Investigating consensus versus conflict between the Greek and Portuguese political elites during the economic crisis: a matter of ideology?[*]

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Conceptual framework

Consensus is a concept marred by ambiguity because a variety of meanings might contribute to its broader understanding. Consensus is often used as a synonym of legitimacy. It can also be used as an expression of solidarity or social cohesion rising from a perceived common heritage which unites the community (McClosky 1964: 362).Moreover, words such as "harmony", "unanimity", "general agreement" and "accord" capture some of the other main aspects of " consensus". In politics, it can be defined as an operation characterized by reliance upon compromise and a search for some accommodation of divergent interests (Payne 1965:21-22). A consensus characterizes what is considered feasible (not necessary desirable) and supports conformity (if not outright compliance) with an established political agenda, limited what governing actors can and cannot do (Heffernan 2002: 743). However, some scholars question the usefulness of the pursuit to develop a single definition of consensus. Instead they ask: is there a one-size-fits-all type of consensus that is suitable for all democracies? Is a more extensive type of consensus needed in times of crisis? (McClosky 1964: 362). The latter question is especially pertinent given that one of the most common situations where consensus among the political elites is demanded is in times of economic crisis. One school in elite theory shares the view that major external events often push some elite groups to move towards a Pareto-optimal equilibrium. This group of theorists (by examining Latin America experiences during the 1980s) observes that economic crises may in the end produce a trend of consensus formation rather than political polarization. Another group of theorists (looking at the same Latin America patterns) note that in a crisis political consensus is almost impossible to achieve because within a context of fiscal austerity increases the likelihood of political protest 'from below", the private sector defects from the political bargain and the capacity of ruling elites to handle the distributive conflicts is very limited (for more details on both theories, see Choi 2006: 3). Furthermore, as some theorists argue, economical decline is often linked to political conflict. But, also the contrary could happen; some decades ago, Mancur Olson stated that rapid economic growth which produces economical inequality should be regarded as conducive to social and political unrest (Olson 1963).

The current sovereign debt crisis in the euro-periphery and in Southern Europe in particular, certainly creates unprecedented pressures on existing political systems, which possibly lead to the accentuation of national particularities and differences. Both the Greek and the Portuguese governments have been forced to request the activation of emergency funds (bailout packages that rely on EU-IMF loans) and implement harsh economic measures. The consequences of the economic crisis on the political arena have contributed to the creation of a rather unique political landscape in the political history of the two

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countries, at least since the consolidation of democracy; the former Portuguese Prime Minister José Sócrates resigned last March and on the 5th of June 2011 a so- called "Post-Bail-out Election" (Magalhães 2011) took place in Portugal. In Greece, years after the 1989-1990's coalition governments, a somewhat unorthodox coalition government has been formed (both in terms of ideological span and the composition of the cabinet), led by Lukas Papademos, a former deputy president of the European Central Bank. Portugal and Greece are not the only countries in Southern Europe facing the political consequences of the financial crisis. The crisis spread quickly to neighbouring Italy and led to the resignation of Silvio Berlusconi and the formation of an Italian government without a single elected official, lead by Mario Monti and his team of technocrats. Furthermore, the Spanish elections of November 2011 took place some months earlier than the completion of the incumbent government's term (March 2012) because the former Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero under significant pressure, announced that a new government should take charge of the economy in 2012.

The call for papers for the 2nd Plenary Conference of the *Comparative Candidate Survey* (CCS) happened at a time when the eyes of the world where focused on Greece and the attempts of Greek politicians to strike some kind of compromise that would allow the present parliament to support a new government and to avoid a snap election in the midst of negotiations to secure the continuation of external funding for Greece. As it is well-known , the widely desired 'consensus' between the two major political parties concerning the need to pursue restrictive economic policies has proven to be far more elusive in the case of Greece in relation to Portugal. From a series of facts, the degree of willingness for compromise and cooperation between different actors throughout the crisis was much higher in Portugal than in Greece. The mandatory request of cross- party political consensus to impose drastic austerity programs was addressed as a precondition for the continuation of the bailout package in Greece by the EU and in particular, by the head of the Eurogroup, Jean-Claude Juncker, with the support of the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the German and French governments.

This differentiation of consensus versus conflict between the governmental and main opposition parties in Greece and Portugal gave us the motivation, using the CCS data, to further explore this compelling empirical puzzle of the different patterns of consensualist and majoritarian positions assumed by the Greek and Portuguese political elites. It should be mentioned that by the time of submitting the proposal of this paper, no coalition government had yet been formed in Greece. Nevertheless, as it will be further elaborated, the later developments do not radically change the research design/question of the paper.

The main objective of the paper is to offer possible explanations of this observed divergence in outcomes by examining the perceptions of candidates belonging to the two major parties in both countries at a time right before the full onset of the crisis. We are using data from the 2009 CCS surveys and the candidates of the *Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement* (PASOK) and *Nea Dimokratia* (ND) for Greece and *Partido Socialista* (PS) and *Partido Social Democrata* (PSD) for Portugal are at the core of our empirical analysis. Therefore, the principal actors under investigation are the two major parties in both countries, excluding from our study other types of actors, such us bureaucrats, intellectuals, interest groups. The research strategy relies on a comparison of the ideological preferences and value orientations of the Greek and Portuguese candidates around specific issues which have been included at the Core CCS Questionnaire. The empirical component of our study rests upon the analysis on the economic, cultural and pro/anti-European dimensions, aiming to offer evidence of possible underlying factors that account for the later divergent trajectories of consensus versus conflict for the political parties in the two countries. The main goal is to determine whether ideological distance (or proximity) is responsible for the divergent outcomes of the two countries or whether the latter should be attributed to other factors.

Furthermore, we attempt to identify patterns of differentiation not only *between* the political elites of the two countries, but also *within* each country's political personnel. Finally, we make the first steps towards a model of measurement of *consensus* for ordered categorical data (which is absent from the standards statistical toolkit of social scientists)**.**

In an attempt to theoretically ground our empirical question, we believe that a case-study of consensus and dissensus of political elites is related to the broader conceptual framework of the seminal studies of Lijphart. From the late 1960s, the studies of Lijphart on the so-called "politics on accommodation" among political elites (1968) and the concepts of "consociational" democracy (1969, 1977), "power-sharing" (1985) and "consensus" democracy (1984, 1999) are principal analytical tools in the conceptual framework of this paper. Consociational democracy means "government by an elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy" (Lijphart 1969:216). As Andeweg states (2000:511), this is an often-quoted core definition, which is widely accepted and has remained unaffected by the evolution of the theory since the late 1960s. With regard to power distribution the two types of democracy, namely the "majoritarian" and the "consensus" are ideally opposed. Majoritarian democracy is characterized by minimal winning cabinets, cabinet dominance over legislature, two-party systems, plurality electoral systems, unicameralism, unitary and centralized government and some other features such as a dependent central bank. Consensus democracy, on the other hand, stresses power-sharing on the basis of a broad coalition cabinet and its main other aspects are the separation of powers, a multi-party system, proportional representation, strong bicameralism, and a federal and decentralized government (see table 1, Andeweg 2000:513).

Lijphart's (1999) factor analysis on the constitutional features and electoral outcomes of 36 different democracies, produces two dimensions. The horizontal dimension is the executive–parties (or joint-power) dimension, while the vertical is the one Lijphart calls the federal–unitary (or divided-power) dimension. The first dimension comprises the degree of electoral proportionality, the effective number of parties, the frequency of single-party government, the average cabinet length, and the structure of the interest group system (liberalism vs. corporatism). The second dimension includes the balance of power between the different legislative houses (for cases of bicameralism), federal vs. unitary government, presence or absence of judicial review, constitutional rigidity or flexibility, and independence versus dependence of central bank. In another section of the paper, we briefly present the main findings of Lijphart's studies for Greece and Portugal. Our attempt is to delineate a contextual institutional framework for the two countries that might allow us to better understand the constraints and opportunity structures under which political elites in the two countries are accustomed to operate in.

The conceptual framework of this paper is also related to another set of theoretical considerations deriving from studies on political opposition in Western democracies and in particular those which are focused on the determining factors (or indication of conditions) which appear to account for variations in types of opposition[i].In relation with this research framework is the argument that in liberal democracies, institutions and social cleavages have a profound effect on the character of opposition: at one extreme, opposition can reflect the existence of communal groups, parties being mere 'epiphenomena'; at the other extreme, where there are no or almost no communal divisions, and social cleavages are cross-cutting or weak, parties are likely to be strong and some of the most important groups at least will tend to operate closely with the parties (Blondel 2007: 486).

The next section briefly reviews the economical and political background up to the end of 2011. Subsequently, we proceed with a discussion of the national specific contexts in an attempt to offer more nuanced readings of contextual, structural and institutional factors that also might account for the divergent trajectories of cooperation patterns between the

political parties of the two countries. The third main section of the paper is focused on our data and method. Finally, the presentation of the findings from the Comparative Candidate Survey constitutes the fourth section of this paper.

Background

On 23 April 2010, the Greek government requested that the EU- ECB-IMF bailout package be activated. On 2 May 2010, a €110 billion loan for Greece was agreed, conditional on the implementation of harsh austerity measures. Few days before, Standard & Poor's slashed Greece's sovereign debt rating to BB+ or "junk" status amid fears of default. The initial adjustment program for Greece hoped to reestablish the access to private capital markets by 2012. Nevertheless, it was soon found that this process would take longer than expected with unexpected political and socio-economical consequences. The rises in the spreads (the difference between the interest rates of peripheral European over German bonds) of Irish[ii], Spanish and Portuguese sovereign bonds and the requested austerity policies of "reassurance" from the markets and the European Union forced the PS to negotiate with the PSD, which was led by Pedro Passo Coelho, an economist and businessman. The minority socialist government gained the consensus from the right-wing opposition party to a series of austerity packages demanded by the EU to tackle the difficulties in borrowing money from the market. This political consensus among the main two Portuguese political parties through 2010 was the main reason why the incumbent government of Sócrates insisted several times that the country would not need to be bailed out. Nevertheless, at the end of 2010 and after the re-election of the right-wing incumbent president (Cavaco Silva), the minority government of PS experienced increasing problems in getting the new austerity package approved by the opposition parties. On one hand, the public debt and the unemployment rate were dramatically increased; the interest rate in the secondary markets had passed the 7% and thus, the difficulties in raising money from international markets were evident. On the other hand, the internal and external pressure to accept the bailout had a prominent position in the political agenda too. In the end, on 23 March 2011, the opposition parties rejected a new austerity package to be passed (blaming at the same time the government for a failed implementation of the other packages) and the dissensus brought a series of consequences; the prime minister resigned, early elections were scheduled for the 5th of June 2011 and, before the polls, Sócrates was forced (on the 6th of April 2011) to officially ask for a bailout for Portugal (a €78 billion bailout package). At this point, we should highlight an important feature which clearly distinguishes the Portuguese from the Greek case and which constitutes the main *explanans* of our research question. The negotiations for the bailout took place directly with the government, but the PSD was also indirectly involved. Coelho agreed to participate, following the EU's insistence of formal agreement of the memorandum among all three largest Portuguese parties (the PS, the PSD and the CDS-PP). This request did not produce any conflict –as in Greece-   and the memorandum of agreement was completed in early May and subscribed by all three parties (Magalhães 2011: 6).

Despite the arrival at an agreement, the consensus character of the political arena was overshadowed by the election campaign debates. One of the major issues at stake was the question of responsibility for the financial situation of the country whilst the other was the bailout agreement. A common theme for all opposition parties (including PCP and BE) were the accusations towards Socrates personally for the handling of the crisis and the eventual exit of Portugal from the international financial markets (Fernandes 2011: 1298). On the other side, the PS explained the bailout both as a consequence of the role of the unregulated financial markets, the unfair downgrades, the Greek case and as a result of the

political crisis, by blaming PSD for "throwing the country into the hands of the IMF" (Magalhães 2011: 6). Another important issue of the campaign was the economic and social policies adopted by the PSD. The party presented a liberal (for some "neo-liberal") discourse, emphasizing the necessity for reducing the role of the state and introducing a set of constitutional amendments for reforming/retrenching the Portuguese welfare state. On the other hand, the rhetorical strategy of the socialist party was centered around the defense of the welfare state.

The lowest-ever for a legislative election turnout (58%), the defeat of the PS which nevertheless did not allow PSD to reach a clear majority and formed a coalition government with CDS, and the party system fragmentation which remained unchanged compared to 2009 (the effective number of parliamentary parties was around 3) can be considered as the main characteristics of the Portuguese 2011 election outcome (Magalhães 2011: 12).

The starting point of an overview of the complex Greek case should go back to the end of 2009. PASOK returned to power after two terms of ND government under Costas Karamanlis. The new prime minister, George Papandreou and his minister of the Economy, George Papakonstantinou, immediately expressed doubts about the accuracy of the previous government's calculations of the budget deficit and announced that the actual deficit was several percentage points (of GDP) higher in relation to the figure that was presented by the former conservative government. In the beginning of 2010, the European Commission published a report on Greece's "unreliable" economic figures and observed "severe irregularities" in Greek accounting procedures.

As mentioned before, Greece has been the first Euro zone country to ask for a bailout. Almost a year after the agreement, in June 2011, the Greek government proposed additional spending cuts and had to pass in parliament an austerity bill, the so-called "Mid-term Strategy Plan" (or Memorandum) as an exchange of the release of further vital aid to Greece by middle of July 2011. Without it the country faced the danger of default. The major Greek political parties failed to reach a consensus on the necessary measures to qualify for this package. The dissensus among the Greek political elites was accompanying with general strikes, mass demonstrations and protests for the severe austerity measures. Most of these ended up with violence both from the protesters and the authorities, with the exception of the spontaneous protest movement (that mirrored analogous mobilizations in Spain) dubbed the "desperate generation" or the "indignants". The growing political unrest fed fears of a generalized social breakdown and forced George Papandreou to propose a re-shuffled cabinet, and asked for a vote of confidence in the parliament. The new government won the confidence vote of the parliament on the 22nd of June 2011 and few days later the mid-term strategy plan was finally voted in parliament. For both cases, the government relied on the support of PASOK MPs and the Eurozone bailout package was released when the proposal was passed. The leader of ND, Antonis Samaras was in favour of a renegotiation of the memorandum and a call for snap elections. He clearly stated several times "I am not going to consent to this recipe that has been proven wrong"; "We want to annihilate the deficit. We don't want to bring Greek people, the Greek middle class and Greek families to their knees". The desired consensus was far away from ND positions, whose leader insisted on an alternative plan, a different government with the credibility to implement it and a transition to a new rescue plan given the fact that the initial plan had failed. He only agreed to back the 50-billion-euro privatisation plan that was part and parcel of the bailout package. The intransigent way of Samaras became a point of concern for European leaders and representatives of the International Monetary Fund.

A second and even more prominent example of ND's inflexibility was documented in late November 2011. As it is well-known, on the 27th of October 2011, the Euro zone leaders and the IMF came to an agreement with banks to accept a 50% write-off of (some part of) Greek debt. The aim of the haircut is to reduce Greece's debt to 120% of GDP by 2020. One

day after this agreement, George Papandreou announced his intention to hold a referendum (without clarifying the exact question, but vaguely insinuating that it would relate to the approval of the decisions taken at the Euro-Summit of the 27th of October). His intentions behind the announcement of the referendum have been a matter of intense speculation for the international press, pundits and social scientists around the world, highlighting the question whether the "fear" of a referendum was an instrument for seeking consensus or just a blunder. However, the widespread criticism of the referendum proposal, from within the parliamentary group of PASOK, the opposition and other EU governments, forced George Papandreou to withdraw the referendum proposal and announce his plans for resignation in favour of a national unity government. Immediately afterwards Papandreou asked for a vote for confidence in order to begin the negotiations with opposition parties to form a coalition "emergency" government. The ND's leader refused to negotiate unless his rival resigned first. After protracted negotiations between PASOK, ND and the party of the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS)-the only smaller party which agreed to be involved in these negotiations- mainly on the issues of the choice of the new Prime Minister and the exact time of the snap election, and stalled by the insistence of Antonis Samaras to not have members of his own party directly participate in the new government, the three parties agreed on the new coalition cabinet. Prime Minister Lucas Papademos and his cabinet were formally sworn in on 11 November 2011[iii]. Even after the formation of the coalition government, the leader of ND insisted that his party does not "co-govern" with PASOK. This statement created another round of conflict, with the EU and IMF demanding a written commitment of agreement (not unlike the case of Portugal) from all leaders of the parties that had contributed members to the cabinet. The ND party strongly argued that the verbal commitments by Samaras were sufficient, but the EU- wanted to see a written agreement[iv].

National Political Arena Contexts

1. General characteristics of political elites in Portugal and Greece

Evidence from the previous-and few- studies of political elites in Southern Europe (see mainly Conti, Cotta and de Almeida 2010) usually confirm that Southern Europe is a generally pro-European region, meaning that the themes of economic and political regional integration have not proven thus far to be particularly divisive, despite the growing politicization of grievances toward the EU, particularly from smaller parties of the left or the right. (Tsatsanis& Teperoglou 2011: 3).

Focusing on the attitudes of the Portuguese and Greek political elites and using as main reference two studies (Moreira et al. 2010 and Nezi et al. 2010; both had relying on data from the 2007 IntUne survey) we would like to bring attention to some interesting characteristics. The level of attachment to the EU of both the Portuguese and the Greek elites is weaker than to the national polity mainly because of a rather instrumental allegiance to Europe. In the Portuguese case there is-as almost everywhere else- the understanding of both European and national identity rests on a mix of ascriptive (religion and ancestry) and achieved (culture, respect for institutions, feelings and language) components but, beyond that, European identity also encompasses an additional cultural/religious component. The Portuguese elites also employ a religious qualification and thus, the paradox of combination of the concept of Christianity as the driving element of European culture with the secular element of Portuguese national identity is observed. This attitude appears to be one of the most divisive issues since the left unanimously agrees that religion is not a relevant attribute in terms of European identity, whereas 50 per cent of respondents on the right express the opposite opinion (Moreira et al. 2010 : 65 and 74). In the case of the sampled MPs from ND the pattern is different: 83.3 per cent reported that

Christianity is an important aspect of Greek citizenship (Nezi et al. 2010: 84). Furthermore, some other remarkable characteristics of the Greek political elites are the trends of 'traditionalism', which describes the category under which beliefs that for someone to be Greek he or she has to be Christian, to have Greek parents, to be born in Greece, to share Greece's cultural traditions and to 'feel' Greek are included. These variables explain most of the variance in national identity, followed by "formalism" (the ability to speak Greek and to be a Greek citizen) and the culture of "liberalism" (to respect Greek laws and institutions) (Nezi et al. 2010: 85).

Another additional element that should be mentioned for both countries is that, especially during and after the transition to democracy, economic policy preferences have been linked (in political party discourse at least) not necessarily to standard economic ideologies but to the broader project of 'modernization', which has not only economic but also political and cultural aspects. Accession into the EU, the full entry into the globalised economy and the ensuing challenge to 'catch-up' with the rest of Europe, produces differentiations between actors which are more open to change ('reformers') and those which are more resistant ('traditionalists'). Globalization and Europeanisation create and reinforce domestic cleavages based on competing notions of reform, economic interest and identity. Change and continuity are juxtaposed as domestic fault lines across the domestic system (Featherstone & Kazamias 2000: 13).

Comparing the two political elites from another perspective, Sotiropoulos and Bourikos observed the mixture of continuity and discontinuity in several characteristics of the Greek ministerial elites, concluding that at the political elite level some changes lag behind the faster developments at the societal level (Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2003:185-186). On the other hand, Pinto and Almeida highlighted a growing trend in Portuguese politics to open the parties to 'civil society' and look for ministers outside the 'party realm' to enhance the government's technical credibility and to tackle parties' disaffection (Pinto and Almeida 2009: 156 and Almeida and Pinto 2003: 33-34). As they highlighted, this tendency does not arise only from the growing complexity and technical character of policy-making. Among other factors, it is also connected with the weak penetration of parties in the Portuguese civil society (Pinto and Almeida 2009: 153). Evidence of increasing number of "independents" is considerably lower in Greece. Maybe one of the reasons is the fact that the party penetration of state and social institutions is a fact and that various forms of clientelism are observed in the Greek political system.

2. The left-right dimension

The broadly shared trajectory of economic development in Southern Europe and the resulting similarities in the composition of the national economic structures have had important repercussions in the formulation of policy orientations for political actors in the region. Even though the classic left-right dimension has emerged as an important signifier for the construction of political identities in the region in the post-war and post-authoritarian periods, it has been suggested that the content of the dimension is arguably determined more by value-based polarities and less by economic ideology (and the standard capital-labor conflict) in comparison to other European countries. The argument goes that the legacy of paternalist states, the large size of the agricultural sector, the existence of small and relatively unorganised working classes, and the persisting size and influence of the 'traditional middle strata' –with the partial exceptions of northern Italy and northeastern Spain - has meant that it has been less politically expedient for parties to espouse economically liberal positions (regardless of actual policies pursued when in power) due to the relative absence of a sizeable receptive audience in the region (Tsatsanis& Teperoglou 2011: 3).

The finding that distributional issues figure less prominently in understandings of the left-right dichotomy in Southern Europe, does not mean that left and right do not function as important cognitive shortcuts in the categorization of political parties, policy preferences and political identities. However, it can mean that the distinction between left and right - understood strictly in terms of its standard association with the class conflict and distributional politics (Mair 2007: 213) - does not have the same structuring impact on the South European ideological space when compared to other European democracies.

3.   Evidence from Lijphart's studies

In this section of the paper, we briefly present the main findings from the studies of Arend Lijphart for Greece and Portugal in an attempt to compare the two countries by confronting the factors which develop the Lijphart's typology of democratic systems that places countries on a continuum from most consensual to most majoritarian. Although, his analysis runs up to the middle of 1996 (the first year analyzed is 1974 for Greece and 1976 for Portugal), we decided to present shortly some findings due to the fact that even after 1996 no fundamental changes have occurred in both the electoral system/constitutional level in the two countries of our study and also believe that the findings indicate some more general patterns that are useful for a broader explanation of the main research question of our study.

The first overarching observation is the different pattern for the Portuguese case within a period of a decade (from the late 1980s to the 1996). From a study of Lijphart et al. (1988) focusing on Southern Europe, the main conclusion was that Portugal is consensual and unitary, while Greece is an "eccentric" case of majoritarianism (Lijphart et al. 1988: 17 and 19). Their overall conclusion was that the changes which were occurring in South Europe were reinforcing the majoritarianism of already majoritarian regimes (namely Greece and Spain) and, similarly, were reinforcing the consensualism of the already consensual systems (namely, Portugal and Italy). Thus, according to Lijphart, Bruneau, Diamandouros and Gunther at the time of writing, Greece and Portugal were much more likely to move farther away from each other than to draw together (Lijphart et al. 1988: 22) Nevertheless, Portugal followed a quite a rather different path as we explain below.

From Lijphart's study of 1999, the first finding relates to his threefold classification into plural, semiplural and nonplural societies (based on the degree of societal division). Greece and Portugal are at the same group of "nonplural societies" (Lijphart 1999: 56). Although this classification reflects the situation in the middle-1990s, Greece and Portugal remain comparatively homogeneous societies, despite increasing immigration rates.

Regarding the examination of the effective number of parliamentary parties, the highest number of the Portuguese parliamentary parties was 4.26 and for Greece was 2.40 accordingly. Among all the countries of his study, Portugal stands as the only example of a clear trend toward fewer parties. In most of the other countries there was either little variation over time (e.g Greece) or fluctuation without any clear long-term trends (Lijphart 1999: 77). The trend of significant reduction of the effective number of parliamentary parties in Portugal is continued in the period from 1996 and on and confirms the historical trend towards two-partism that was set in motion with the 1987 realignment election. From calculation presented in Freire (2010: 607-8) and (Magalhães 2011: 6), the effective number of parliamentary parties was about 3 in both the 2009 and 2011 elections. This number is almost identical with the respective one of Greece from the 2009 legislative election (Teperoglou 2010: 252).

Studying the issue dimensions of partisan conflict, Lijphart identifies seven dimensions for the thirty-six democratic party systems in the period 1945-96. These are: socioeconomic, religious, cultural-ethnic, urban-rural, regime support, foreign policy, and

postmaterialist issues. Portugal reaches an average of 2,5 dimensions, while Greece 1.5. In both countries, the socio-economic dimension is the only one with high salience. Some slightly different patterns between the two countries are observed in the dimensions that constitute the medium salience group. Religious, regime support and foreign policy are at the group of medium salience in Portugal, while in Greece only the regime support has a less prominent and explicit, but still merit at least a "medium" rating (see Lijphart 1999: 80-81; results of Table 5.3). The common pattern of salience of the regime support dimension can be explained by the presence of communist parties in both countries.

On another component of Lijphart study (the proportions of time during which minimal winning cabinets and one-party cabinets were in power), Greece is an exception as it stands in the same group with the British-heritage countries at the majoritarian end, reaching the remarkable mean of 96.9. For Portugal the two elements are unequally combined; the mean is on 40.2 (the minimal winning cabinets is 37.4% and one-party cabinets at 43%; see Lijphart 1999: 110-111). Finally, moving to the average electoral disproportionality and type of electoral system used in legislative elections, the figures are as follows: 4.04 for Portugal and 8.08 for Greece (see Lijphart 1999: 162). We are not presenting the results from some other components of Lijphart's study both due to space limitations and lack of relevance.

In conclusion, Greece represents one of the most prominent examples of majoritarianism, while in Portugal there is marked move away from the initial post-authoritarian model of consensus democracy. Once the political system was stabilized and consolidated, there have been clear trends towards a more majoritarian system. Nevertheless, any attempt to include the two countries in the same group is bound to fail to capture the much more dynamic aspects of the Portuguese system.

Data and Method

The 2009 CCS Portuguese study includes 50 (63,3%) PSD candidates and 29 (36,7%) PS candidates. The fieldwork was carried out between 12th February and 31st July 2010.The CCS survey in Portugal was part of a larger research project titled "Portuguese Deputies in Comparative Perspective: Elections, Leadership, and Political Representation" based at the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology of the Lisbon University Institute (CIES-ISCTE-IUL), coordinated by Andre Freire and Jose Manuel Leite Viegas, the goal of which is to study the process of political representation in the Portuguese parliament. The study´s universe was made up of 1150 candidates to the Portuguese Assembly of the Republic in the 2009 legislative elections. The survey was answered by 203 candidates (17,7% of the universe, 28,4% of the questionnaires sent) from the 5 major parties/coalitions with representation in the Parliament (See: Comparative Candidates Survey Portuguese database-codebook, available at the CCS website). The 2009 CCS Greek study includes 111 (52,9%) ND candidates and 95 (45,2%) PASOK candidates It was the second candidate study in Greece in a series that started in 2007 (Andreadis and Chadjipadelis, 2007) and it was conducted as a web survey (Andreadis, 2010). The CCS surveys in Greece are based at the Laboratory of Applied Political Research of the Department of Political Sciences, Aristotle University Thessaloniki, Greece, coordinated by Theodore Chadjipadelis, Ioannis Andreadis and in collaboration with Eftichia Teperoglou.

The first and most important step in our research design was to make the appropriate choice of those questions of the "CCS Common Core questionnaire" from which we can explore the ideological positions of the candidates on the economic, cultural and pro/anti-European dimensions. These questions are from the section "C. Issues and Policies" and are the following: "C2. People hold different views on political issues. What do you think

of the following" ? with a list of twelve issues (further details below) , accompanying with the four questions about the pro and anti-European stances. The latter group of questions are: the EU membership evaluation (C4. *Generally speaking, do you think that [country's] membership of the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad*?), the opinion about the European Unification (C5. "*Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion?*"), the satisfaction with EU democracy (C6. *All in all, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union?*) and the opinion about the EU Enlargement (C7. *Should the EU be enlarged to include more countries?*). Finally, we are also using in the analysis the questions about the self-placement of the candidate on the left-right scale (C3. "*In politics, people sometimes talk about the 'left' and the 'right'. Where would you place your own views on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means the most left and 10 means the most right?*"), and the one of the placement of the party (C3a. "*Using the same scale, where would you place your party?*").

The second and most complicated methodological issue was the selection of the most appropriate method of analysis. Our main aim here is to make the first steps towards a model of measurement of *consensus*, which is our dependent variable and *sensu stricto is defined* in terms of statistics as the relative absence of dispersion, meaning that maximum consensus occurs when dispersion gets its minimum value (0) which occurs when there is no variability. When we want to measure variability, the first statistical measure that comes to mind is the variance, or the square root of variance, i.e. standard deviation. But, we have to measure the "consensus" using mainly Likert scale variables, which are ordinal variables, i.e. the response categories have a rank order, but the intervals between values cannot be presumed equal. Measures of dispersion for ordered categorical data are absent from the standard statistical toolkit of social scientists (Blair& Lacy 200: 251) and the question of the most appropriate class of measures of ordinal variation is raised. The studies by Leik (1966) Kvalseth (1989, 1995), Berry and Mielke (1992a,1992b) and Blair and Lacy (2000) provided us methodological insights and the importance of selecting the best measure is a crucial point that needs to be clarified. The application of some conventional measures to such data is very problematic and unsatisfactory.

Ordinal variables are categorical variables and the numerical values (scores) assigned to the categories are arbitrary chosen (as far as these numbers maintain the order of the categories of the ordinal variable). This means that different researchers may use different scores for the same ordinal variable. For instance, a "level of agreement" variable is usually coded as follows: strongly disagree (1)-disagree (2)- neither agree, nor disagree (3) - agree (4) and strongly agree (5) but a researcher is free to use the following coding: strongly disagree (-1)-disagree (-0,5)- neither agree, nor disagree (0) - agree (0,5) and strongly agree (1). Such changes of scores would give different values for the variance of the same variable. This problem is very serious as Blair& Lacy (2000: 252) demonstrate with an example: First they use one coding scheme and variance is larger in Group A than in Group B, then they use a different coding scheme for the same variable and the variance is larger in Group B than in Group A, i.e. the outcome of the comparison of the variances is different, leading to different conclusions. Thus, the usual measures of dispersion, which are made to estimate the variability of ratio and interval data, cannot be used to measure the dispersion of ordinal data, or they can be used only as supplementary measures (Cyr 1978).

Another question is whether we can ignore the ordered character of the data and use a chi-square test of independence which would test for shape differences between the two distributions. The answer is negative because Blair& Lacy (200: 253) demonstrate we can have two groups with exactly the same dispersion but with very different shapes. As a result, if the *chi square* test lead us to reject the independence this does not guarantee that the two groups have different dispersions.

Another conventional measure of qualitative variation that should also been dropped is the *IQV*, initially suggested by Simpson (1949). As Blair and Lacy argued, the selection of this measure is undesirable because it not only wastes information, but also violates reasonable intuition about dispersion in ordered data (Blair and Lacy 2000: 253). An example- using our research hypothesis- highlights the shortcomings of *IQV*: Suppose that when asked about their level of agreement on an item all candidates of party A choose strongly agree and all candidates of party B choose agree. Now let's suppose that item all candidates of party A choose strongly agree and all candidates of party B choose strongly disagree. IQV would give the same level of dispersion without taking into account what the categories are and what is the distance between the categories.[v] Therefore, it is problematic for the analysis of the dispersion to treat ordinal data as interval/ratio or as nominal, as conventional approaches do.

Various measures of variation for ordinal categorical data have been suggested and these are: the *LOV* (Leik, 1966), the *IOV (index of ordinal variation;* (Berry & Mielke, 1992a, 1992b), and the *COV coefficient of variation* (Kvalseth, 1989, 1995)[vi]

Blair and Lacy (2000: 251) have provided two additional measures LSQ and L, which are [0-1] normed measures of concentration and their usefulness is to measure cultural consensus. In the following paragraphs we use the measure of consensus *LSQ* to describe the level of consensus within each party and the level of consensus of the combined group, i.e. the national consensus.

Operationalization of the measure of consensus

Aiming to measure the concentration or dispersion in terms of consensus (and dissensus) not only *between* the Portuguese and Greek candidates, but also *within* each country's political personnel, we can identify two patterns of differentiation and label them as follows:

"*Party consensus*" (LSQ_A): if set A consists of candidates of party A then Party consensus is the consensus level of the candidates of party A.

"Party dispersion"=1-"Party consensus"

"*National consensus*" (LSQ_{AUB}): if set A consists of candidates of party A and set B consists of candidates of party B then National consensus is the consensus level of the all candidates who belong in the union of sets A and B (AUB).

"National dispersion"=1-"National consensus"

Furthermore, we employ a classification of the consensus values of LSQ both of the two separate groups and the combined group which corresponds to all possible solutions. We argue that cooperation between two groups A, B of candidates is difficult when groups are different from each other and homogeneous internally. The larger the consensus within the groups and the smaller the consensus of the combined group AUB, the more difficult it is for groups A and B to work together and to arrive on an agreement.
This classification is as follows:

"Intense conflict":
If $LSQ_{AUB} < LSQ_A$ and $LSQ_{AUB} < LSQ_B$ then the additional dispersion observed at the national level (union of sets) is due to the conflict between the groups A and B. In addition the larger LSQ_A and LSQ_B are and the smaller LSQ_{AUB} is, the more intense is the conflict. Following the

aforementioned statement we propose a criterion to identify items on which there is strong disagreement between parties. If the national consensus (i.e. the consensus between the parties) on item j is smaller than the minimum consensus of the parties on the same item and the national consensus is less than 0.5, then item j is named as an intense conflict item between the two parties.

"Mild conflict":
If the national consensus on item j is smaller than the minimum consensus of either of the parties on the same item and the national consensus value is greater than 0.5, then item j is named as a mild conflict item between the two parties.[vii]

"Low consensus"
If the national consensus (LSQ_{AUB}) lies between the consensus values of the groups A and B then the dispersion of the combined group is partially due to the internal dispersion of the group with the lower consensus and partially due to potential conflict between the two parties.

Findings

The presentation of the findings is divided into two main sections. In the first one the results on the questions of the different political issues and on the European issues are presented. The analysis about the self-placement of the candidates on the left-right scale and the placement of the party is followed. Finally, we also present separately the results on the question about the evaluation of EU democracy because another method was applied.

1.   Issues

First of all, it is necessary to weight for equal number of candidates supported by each party. In Portugal, the PS candidates are underrepresented in the sample. If we do not use any weights for the Portugal sample then the consensus (values of LSQ) of the combined group will be underestimated if the consensus within PS is greater than the consensus within PSD and it will be overestimated if the consensus within PS is greater than the consensus within PSD.

Table 1 presents the values of Party consensus on the positions of the candidates of PSD and PS and PASOK and ND and the values of National consensus for Portugal and Greece (based on weighted samples so that in each country each political party is equally represented) among fourteen political issues, while Table 2 presents the European issues accordingly.

How can we read the results in these two tables? Taking as an example the results regarding the opinion about the enlargement of the European Union, the conclusion it that for the candidates of PSD the opinion about the enlargement of the European Union exhibits 37.2% of maximum possible concentration (consensus), while for the PS candidates the same variable exhibits 52.9% of maximum possible consensus. Since consensus and dispersion are related such that *consensus=1-dispersion*, we can also interpret the same numbers from the opposite point of view (the point of dispersion). For instance, we can say that variable "Opinion about the enlargement of the European Union" exhibit 1-37.2%=62.8% (1-52.9%=47.1%) of the maximum possible dispersion in PSD (PS). In other words, the opinion about the enlargement of the European Union has a more dispersed distribution in PSD than in PS.

Table 1. Consensus on issues

	LSQ$_{PSD}$	LSQ$_{PS}$	LSQ$_{PT}$	LSQ$_{ND}$	LSQ$_{PASOK}$	LSQ$_{GR}$
C2.1. Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of Portugal /Greece	0,415	0,482	0,423	0,453	0,454	0,420
C2.2. Politics should abstain from intervening in the economy	0,476	0,627	0,532	0,258	0,541	0,358
C2.3. Stronger measures should be taken to protect the environment	0,678	0,605	0,638	0,689	0,755	0,720
C2.4. Same-sex marriages should be prohibited by law	0,273	0,641	0,195	0,376	0,379	0,314
C2.5. Women should be given preferential treatment when applying for jobs and promotions	0,567	0,558	0,558	0,382	0,629	0,471
C2.6. People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences	0,431	0,496	0,448	0,611	0,490	0,550
C2.7. Providing a stable network of social security should be the prime goal of government	0,478	0,536	0,501	0,669	0,755	0,709
C2.8. Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people	0,574	0,555	0,562	0,457	0,570	0,474
C2.9. Our democracy needs serious reform	0,574	0,479	0,485	0,639	0,556	0,598
C2.10. Immigrants are good for Portuguese/Greek economy	0,712	0,767	0,737	0,551	0,582	0,531
C2.11. Women should be free to decide on matters of abortion	0,310	0,655	0,357	0,512	0,669	0,563
C2.12. Portugal /Greece should provide military assistance to 'the war on terror'	0,603	0,495	0,540	0,363	0,426	0,351
C2.13. Torturing a prisoner is never justified, even if it might prevent a terrorist attack	0,532	0,648	0,526	0,444	0,426	0,427
C2.14. Globalization should be promoted	0,538	0,524	0,529	0,465	0,472	0,466

Source: *Comparative Candidate Survey for Portugal and Greece 2009*

Table 2. Consensus on attitudes about EU related issues

	LSQ$_{PSD}$	LSQ$_{PS}$	LSQ$_{PT}$	LSQ$_{ND}$	LSQ$_{PASOK}$	LSQ$_{GR}$
C4. Opinion about the Portuguese Greek membership of the European Union	0,923	1,000	0,961	0,869	0,862	0,865
C5. Opinion about the unification of the European Union	0,476	0,659	0,526	0,451	0,585	0,495
C7. Opinion about the enlargement of the European Union	0,372	0,529	0,393	0,374	0,342	0,268

Source: *Comparative Candidate Survey for Portugal and Greece 2009*

Issues of Intense Conflict in Portugal and in Greece

Among the candidates of PSD and PS there is –only- one political issue around which an intense conflict is formed; the opinion about the **prohibition by law of same-sex marriages** (LSQ=0.273 for PSD and 0.641 for PS). There is dispersion among the PSD candidates, but the national dispersion is even larger (1-0.195=0.805) because 89,7% of PS candidates fall into the categories "strongly disagree and disagree" regarding the statement, while most PSD candidates fall into the other 3 categories (only 22% of PSD candidates fall

into strongly disagree and disagree). We can arrive at the same conclusion also for the candidates of PASOK and ND. This issue of **cultural liberalism** is also an intense conflict item among the Greek candidates. The national dispersion is larger than the dispersion of each party.

Contrary to the Portuguese candidates, there are some other political issues which constitute a basis of an intense conflict among the Greek candidates. The first group of issues concern **immigration,** both in terms of cultural integration (question about the requirement of adapting to the customs of the country) and in economic terms (question about the role of the immigrants in the economy). The probability of adopting a negative attitude towards immigrants is much higher among the candidates of the Greek right-wing party.

The opinion about the **enlargement of the European Union** is another issue at stake; although, this issue displays low consensus values both within ND (0,374) and within PASOK (0,342), the national consensus is much lower (0,268) and thus, it is an item of intense conflict. This is a result of the majority of PASOK candidates (71%) falling into the categories "strongly agree and agree", while most of ND candidates (60%) fall into the categories of disagreement. The measurement of the opinion towards the military assistance to **'the war on terror'** produce similar patterns; the national consensus is: 0,351, which is explained by the majority of PASOK candidates (55%) falling into the categories strongly disagree-disagree, while the respective percentage among the ND candidates is much lower (29%).

Issues of Mild Conflict in Portugal and in Greece

The opinion about the **torture of prisoner** that should never be justified, even if it might prevent a terrorist attack, captures rather high consensus both within PSD and within PS. National consensus is smaller than the consensus within each party. This indicates that there is a conflict between PS and PSD over this issue. But, the national consensus is larger than 0.5, so the conflict between the two parties is not intense.

None of the results for the Greek candidates could be categorized into mild conflict.

Low national consensus

In both countries we can observe cases in which the national consensus lies between the consensus values of the two parties. The reasons can be an internal dispersion of the party with the lower consensus (intra-party conflict) and a potential conflict between the two parties. From the analysis of the Portuguese data under this category are the following political issues:

Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of Portugal: low consensus for both parties

People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences: low consensus for both parties

Our democracy needs serious reform: lower consensus in PS

Women's decisions on matters of abortion: there is a much lower consensus within PSD than within PS (38% of PSD candidates fall into the categories strongly disagree-disagree and 42% of PSD candidates fall into the categories strongly agree- agree). Thus the low consensus on this item is not a result of a conflict between PSD and PS. Mostly it is the internal dispersion within PSD that is reflected to the low consensus of the combined group.

From the analysis of the Greek data, several political issues fit to this category of our study:

The first political issue that we should pay particular attention to is the opinion of the candidates towards the statement "**politics should abstain from intervening in the economy**". For the candidates of ND this statement exhibits 26% of maximum possible concentration (consensus) , while for the PASOK candidates the same variable exhibits 54% of maximum possible consensus. The significantly lower consensus within ND (0,258) than within PASOK (0,541) is due to the fact that although the majority of ND candidates (62%) agrees with the majority of PASOK and falls into "strongly disagree-disagree", there is a significant share (31%) who fall into the opposite categories "strongly agree-agree". Therefore, the dispersion in the combined group is the reflection of the internal dispersion between ND candidates. This finding illuminates a very crucial and relevant feature of intraparty dynamics within ND. Even though historically ND has always contained loose informal factions around particular personalities, in recent years there has been a growing differentiation and mounting tension between two ideologically distinct groups, the so-called "liberal right" versus the "popular right". In the last elections for party leadership (the first election that was open to non-party members), the struggle between the two groups became all too clear. The two main rivals were Dora Bakoyanni (daughter of ex-prime minister Mitsotakis) and Antonis Samaras , who emerged as representatives of the "liberal" and "popular" camps respectively. The victory of Samaras and his assumption of the leadership of the party can thus be interpreted as a victory for the "popular" camp, meaning that the elite positions and decision-making authority have been decisively reallocated towards the more conservative and populist elements within the party organization.

Another issue of low national consensus is about the **opinion that women should be given preferential treatment when applying for jobs and promotions**: Lower consensus within ND (0,382) than within PASOK (0,629) due the fact that although the majority (57%) agrees with the majority of PASOK (87%) and falls into the categories "strongly disagree-disagree", there is a significant share of ND candidates (23%) who fall into the opposite categories "strongly agree-agree". Thus, the dispersion in the combined group is the reflection of the internal dispersion between ND candidates.

Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people: Lower consensus within ND (0,457) than within PASOK (0,570) due the fact that although the majority (55%) is in agreement with the majority of PASOK (83%) and falls into the categories "strongly agree-agree". there is a significant share of ND candidates (17%) who fall into the opposite categories "strongly disagree-disagree". The dispersion in the combined group is the reflection of the internal dispersion between ND candidates.

Torturing a prisoner is never justified, even if it might prevent a terrorist attack: low consensus both for ND candidates (0,444) and for PASOK candidates (0,426)

Globalization should be promoted: Low consensus both within ND (0,465) and within PASOK (0,472). It should be highlighted that both Greek candidates are on the "anti-globalization" camps, while the Portuguese are in favour of the globalization.

Unification of the European Union: Lower consensus within ND (0,451) than within PASOK (0,585), but there are no significant differences.

The variable about the **satisfaction with the democracy in the European Union** is converted to a binary variable (Not Satisfied/Satisfied), thus chi-square is suitable here. The findings are presented in Table 3.

We can derive the following main conclusions: the PSD candidates are more satisfied with EU democracy compared to the candidates of the socialist party. The same trend is observed in Greece. But the difference is that the centre of gravity in Portugal is towards the satisfied half of the continuum, whereas in Greece it is located towards the opposite end.

Table 3. Satisfaction with the democracy in the European Union

	Not Satisfied	Satisfied
PSD	26,00%	74,00%
PS	55,20%	44,80%
Portugal	36,70%	63,30%
ND	58,30%	41,70%
PASOK	73,90%	26,10%
Greece	65,40%	34,60%

2. The Left-Right Dimension

Table 4. Consensus on Left/Right Dimension

	LSQ_{PSD}	LSQ_{PS}	LSQ_{PT}	LSQ_{ND}	LSQ_{PASOK}	LSQ_{GR}
C3. Left/right scale: candidate position	0,698	0,711	0,566	0,644	0,700	0,475
C3a. Left/right scale: candidate's political party	0,800	0,787	0,670	0,715	0,729	0,583

The self-placement on the left-right scale and the placement of the party itself produces intense conflict in Greece. The candidate's political party consensus is 0,475 and 0,583 respectively. Consensus values are smaller in Greece than in Portugal for both variables. LSQ values smaller than 0.5 can occur when all respondents classify equally into two categories i, j where j-i=5 and k=11. The consensus within ND candidates is 0,644 and within PASOK candidates is: 0,700. Thus, we have two groups which display homogeneity within each group and heterogeneity between the groups and LSQ=0,475 i.e. less than 0,5. This value of LSQ classifies the conflict between PASOK and ND candidates on the left/right dimension as intense. While in Greece, the self-placement on the left-right scale and the placement of the party itself are grouped in the intense conflict classification, in Portugal are part of the so-called mild conflict category. We can argue there is a significant conflict if LSQ<0.7 that corresponds to a distribution when all respondents classify equally into two categories i, j where j-i=3 and k=11. If j-i=4 then LSQ<0.6 . Therefore, the left/right is dimension of conflict between PSD and PS, but it is not intense because none of the values are less than 0,5. The differentiation between the two countries could be explained by the relatively low barrier between left and right among the two parties, the lack of a consistent and coherent ideological stance during the critical early stages of party building, and past participation in coalition governments that fostered moderation and pragmatism (Gunther 2005: 270).

Concluding Remarks

In this paper, we have tried to investigate the differentiation of consensus versus conflict between the governmental and main opposition parties in Greece and Portugal by examining the perceptions of candidates belonging to the two major parties in both countries at a time right before the full onset of the crisis. We have built a measurement of "consensus" in order to compare the Greek and Portuguese candidates around specific political and European issues and the left-right placement.

Overall, the findings appear to indicate that there are different ideological preferences and value orientations between the candidates of the two countries on a series of political issues. Those issues that belong to the ideological category of cultural liberalism

clearly form a pattern of dispersion; here the Portuguese candidates are more conservative compared to the Greeks. But, as we have observed, this differentiation comes mainly because of the attitudes of the candidates of PSD. It came up that only issue of intensive conflict among the Portuguese candidates is the one of prohibition of the same-sex marriages by law.

The economic dimension captures some other major differences. The Portuguese data reveal trends towards economic liberalism, while the Greek data captures an overall preference for state interventionism. In more detail, we can see that the candidates of the Portuguese right-wing party support the opinion that the state should not intervene in the economy (LSQ=0,627), while for the Greek conservative candidates the LSQ reaches 0,541 with high intra-party dispersion. Among the two socialists parties the difference is noteworthy: the LSQ is 0,476 for the PS and 0,358 for PASOK. Therefore, one of the major findings of our study is that the main factor which we could say that "contributes" to the dissensus between the Greek candidates on the issue interventionist state versus economic liberalism is mainly the internal dispersion between ND candidates on this topic. Any different ideological preferences between the candidates of PASOK and ND only partially explain the conflict. Taking into account the results on some other issues (social security, income distribution) we conclude that in Greece there is much more clear evidence of an economic conflict over distributional preferences.

The immigration-in economic trends- displays another pattern of differentiation between the two countries, while its cultural trends produce similar patterns. Both candidates of the Greek parties are characterised with their staunch rejection of globalization, while the Portuguese project a post-nationalist profile. Both the candidates of PASOK and ND are very close to a rhetoric against the "war of terrorism", while the Portuguese candidates of both parties support the idea of their country should provide military assistant to 'the war on terror'. On the other hand, mainly due to the high consensus among the PS candidates, they do not support any justification of torturing a prisoner, even if it might prevent a terrorist attack. On the contrary, a clear majority of the Greek candidates support this idea.

From the results on the left-right placement, we can figure out that the left-right dimension is a "top" issue of intense conflict in Greece, while the Portuguese data confirm previous research findings of low barrier between left and right among the two parties. Furthermore, there are -at least some signs- to confirm that the content of the dimension is arguably determined more by value-based polarities and less by economic ideology (and the standard capital-labor conflict). In Greece apart from differences in particular issue dimensions we see that there is great polarization of left-right self placement among the political elites reflecting stronger ideological identifications than in Portugal.

We can conclude that the tendency to create conditions conducive to intense conflict is mostly evident among the Greek political elite compared to the Portuguese. The candidates of PASOK and ND have ambivalent stances towards issues of economy, but this finding should not lead one to assume that the economic debate is on the track of polarizing the political elites in Greece. Further research should be made in order to thoroughly explore this trend. Nevertheless, for now we can conclude that the dispersion among the candidates of ND between two ideologically distinct groups, the so-called "liberal right" versus the "popular right" is considered as an important factor of producing dissensus in the Greek political arena.

Overall, the ideological distance certainly contributes to understand the difficulties of consensus in Greece. However, we should keep in mind that the main factor is the culture of majoritarianism that drives the Greek political elites to pursue office-seeking strategies for one party and not for a coalition government.

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[i] As Blondel states (2007:462) little research has been done on the analysis of the characteristics of opposition, although the classical work on political opposition in Western Democracies, edited by Dahl, was published in 1966 . See also Mújica & Sánchez-Cuenca (2006)

[ii] The Irish government made a similar request in November 2010 and is the second Euro zone country under bailout package.

[iii] The majority of Ministers in former Prime Minister George Papandreou's government, kept their portfolios. Although during the negotiations the necessity for a small and flexible coalition government was repeatedly iterated, in the end the coalition government included 49 ministers and deputy ministers. This formation includes six representatives of ND and four members from the party of LAOS .It is the first time that the far right has joined a Greek government since the fall of the military junta in 1974. A notable feature is that one of the ND members had to resign from his seat at the Parliament as Antonis Samaras insisted of not providing Papademos with elected members of the parliament for the ND (the other five members are not elected MPs). On the contrary, Passos Coelho's government is one of the smallest ever (Fernandes 2011: 1301).

[iv] The European People's Party was considering imposing sanctions on New Democracy, because of the persistent refusal of its leader Antonis Samaras to support the new rescue plan for Greece.

[v] i.e. if n/2 agree and n/2 strongly agree would have the same dispersion with n/2 strongly agree and n/2 strongly disagree. In fact, the maximum value of IQV occurs when each of the k categories is selected by n/k respondents, i.e. for a nominal variable, maximum dispersion occurs for the uniform distribution, with each relative frequency equal to $1/k$. But for ordinal variables the average distance between a pair of individuals is maximized when respondents are separated into the two polar categories, not when they are distributed uniformly. If n candidates are separated into two equally sized (n/2) groups by choosing the two polar categories of an item, i.e. (strongly disagree or strongly agree), then the total group of candidates is considered to have no consensus on the corresponding item, i.e. for an ordinal variable maximum dispersion occurs if half of the responses fall in category 1 and half of the responses fall in category k. If all candidates classify themselves in the same category of the Likert scale, regardless of the category, then consensus gets its maximum value and dispersion gets its minimum value.

[vi] LOV uses a city block metric, IOV uses squared Euclidean distance and COV uses Euclidean distance.

[vii] We argue that if there is a conflict between two political parties, but the level of national consensus is greater than 0.5, then the consensus is mild. For N even, it can be shown in general that when all scores occur in a single category then M2max=(k - 1)/4. For k=5, when all respondents classify equally into two adjacent categories, i.e. j=i+1, then LSQ =(k-2)/(k-1)=3/4=0,75. In general, when all respondents classify equally into two categories i, j where i<j, then LSQ= (k-(j-i)-1)/(k-1). Thus for n=5 when all respondents classify equally into two categories i, j where j-i=2 then LSQ=0,5. Can we name an item a conflict item when half of respondents fall into strongly agree and half fall into agree? It seems more reasonable to require a distance of at least 2. This leads to an additional criterion for an item with 5 categories to be named as intense conflict item: LSQ<0,5. If LSQ>0,5 the consensus is considered high, else it is considered low.