

The newcomer and a new era for European integration: Portugal, the European Union and the anti-Maastricht debates*

Un país recién llegado y una nueva era para la integración europea: Portugal, la Unión Europea y los debates anti-Maastricht

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Resumen: Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar la percepción y el debate en torno a la integración europea en Portugal, antes y después de la aprobación del Tratado de Maastricht, teniendo en cuenta la identidad y la cultura política del país. En particular, el artículo evaluará las actitudes del gobierno portugués, los partidos políticos y el público en general hacia el Tratado de Maastricht.

Palabras clave: Portugal; Tratado de Maastricht; Unión Europea.

Abstract: This article aims to analyze the perception of and the debate surrounding European integration in Portugal, before and after the approval of the Maastricht Treaty, taking into account the country's identity and political culture. In particular, the article will assess the attitudes of the Portuguese government, political parties and the general public towards the Maastricht Treaty.

Keywords: European Union; Maastricht Treaty; Portugal.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Portugal's first decade as a Member State of the European Union¹ (EU) coincided with a time of change for European integration. Since its accession in 1986, Portuguese EU membership has revolved around two main axes: the optimization of the benefits of membership, and the country's involvement in all the key stages of EU deepening. Since becoming a member, Portugal has made full integration its highest priority, as well as becoming actively involved in the process of deeper European integration, thereby participating in all major EU developments, including those that emanated from the Maastricht Treaty.

In the history of Portugal's membership of the EU, two episodes stand out as sources of national friction: the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, and joining the Eurozone. The debate surrounding the Maastricht Treaty, and its subsequent approval, is in fact the European topic that has prompted the most interest and discussion in Portugal, as well as resulting in amendments to the Constitution. As was the case in many Member States, the decision to ratify the Treaty was not a unanimous one. Traditionally the Portuguese have been among the strongest supporters of European integration and the EU itself, but the debate around Maastricht and its consequences generated a number of divisions, not only between those in favour of or against Maastricht, but also concerning the question of the limits of the EU's sphere of intervention as opposed to the competences and sovereignty of the Member States.

This article aims to analyze the perception of and the debate surrounding European integration in Portugal, before and after the approval of the Maastricht Treaty, taking into account the country's identity and political culture. In particular, the article will assess the attitudes of the Portuguese government, political parties and the general public towards the Maastricht Treaty.

2. THE NEWCOMER: PORTUGAL IN THE EU (THE EARLY YEARS)

Portugal's first decade as a member of the European Union was characterized by a large number of new elements within the EU deepening

¹ Since the European Union was only officially established when the Maastricht Treaty came into force on 1 November 1993, whenever it is mentioned prior to that date it should be understood that I am referring its predecessor, the European Economic Community.

process, including treaty revision (Single European Act and Maastricht Treaty); the completion of the Internal Market and the four freedoms of movement; the creation of the Schengen Area, the Economic and Monetary Union, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Cohesion Policy; the first major reform of the Common Agricultural Policy; and also, in the widening sphere, the completion of another enlargement round to include EFTA countries; all this occurred against the background of major geopolitical changes, notably the collapse of the Soviet Union and the reunification of Germany.

During its first decade as a Member State, Portugal achieved its main priority of full integration into the EU. At the time, European Union membership was viewed as a decisive factor for the modernization and development of the country, while the Portuguese government also intended to become actively involved in EU affairs. Despite the country having previously been a member of other international organizations, none of these was comparable to the EU: the organization was to have an unprecedented and lasting impact on all of Portugal's public policies, and in fact being a member become "a full-time job".² These transition years – corresponding to the seven years' timeframe agreed in the Accession Treaty (1986-1992) – would prove crucial in enabling the Portuguese government not only to adapt to a permanent multilateral negotiation, but also to prepare and make adjustments for the obligations arising from being a Member State.

With this in mind, the government established three major guidelines: first, that national interests be aligned with those of the EU; second, that the country adopt a constructive and, as far as possible, consensual attitude; third, that coordination and an overall picture were essential in what was an entirely new experience as far as Portuguese foreign relations were concerned.³ These guidelines remain in place today.

During this period Portugal's Prime Minister was the Social Democrat Aníbal Cavaco Silva, who entered office in 1985 and whose party governed alone for a period of ten years (1985-1995). During his time in office the country enjoyed a period of political stability and economic prosperity.

² Cunha, A. (2023): "União Europeia". In N. S. Teixeira and A. Cunha (Coord.) *Portugal Multilateral. Dicionário*. Almedina. Coimbra, p. 232.

³ Secretaria de Estado da Integração Europeia – Comissão Interministerial para as Comunidades Europeias (1986): *Portugal nas Comunidades Europeias: Orientações Gerais*. Volume I. Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros. Lisboa, non signed, pp. 11-12.

1992 represented an important milestone in Portugal's EU membership: first of all, it marked the end of the transition period, which meant that the country was now a full EU member; and secondly, it was in this year that Portugal first held the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU, which allowed the country to chair a European institution. At that time, Portugal had been a Member State for only six years and membership still felt like a recent occurrence. Its accession process had been difficult, challenging, and particularly long,⁴ and the country's ability to fully integrate into the EU had even been questioned by existing Member States. Portugal therefore made full use of its first Council Presidency to promote the image of itself as a young but stable democracy with a fast-growing economy, eager to become socialized into the EU club.⁵ The pressure to perform was further exacerbated by the timing of events: Portugal's presidency coincided with the ending of the country's transition phase, hence its being viewed as the "presidency of expectation".⁶

During this first presidency, the principal concern was over Portugal's ability to coordinate, and whether the country would have sufficient knowledge of the functioning of the presidency and the different dossiers. This was a presidency focused chiefly on the economic domain, in line with the nature of the EU itself at the time. The key issues to be negotiated were the completion of the internal market, the negotiation of the Delors II Package, and the formalization of the Treaty on European Union. Not only was the title of Portugal's programme for its 1992 presidency "Setting Course for the European Union" (*Rumo à União Europeia*), but its first major area of focus ("new parameters for building Europe") outlined as a priority the signing of the Maastricht Treaty as well as the process leading to its ratification.⁷

⁴ Cunha, A. (2018): *Dossiê Adesão. História do Alargamento da CEE a Portugal*. Imprensa de Ciências Sociais. Lisboa; Cunha, A. (2017): *Os Capítulos da Adesão*, ed. A. Cunha. Assembleia da República. Lisboa; Lã, J. R., e Cunha, A. (2016): *Memórias da Adesão. À Mesa das Negociações*, org. J. R. Lã, e A. Cunha. Bookbuilders. Santa Cruz.

⁵ Soares, A. G. (2007): "Portugal and the European Union: The Ups and Downs in 20 Years of Membership". *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 8(4), 463-473; Ferreira-Pereira, L. C. (2008): "Portugal e a Presidência da União Europeia (1992-2007)". *Relações Internacionais* 20, 131-143.

⁶ Cunha, A. (2013): "Portugal no Centro da Europa: As Presidências Portuguesas do Conselho da União Europeia (1992, 2000 e 2007)". *Ler História* 64, 163-177.

⁷ Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros (1991): *Rumo à União Europeia*. Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros. Lisboa.

While “the presidency would be conducted within a mixed cocktail of diversity, complexity and unpredictability of the issues addressed, alongside political uncertainties in each member state”,⁸ during the earlier negotiations for the future Treaty the Portuguese government had “adopted a flexible and pragmatic attitude”, with a view to deepening a number of areas such as education, culture and economic and social cohesion.⁹ Portugal was therefore broadly satisfied with the results of the Intergovernmental Conference at which it secured the inclusion in the Treaty of the “principle of subsidiarity” and the “principle of solidarity”, along with the reinforcement of economic and social cohesion.¹⁰ The signing ceremony held on 7 February in Maastricht was chaired by Cavaco Silva, who, in his speech, described the Treaty “not as an endgame, but as the beginning of a new cycle for Europe”,¹¹ paving the way for major developments in the new EU.

The Maastricht Treaty¹² was the first treaty revision in which Portugal was actively involved, as the earlier Single European Act had been negotiated and concluded before Portugal became a member of the EU. Interestingly, both treaties introduced major changes to European integration and modified part of what Portugal had only recently agreed to in its Accession Treaty.

⁸ Cunha, A. (2015): “From apprentice to partner: The 1992 Portuguese Council Presidency”. *International Journal of Iberian Studies* 28(2-3), p. 199.

⁹ Marinho, C. L. (1994): “Portugal and the Ratification of the Maastricht Treaty”. In F. Laursen, and S. Vanhoonacker (Eds.) *The ratification of the Maastricht Treaty: issues, debates and future implications*. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers. Dordrecht, p. 231.

¹⁰ Cunha, A. (2012): “O Tratado de Maastricht: A Europa e Portugal em Mudança”. *Debater a Europa* 6, p. 35.

¹¹ Silva, A. C. (1992): “Discurso de Sua Excelência o Primeiro-Ministro de Portugal e Presidente do Conselho Europeu na Cerimónia de Assinatura do Tratado da União Europeia”. In Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros (Ed.) *Presidência Portuguesa do Conselho das Comunidades Europeias: Eventos Principais*. Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros. Lisboa 1992, p. 190.

¹² On the Maastricht Treaty, see among others: Dyson, K., and Featherstone, K. (1999) *The road to Maastricht: Negotiating economic and monetary union*. Oxford University Press. Oxford; Geary, M. J., Germond, C., and Patel, K. K. (2013): “The Maastricht Treaty: Negotiations and Consequences in Historical Perspective”. *Journal of European Integration History*, 19(1), 5-11.

3. PORTUGUESE POLITICAL PARTIES AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

With the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, formally known as the Treaty on European Union, the balance of power tilted even further in favour of the EU, with the extension of majority voting, the sharing of legislative power between the Council and the European Parliament on certain issues (co-decision procedure), and the establishment of a political union with a single currency and a common foreign and security policy; in addition to economic cooperation, this signified a strengthening of political integration. The post-Maastricht debate therefore focused both on the federal elements of the Treaty and on the democratic deficit of the Union, since it was felt in some quarters that this deepening of the EU was not accompanied by the mechanisms necessary to guarantee legitimacy and democracy. It was at this time that parliaments of Member States began to demand a more active role in European affairs, as there was a growing awareness that the adoption of this treaty would alter the political landscape in Europe.

Notably, it would be this same treaty that for the first time formally recognized a role for national parliaments in European affairs, by contemplating two annexed declarations on this issue (declarations 13 and 14), although these were not binding. The first declaration referred to the need to encourage a more active involvement of parliaments in EU initiatives but, while defending a greater exchange of information between parliaments and the European Parliament (EP), it was left in the hands of national governments to transmit the legislative proposals of the Commission to national parliaments; the second declaration invited national parliaments and the EP to meet whenever necessary to discuss key EU affairs, initiating the regular holding of COSAC (The Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs).

Nevertheless, the literature on the subject suggests that the members of parliament (MPs) of Member States “have no real interest in engaging in European policies. European issues are not decisive matters in national elections, the attention of the media on EU issues is still limited, and parties compete more on domestic policies than on European affairs”.¹³ Julien Navarro and Sylvain Brouard found empirical grounding

¹³ Benz, A. (2004): “Path-Dependent Institutions and strategic veto players: National Parliaments in the European Union”. *West European Politics* 27(5), p. 885, quoting Saalfeld, T. (2003): “The Bundestag: Institutional Incrementalism and Behavioural

in the case of France, as “on the whole, it appears that Europe remains an issue of secondary importance for national MPs who are obviously more concerned by electorally rewarding local problems than by international affairs”.¹⁴ Tapio Raunio adds that since “re-election and policy influence are probably the primary goals of most MPs and political parties, focusing on EU matters is not a very attractive option for most deputies. In terms of re-election, EU policy may be important for the constituencies (for example, in terms of attracting regional policy funds), but not necessarily for the voters who still base their voting choices primarily on domestic issues”.¹⁵ While, on some occasions, European matters are also politicized and used as national issues, it can be argued that EU affairs attract very little public recognition, making them even less appealing to MPs.

Moreover, the Portuguese case follows the European trend in this matter and confirms that former incumbent parties are, in general, more pro-European, while parties who have never been in government are, by contrast, less favourable to European integration.

In her study of national identity, Cláudia Toriz Ramos concludes that political parties in favour of European integration seek to demonstrate the compatibility of EU membership and national identity, while those who are opposed argue that the two are irreconcilable; and that, specifically in the Portuguese parliament, although there are no “strictly nationalist discourses, based on an absolute exclusivity of the Portuguese political identity, there are also no strictly Europeanist positions, matching the Portuguese and European dimensions”.¹⁶

European integration does not constitute a structural issue for any of the Portuguese political parties. All have formulated their own official position as regards European integration, the European Union and Portugal’s EU membership. There has been little variation in these positions, with the exception of the Communist party (Partido Comunista Português – PCP) which has moved from an anti-EU standpoint to a

Reticence”. In K. Dyson, and K. Goetz (Eds.) *Germany, Europe and the Politics of Constraint*. Oxford University Press. Oxford, pp. 73-96.

¹⁴ Navarro, J., and Brouard, S. (2014): “Who cares about the EU? French MPs and the Europeanisation of Parliamentary questions”. *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 20(1), p. 106.

¹⁵ Raunio, T. (2009): “National Parliaments and European integration: What we know and agenda for future research”. *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 15(4), p. 328.

¹⁶ Ramos, C. (2005): “Discurso parlamentar português e construção da identidade política no contexto da integração europeia”. *Antropológicas* 9, pp. 76-77 and p. 92.

Eurosceptic stance; and the Christian Democrats (Centro Democrático Social – CDS) whose position underwent sudden but temporary changes during the discussions surrounding the Maastricht Treaty. The two main parties – the Socialists (Partido Socialista – PS) and the Social Democrats – (Partido Social Democrata – PSD) – have sustained the most consistent position towards European integration, maintaining a clearly pro-European stance and professing that they are in favour of a further deepening of the EU;¹⁷ indeed, their programmes with respect to the EU are identical.

Regardless of their political differences, and despite disagreements over which party was more pro-European or pro-accession and who had been so the longest, given the high turnover of governments during the accession negotiations all parties favourable to Portugal's joining the EU were in the end justified in "bragging about having led (...) part of the negotiations" and entitled "to feel involved in the results".¹⁸ More than three quarters of MPs unequivocally backed Portugal's membership of the EU, with only the PCP voting against. In their view, EU membership jeopardized the consolidation and defence of the State that had emerged from the *25 de Abril* revolution. Henceforth, during the EU accession process, the communists "claimed that Portugal would never join [the EU] or prophesied that the European Communities would come to an end soon".¹⁹

The ideological positioning of Portuguese political parties in relation to European issues can be divided into three distinct periods: i) 1986 to 1991, characterized by diffuse enthusiasm and pragmatism, insofar as all the main parties with the exception of the PCP positively advocated European integration; ii) a second phase, coinciding with the post-Maastricht period, where there was clear enthusiasm for the European project, especially on the part of the two catch-all parties (PS and PSD), while the Christian Democrats (CDS) became less enthusiastic; iii) and the third phase corresponding to the period 2000-2015 (and still valid in 2023),

¹⁷ Cunha, A. (2019): "A omnipresente Europa: Portugal, partidos políticos e integração europeia". In A. Cunha (Coord.) *Os Partidos Políticos Portugueses e a União Europeia*. Almedina. Coimbra, p. 43.

¹⁸ Ferreira, J. M. (1989): "Partidos políticos, parceiros sociais e o desafio da CEE". In M. B. Coelho (Coord.) *Portugal: O Sistema Político e Constitucional 1974-1987*. Instituto de Ciências Sociais/Universidade de Lisboa, Lisboa, p. 500.

¹⁹ Ferreira, J. M. (1999): *A nova era europeia: De Genebra a Amesterdão*. Editorial Notícias. Lisboa, p. 43.

during which the weakening of the Portuguese economy and subsequent Troika's bailout entails some reluctance, divergence and Euroscepticism, despite the support for EU membership remaining stable.²⁰

Since its foundation in 1974, the CDS has been in favour of European integration and has considered EU membership to be “not a way of diminishing the country, but of their affirmation and valorization”.²¹ The first centrist leaders (Diogo Freitas do Amaral, Francisco Lucas Pires and Adriano Moreira) all supported the country's EU membership. It was only under the leadership of Manuel Monteiro (1992-1998) that the party's positioning changed. Although most political parties from EU Member States are moderately pro-integration, many struggled with the issue in the wake of the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, involving as it did an unprecedented transfer of powers from the national to the European sphere, causing intra-party divisions on the question of European integration. In Portugal's case, the party which most clearly took this stance was the CDS, which not only voted against the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty but also campaigned vigorously against it.

Opposition to the Maastricht Treaty formed the basis of the first political battle fought by Manuel Monteiro, who had been elected CDS President in March 1992; this campaign would have both internal and external consequences for the party. The CDS, which had contributed to the neutralization of a sovereignist right that was sceptical of European integration, was still “a party of various rights”;²² Manuel Monteiro represented a new generation of right-wing politicians, for whom “the European project did not represent, as it had for the generation of party founders, the right path for the development and modernization of the country”.²³

²⁰ Santana Pereira, J. e Sanches, E. (2013): “Portugal”. In N. Conti (Ed.) *Party Attitudes towards the EU in the Member-States – Parties for Europe, parties against Europe*. Routledge. London, pp. 115-132; Teixeira, N. S., e Pinto, A. C. (2017): *A Europeização da Democracia Portuguesa*, org. N. S. Teixeira, e A. C. Pinto. Imprensa das Ciências Sociais. Lisboa.

²¹ Francisco Lucas Pires (CDS), *Diário da Assembleia da República*, I Série, n.º 89, 23 Março de 1977, p. 3042.

²² Alves, E. (2019): “O CDS e a integração europeia: um percurso singular”. In A. Cunha (Coord.) *Os Partidos Políticos Portugueses e a União Europeia*. Almedina. Coimbra, p. 175, pp. 177-178.

²³ Alves, E. (2019): “O CDS e a integração europeia: um percurso singular”. In A. Cunha (Coord.) *Os Partidos Políticos Portugueses e a União Europeia*. Almedina. Coimbra, p. 177.

Furthermore, this shift in the CDS's political position was also motivated by pragmatic considerations. It sought to appeal to and win the votes of the young, urban and suburban electorate,²⁴ as the party was fighting extinction in the early 1990s. The CDS further instrumentalized the issue of European integration in an attempt to distinguish itself from the PSD, hoping "to capitalize on the rise in popular dissatisfaction with the direction and certain consequences of the process of European integration", and equally as "a strategy to avoid decimation".²⁵

One component of the anti-Maastricht initiatives organized by the CDS was the internal referendum on the Treaty, which was held in November 1992. Seven thousand party members took part (by mail and in person), constituting around 30% of the party's affiliates,²⁶ of which around 90% voted against ratification of the Treaty.²⁷ This was an internal referendum, but in Portugal it remains the only instance of such a vote being held on an EU-related question.

This resounding result meant that Maastricht was roundly rejected, while reinforcing Manuel Monteiro's European policy. However, it had a number of significant internal repercussions, one of which was its effect on the CDS's relationship not only with its founding fathers, but also with the European People's Party (EPP). Another consequence was Diogo Freitas do Amaral's decision to abandon the party and become an independent MP, ultimately voting in favour of the Treaty. In his view, the CDS's rejection of the Maastricht Treaty "poses a serious and delicate problem, which is to maintain or reject everything that was said, written and signed by the party between 1974 and 1991,"²⁸ hence his divergence from the party's leadership and their new ideological stance and programme. Externally, the EPP resolved to expel the CDS in March 1993, after urging the party not to continue with the consultation, and demanding that it retreat from its position.

²⁴ Alves, E. (2019): "O CDS e a integração europeia: um percurso singular". In A. Cunha (Coord.) *Os Partidos Políticos Portugueses e a União Europeia*. Almedina. Coimbra, p. 178.

²⁵ Lobo, M. C. (2003): "Portuguese Attitudes Towards EU Membership: Social and Political Perspectives". *South European Society and Politics* 8(1-2), pp. 108-109.

²⁶ *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 19, I Série, 11 December 1992, p. 661.

²⁷ Monteiro, M. (2015): "O Partido Popular". In AAVV. *CDS. 40 Anos ao Serviço de Portugal*. Prime Books. Estoril, p. 122.

²⁸ Amaral, D. F. (1992): *Um Voto a Favor de Maastricht. Razões de uma Atitude*. Editorial Inquérito. Mem Martins, p. 26.

The anti-Maastricht campaign constituted a new phase for the CDS, in the sense that it signalled an attempt to shift the party's ideological position, yet without abandoning the CDS's commitment to European integration. What was in fact at stake for the party was the defence of national sovereignty, and this depended on the rejection of federalism and the rule of unanimity voting in the Council, the possibility of Member States being able to adapt European policies to their superior interests, and the renegotiation of the convergence criteria of the Economic and Monetary Union. The party has since taken a more conservative line on European integration, with a nationalist bent.

With regard to the other end of the political spectrum, the Maastricht Treaty was signed at a particularly difficult moment for those European communist parties that remained close to the Soviet model, as was the case with the Portuguese Communist Party. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the Soviet Union had a notable impact on the communists' political response to European affairs. The PCP modified its discourse, in line with the abandonment of its position of absolute rejection of the EU, and its insistence that Portugal leave the European Union, adapting itself instead to EU membership and modifying its stance to one of Euroscepticism. This also coincided with the departure from office of the historic figure of Secretary General Álvaro Cunhal in December 1992 and his replacement by Carlos Carvalhas, ushering in a new era within the party.

There was in fact an evolution in the PCP's position on European policy, with the party implicitly acknowledging that it had not succeeded in fulfilling its objective of blocking accession, and eventually accepting this fact. From that point on, "the logic of debate and political intervention started to be made in fact from within the EEC".²⁹ Although it had voted against Portugal's accession to the EU, the PCP soon became integrated into its institutional system. It fielded candidates in the 1987 elections to the European Parliament, an institution in which it wished to secure representation, and which also served to bring the Communists closer to the EU.³⁰ Thereafter it accepted EU membership as a *fait accompli*, and the EU became the institutional framework within which the party would

²⁹ Madeira, J. (2019): "O PCP e a União Europeia". In A. Cunha (Coord.) *Os Partidos Políticos Portugueses e a União Europeia*. Almedina. Coimbra, p. 136.

³⁰ Lobo, M. C. (2003): "Portuguese Attitudes Towards EU Membership: Social and Political Perspectives". *South European Society and Politics* 8(1-2), p. 108.

develop its political action, and it reoriented its political discourse³¹ on the matter.

Yet, as was to be expected, the PCP also reacted negatively to the Maastricht Treaty. This occurred for a number of reasons, including the new juridical nature of the EU (in line with a pathway towards federalization), the creation of the single currency, and the democratic deficit, namely the lack of power of national parliaments. At the time, the PCP campaigned vigorously for a referendum on Maastricht, but to no avail. Interestingly, Maastricht was also the episode that succeeded in bringing together the Iberian communist parties, whose positions regarding their respective countries' membership of the EU had differed widely. As Sanz and Treglia conclude "the Iberian communists stood together in their opposition to this founding treaty of the European Union (EU) and this led to their rapprochement by accentuating the convergence of their interpretation of international events".³²

In the elections held on 6 October 1991, the CDS won five of the 230 parliamentary seats, and the PCP (as part of the CDU – Coligação Democrática Unitária coalition with the PEV – Partido Ecologista Os Verdes) won 17, accounting for a little under 10% representation in the Portuguese Parliament. Together the PS and the PSD secured a huge majority of 207 MPs (PS = 72; PSD = 135),³³ with the PSD holding on to power.

While the ratification process of the Maastricht Treaty was taking place, the Portuguese parliament or Assembleia da República exercised the legal provisions on the matter,³⁴ and discussed the matter in plenary sessions. The Treaty was scrutinized at four plenary meetings: at the first of these, the results of the Maastricht European Council (held on 17 December 1991) were debated; the second and third examined the

³¹ Cunha, A. (2019): "A omnipresente Europa: Portugal, partidos políticos e integração europeia". In A. Cunha (Coord.) *Os Partidos Políticos Portugueses e a União Europeia*. Almedina. Coimbra, pp. 43-44.

³² Sanz, C., and Treglia, E. (2022): "Sharing the Iberian Room in a "Common Home"? The Portuguese Communist Party and the Communist Party of Spain in a Changing Europe, 1985-1994". *Histoire Politique* 46, p. 11.

³³ Assembleia da República, *Diário da República*, n.º 249, I Série - A, 29 de Outubro 1991, pp. 5542-5547.

The Partido da Solidariedade Nacional (PSN) won one seat.

³⁴ Assembleia da República, Lei n.º 111/88, 15 de Dezembro, "Acompanhamento da Assembleia da República em matérias relativas à participação de Portugal nas Comunidades Europeias".

ratification of the Treaty (9-10 December 1992); the final meeting took place after the Treaty had come into force (19 January 1994).³⁵ Besides being discussed at these sessions, the Maastricht Treaty was the European matter that prompted the greatest interest and gave rise to most intense debate in the Portuguese parliament in the 1990s, with the drawing up of reports by a number of specialized commissions, along with a series of hearings.³⁶

During the two plenary sessions debating the approval of the Treaty (Proposta de Resolução n.º 11/VI), each party presented its argument in favour of or against ratification. As had been the case in a number of other Member States, it was this Treaty that generated the most controversy, with very strong views voiced by both the PCP, in whose opinion the Treaty was unconstitutional, and the CDS, who claimed to be conducting a “political struggle for Europe but against Maastricht!”.³⁷ The party refused to accept that their earlier defence of the deepening of the EU meant that they were obliged to agree with the Treaty.³⁸ This position was similar to that of the PCP MP who stated that “I do not confuse the Community with Europe or the ‘no’ to the Maastricht Treaty with the ‘no’ to Europe, because Maastricht is not Europe”.³⁹

The communists argued that, even after the constitutional revision, the revised version did not give Parliament sufficient authority to ratify the Treaty, and therefore opposed it being discussed in Parliament. Their motion was rejected. The PCP was of the view that, “there is no national independence if Portugal cannot fully exercise its sovereign powers, particularly in matters such as currency issuance, monetary, exchange rate and economic policies, foreign and defence policy (...) all matters in which

³⁵ Assembleia da República, *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 15, I Série, 18 de Dezembro de 1991; *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 18, I Série, 10 de Dezembro de 1992; *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 19, I Série, 11 de Dezembro de 1992; *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 28, I Série, 20 de Janeiro de 1994.

³⁶ Cunha, A. (2017): *Assuntos Europeus no Parlamento. Os debates*. Assembleia da República. Lisboa, p. 87; Assembleia da República (1993): *A Assembleia da República e o Tratado da União Europeia*. Assembleia da República. Lisboa.

³⁷ Manuel Queiró (CDS), *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 18, I Série, 10 de Dezembro de 1992, p. 606.

³⁸ Manuel Queiró (CDS), *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 18, I Série, 10 de Dezembro de 1992, p. 642.

³⁹ Carlos Carvalhas (PCP), *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 18, I Série, 10 de Dezembro de 1992, p. 629.

(...) national sovereignty is affected” by Maastricht.⁴⁰ The arguments for rejecting the motion were that this transfer of sovereignty had already occurred, either when the country joined the EEC, or when the European Single Act had been ratified. The party considered the Maastricht Treaty unconstitutional and believed that it would only serve to reinforce the democratic deficit.⁴¹

Although the CDS was in agreement with the government’s assertion that the EU represented the only means for Portugal to be integrated into Europe, the party argued for an alternative to the Maastricht Treaty.⁴² At the end of the day, what was at stake was not EU membership but the Treaty itself. This was even more true for the Communists, who had by then accepted that Portugal was not going to leave the EU. They however wanted a different EU, one which eschewed neoliberalism and instead advocated peace and cooperation, striving for equality when it came to economic and social development.⁴³

In spite of their being in agreement over the rejection of the Maastricht Treaty, both the PCP and the CDS were keen to emphasize the differences between themselves and the other party: “the position of the CDS is clearly different from that of the PCP, which did not want our integration in Europe”.⁴⁴

By contrast, the majority of Portuguese MPs welcomed the Treaty and highlighted the benefits which European citizenship would confer, namely diplomatic protection for Portuguese emigrants, and the creation of the Cohesion Fund. Despite misgivings about the Treaty being or becoming too federal in nature – as a result of which the word “federal” was removed from the first draft of the Treaty – the fact is that, with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, several classic federal elements were introduced into the EU, such as European citizenship, the Economic and

⁴⁰ António Filipe (PCP), *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 18, I Série, 10 de Dezembro de 1992, p. 605.

⁴¹ Carlos Carvalhas (PCP), *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 18, I Série, 10 de Dezembro de 1992, p. 623, p. 627.

⁴² Manuel Queiró (CDS), *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 18, I Série, 10 de Dezembro de 1992, p. 612.

⁴³ Carlos Carvalhas (PCP), *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 18, I Série, 10 de Dezembro de 1992, p. 624; Lino de Carvalho (PCP), *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 19, I Série, 11 de Dezembro de 1992, p. 667.

⁴⁴ Manuel Queiró (CDS), *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 19, I Série, 11 de Dezembro de 1992, p. 658.

Monetary Union, including the single currency, and the foreign and security policy. A petition signed by 40,563 citizens was presented to the Portuguese parliament – the first signatory was the writer (and future Nobel Prize winner) and PCP affiliate José Saramago – urging Parliament not to ratify the Treaty, as in their view Maastricht heralded the creation of a European federal superstate over which its citizens would have no democratic control.⁴⁵

Freitas do Amaral – who in the meantime had left the CDS party and was sitting as an independent MP – was in favour of the ratification of the Treaty and voted accordingly. He had supported European integration for over 30 years, since long before Portugal had even considered joining the EU, and would continue to do so, which was also in line with the Christian Democrats' ideology. He was in favour of European citizenship and the single currency; however, he was also in support of a referendum on the Maastricht Treaty.⁴⁶

As far as Portugal-EU relations were concerned, the process for the approval of the Maastricht Treaty was the “dominant political event”⁴⁷ of 1992. It was felt that “the ratification process in Portugal was carried out calmly compared to other countries, but possibly not as calmly as expected”.⁴⁸ The Treaty was approved with 200 votes in favour and 21 against (the combined vote of CDS and PCP MPs), by roll call vote.⁴⁹

Ultimately, the debate was not polarized by the idea of choosing between two options – the national State or Europe – but rather over the question of whether the Treaty was in line with Portuguese interests; all parties however agreed that they were in favour of Portugal's EU membership.

The Maastricht Treaty brought a number of divisive issues into play, such as the extension of the use of qualified majority voting in several areas and the creation of the Economic and Monetary Union, which

⁴⁵ *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 19, I Série, 11 de Dezembro de 1992, p. 653.

⁴⁶ Diogo Freitas do Amaral (Indep.), *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 19, I Série, 11 de Dezembro de 1992, pp. 674-677.

⁴⁷ Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros (1993): *Portugal nas Comunidades Europeias. Sétimo Ano, 1992*. Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros. Lisboa, p. I.

⁴⁸ Marinho, C. L. (1994): “Portugal and the Ratification of the Maastricht Treaty”. In F. Laursen, and S. Vanhoonacker (Eds.) *The ratification of the Maastricht Treaty: issues, debates and future implications*. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers. Dordrecht, p. 240.

⁴⁹ *Diário da Assembleia da República*, n.º 19, I Série, 11 de Dezembro de 1992, p. 698. Nine MPs were absent for the vote.

prompted the CDS and the PCP to demand a referendum as a means of ratifying the Treaty. The principal issues at stake were a further loss of national sovereignty and the transfer of new competences from national parliaments to EU institutions, in a continuous and exponential governmentalization of European affairs.

However, at the time, a referendum was not an option from a constitutional point of view, although there was also a lack of political will on the part of both the party in power (PSD), and the largest opposition party (PS), who were in agreement on this point and on a clear and unequivocal approval of the Treaty. The former Prime Minister Cavaco Silva was firmly opposed to a referendum. In his view, the Danish referendum emboldened the CDS to demand that Portugal hold one too, with the support of the PCP.⁵⁰

The Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, ratified on 2 April 1976, reflected political and ideological options which arose out of the revolutionary period and, understandably, included no reference to the country's relationship with nor participation in the EU. At the time, Portugal had not yet applied for membership, nor was it even a candidate state. The ratification of the Maastricht Treaty meant a constitutional revision was unavoidable, as a number of clauses contained in the Treaty clashed with Portuguese constitutional norms.

The 1992 constitutional revision (and the later one undertaken in 1997) sought to adapt the Constitution to the principles of the European Union Treaties and the Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam respectively, including foreign citizens' right to vote or the reinforcement of the Assembleia da República's exclusive legislative powers. In particular, the 1992 Constitutional Law included a number of points that were added to the Constitution in order that it comply with the Maastricht Treaty, as follows:

- Article 7, No. 6, "Portugal may, under conditions of reciprocity, with respect for the principle of subsidiarity and with a view to achieving economic and social cohesion, agree on the common exercise of the powers necessary for the construction of the European Union";
- Article 15, No. 5, "The law may also grant, under conditions of reciprocity, citizens of European Union Member States residing in

⁵⁰ Silva, A. C. (2019): "A primeira década na União Europeia". In J. R. Lã, A. Cunha, e P. S. Nunes (Org.) *As Décadas da Europa*. Bookbuilders. Santa Cruz, p. 50.

Portugal the right to elect and be elected Members of the European Parliament”;

- Article 166 f), to enable the Portuguese Parliament to “monitor and assess, under the terms of the law, Portugal’s participation in the process of building the European Union”;
- Article 200, No. 1 i), the obligation for the Government “to share, in good time, to the Assembly of the Republic (...) information regarding the process of construction of the European Union”.

In addition, Article 105 was altered, thereafter affirming that the “Banco de Portugal, as the national central bank, collaborates in defining and implementing monetary and financial policies and issues currency, under the terms of the law”.⁵¹

Following the constitutional revision, and taking into account the loss of power experienced by national parliaments as a result of competences being transferred to the European institutions and the national governments represented in them, the Portuguese parliament also passed a new law regulating Parliament’s role in subjecting EU matters to scrutiny.⁵²

4. PORTUGUESE PUBLIC OPINION AND FEELINGS TOWARDS EU

Whereas, shortly after accession, the great majority of Spaniards (65%) felt that their country had yet to see the advantages of joining the EU, in the same period, surprisingly more than one third of Portuguese citizens claimed to have already benefitted from EU membership.⁵³ The Portuguese have in fact been quite strong supporters of EU integration ever since the country joined the EU.

Overall, as far as the Portuguese are concerned, the EU has been synonymous with democratic stability and has constituted a source of economic prosperity. EU membership has never been questioned by any significant sector of Portuguese society, not even when the country received financial assistance from the Troika in 2011 and was subsequently subjected to deeply unpopular austerity measures. This was

⁵¹ Lei Constitucional n.º 1/92, de 25 de novembro, in *Diário da República*, 1.º Suplemento, n.º 273, Série I-A, de 25 de novembro de 1992, pp. 2-45.

⁵² Lei n.º 20/94, 15 de Junho, “Acompanhamento e apreciação pela Assembleia da República da participação de Portugal no processo de construção da União Europeia”.

⁵³ Commission of the European Communities, Eurobarometer No. 25, Spring 1986, Brussels, p. 55.

a time when Europe-wide indicators of public trust in European institutions were plummeting, yet in the face of political, economic and social discontent, Europeanism proved to be resilient in Portugal. As a matter of fact, at the time no political party, not even those who were new in the political arena, advocated withdrawing from the EU, in spite of the controversial nature of the economic policies imposed by the Troika.

This phenomenon can be partially explained by the fact that the two major parties – the Socialists and the Social Democrats – as well as those on the left of the political spectrum (Communist Party and the Left Bloc – Bloco de Esquerda) still play a key role in connecting public opinion to European issues in the country; the EU remains chiefly in the domain of a political elite, with parties exploiting it to fit their political agenda. Their visions of Portugal’s EU participation range from defending “more Europe” to a “better Europe” or “another path for Europe”.⁵⁴ Although Euroscepticism has seen an increase among civil society – more so than among political parties – the financial crisis was perceived as a consequence of the failure of the domestic political system to implement the structural reforms required at that time by the Economic and Monetary Union, and not something driven exclusively by EU membership.

In 2022, 68% of Portuguese citizens stated that they trusted the European Union, the third highest percentage among the Member States; 63% had a totally positive image of the EU, well above the EU average (47%); and 74% were optimistic about the future of the EU; while an impressive 75% of Portuguese citizens “totally disagreed” that Portugal could better face the future outside the EU.⁵⁵

As other authors have noted, “public support for the European project began to erode following the Maastricht agreement”, as it “required Europeans to conceive of the integration process as more than merely an economic enterprise”, and that decline might have signalled “a rejection of this dramatic acceleration in the scope and depth of the integration process.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Cunha, A. (2017): *Assuntos Europeus no Parlamento. Os debates*. Assembleia da República. Lisboa, p. 109.

⁵⁵ European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 97 - Summer 2022* (fieldwork: June-July 2022), European Union, Brussels, 2022, p. 101, p. 119, p. 123, p. 155.

⁵⁶ Eichenberg, R. C., and Dalton, R. J. (2007): “Post-Maastricht Blues: The Transformation of Citizen Support for European Integration, 1973–2004”. *Acta Politica* 42, p. 129, p. 139.

During this period, the EU's image deteriorated sharply. While in most Member States public support for the EU grew consistently until 1991, it began to experience a decline in 1992, coinciding with the approval of the Maastricht Treaty. It was not until 1995 that the first signs of recovery became discernable in some, but not all Member States. These were known as the years of the "Maastricht crisis".

In the months following the Maastricht agreement and the signing of the Treaty, a more intense politicization of the EU was set in motion. After the Danish referendum (2 June 1992) and more particularly after the French referendum (20 September 1992), public support for the Treaty declined sharply and even those among the general public with little interest in politics voiced their clear opposition to "much more Europe". Not only had the EU's prominence increased, but the conditions for an erosion of the "permissive consensus" had also begun to be met. In the 1970s, public opinion had not yet played a decisive role in the process of European integration and the workings of EU.⁵⁷ The relatively high public support enjoyed by the EU at the time was described as a "permissive consensus".⁵⁸ Ever since Maastricht and the dissatisfaction provoked by the Treaty among a large number of voters, this has evolved into a "constraining dissensus" in which European integration is a subject of party political contestation, as postulated by the post-functionalist theory of European integration.⁵⁹

In Portugal, despite high levels of support for EU integration, and the fact that there has been no strong political divergence on EU affairs, "most of the time public opinion has no strong views on Europe", one of the exceptions to this being the time of the referenda on the Maastricht Treaty.⁶⁰

An historical overview (Chart I.) reveals that the Portuguese view of EU membership as "a good thing" has experienced fluctuations. It is clear that, immediately after accession in 1986, 67% of Portuguese citizens

⁵⁷ Lindberg, L., and Stuart A. S. (1970): *Europe's Would-be Popsy. Patterns of Change in the European Community*. Prentice Hall. Englewood Cliffs, 1970.

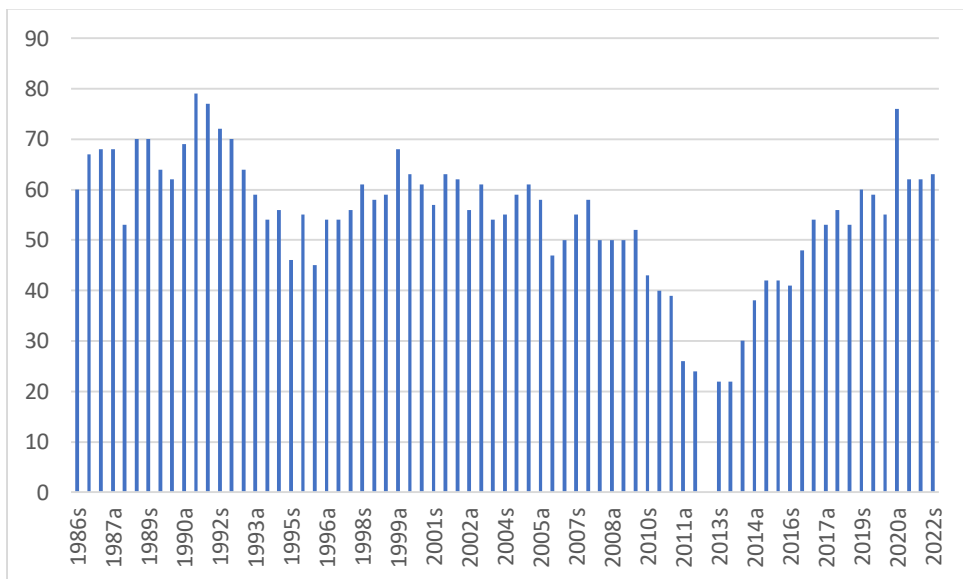
⁵⁸ Key, V. O. Jr. (1961): *Public Opinion and American Democracy*. Alfred A. Knopf. New York.

⁵⁹ Hooghe, L., and Marks, G. (2009): "A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus". *British Journal of Political Science* 39(1), 1-23.

⁶⁰ Torres, F., and Fraga, A. (2004): "What 'Europe'? Portugal's Reactive Adaptation to European Institutional Changes". *South European Society and Politics* 9(1), pp. 97-98.

already had a positive view of membership. Approval ratings reached a peak in 1991 with an impressive 79%, but this was followed by a sharp decline over the following two years until 1994, coinciding with the Maastricht discussions and their aftermath. However the popularity of EU membership was at its lowest point between 2011 and 2013 (when only 22% had a “positive image” of the EU), the period coinciding with the economic and financial crisis and intervention by the Troika.

Chart I. “EU membership is a good thing” / “Positive image of the EU”



Source: PORDATA (until 2011) using Eurobarometer data⁶¹; and Eurobarometer (from 2011 until 2022). No data is available for Autumn 2012.

⁶¹ Available at: <https://www.pop.pt/pt/grafico/a-politica/avaliacao-da-pertenca-a-ue/pt/?colors=pt-0>, last accessed 16 November 2022.

Standard Eurobarometer 78 - Autumn 2012 data are missing, as they do not appear separately in the report.

S = Spring; A = Autumn. Occasionally, the Spring Standard Eurobarometer may be published as the Summer edition; similarly, the Autumn edition may be published as the Winter edition.

5. CONCLUSIONS: WHAT TO REMEMBER FROM THE PORTUGUESE DISCUSSION OF MAASTRICHT

Foreign policy does not usually attract a great amount of media interest, nor do political parties or the general public often become truly engaged with it, except when it has a bearing on something of real concern to their country. Likewise, foreign policy is not an election winner for political parties, nor does it figure among citizens' number one concerns. The EU, however, is no longer perceived merely as a dimension of Portuguese foreign policy,⁶² but instead occupies a separate space between foreign and national politics: as stated in the Programme of the XXIII Constitutional Government (2022-...) it follows “the continuity and consolidation of the strategic axes and objectives of European and foreign policy”.⁶³ The use of this kind of terminology demonstrates that the Portuguese government makes a clear distinction between European and foreign policy. This is not insignificant, and suggests that European policy is different in some way.

Portugal's EU membership has yet to be broadly assessed from an academic point of view. It is however indisputable that two particular issues have proved particularly contentious as regards their membership: the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty and joining the Eurozone. Specifically, a number of major points should be highlighted with regard to the Portuguese debate around Maastricht.

Firstly, having only become a Member State six years previously, Portugal was not significantly involved in the historical processes that led to the signing of the Treaty. It did, though, participate in the decision to adopt it.

Secondly, and rather surprisingly, the Treaty was the first contested “product” of EU integration (following a Europe-wide trend). The ‘no’ campaign was spearheaded by the CDS, a party that was fundamentally pro-European, and that continued to support EU integration, but whose idea of Europe was that of a Europe of Fatherlands (De Gaulle's *Europe des Patries*), and an EU based on cooperation.

⁶² Cunha, A. (2023): “União Europeia”. In N. S. Teixeira and A. Cunha (Coord.) *Portugal Multilateral. Dicionário*. Almedina. Coimbra, p. 236.

⁶³ *Programa do XXIII Governo Constitucional*, 2022, p. 48. Available at: <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/gc23/programa-do-governo-xviii/programa-do-governo-xviii-pdf.aspx?v=%C2%ABmlkvi%C2%BB=54f1146c-05ee-4f3a-be5c-b10f524d8cec>, last consulted on 15 November 2022.

Thirdly, this led to an informal negative coalition formed by two parties with very different political affiliations: the CDS and the PCP, who had come to accept Portugal's integration into the EU, but remained firmly opposed to any further deepening.

Fourthly, the anti-Maastricht stance adopted by these two parties was not really a question of taking back control, but rather an unwillingness to accept the further loss of any part of the country's sovereignty, and a desire for the Treaty to be ratified by the people by means of a referendum.

Fifthly, the two mainstream pro-European parties that alternate in government (the PSD, in power at the time of the ratification of the Treaty, and the PS) voted in favour of the Treaty, and have never adopted a different position in any other vote regarding the deepening or the widening of the EU.

Sixth and lastly, Portuguese citizens figure amongst the Europeans most in favour of their country's EU membership, and are in the uppermost ranks of those who consider the EU to be a "good thing". Nevertheless, this approval rating has fluctuated over time, with the greatest decrease in support (a drop of 25%, from 79% to 54%) recorded around the time of the ratification and entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty.

Nonetheless, over time Maastricht has become more widely associated with the four freedoms of movement and their potential than with the transfer or loss of the country's sovereignty to the EU.

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