to the EU in 1995, Kritzinger and Michalowitz found out that Europeanization had taken place at the level of salience of EU issues and at the level of policy position change. Only in the case of Finland was Europeanization at the latter level missing (Kritzinger and Michalowitz 2005). However, their study only covers European election manifestos. Therefore, it is not possible to discern from this study whether the European issue is salient in the national elections of these three countries as well. Nonetheless, we can see that there is a significant difference between countries. Europeanization has taken place at both levels in the case of Austrian and Swedish parties, but only at the level of policy positions in the case of Italy and at the level of salience of EU issues in Finland.

Utilizing data from the Comparative Manifesto Project, Dorussen and Nanou (2006) and Pennings (2006) compared the Europeanization of political manifestos of dozens of political parties in several European countries over the past few decades. In the case of Dorussen and Nanou, they analyzed 226 national elections held between 1951 and 2001 in the fifteen countries which were members of the EU before the 2004 enlargement. They included elections taking place before these countries joined the EU, as well as elections in Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, three countries yet to join the EU. They found out that European integration had produced systematic convergence of policies among, respectively, Euro-friendly and Eurosceptic parties (Dorussen and Nanou 2006).

As for Pennings, his analysis encompassed political manifestos of parties in fifteen countries – all EU members before the 2004 enlargement except for Greece and Luxembourg, plus Norway and Switzerland. Pennings concurred with Dorussen and Nanou that European integration affected the policies of political parties. Eurosceptic parties de-emphasized European integration, instead favouring mentions to nation or region. But manifestos from all political parties, Euro-friendly and Eurosceptic alike, were affected by European integration (Pennings 2006).

The findings of these articles provide qualified support to the idea that EU integration correlates to Europeanization of political parties' programmes and policies. Certainly, all authors agree that Europeanization takes place. However, there are differences in terms of the degree and level of Europeanization. Political parties seem to show a smaller degree of Europeanization in national elections compared to European elections. Also, Europeanization

at the level of salience of EU issues differs from Europeanization at the level of policy positions. These are different depending on the country studied.

Therefore, in the next section I am going to explore whether Europeanization of the PSOE and PP in national elections has taken place. Europeanization in the case of European elections is assumed to have occurred, hence the focus on national elections. If Europeanization in the latter has indeed taken place, we would be able to talk about a larger degree of Europeanization of Spanish political parties compared with their European counterparts. In addition, I will analyze salience and policy positions. If Europeanization has occurred at both levels, then we can ascertain that Europeanization of Spanish political parties has been deeper than in other countries.

### **3. The Europeanization of Spanish political parties**

#### **3.1. Methodology and research design**

As aforementioned, I am going to use electoral manifestos to analyze the Europeanization of the PSOE and the PP. The use of electoral manifestos to study the degree of political party Europeanization has the advantage of allowing researchers to avoid having to rely on “vague policy declarations and preconceived ideological positions” (Kritzinger et al. 2004: 959). Electoral manifestos represent the public position of political parties regarding principles to guide their actions and policies to be implemented should they be elected. Certainly, any astute observer will pinpoint that political parties rarely respect all or even a majority of the pledges made in their electoral manifestos when in government. However, it is also true that electoral manifestos at least provide a good account of what political parties think and how they would like to act, even if the realities of power make them behave differently. As such, electoral manifestos can be used to ascertain the preferred ideas and policies of political parties, including their position on Europeanization.

There are two main methods to study party manifestos. The first one is quantitative in nature, analyzing text as data in the form of words. A computer programme quantifies the prevalence of party positions on a range of policy dimensions, producing a dataset which allows the analyst to identify the salience of particular issues and even to infer policy positions. Texts are not considered discourses to be analysed. Instead, they are interpreted as collections of word

data. This simplifies data analysis, since publicly available computer software can be used to produce a word dataset in a matter of seconds. This dataset serves the researcher to quickly determine whether there has been a change in position or whether a perceived change is the result of measurement errors. Word frequencies rather than the researcher's analysis of manifesto content is what determines the prevalence of a policy (Laver et al. 2003).

The second method can be labelled "hand-coding" of texts. This approach uses labour-intensive techniques of content analysis in which one or more human coders code party manifestos. Computer-coding could be considered an extension of this approach, since it mostly is a means to shrink the time demands derived from hand-coding through the association of texts to coding dictionaries (Laver et al. 2003). These dictionaries link specific words or phrases to policy positions. Hence, even though data gathering is computerized, there is still a central human element insofar the researcher has to develop coding dictionaries. Hand-coding and computer-coding can therefore be grouped together as a single technique characterized by the researcher's own interpretation of the prevalence and importance of a policy.

Mikhaylov, Laver and Benoit (2012) draw our attention to a problem that coders face when coding party manifestos. Namely, even highly trained coders may misclassify certain statements, placing them in categories with which other coders might disagree. To avoid such a problem, they suggest the use of simplified coding schemes that can facilitate reliable classification. Building on this advice, my coding of the party manifestos studied has been relatively simple.

Thus, in this article I have used computer-coding of PSOE and PP national election manifestos dating back to the first post-Francoism elections of 1977. One of the two main objectives of this article is to analyse the extent to which Spanish political parties have been Europeanized by measuring the salience of EU issues. Quantifying the prevalence of references to the EU in party manifestos is an excellent proxy for salience. However, simply quantifying the total number of references to the EU is insufficient to aptly analyse salience, given that the size of party manifestos varies across elections and between parties. Hence, to better establish the degree of Europeanization of the PSOE and the PP in terms of salience of EU issues I divide the total number of references to the EU between the total number of pages of each manifesto. This way it is possible to see the prevalence of references to the EU per

page, a more accurate proxy for salience of the EU in the party manifestos of Spanish political parties.

Computer-coding of party manifestos to analyse salience has been supplemented by hand-coding of selected manifestos to analyze policy positions. Salience of the EU is insufficient to fully understand the Europeanization of political parties, since it may well be the case that a Eurosceptic party bases its manifesto on attacking the European project and/or specific EU policies. This party may be more Europeanized than less Eurosceptic parties in terms of salience, but it does not mean that it is Europeanized in terms of accommodating its policies to EU demands or preferences.

Qualitative analysis of selected manifestos is a useful method to examine the Europeanization of policy positions of PSOE and PP across elections. Using a modified version of the method employed by Kritzinger and Michalowitz (2005), I look at the percentage of sentences with positive connotations towards the EU. This serves to show the position of a party with regards to the EU. Since I am focusing on changes in policy positions, the sentences analysed are those related to issue-areas (e.g., agriculture, economy, environment, social affairs, etc).

I conduct qualitative analysis of the party manifestos from the 1982, 1989, 1996, 2004 and 2011 elections. In 1982 the PSOE won the elections and the PP became the second most voted party in Spain for the first time. From that year onwards these two have been the most voted parties in all national elections. As for the 1989 elections, they were the first to take place after Spain had been a member of the EU for a substantial period of time – three years. The elections of 1996 brought the PP to power for the first time, and the elections of 2004 produced a change in government again, with the PSOE returning to power after eight years. The 2011 elections were won by the PP, bringing the Spanish conservatives to power for the second time. Therefore, the elections that took place in the years selected either led to a change of government or were the first ones after Spaniards and Spanish political parties had had the chance to judge the realities of EU membership. Moreover, I have analysed manifestos from one out of every two elections taking place since the PSOE and the PP started to dominate national elections in terms of votes. The selection therefore provides a representative sample of elections, party manifestos and, subsequently, policy positions.

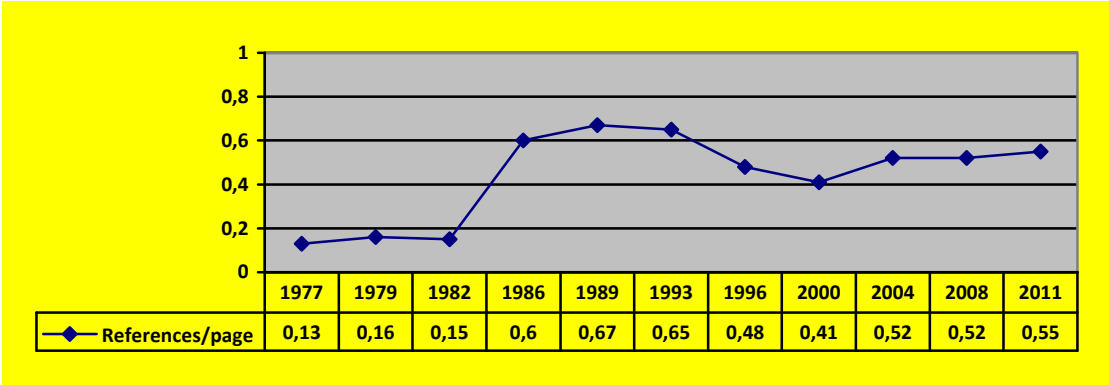
The next two sub-sections show the quantitative data related to the Europeanization of PSOE and PP and a qualitative interpretation of them. I will first concentrate on the PSOE, since it is the party that has been in power in Spain for the longest period of time since the restoration of democracy in the 1970s. Afterwards I will look at the PP.

**3.2. Case study I: PSOE**

*Europeanization at the level of salience*

The data for the PSOE shows that Europeanization at the level of salience of EU issues reached its peak in the three elections immediately following Spanish entry into the EU. Salience of the EU peaked in the 1989 elections, the first ones in which Spaniards and Spanish political parties had had the opportunity to fully understand the implications of EU membership. But even the manifestos published by the PSOE for the 1986 and 1993 elections showed a degree of Europeanization at the level of salience not reached before or since. References to the EU were abundant, demonstrating that the degree of Europeanization of the PSOE grew significantly in a relatively short period of time.

**Figure 1. Europeanization at the level of salience, PSOE**



**Source: Data excerpted from PSOE electoral manifestos.**

Europeanization at the level of salience has remained high in the five national elections that have taken place since 1996. Regardless of the PSOE producing its manifesto while in power, as in 1996, 2008 and 2011, or in the opposition, as was the case in 2000 and 2004, the salience of EU affairs has been notable. The decrease compared to the 1986-1993 period is understandable if we account for the fact that these were the years immediately following

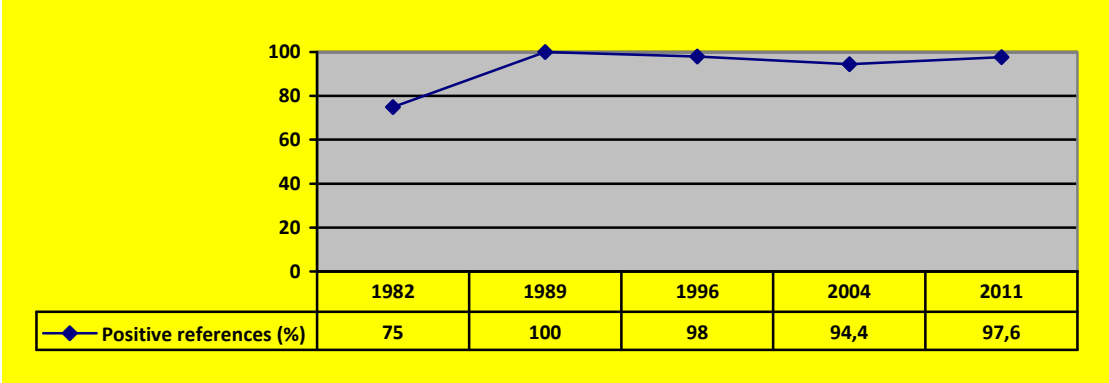
Spanish accession to the EU, when debates about what role Spain should play in the EU were central to Spanish politics and, equally relevant, Spain was in the process of adapting its socio-political and economic structures to EU requirements (Powell 2003).

Interestingly, Europeanization at the level of salience was low in 1982, when the PSOE was widely tipped to win the elections and, as a consequence, lead negotiations for Spain to join the EU. Compared to the 1977 and 1979 manifestos, the one from 1982 shows no significant difference in terms of Europeanization at the level of salience. This suggests that in the case of the PSOE Europeanization at the level of salience of EU affairs was more affected by membership rather than the prospect of it.

*Europeanization at the level of policy positions*

A qualitative analysis of the 1982, 1989, 1996, 2004 and 2011 manifestos provides a better perspective on the degree of Europeanization of the PSOE. As we can see, this yields a clear image of its degree of Europeanization in terms of policy positions. There are almost no negative references to EU policies. PSOE manifestos are overwhelmingly positive in their treatment of EU policies, to the extent that negative remarks are almost absent.

**Figure 2. Europeanization at the level of policy positions, PSOE**



**Source: Data excerpted from PSOE electoral manifestos.**

Tellingly, negative references are more prevalent in the 1982 manifesto, before Spain joined the EU. This suggests that in the case of the PSOE Europeanization at the level of policy positions strengthened after Spain joined the EU. Similarly to Europeanization at the level of salience, Europeanization at the level of policy positions was absent from PSOE manifestos

while Spain was yet to become an EU member. Therefore, Europeanization progressed in parallel at both levels.

A closer analysis of the manifestos shows that agriculture is the area in which Europeanization at the level of policy positions had yet to take place in 1982. The PSOE felt that membership of the EU could have negative consequences in the Spanish agricultural sector. The 1982 manifesto establishes that the PSOE thought that membership of the EU would bring uncertainty to the sector (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 1982). Most probably this reflected the key role that agriculture played and still plays in negotiations between EU members, since this sector still accounts for 47% of the EU budget (National Audit Office 2008). In the 1989, 1996, 2004 and 2011 manifestos the PSOE showed a positive attitude towards the EU's agricultural policy.

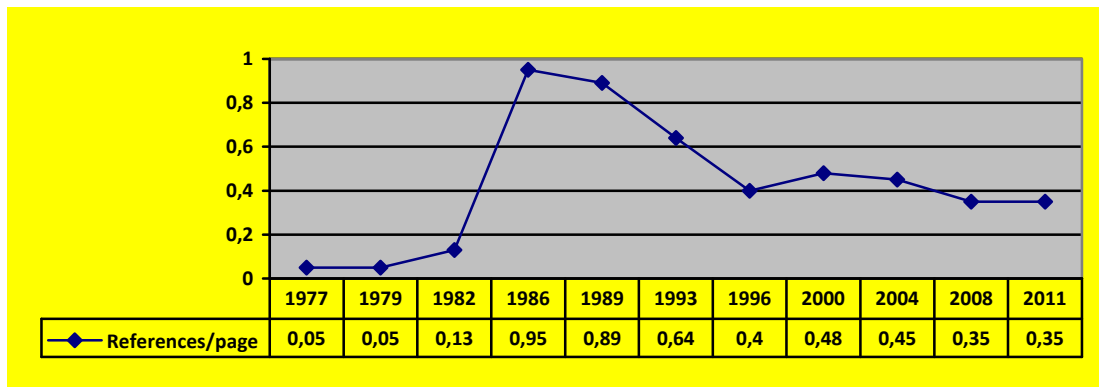
On all other issue-areas the Socialist Party has become Europeanized at the level of policy position. However, EU membership has strengthened even further Europeanization at this level. The percentage of positive references to the EU increased after Spain became a member and has remained at very high levels ever since. It was 75% in 1982 and then moved up to 100% in 1989, 98% in 1996, 94.4% in 2004 and 97.6% in 2011. Of interest is to note that, similarly to Europeanization by salience, Europeanization by policy positions declined after the peak following entry into the EU but has been high and stable afterwards. I will advance an explanation for this in section four.

### **3.3. Case study II: PP**

#### *Europeanization at the level of salience*

The data for the PP shows a different pattern of Europeanization at the level of salience compared to the PSOE. Nonetheless it is true that, similarly to the PSOE, EU membership has had a direct effect on the importance that the PP attaches to EU policies. References to the EU in manifestos for the three elections that took place before Spain joined the EU are relatively modest in number, and in any case lower than the references in the PSOE manifestos. The biggest disparity occurred in 1979, when the PP's degree of Europeanization was still very modest.

**Figure 3. Europeanization at the level of salience, PP**



**Source: Data excerpted from PP electoral manifestos.**

Similarly to the case of the PSOE, Europeanization by salience in PP manifestos shot up in the 1986-1993 period. During these years the data for the PP shows that Europeanization even surpassed the PSOE's in 1986 and 1989, and was almost equal in 1993. In fact, the PP's manifesto of 1986 marks the highest degree of Europeanization by salience of any of the two main Spanish political parties. The figures for 1989 and 1993 are not as impressive but still high, proving that Europeanization of Spanish political parties reached its peak in the aftermath of Spain joining the EU.

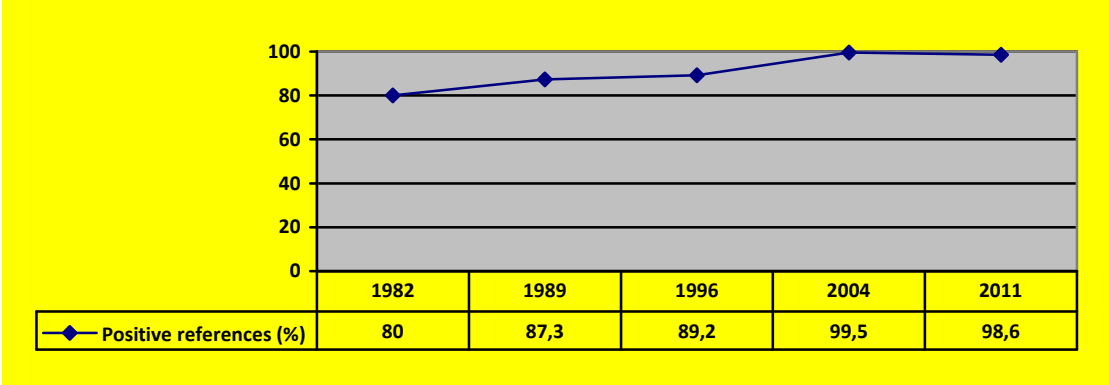
The figures for the five elections taking place between 1996 and 2011 demonstrate that Europeanization by salience is still high. Nevertheless, Europeanization by salience seems to have decreased slightly since 2008. It will be interesting to see whether this trend will continue, as salience in the 2011 manifesto suggests. Compared with the Socialist Party, after the 1996 and 2004 elections, in which the degree of Europeanization was similar, there has been a slight divergence in the last two elections, with the Socialist Party maintaining its degree of Europeanization and the PP reducing it slightly. In any case, the figures for the PP still compare very favourably to those of the period between 1977 and 1982. In the case of this party, EU membership has been clearly correlated to Europeanization by salience.

#### *Europeanization at the level of policy positions*

Similarly to the previous case, a qualitative analysis of the manifestos that the PP prepared for the 1982, 1989, 1996, 2004 and 2011 elections shows a very high degree of Europeanization at the level of policy positions. Positive views of EU policies abound. Spain's main

conservative party even considers EU membership an excellent means to modernize the Spanish economy and download useful European policies.

**Figure 4. Europeanization at the level of policy positions, PP**



**Source: Data excerpted from PP electoral manifestos.**

There is one issue-area in which the PP did not Europeanize its policy position until 2004 though. In the 1982, 1989 and 1996 manifestos the PP expressed misgivings about the effects of the Common Agricultural Policy on the Spanish agricultural sector (Alianza Popular 1982; Partido Popular 1989, 1996). As aforementioned, in its 1982 manifesto the PSOE indicated qualms about the effects of EU membership on Spanish agricultural sector as well. The PP, however, took longer to be Europeanized at the policy position level. It was only in the 2004 manifesto that the PP’s views on agriculture were Europeanized.

Two reasons explain why the PP took longer to be Europeanized. The first one, as already mentioned, is the central role of the Common Agricultural Policy plays in negotiations among EU member states. Seen from outside, these negotiations seem to consume an important share of the time of member states. A second reason that helps to explain why the PP took longer to be Europeanized is its inability to form government until 1996. Both in the case of the Socialist Party and the conservatives, manifestos issued after they accessed power evidenced Europeanization at the level of policy position in the issue-area of agriculture. Even though correlation between both phenomena could only be proved by interviewing party members, it is safe to assume that experience in negotiating the budget and conditions of the Common Agricultural Policy, as well as satisfaction with what each party was able to obtain whilst in government, would be related to Europeanization.

An analysis of the policy positions of the PP in other issue-areas shows two relevant characteristics. Firstly, Spain's main conservative party already displayed signs of Europeanization before Spain joined the EU. In the 1982 manifesto most policy positions of the PP already showed convergence with EU policies. Secondly, Europeanization at this level started growing after Spain joined the EU, a growth that did not stop after Europeanization by salience peaked in 1986 but has continued unabated. The percentage of positive references to EU policies has increased from 80% in 1982, to 87% 1989, to 89.2% in 1996 and to 99.5% in 2004. It remained very high in 2011, with 98.6% of positive references being only less than a percentage point lower than in 2008. Even in the area of foreign policy, in which the PP has sometimes been portrayed as too keen on developing transatlantic relations to the expense of links with European neighbours (Chislett 2006; Lachmann 2006), the party's manifestos display an appreciation of EU positions.

Europeanization at the level of policy positions in the case of the PP increased not only after Spain joined the EU, but also once it reached power. This suggests that experience in negotiating policies with other governments was necessary for the PP to become more Europeanized. Interestingly, even though Europeanization at the level of salience is still high but at a lower degree than in the 1986-93 period, Europeanization at the level of policy positions has actually kept growing. Despite its image of a party relatively ambivalent towards the EU project, qualitative analysis of its manifestos shows that, at least in principle, the PP has become Europeanized.

In this section I have only sketched out possible explanations for the Europeanization of Spain's two main political parties at the level of salience and policy positions. The next section will concentrate on these explanations further and advance a more systematic rationalization of the Europeanization of PSOE and PP.

#### **4. Explaining the Europeanization of Spanish political parties**

Europeanization of Spain's two main political parties at the levels of salience and policy positions has occurred, as seen in the previous section. Beyond the immediate reasons for this phenomenon suggested above, there ought to be other underlying causes making Spanish political parties become Europeanized. In this section I will argue that the pro-European

stance of the Spanish electorate and legal requirements and pressure from the EU explain Europeanization.

As Robert Putnam's two-level game model lays out, governmental decision-making is affected and takes into account domestic politics, especially the position of societal actors, and international politics, most notably developing the government's ability to maximize the benefits for those societal actors. A win-win situation occurs when the position of societal actors coincides with the demands of international actors (Putnam 1988).

The two-level game model can be applied to the case of political parties with a real opportunity to win a national election and form government. It is not surprising that a party in this situation will seek to cater to the demands of the electorate (i.e., societal actors) at the same time as it tries not to take a confrontational position that could strain its relations with international actors which with it will have to deal with. In the case of the PSOE and the PP, Europeanization by salience and by policy positions is a logical consequence of the pro-European stance of the Spanish electorate and the legal requirements and pressure from the EU.

#### **4.1. Consistent pro-European position of the Spanish electorate**

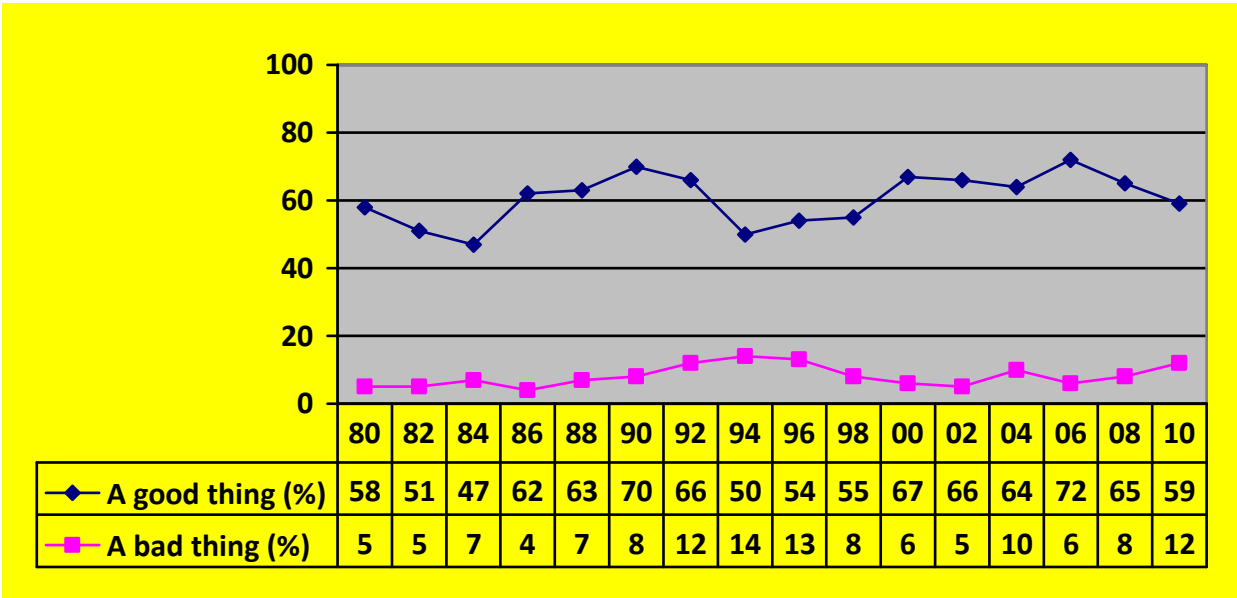
Spaniards are amongst the most pro-European nationals in the EU (Díez-Nicolás 2003; Magone 2009). The biannual Eurobarometer surveys regularly conducted on behalf of the European Commission attest to the positive perception that Spaniards hold of the EU as a project and in terms of its benefits to Spain. Furthermore, the results of publicly available surveys conducted between April 1980 and May 2011 show that the views of Spaniards regarding membership of the EU have remained positive throughout the past three decades (see figure 5).

The only three periods of time in which approval of Spanish membership of the EU has been below 60% were the early 1980-84, 1994-98 and 2010-11, when Spain was suffering the effects of the 1980-82 and 1992-94 economic crises and the Eurozone debt crisis, respectively. Noticeably, even during these three periods of time the number of Spaniards who thought EU membership was good was 15-35% higher than the number of those who considered it bad. Only once, in 1984, have less than half of Spaniards considered EU

membership to be a good thing. Thus, Spaniards’ opinion on EU membership might have been the result of general displeasure with politicians rather than a reflection of views on the EU per se.

Nevertheless, it is still early to draw conclusions on the effects of the Eurozone debt crisis on the position of Spaniards with regards to EU membership. It might be the case that longer trends such as enlargement of the EU and subsequent loss of structural funds, rather than the crisis, are creating a more negative perception of the EU.<sup>4</sup> Further analysis will be required once the crisis is over.

**Figure 5. Generally speaking, do you think that (your country’s) membership of the European Community (Common Market) [would be/]is ...?**



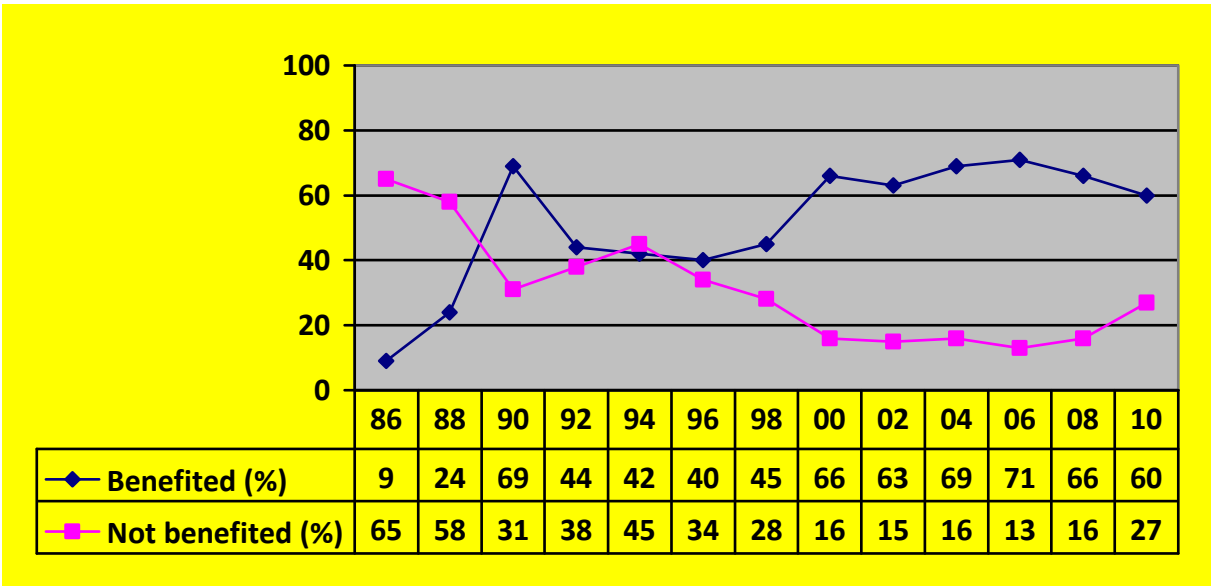
**Source: Eurobarometer (Spring wave surveys, even years; “neither good nor bad” and “don’t know” not included).**

As for the views of Spanish public opinion regarding how beneficial EU membership has been for Spain, figure 6 shows similar results to those of figure 1. After a two-year period following entry into the EU in which a vast majority of Spaniards thought that Spain had not benefited from its membership, Spanish nationals have consistently and, from 1998 onwards, by big margins maintained that Spain has benefited from being part of the EU.

<sup>4</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

The period between 1992 and 1996, in which Spain suffered from an economic crisis and its aftermath, is the only one since Spaniards began to see first-hand the benefits of EU membership in the late 1980s in which public opinion was negative towards the benefits of this membership. Even then, the percentage of Spaniards holding negative views of Spanish membership of the EU was not much higher than the percentage of those claiming to hold a positive view.

**Figure 6. Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (your country) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Community (Common Market)?**



Source: Eurobarometer (Spring wave surveys, even years; “don’t know” not included)

Other Eurobarometer survey questions do not serve for the purposes of this paper. This is because the questions asked either do not reflect whether public opinion is pro-European or not, or the time period covered is not long enough to provide meaningful information with regards to the object of analysis of this article. In any case, a look at Eurobarometer questions pertaining issues such as meaning of the EU, trust in European institutions or image of the EU reveal that Spaniards reflect positively on the EU than most of their European peers.<sup>5</sup>

Political parties with a real chance of forming government generally seek to cater to the views of a majority or at least a plurality of the voters. The ideology and policy positions of these

<sup>5</sup> The data is available at the European Commission’s website, section on public opinion [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm)

parties also tend to be more closely related to those of most voters. Otherwise, they would not have a realistic chance of forming government unless they were to become the junior partner in a coalition. Therefore, these parties both try to attract and reflect the views of a plurality of the electorate.

In the case of the PSOE and the PP, they need to cater to the pro-European stance of the Spanish electorate. The decline of Izquierda Unida (United Left), the only Eurosceptic national party in Spain (Gómez-Reino et al. 2008), in the decade prior to the 2011 election demonstrates the perils of being perceived as anti-European by the Spanish electorate.<sup>6</sup> PSOE and PP leaders understand the potential problems associated with being perceived as anti-European, which is reflected in the Europeanization by salience and by policy positions in their manifestos. But far from being a simple vote-attraction tool, this Europeanization appears to be genuine. Interviews of PSOE and PP leaders demonstrate that they believe that EU membership has been and is beneficial for Spain (Ramiro and Morales 2007; Ray 1999).

#### **4.2. Legal requirements and pressure from the EU**

As already explained, the PSOE and the PP have become Europeanized at the level of policy positions as well. Whilst Europeanization at the level of salience would to a large extent be a reflection of the pro-European sentiment of a majority of Spaniards, Europeanization at the level of policy positions is related to the realities of EU membership as much as to the views of the Spanish electorate. EU membership is correlated to top-down Europeanization, or “how the EU shapes institutions, processes, and political outcomes”, which includes the downloading of policies to the domestic level (Börzel and Panke 2010: 406).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> This is not to say that the decline of Izquierda Unida is only or even mostly related to its Euroscepticism. But the anti-European stance of the party has been a contributing factor to its decline. On the other hand, the revival of Izquierda Unida in the 2011 general election suggests that being perceived as anti-European might be advantageous when there is a decrease in positive opinions towards the EU among Spanish voters.

<sup>7</sup> Certainly, uploading of policies from the domestic to the European level coexists with downloading. However, this section is not concerned with uploading insofar it focuses on how European integration has influenced Europeanization of the PSOE and the PP, rather than on how these two parties seek to upload their policy choices to the European level.

European integration has advanced rapidly since the Maastricht Treaty was signed in 1992. The treaty created the EU and introduced three pillars only abandoned after the Lisbon Treaty entered into force in 2009. The three pillars, governing respectively economic, social and environmental policies, foreign and security policy, and police and judicial policies, led to an unprecedented level of joint policy decision-making by member states at the EU level (Phinnemore 2010). It is probably not an exaggeration to say that the process of integration among member states from 1992 onwards amounts to the greatest degree of voluntary sovereignty transfer from individual states to a larger entity. The Lisbon Treaty has created a framework to advance further the integration process, even though it is early to ascertain whether it will successfully do so.

The election manifestos of PSOE and PP reflect this integration. References to the alignment of Spanish policies to EU standards and legal demands increased after Spain became a member in 1986, as seen in the 1989 manifesto. Then, references to this alignment went up again in the elections after the Maastricht Treaty entered into force. The 1996 and 2004 manifestos of PSOE and PP show support or respect for EU policies (Partido Popular 1996, 2004; Partido Socialista Obrero Español 1996, 2004). Neither the socialists nor the conservatives in Spain are critical of the policies agreed within the EU, at least publicly.

Spaniards are more ambivalent when it comes to EU policies than in their pro-European views. Eurobarometer results show that Spanish respondents do not express a clear preference when asked whether decisions on sixty different areas should be taken by the Spanish government, jointly within the EU, or both at the national and European level. However, a cursory analysis of Eurobarometer data shows that, in general, Spaniards tend to favour strong involvement of the EU in the policy decision-making process.<sup>8</sup>

In areas such as immigration policy and protection of the environment an overwhelming majority of those asked would like decisions to be taken either by the EU alone or by the EU and Spain together. In other areas such as police and justice a narrow majority of respondents show their preference for the Spanish government to decide on policy. Yet, in areas such as cultural policy and security and defence there are times when more Spaniards want the EU to

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<sup>8</sup> The data is available at the European Commission's website, section on public opinion [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm)

choose policies by itself or together with the Spanish government, and other times when a larger number of respondents express their preference for decision to be taken at the national level.<sup>9</sup> Even though the Eurobarometer data would merit more careful analysis, it is possible to discern a pattern whereby Spanish respondents opt for a relatively high degree of EU involvement in the selection of policies.

Even if the position of Spaniards regarding EU policies is probably not as important as legal requirements derived from integration when it comes to explain Europeanization of PSOE and PP at the level of policies, it can serve to reinforce it. Expressing support or respect for EU policies in their manifestos proves to the electorate that neither party seeks to go against the wishes of voters in favour of the EU having a role in the policy decision-making process.

In any case, when it comes to Europeanization by policy position it seems that relations with international actors are at least as important as pleasing the electorate. Openly criticizing EU policies would be counterproductive for political parties that could well be forming government. Once in power, these parties would have to work alongside the governments of other member states in formulating new policies or deciding on the implementation of existing ones. Hence, expressing misgivings or doubts about EU policies that in many cases are legally binding would be ill-advised.

## **5. Conclusions**

Spanish political parties seem to be more Europeanized at the levels of salience and policy positions than their counterparts from elsewhere in Europe. The analysis of the degree of Europeanization of the PSOE and the PP as expressed through their electoral manifestos demonstrates that they are more pro-European than parties in other EU member states. Negative views of the EU are small in number, and have decreased since Spain joined the EU. The content of the manifestos of socialists and conservatives also proves that the EU became more relevant once Spain joined it.

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<sup>9</sup> The data is available at the European Commission's website, section on public opinion [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm)

There are two main reasons why Europeanization of the PSOE and PP at the levels of salience and policy positions. Firstly, the pro-European stance of the Spanish electorate. Studies and polls show that Spaniards have a better image of the EU than most other Europeans. This needs to be taken into account by parties with a good opportunity to form government. Secondly, the demands of EU membership lead to top-down Europeanization. Policies have to be downloaded, which is reflected in the electoral manifestos of socialists and conservatives. The combination of the pro-European stance of the Spanish electorate and legal demands related to EU membership mean that Europeanization of PSOE and PP became a feature of these two parties between the 1986 and 2011 elections.

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