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## **Anti-party sentiments in Southern Europe**

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Over the past two decades, a so-called ‘confidence gap’ has undermined public support for many public institutions.<sup>1</sup> Popular images of political parties have been especially susceptible to this deterioration (Listhaug and Wiberg 1995). In both the United States and in many European countries, the phrase ‘crisis of parties’ has become all too familiar, and is often linked with more sweeping criticisms of other democratic institutions, including the government, the legislature, and, more broadly, political elites or ‘politicians’.<sup>2</sup> In 1992 the term *Parteienverdrossenheit* (‘vexation with parties’ or ‘crisis of acceptance of parties’) was ‘the word of the year’ in Germany, given its ability to capture the tone of debate concerning political parties (Immerfall 1993; Eilfort 1995). While this term was specifically applied to German parties, it could apply as well to public perceptions in many other countries, where ‘parties are seen as overly self-interested, eternally squabbling instead of striving for the common good, incapable of devising consistent policies, and prone to corruption’ (Poguntke 1996, 320). More broadly, anti-party rhetoric has become a common element of political discourse in many modern democracies (Poguntke and Scarrow 1996b). Accordingly, the alleged decline of political parties has become a preoccupation of journalists, essayists, and social scientists.

Political scientists who have written about this theme fall into two broad categories. One group includes those who focus their analysis on the organizational structures, functions, and membership of parties, and their performance in government and in representative institutions. They have produced an abundant literature based on empirical research.<sup>3</sup> A second group of scholars has been more concerned with citizens' attitudes towards political parties. Their empirical studies, however, have rarely focused on the question of the decline in public support for parties, and have instead been primarily concerned with themes such as

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<sup>1</sup> See the already classical book by Lipset and Schneider (1983), and also the volumes edited by Klingemann and Fuchs (1995); Nye, Zelikow and King (1997); Norris (1999a) and Pharr and Putnam (2000).

<sup>2</sup> See Daalder (forthcoming). Wattenberg (1990); Aldrich (1995, ch.1); Mair (1997, ch.2); Putnam, Pharr and Dalton (2000); and Torcal (2000).

<sup>3</sup> Some examples include Lawson and Merkl (1988); Selle and Svåsand (1991); Müller (1993); Webb (1995); Mair (1995); Strøm and Svåsand (1997), Clarke and Stewart (1998); and Dalton and Wattenberg (2000a).

the evolution of party identification, electoral participation, and the traditional social ties linking parties to citizens.<sup>4</sup> Despite widespread interest in this theme, there have been surprisingly few empirical studies of the extent and possible origins of anti-party attitudes. In this paper, we hope to fill this gap in the literature by systematically exploring the hypothesis of ‘the decline of parties’ from the standpoint of citizen support for these key institutions in four Southern European democracies.

The existing literature on this topic has produced contradictory findings. To some extent, this lack of consistency is the joint product of operationalization and measurement problems. Several such studies, for example, have been based on survey items that are only tangentially related to our central concern: they have used as indicators of anti-party attitudes drawing on related concepts such as the decline of party identification, party membership, voting turnout, and increases in electoral volatility or support for anti-system parties (Poguntke 1996). We concur with Webb (1995, 303) who points out that these behavioral indicators are less reflective of fundamental attitudes towards parties than they are consequences of such factors as the increasing ideological convergence among parties, or a simple process of political dealignment (see also Reiter 1989, 327-8). Accordingly, these studies do not deal directly with citizens' basic approval of political parties as forms of political representation or vehicles for the aggregation of interests (Poguntke and Scarrow 1996b, 259). Indeed, the conceptualization of this phenomenon has been so imprecise that it has not been clearly established that a ‘crisis in the approval of political parties’ definitely exists, let alone that we understand its possible origins or behavioral consequences.

In this paper we therefore aim at four complementary objectives: (1) to develop and discuss attitudinal indicators that can serve as adequate measures of anti-party sentiments; (2) to observe the evolution of these indicators over time in a variety of contexts; (3) to discuss their relationship with other aspects of political behavior; and (4) to speculate about the origins of anti-party sentiments. While most of our analysis will focus on Spain (for which we have a wealth of comparable survey data over a period of two decades), we also explore

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Dalton, Flanagan and Beck (1984); Clarke and Suzuki (1994); Schmitt and Holmberg (1995); Miller and Shanks (1996, ch.7); and Dalton, McAllister, and Wattenberg (2000).

similar attitudes in Portugal, Italy, and Greece in an effort to determine the extent to which an increase in anti-party sentiments represents a general feature of contemporary West European democracies, and to what extent it may be linked to a broader concept of political disaffection. We shall also examine some of the consequences of this phenomenon with regard to electoral behavior, to psychological identification of citizens with parties, and to the overall level of involvement of citizens in public life.

### **The concept and types of antipartyism**

During the 1990s, it was commonly argued (often without supporting evidence) that negative sentiments towards political parties had become a widespread feature of politics throughout Western Europe. Although the term *Parteienverdrossenheit* was, for obvious reasons, most commonly used to describe popular irritation with and disaffection from parties in Germany, this and similar terms were often used to capture popular sentiments in other countries. But while many scholars and journalistic observers shared an interest in this phenomenon, they differed substantially with regard to how they conceptualized and measured anti-party sentiments, and they disagreed about how widespread they had become in these countries, as well as about their origins and consequences. German scholars, for example, tended to regard anti-party sentiments as transitory responses by citizens to the political developments of the early 1990s (German reunification, economic crisis, corruption, etc.) (Wiesendahl 1998). A similar interpretation could be derived from a prima-facie examination of the Spanish case: during and shortly after the transition to democracy the popular image of parties was positive;<sup>5</sup> but during the 1980s attitudes towards parties

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<sup>5</sup> Montero (1992); and Maravall 1984 (126-7). In 1978, for example, two of every three Spaniards considered parties as useful for bringing about improvements in society, half believed that they were doing a good job in the democratization process, and a third thought that they would help to resolve the economic crisis. Non-responses to these questions included in the July 1978 survey of 5,345 Spaniards undertaken by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS) ranged from 26 to 34 percent.

deteriorated rapidly (Wert 1996), at least in part in response to the corruption scandals of the early 1990s.<sup>6</sup>

Other studies, however, reach different conclusions about the nature and possible origins of these clusters of attitudes. Anti-party sentiments in Italy, for example, have been found to be much more stable over time. Sani and Segatti (2001) contend that such attitudes have deep roots in Italy's political culture, and that these orientations were reinforced by socialization during the fascist era. They also conclude that such attitudes helped to undermine support for the parties of the so-called 'First Republic', contributing to their collapse in the 1994 election. Compatible with this country-specific explanation, Reiter (1989, 343) argues that the decline of attitudinal support for parties is specific to political conditions in each individual country. In contrast, other scholars already mentioned assert that the increase in anti-party sentiments is a general, long-term phenomenon that is part of the decline of confidence in all representative institutions in modern democracies, and that is caused by processes of culture change or by the tensions between professional political elites and the individuals and social groups that they are supposed to represent.

Other discrepancies found in this literature involve the consequences of anti-party attitudes. Some have argued that they have contributed to the emergence of populist or xenophobic parties in some countries (Schedler 1996; Mudde 1996), or to the rejection of the major parties and cynicism towards their leaders (Taggart 1994). It is often assumed that increases in anti-party attitudes are closely related to a decrease in general support for the democratic regime, or are linked to anti-system behavior. In contrast, Sani and Segatti (2001) have demonstrated that anti-party sentiments in Italy coexisted for decades with high levels of party identification, and with strong majority support for the democratic regime. In light of these paradoxes and contradictory conclusions, we believe that a comparative, empirical study of the nature and consequences of anti-party attitudes is long overdue.

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<sup>6</sup> In 1992, eight of every ten Spaniards believed that parties lacked internal democracy, and that corruption would inevitably continue to increase (De Miguel 1993, 788 and 796). Similarly, when asked to rank-order various institutions in terms of positive or negative evaluations, survey respondents in the 1990s placed parties last (Wert 1996, 135).

Accordingly, we shall analyze this phenomenon using survey data collected in Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece over the past two decades. We shall argue that the confusion and inconsistencies among earlier empirical findings have resulted, in large measure, from a lack of awareness that anti-party attitudes are of two distinctly different types, with different origins and different behavioral consequences. We shall refer to these different dimensions as ‘reactive antipartyism’ and ‘cultural antipartyism’. We shall argue that these two dimensions have different origins, attitudinal and behavioral correlates, and evolve over time in distinctly different ways.

*Reactive antipartyism* is a critical stance adopted by citizens in response to their dissatisfaction with the performance of party elites and institutions. It is the product of inconsistencies between the promises, the ideological labels, and the rhetoric of politicians, on the one hand, and citizens' perceptions of the actual performance of democracy and political elites, on the other. In some respects, it is a logical consequence of ‘overpromising’ by politicians—of their reliance upon a political discourse that raises expectations among the general public to such a degree it would be difficult to deliver all that was promised. To some extent, however, it is also a response to actual failures on the part of parties and elites. Many social, political, and economic problems are simply not solved, or even satisfactorily addressed; many party leaders may behave irresponsibly, or at least in such a manner as to be regarded as objectionable by many citizens; and some party leaders may misuse their access to government resources and privileges, and engage in corruption, patronage, or other similar practices.

In the case of the four Southern European countries under examination here, it is not difficult to identify patterns of behavior that could provoke a negative response on the part of many citizens, leading them to adopt a reactive anti-party stance. Portuguese democracy, for example, was born of a highly conflictual and chaotic revolutionary process, only to be followed by more than a decade of extreme governmental instability (see Bruneau 1997, and Bruneau, et al, 2001). In Spain, crises involving corrupt behavior by government and party leaders repeatedly erupted during the late 1980s and early 1990s (Pradera 1996). In Italy, four decades of government instability, paradoxically coupled with political immobilism and reinforced by dramatic revelations of massive corruption at the highest levels of government,

led to a complete breakdown of the party system beginning between 1992 and 1994 (Sani and Segatti 2001). And in Greece, a succession of scandals, demagogic political rhetoric, opportunistic partisan strategies and irresponsible behavior plagued the political system until the mid-1990s (Mendrinou and Nicolacopoulos 1997). Under these circumstances, the adoption of anti-party attitudes on the part of citizens could be regarded as little more than an expression of political realism (Poguntke 1996, 327). Since political reality evolves over time, we should expect the extent and intensity of such negative sentiments to fluctuate in accord with the changing conjuncture of political, economic, and social developments. This prediction fits well with the evolution of such sentiments in Germany, where the phenomenon of *Parteienverdrossenheit* was of relatively short duration, and had more modest consequences than had initially been feared (Gabriel 1996, 16-17; Noelle-Neumann 1994, 43-45). Several scholars have asserted that attitudes regarding lack of confidence in representative democratic institutions and political parties should be most commonly found among those who are better educated and politically informed, and more interested and involved in politics—that is, that these sentiments should be more prevalent among those who have high expectations regarding democratic politics, but who are most aware of the shenanigans of politicians and parties (Dalton 1996, ch.9; and Putnam, Pharr, and Dalton 2000).

We can also construct a profile of a very different variety of antipartyism—one that is rooted in the historical traditions and core values of a political culture, and thus independent of short-term changes in a country's political conditions. We shall refer to these kinds of political orientations, which should be expected to remain relatively constant over time in terms of their scope and intensity, as *cultural antipartyism*. Again, the four Southern European cases under examination here provide clear examples of the kinds of socializing factors that are likely to encourage the development and anchoring of such attitudes. As Maravall (1997, 237) has written, these factors include 'a long experience of dictatorships and pseudodemocracies, a history of political turbulence and discontinuities, manipulated elections over long periods, and a prolonged negative socialization into politics. In this sense, citizen's evaluations of politics and their personal influence may be considered simply a rational response, the result of a historical experience which would hardly have encouraged trust in politics'. Parties were obviously an integral part of this picture. In each Southern



European case, the country's experiences with liberal democracy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century represented fertile grounds for the development of cynical attitudes towards parties: their exclusionary 'limited democracies' (Burton, Gunther and Higley 1992, 5-6) relied heavily on patron-client relationships, systematic electoral fraud, and outright intimidation as a means of restricting the right of all citizens to participate freely and effectively. Each of these parliamentary but not fully democratic regimes collapsed in the early twentieth century, typically in a political environment characterized by high levels of instability and intense conflict (in the case of Spain, and to a lesser extent of Greece, culminating in civil war), in which political parties often resorted to extra-parliamentary if not downright undemocratic means in their ultimately self-destructive conflicts with one another. Finally, these four political systems fell under the control of right-wing corporatist or quasi-corporatist authoritarian regimes that sought to resocialize their populations, inculcating within them attitudes hostile to the basic notions of competitive parties and liberal democracy. In the course of the regimes' propaganda campaigns, parties and politicians were portrayed as self-serving, and as dividing and weakening what should be a united nation (see, e.g., Aguilar 1996; Sani and Segatti 2001). In short, the authoritarian regimes sought to instil anti-party sentiments into their populations through propaganda campaigns and formal socialization by schools, and these efforts reinforced initially sceptical beliefs about the utility of parties and politicians in competitive democratic systems. Insofar as late nineteenth and early twentieth century experiences with democracy or limited democracy imparted an indirect socialization of cynical attitudes towards parties to the country's population, and the intentional resocialization during the following authoritarian interludes inculcated explicitly anti-party attitudes into significant segments of the populace, such orientations may have become durable features of the political culture of a country. In contrast with reactive antipartyism, these attitudes should be expected to be stable over time, and, unlike those associated with reactive antipartyism, should not fluctuate in accord with short-term political circumstances.

In this regard, it is not unreasonable to expect that cultural antipartyism might be closely associated with other cynical or negative assessments of various dimensions of democratic politics, forming part of a broader syndrome of political disaffection. As we have argued elsewhere (Montero, Gunther and Torcal 1997 and 1998; Gunther and Montero 2000;

Torcal 2000), this syndrome is conceptually and empirically distinct from two other clusters of democratic orientations, one of which involves general support for democracy and is a key element in the legitimation of democratic regimes, while the other reflects political discontent or dissatisfaction with the performance of a regime's political institutions and incumbent officials. Political disaffection, in contrast, includes a subjective sense of distance from politics and political institutions, cynicism and general disinterest regarding politics, and low levels of political participation (Torcal 2000). Accordingly, it is to be expected that this syndrome of disaffection, disinterest and passivity would include negative attitudes towards political parties.

These two distinct varieties of antipartyism, the cultural and the reactive, should have greatly different behavioral consequences. In so far as reactive antipartyism represents a negative assessment and therefore a series of criticisms against poor performance by party institutions or leaders, it could have the positive result of mobilizing citizens to demand improvement or a change of incumbents in power (Dalton 1999, 75-76; Norris 1999b, 263). In contrast, in so far as the cultural variety of antipartyism is a durable characteristic of a political subculture, is not immediately responsive to changes in the performance of parties or their leaders, and is associated with pervasive cynicism and non-involvement in politics. As a critical component of political disaffection, cultural antipartyism may broaden the gap between citizens and their representatives, and reinforce the marginalization of an important sector of the population whose political resources are inferior to others who are better able to defend their interests in a competitive democratic system. Both in terms of democratic theory and of the actual quality of a democracy, the latter would have negative implications.

## The dimensions of anti-party sentiments

Let us begin this empirical analysis of antipartyism in Southern Europe by attempting to determine the extent to which attitudes towards parties cluster along two distinct attitudinal dimensions. The survey items that will serve as the initial focus of this study are the following:

- (1) Parties criticize one another, but in reality they are all alike.
- (2) Political parties only divide people.
- (3) Without parties, there can be no democracy.
- (4) Parties are needed to defend the interests of various groups and social classes.
- (5) Thanks to parties, people can participate in political life.
- (6) Parties are useless.

In Table 1, we present the results of a varimax rotation of responses to these items in a factor analysis from the mid-1980s. The patterns among these factor loadings are remarkably constant across all four countries and over time, and they clearly reveal the existence of two distinct factors. The first includes indicators that may be regarded as simple rejection of parties in general—‘they are all alike’ and they ‘only divide people’. As we shall argue, these items tap into the *cultural* dimension of anti-party attitudes. The other cluster of items, which we regard as belonging to the *reactive* dimension, consists of more measured affirmations concerning the roles played by parties in modern democracies: they ‘defend the interests of the various groups’, allow people to ‘participate in political life’, and are necessary for the functioning of democracy. Only the ‘parties are useless’ item in the first column does not fit neatly into one or the other of these dimensions: although it is more strongly linked to the cultural dimension, there is also some association with reactive antipartyism. The only exceptions are found in Portugal in 1985 and Greece in 1998, where it is absolutely clear that the ‘parties are useless’ item belongs to the cultural dimension.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Because it straddles two attitudinal dimensions in most of these surveys, this item will be excluded from most of the following analyses of these two domains.

**Table 1.** *Factor analysis of anti-party sentiments in Southern Europe, 1985-1998\**

| Country  | Year | Parties<br>useless | Parties<br>alike | Parties<br>divide | Defend<br>interests | Allow<br>participation | No parties, no<br>democracy |
|----------|------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Spain    | 1985 | <b>-.41</b>        | -.19             | -.20              | <b>.58</b>          | <b>.68</b>             | <b>.66</b>                  |
|          |      | <b>.53</b>         | <b>.60</b>       | <b>.78</b>        | -.30                | -.21                   | -.17                        |
|          | 1989 | <b>-.40</b>        | .11              | -.27              | <b>.57</b>          | <b>.51</b>             | <b>.62</b>                  |
|          |      | <b>.53</b>         | <b>.57</b>       | <b>.62</b>        | -.31                | -.26                   | -.11                        |
|          | 1991 | <b>-.35</b>        | -.17             | -.32              | <b>.58</b>          | <b>.35</b>             | <b>.44</b>                  |
| Portugal | 1985 | <b>.45</b>         | <b>.52</b>       | <b>.53</b>        | -.17                | -.12                   | -.00                        |
|          |      | <b>-.50</b>        | <b>-.01</b>      | -.18              | <b>.74</b>          | <b>.37</b>             | <b>.62</b>                  |
|          | 1995 | <b>.42</b>         | .50              | <b>.73</b>        | -.12                | -.01                   | -.11                        |
|          |      | <b>-.34</b>        | -.17             | -.00              | <b>.74</b>          | <b>.48</b>             | <b>.59</b>                  |
|          | 1997 | <b>.52</b>         | <b>.62</b>       | <b>.62</b>        | -.18                | -.15                   | -.01                        |
| Italy    | 1985 | -.12               | .11              | .00               | <b>.35</b>          | <b>.80</b>             | <b>.62</b>                  |
|          |      | <b>.54</b>         | <b>.70</b>       | <b>.70</b>        | -.14                | -.00                   | -.22                        |
| Greece   | 1985 | <b>-.44</b>        | -.18             | -.28              | .06                 | <b>.72</b>             | <b>.75</b>                  |
|          |      | <b>.34</b>         | <b>.57</b>       | <b>.73</b>        | <b>.47</b>          | -.07                   | -.05                        |
| Greece   | 1985 | <b>-.44</b>        | -.01             | -.16              | <b>.45</b>          | <b>.63</b>             | <b>.64</b>                  |
|          |      | <b>.49</b>         | <b>.66</b>       | <b>.56</b>        | -.10                | -.13                   | -.13                        |
| Greece   | 1985 | -.45               | -.00             | -.01              | <b>.38</b>          | <b>.59</b>             | <b>.38</b>                  |
|          |      | .31                | <b>.73</b>       | <b>.61</b>        | -.00                | -.00                   | -.00                        |
| Greece   | 1998 | -.11               | .06              | -.02              | <b>.57</b>          | <b>.62</b>             | <b>.56</b>                  |
|          |      | <b>.58</b>         | <b>.80</b>       | <b>.69</b>        | .08                 | -.05                   | -.11                        |

\*First and second factor loadings after varimax rotation.

*Sources:* For Spain in 1985, 1989, 1991, 1996 and 1997 Banco de Datos, Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS); for all countries in 1985, The Four Nation Study; for Italy in 1990, Sani (1992, 139); for Italy in 1997, Segatti (1998, 5); for Greece in 1998, Greek Study of the Role of Government; and for Portugal in 1993, ESEO, Estudios de Mercado Lta.

An examination of the survey responses of Southern European citizens interviewed at various times from the mid 1980s to the end of the 1990s (presented in Tables 2 and 3) reveals that popular attitudes towards political parties are highly ambivalent, if not contradictory. Those citizens simultaneously hold some attitudes that are quite positive (particularly concerning the basic functions played by parties in democratic systems) and others which are decidedly negative (see Sani 1992, 136). When these attitudes are separated into the 'cultural' and 'reactive' categories, however, some clearer patterns begin to emerge. With regard to indicators of reactive antipartyism (see Table 3), it is noteworthy that most respondents in all four countries (sometimes overwhelming majorities) have tended to express opinions that were generally supportive of parties. These favorable assessments of parties were by far the weakest in Italy during the 1990s, however, reflecting the restructuring of the party system that was occurring during that period (Sani and Segatti 2001, 178): between 34 and 43 percent of Italians interviewed between 1990 and 1997 disagreed with statements that parties were needed to defend social interests, enabled citizens to participate in politics, and are necessary for democracy. In contrast, levels of rejection of these survey items in the other countries ranged between 10 and 22 percent, and even in Italy in 1985 (before the crisis of the Italian party system began) did not exceed 29 percent. Thus, with the exception of Italy in the 1990s, the overall conclusion to be drawn from these data is that there is significantly less (reactive) anti-party sentiment in Southern Europe than is commonly claimed.

Responses to those items that we regard as indicative of cultural antipartyism, however, reveal a much more negative pattern of attitudes towards parties. As can be seen in Table 2, about 40 to 60 percent of respondents in most of these surveys agreed with the propositions that 'all parties are alike', and that they 'only divide people'. Indeed, as a harbinger of the party-system crisis that would unfold in Italy beginning in 1992, it is noteworthy that two years earlier fully 74 percent of Italians stated that they thought there was no difference between parties, and 51 percent claimed that parties only serve to divide people. In general, we can conclude the sentiments we have referred to as cultural antipartyism are widespread among the citizens of all four Southern European countries.

**Table 2.** *Indicators of cultural anti-party sentiments in Southern Europe, 1985-1998* (In percentages)

| Indicators                 |       | Agree | Disagree | Don't know/<br>no answer | (N)     |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|----------|--------------------------|---------|
| Parties are all alike      |       |       |          |                          |         |
| Spain                      | 1985  | 49    | 34       | 17                       | (2,505) |
|                            | 1989  | 46    | 34       | 20                       | (4,524) |
|                            | 1991  | 58    | 31       | 11                       | (2,471) |
|                            | 1996  | 57    | 33       | 9                        | (2,498) |
|                            | 1997  | 61    | 30       | 9                        | (2,490) |
| Portugal                   | 1985  | 60    | 22       | 18                       | (2,210) |
|                            | 1993* | 59    | 24       | 3                        | (2,000) |
| Italy                      | 1985  | 62    | 31       | 7                        | (2,074) |
|                            | 1990  | 74    | 26       | 0                        | (M.D.)  |
| Greece                     | 1985  | 48    | 49       | 3                        | (1,998) |
|                            | 1998  | 70    | 18       | 12                       | (1,191) |
| Parties only divide people |       |       |          |                          |         |
| Spain                      | 1985  | 38    | 44       | 18                       | (2,505) |
|                            | 1989  | 31    | 48       | 21                       | (4,524) |
|                            | 1991  | 35    | 51       | 14                       | (2,471) |
|                            | 1996  | 36    | 51       | 13                       | (2,498) |
|                            | 1997  | 36    | 53       | 11                       | (2,490) |
| Portugal                   | 1985  | 59    | 23       | 19                       | (2,210) |
|                            | 1993* | 52    | 29       | 4                        | (2,000) |
| Italy                      | 1985  | 50    | 41       | 9                        | (2,074) |
|                            | 1990  | 51    | 29       | 0                        | (M.D.)  |
|                            | 1997  | 28    | 62       | 10                       | (4,550) |
| Greece                     | 1985  | 66    | 31       | 3                        | (1,998) |
|                            | 1998  | 59    | 19       | 22                       | (1,191) |

\* The addition of a 'neutral' category in this survey (the results of which are not presented) means that these figures do not total 100%.

*Sources:* See Table 1.

**Table 3.** *Indicators of reactive anti-party sentiments in Southern Europe, 1978-1998 (In percentages)*

| Indicators                                  |       | Agree | Disagree | Don't know/<br>no answer | (N)     |
|---|-------|-------|----------|--------------------------|---------|
| Parties needed to defend interests          |       |       |          |                          |         |
| Spain                                       | 1985  | 65    | 15       | 20                       | (2,505) |
|   | 1989  | 65    | 13       | 21                       | (4,524) |
|   | 1991  | 70    | 15       | 15                       | (2,471) |
|   | 1996  | 72    | 16       | 12                       | (2,498) |
|   | 1997  | 75    | 13       | 12                       | (2,490) |
| Portugal                                    | 1985  | 59    | 16       | 25                       | (2,210) |
|   | 1993* | 72    | 10       | 5                        | (2,000) |
| Italy                                       | 1985  | 63    | 26       | 11                       | (2,074) |
|   | 1990  | 58    | 41       | 1                        | (M.D.)  |
|   | 1997  | 51    | 38       | 11                       | (4,550) |
| Greece                                      | 1985  | 78    | 13       | 9                        | (1,998) |
|   | 1998  | 74    | 18       | 8                        | (1,191) |
| Parties allow us to participate in politics |       |       |          |                          |         |
| Spain                                       | 1985  | 60    | 18       | 22                       | (2,505) |
|   | 1989  | 61    | 17       | 22                       | (4,524) |
|   | 1991  | 61    | 22       | 17                       | (2,471) |
|   | 1996  | 66    | 21       | 13                       | (2,498) |
|   | 1997  | 67    | 22       | 11                       | (2,490) |
| Portugal                                    | 1985  | 57    | 15       | 28                       | (2,210) |
|   | 1993* | 72    | 9        | 4                        | (2,000) |
| Italy                                       | 1985  | 59    | 29       | 12                       | (2,074) |
|   | 1990  | 56    | 43       | 1                        | (M.D.)  |
| Greece                                      | 1985  | 76    | 11       | 13                       | (1,998) |
|   | 1998  | 63    | 22       | 14                       | (1,191) |
| Without parties there can be no democracy   |       |       |          |                          |         |
| Spain                                       | 1985  | 60    | 16       | 24                       | (2,505) |
|   | 1989  | 62    | 13       | 26                       | (4,524) |
|   | 1991  | 67    | 15       | 18                       | (2,471) |
|   | 1996  | 67    | 17       | 16                       | (2,498) |
|   | 1997  | 70    | 15       | 15                       | (2,490) |
| Portugal                                    | 1985  | 58    | 13       | 29                       | (2,210) |
|   | 1993* | 70    | 10       | 5                        | (2,000) |
| Italy                                       | 1985  | 67    | 20       | 13                       | (2,074) |
|   | 1990  | 65    | 34       | 1                        | (M.D.)  |
|   | 1997  | 54    | 36       | 10                       | (4,550) |
| Greece                                      | 1985  | 85    | 10       | 5                        | (1,998) |
|   | 1998  | 79    | 13       | 8                        | (1,191) |

\* The addition of a 'neutral' category in this survey (the results of which are not presented) means that these figures do not total 100%.

Sources: See Table 1.

The considerable differences between patterns of agreement with the cultural and reactive items explains, in part, the inconsistencies in the findings of many previous studies of antipartyism. They also indicate that much more detailed research should be conducted focusing on the behavioral and attitudinal correlates of these orientations. The first step in this analysis was the construction of two scales measuring the consistency of agreement or disagreement with the items making up the reactive and cultural dimensions of antipartyism. The reactive scale ranges from +3 (reflecting agreement with all three of the positive statements about parties) to -3 (at the anti-party end of the continuum), with scores between +1 and -1 regarded as neutral. The data presented in Table 4 clearly show that the great majority of respondents surveyed over the past two decades have held pro-party attitudes, particularly in Spain, Portugal, and, in 1985, Greece. Italians were almost evenly divided in 1985 between those with pro-party and neutral attitudes, while in the case of Greece there was a great decline in pro-party sentiments between the mid-1980s and late 1990s.

**Table 4.** *Reactive anti-party sentiments in Southern Europe, 1985-1998\** (In percentages)

|            | Spain |      |      |      |      |      | Portugal |      | Italy | Greece |      |
|------------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|----------|------|-------|--------|------|
|            | 1985  | 1988 | 1991 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1985     | 1993 | 1985  | 1985   | 1998 |
| Pro-party  | 64    | 68   | 58   | 63   | 62   | 62   | 60       | 65   | 48    | 72     | 13   |
| Neutral    | 30    | 27   | 37   | 32   | 32   | 32   | 35       | 34   | 43    | 26     | 46   |
| Anti-party | 6     | 5    | 4    | 4    | 4    | 6    | 5        | 1    | 9     | 2      | 41   |

\*Don't know and no answer have been excluded from calculation of vertical percentages.

Sources: See Table 1.

Table 5 presents the distribution of respondents in accord with their positions on the cultural antipartyism scale, constructed of their responses to the parties 'are all the same' and 'only divide people' items. This scale ranges between +2 (representing a pro-party orientation based on a *negative* response to the two anti-party statements) and -2 (reflecting an anti-party stance). As can be seen, anti-party sentiments of this kind are much higher than



was the case with the other dimension, and were especially strong in Portugal and in Greece in 1998. While such negativism is not surprising in the case of Portugal in the early to mid-1980s (given the political instability that characterized the decade following the revolution), it seems certainly to be incompatible with the government stability that has characterized Portuguese politics since 1987 (Bruneau and Bacalhau 1978; and Bruneau and McLeod 1986), or with the rapid economic and social development that the country has enjoyed over the past decade and a half. In short, these anti-party attitudes seem to be insensitive to real changes in the Portuguese political environment. The contrary can be seen in Greece, where a substantial increase in anti-party sentiments has taken place between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s. Most of that increase, however, can be accounted for by the much larger percentage of respondents who came to agree with the proposition that all parties were alike, an accurate reflection of the ideological and programmatic convergence between PASOK and Nea Demokratia that began in the mid-1980s during PASOK's second term in office (Diamandouros 1994, 9-20 and 34-42; Mendrinou and Nicolacopoulos 1997, 11); the percentage of Greek respondents who thought that 'parties only divide people' actually declined slightly, from 66 to 59 percent between 1985 and 1998. Spanish survey responses, meanwhile, were remarkably consistent over time. Spanish cultural anti-party attitudes have been almost evenly divided among the pro-, anti-, and neutral categories ever since the mid-1980s.

**Table 5.** *Cultural anti-party sentiments in Southern Europe, 1985-1998\** (In percentages)

|            | Spain |      |      |      |      |      | Portugal |      | Italy | Greece |      |
|------------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|----------|------|-------|--------|------|
|            | 1985  | 1988 | 1985 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1985     | 1993 | 1985  | 1985   | 1998 |
| Pro-party  | 34    | 35   | 22   | 32   | 32   | 28   | 15       | 22   | 22    | 25     | 8    |
| Neutral    | 29    | 32   | 33   | 35   | 33   | 37   | 24       | 24   | 33    | 33     | 18   |
| Anti-party | 37    | 33   | 44   | 33   | 36   | 35   | 61       | 52   | 44    | 42     | 74   |

\*Don't know and no answer have been excluded from calculation of vertical percentages.

Sources: See Table 1.

Aside from the common finding that levels of cultural antipartyism are consistently higher than those of reactive anti-party sentiments, these data reveal that the extent and intensity of such attitudes vary from country to country. Pervasive, negative attitudes towards parties do not appear to constitute a Southern-Europe-wide phenomenon, let alone a general characteristic of politics throughout Western Europe (see Reiter 1989). Instead, these attitudes reflect a great deal of ambivalence among citizens toward their political parties.

### **The origins of anti-party sentiments**

One way of exploring the origins and nature of these two dimensions of antipartyism is to compare the evolution of these attitudes over time among different political generations. Depending on the patterns observed, such an analysis should make it possible clearly to separate the effects of different socialization experiences from reactions to short-term developments in the political environment. Given the greater availability of comparable data over an extended period of time, we shall now focus our attention on the case of Spain. The Spanish case is particularly suitable for this kind of analysis, given the great differences in socialization experiences of the various age cohorts in our survey samples: these include the fully democratic but tumultuous regime of the Second Republic, the trauma of the Civil War, the hunger and political repression of the post-Civil War era, the economic development and partial liberalization that took place in the 1960s and early 1970s, and the transition to democracy following the death of Franco. To what extent have these greatly different political and social conditions affected the development of attitudes toward political parties? And how have these positive and negative orientations evolved over the past two decades in response to the major political developments of this most recent period?

While political socialization takes place throughout life (beginning with informal socialization by parents and formal socialization in school, and continuing in response to dramatic political developments, if they should occur), we shall use as the basis of defining the various cohorts the most distinguishing political characteristics that occurred when the

respondent was age 17-25. This is the period, according to numerous studies in social psychology (e.g., Newcomb, et al, 1967; Krosnick and Alwin 1989), when most political attitudes tend to stabilize. Accordingly, age cohort #6 is defined as those respondents who were born before 1914. This group thus includes some individuals who would have passed through their most crucial formative period under the Restoration Monarchy or the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, but most of them would have matured during the Second Republic (1931-6). Cohort #5 is the Civil War cohort, and includes persons born between 1915 and 1923. The next group, born between 1924 and 1943 is the post-war generation, who would have felt most intensely the harsh period of economic deprivation and political repression that followed the civil war. In contrast, cohort #3 (born between 1944 and 1957) matured politically during the rapid economic growth and *apertura* (partial liberalization) that characterized the final years of *franquismo*. Respondents belonging to the second cohort (born between 1958 and 1965) passed through their most formative years between 1975 and 1982--the period of transition to and consolidation of the post-Franco democracy. Finally, respondents in cohort #1 (born after 1966) would have been socialized almost entirely in the current democratic era.

An examination of data derived from this type of analysis makes it possible to distinguish among three different kinds of patterns, commonly referred to as cohort effects, period effects, and life-cycle effects. The latter effect is one in which, over a very extended period of time, the effects of ageing influence all cohorts in the same way; they tend to converge on a common point towards the end of their lives, such that trend lines should exhibit an upward slope. Both because of the nature of the hypotheses we are exploring, and because we do not observe life-cycle effects with regard to anti-party sentiments, we will focus our attention on the first two patterns. Cohort effects result primarily from common socialization experiences that impart certain attitudes that continue to influence individuals in the cohort throughout their lives. Accordingly, we should expect to find that individuals socialized under the Second Republic should continue to differ from those whose primary socialization experiences occurred during the current transition to democracy across all of the data points in our time-series analysis. Conversely, period effects should have a similar influence on individuals in all of the cohorts; irrespective of their socialization experiences, they respond in a similar manner to reactive stimuli that occur over the course of the time

period surveyed in our analysis. Visually, this should be reflected in simultaneous and parallel peaks and dips in the trend lines for all cohorts.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of survey responses to the ‘cultural antipartyism’ questions over time. The patterns apparent in this graph suggest that the most powerful influence over the anti-party attitudes held by each age group is exerted by a cohort effect. The five age groups arrayed in this figure tend to differ from each other consistently across time, with the older respondents invariably expressing anti-party sentiments. As can be seen, these trend lines are extremely flat, the sole exception being the instability in responses of the oldest cohort during the 1990s. Thus, the strongest influence over these attitudes appears to be related to the primary socialization experiences of the respondent: those individuals who were socialized earlier hold the most negative attitudes towards parties. (It is worthy of mention that these findings also hold for the youngest cohort—socialized since the transition to democracy—whose responses could not be presented in the figure for technical reasons.)<sup>8</sup> This interpretation of the visual presentation of these data is confirmed by a multivariate regression analysis.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Specifically, there were too few of these respondents in the earlier surveys included in this study, and the composition of that cohort changed so much over time (with the incorporation of new, younger respondents) that serious problems of comparability would have arisen.

<sup>9</sup> In this analysis, the data points used to construct the graph presented in Figure 1 serve as the dependent variable, and dummy variables measuring cohort effects (with  $C_1$  representing the Cohort 2, as described above,  $C_2$  Cohort 3,  $C_3$  Cohort 4, and  $C_4$ , the oldest age group) and period effects (with  $T_1$  representing 1985,  $T_2$  representing 1987,  $T_3$  for 1988,  $T_4$  1991,  $T_5$  1995, and  $T_6$  representing 1996) were used as independent variables. The results of this analysis are summarized in the following equation:

$$Y = 52.7 - 25.6C_1 + 21.6C_2 + 12.0C_3 - 8.1C_4 + 2.4T_1 - 5.4T_2 - 1.8T_3 + 1.2T_4 - 4.0T_5 + 3.0T_6$$

$$P = (.000) (.000) (.000) (.000) (.000) (.36) (.04) (.49) (.64) (.13) (.25)$$

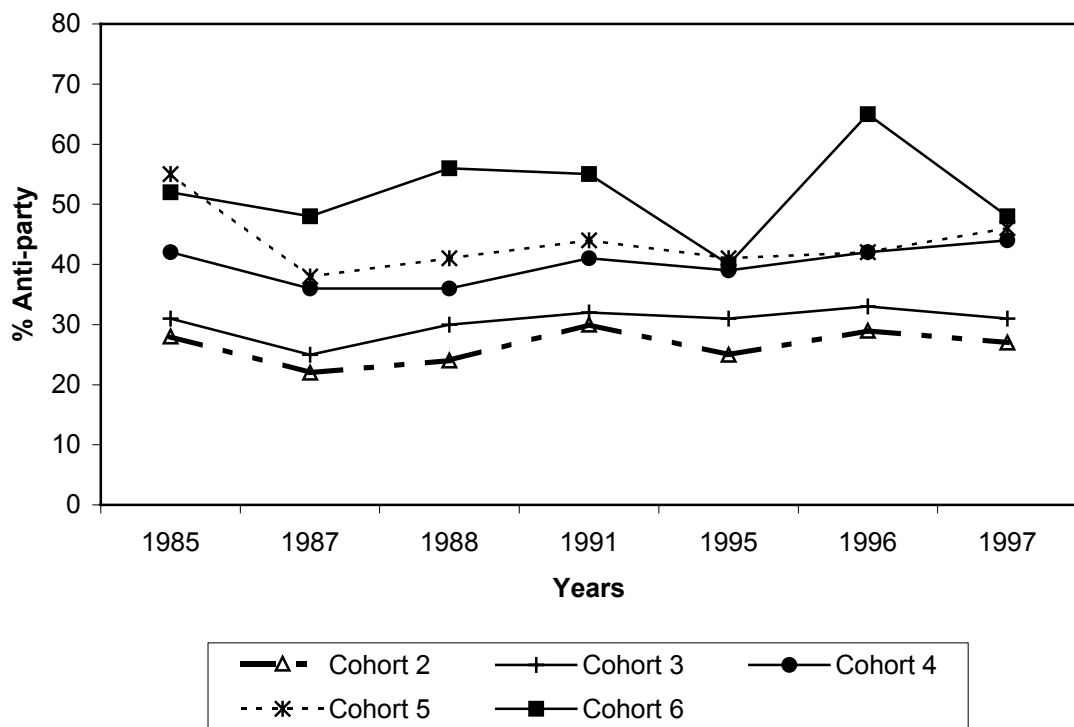
$$R^2 = .85$$

These data clearly reveal a strong difference among cohorts, but virtually no period effects. Only the coefficient for 1987 was statistically significant at the .05 level, and that figure was quite weak.

In short, these data suggest that the unfortunate earlier decades of the twentieth century in Spain—characterized by electoral manipulation under the Restoration Monarchy, bitterly rancorous partisan conflict under the Second Republic, culminating in Civil War, and followed by decades of anti-party propaganda under an authoritarian regime-left a lasting mark on the political orientations of those older Spaniards who were most exposed to these socializing influences. And the more protracted and cumulative these anti-party cues, the more negative were these attitudes within the cohort. It should be noted that these findings parallel those of a broader study of these and additional variables measuring political disaffection (see Torcal 2000): political disaffection is systematically stronger among the older cohorts of interview respondents.

**Figure 1**

**Cohorts and cultural anti-party sentiments in Spain 1985-1997**

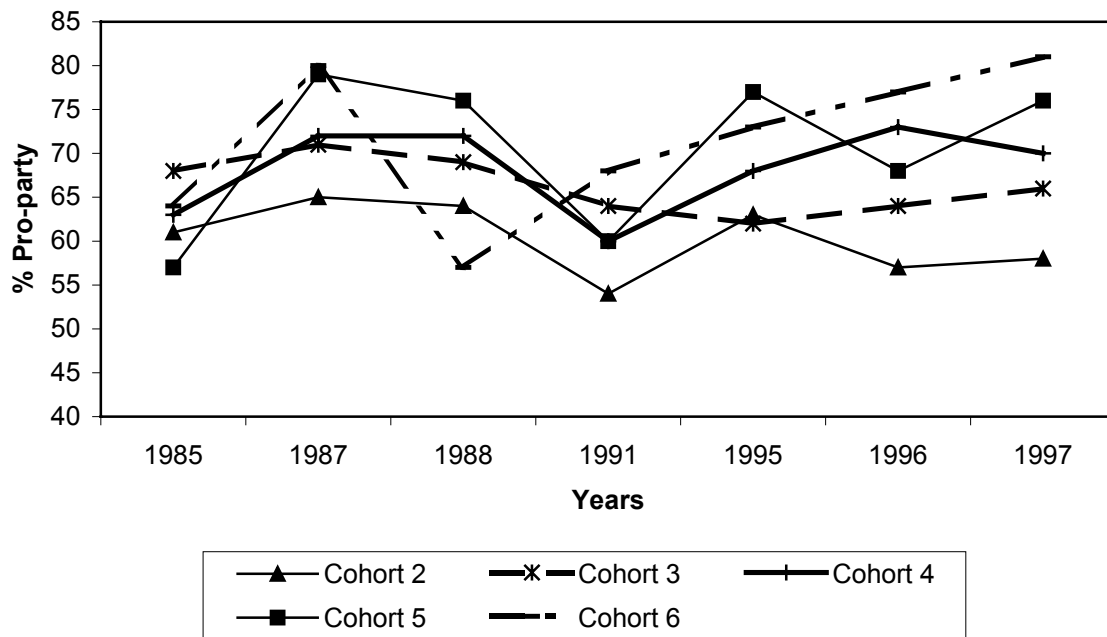


These data also suggest that cultural anti-party attitudes do not represent a universal or permanent feature of Spain's political culture, but, rather, are a reflection of distinct socialization experiences within different political contexts that have different impacts on the various political generations. Once individuals have acquired such attitudes, however, they are remarkably durable, and the aggregate level of support for such sentiments remains quite stable over time. These attitudes were nearly constant within each of the cohorts, irrespective of occasionally dramatic political developments that one might have expected would lead to an increase in anti-party sentiments, such as the corruption scandals of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Thus, it appears that this 'cultural' variety of antipartyism in Spain is not substantially affected over the short term by the behavior of party elites or the performance of parties. Instead, such attitudes appear to be the product of socialization experiences that, for many Spaniards, substantially predated the establishment of this democratic regime in the late 1970s. The more pessimistic view of this same finding is that, contrary to expectations that might be derived from Converse (1969) or Schmitter and Karl (1991), the generally successful performance of the current democratic regime has been incapable of erasing these anti-party sentiments among the older cohorts. Instead, it appears more likely that cultural antipartyism will diminish only with the progressive disappearance of the older generations who most strongly cling to such orientations.

Figure 2 presents the evolution over time, by age cohort, of the percentage of respondents agreeing with the *pro*-party attitudes that make up the reactive cluster. These patterns are very different from those found in the first graph: rather than being generally stable over time, they fluctuate substantially from one year to the next; and there is no cohort effect that is compatible with what we observed in the previous graph. In sharp contrast with the cultural variety of antipartyism, the older cohorts generally tend to express more pro-party sentiments than do younger respondents. And there is no stable rank-ordering of cohorts; indeed, while the oldest cohort is more pro-party than the others in most years, in 1988 it is the least. Clearly, these data do not indicate the existence of a substantial cohort

effect. But their inconsistency also gives very weak support to a ‘period effect’ interpretation, as is confirmed by an empirical test of a multivariate model.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 2**  
**Cohorts and reactive pro-party sentiments in Spain, 1985-1997**



In general, these reactive anti-party sentiments appear to be associated with a broader ‘political discontent’ cluster of attitudinal orientations. As we have also argued elsewhere (Montero, Gunther and Torcal 1997 and 1998; Gunther and Montero 2000; and Torcal 2000), these attitudes are highly unstable over time. And this instability is a function both of the

<sup>10</sup> As in the previous equation, the data points used to construct the graph presented in Figure 2 serve as the dependent variable, and dummy variables measuring cohort effects (with  $C_1$  representing the Cohort 2, as described above,  $C_2$  Cohort 3,  $C_3$  Cohort 4, and  $C_5$ , the oldest age group) and period effects (with  $T_1$  representing 1985,  $T_2$  representing 1987,  $T_3$  for 1988,  $T_4$  1991,  $T_5$  1995, and  $T_6$  representing 1996) were used as independent variables. The results of this analysis are summarized in the following equation:

$$Y = 74.3 + 11.1C_1 + 5.1C_2 + 3.1C_3 + 1.0C_4 - 7.6T_1 + 3.2T_2 - 2.6T_3 - 9.0T_4 - 1.6T_5 - 2.4T_6$$

$$P = (.001) (.09) (.29) (.74) (.04) (.37) (.46) (.02) (.65) (.50) (.25)$$

$$R^2 = .43$$

evaluations of parties and of the respondent's degree of satisfaction with the performance of the incumbent government, which is, in turn, strongly influenced by his/her own partisan preferences. This attitudinal domain is both conceptually and empirically distinct from the political disaffection syndrome, to which the cultural anti-party attitudes appear to be linked, as we shall demonstrate below.

### **Attitudinal correlates of anti-party sentiments**

In an earlier discussion, it was noted that the distribution of cultural anti-party sentiments among various age cohorts reflected patterns quite similar to other political orientations that we asserted constitute a political disaffection syndrome. In Table 6, we present data testing that assertion, revealing the extent to which individuals whose other survey responses are indicative of political disaffection also hold cultural and reactive anti-party sentiments. As can be seen, there is a strong relationship ( $\text{Tau-b} = .31$ ) between cultural antipartyism and the belief that 'Politics is so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is happening.' At the same time, there is absolutely no relationship between this 'internal efficacy' item (a standard measure of one dimension of political disaffection) and reactive antipartyism ( $\text{Tau-b} = .01$ ). There is also a strong relationship between cultural antipartyism, on the one hand, and two standard measures of 'external efficacy': the beliefs that 'Those in power are only looking out for their own personal interests' ( $\text{Tau-b} = .39$ ), and that 'Politicians don't care what people like me think' ( $\text{Tau-b} = .26$ ). While the relationships between these two political disaffection items and reactive antipartyism were statistically significant, they were very weak ( $\text{Tau-b} = .08$ , in each case). Very similar results are obtained from an examination of the relationships between these two different types of antipartyism and two indicators of political interest which are also intimately linked to the political disaffection syndrome -the respondent's self-described level of interest in politics, and extent to which he/she feels aware about political matters. Neither of these measures of political involvement are statistically associated with reactive antipartyism ( $\text{Tau-b} = -.05$  and  $-.03$ ), while they were much more closely associated with scores on the cultural antipartyism scale



(Tau-b = -.28 and -.22); the more aware the respondent, the less likely he or she is to hold anti-party attitudes of that kind.

**Table 6.** *Anti-party sentiments and political efficacy, interest, and awareness in Spain, 1995\*\** (In percentages)

| Efficacy Item   | Cultural dimension |         |            | Reactive dimension |         |            |
|---|--------------------|---------|------------|--------------------|---------|------------|
|   | Pro-party          | Neutral | Anti-party | Pro-party          | Neutral | Anti-party |
| Politics too complicated                                  |                    |         |            |                    |         |            |
| Agree   | 34                 | 56      | 75         | 52                 | 53      | 53         |
| Disagree  | 66                 | 43      | 25         | 48                 | 47      | 47         |
| (N)   | (1,034)            | (1,115) | (1,065)    | (1,877)            | (961)   | (129)      |
| Tau-b   |                    | .31*    |            |                    | .01     |            |
| Those in power only look out for their personal interests |                    |         |            |                    |         |            |
| Agree   | 47                 | 83      | 92         | 71                 | 76      | 90         |
| Disagree  | 53                 | 17      | 8          | 29                 | 24      | 10         |
| (N)   | (971)              | (1,085) | (1,054)    | (1,792)            | (944)   | (126)      |
| Tau-b   |                    | .39*    |            |                    | .08*    |            |
| Politicians not concerned                                 |                    |         |            |                    |         |            |
| Agree   | 61                 | 77      | 90         | 73                 | 78      | 90         |
| Disagree  | 39                 | 23      | 10         | 27                 | 22      | 10         |
| (N)   | (993)              | (1,088) | (1,036)    | (1,812)            | (944)   | (127)      |
| Tau-b   |                    | .26*    |            |                    | .08*    |            |
| Interest in politics                                      |                    |         |            |                    |         |            |
| Much and some   | 43                 | 23      | 11         | 30                 | 23      | 29         |
| Little and none   | 57                 | 77      | 89         | 70                 | 77      | 71         |
| (N)   | (855)              | (799)   | (815)      | (1,524)            | (604)   | (111)      |
| Tau-b   |                    | -.28*   |            |                    | -.05    |            |
| Political awareness                                       |                    |         |            |                    |         |            |
| Much and some   | 51                 | 35      | 24         | 40                 | 36      | 42         |
| Little and none   | 49                 | 65      | 76         | 60                 | 64      | 58         |
| (N)   | (858)              | (799)   | (813)      | (1,520)            | (606)   | (112)      |
| Tau-b   |                    | -.22*   |            |                    | -.03    |            |

\* Significant at .01 level.

\*\* Don't know and no answer have been excluded from calculation of vertical percentages.

Source: Banco de Datos, CIS, #2,154.

These findings are of considerable theoretical significance. The linkage between cultural antipartyism and low levels of interest in or awareness of politics provides support for our hypothesis that this variety of negative attitude towards parties is part of the broader disaffection syndrome that we have analyzed elsewhere. But the negative finding regarding a possible association between political awareness, on the one hand, and reactive antipartyism, on the other, is also of interest. This finding is inconsistent with claims by scholars (Dalton 1996, 281; Norris 1999b, 270) that cynicism, a lack of confidence in institutions, and declining levels of party attachment are characteristic of those who are better informed politically. Indeed, this finding runs counter to that portion of the reactive anti-party model that we set forth at the beginning of this paper in so far as some scholars predicted that these kinds of anti-party sentiments would be most widespread among those individuals who are most interested in and better informed about politics, and the actual failings of parties and politicians. Instead, we find that there is absolutely no relationship between reactive antipartyism and political interest. In contrast, the association with cultural antipartyism is strongly negative, with those who are least interested in and aware about politics being by far the most predisposed to adopt an anti-party stance.

A clue as to the broader meaning of reactive antipartyism can be gleaned from an examination of the partisan preferences of those holding anti-party sentiments. There is very little relationship between cultural antipartyism and the vote (for the PP [the conservative Partido Popular] as compared with the PSOE [the Socialist Partido Socialista Obrero Español]) in the 1993 and 1996 elections ( $Tau-b = .02$  in both elections). With regard to reactive antipartyism, however, there is a moderately strong association with a vote for the opposition party. In 1993, when the PSOE was in power, those with reactive anti-party sentiments voted disproportionately for the opposition PP (by a margin of 60 versus 40 percent). In 1996, when the PP came to power, the relationship was reversed: 62 percent of anti-party respondents supported the opposition PSOE, while just 36 percent voted for the PP.

This same pattern can be found when these relationships are re-examined using a generic measure of satisfaction with the performance of the PSOE government in a 1995 survey (CIS survey #2,154). Among those who expressed reactive anti-party opinions, 72 percent disapproved of the performance of the governments headed by Felipe González,

while only 41 percent of those with pro-party attitudes did so ( $\text{Tau-b} = -.12$ ). In this same survey, 60 percent of pro-party respondents said that they thought things had improved under the PSOE governments that were in power beginning in 1982, while only 27 percent of anti-party respondents shared these views. Similar patterns can be observed with regard to satisfaction with the state of the economy at that time: 49 percent of reactive anti-party respondents stated that their personal economic situation was bad or very bad, and fully 80 percent said that the general economic situation of the country was bad or very bad. Among those who selected pro-party items on the reactive scale, the percentages who gave similarly negative evaluations to their personal and the country's economic condition were 24 percent and 63 percent, respectively. In light of these findings, it would not be unreasonable to regard these kinds of anti-party sentiments as being linked to a desire to 'throw the bums out' following an unsatisfactory performance in government. It should be noted that, while responses to the cultural antipartyism items revealed the same general pattern, the relationships between dissatisfaction and anti-party sentiments was much weaker: the 69 percent of anti-party respondents who were dissatisfied with the general state of the economy was only slightly larger than the 60 percent of those who have pro-party responses; and a breakdown of cultural anti- and pro-party respondents with regard to a negative assessment of their personal economic situation also produced a narrow margin of 33 versus 23 percent.

Dissatisfaction inherently involves a desire for change. Not surprisingly, then, reactive anti-party sentiments are also related to both the extent of change desired and to preferences regarding the political means for bringing it about. In a 1995 survey, respondents were asked to choose among the following options concerning the current status of Spanish society: 'It's fine the way it is'; 'it could be improved with small changes'; 'it needs profound reforms'; and 'it should be radically changed'. As can be seen in Table 7, those who selected pro-party items on the reactive scale were strongly predisposed towards moderate amounts of change or deeper reforms, while anti-party respondents tended overwhelmingly to prefer more radical changes. Again, the same general pattern could be observed with regard to cultural anti-party sentiments, but in this case the relationships were extremely weak. With regard to the preferred institutional vehicle for implementing the desire for change, the differences between reactive pro- and anti-party respondents, and between the effects of the cultural and reactive dimensions of antipartyism, were even more pronounced. Among those

who selected pro-party items on the reactive scale, fully 87 percent agreed with the proposition that ‘Voting is the only way of influencing the government’, while reactive anti-party respondents were almost evenly divided, with 49 percent regarding the vote as the only vehicle for influencing the government, and 51 disagreeing (Tau-b = .23). In sharp contrast, there was virtually no impact of cultural antipartyism on preferences for one or the other of these behavioral preferences (Tau-b = .03).

**Table 7.** *Anti-party sentiments and conservative or reformist attitudes towards Spanish society, 1995\*\* (In percentages)*

| Attitude toward society | Cultural dimension |         |            | Reactive dimension |         |            |
|-------------------------|--------------------|---------|------------|--------------------|---------|------------|
|                         | Pro-party          | Neutral | Anti-party | Pro-party          | Neutral | Anti-party |
| Fine as it is           | 5                  | 5       | 4          | 5                  | 5       | 2          |
| Minor reforms           | 38                 | 30      | 30         | 39                 | 25      | 11         |
| Profound reforms        | 48                 | 54      | 48         | 47                 | 54      | 59         |
| Radical change          | 8                  | 11      | 17         | 9                  | 16      | 28         |
| (N)                     | (1,040)            | (1,121) | (1,049)    | (1,885)            | (971)   | (129)      |
| <i>Tau-b</i>            | .09*               |         |            | .17*               |         |            |

\*Significant at .01 level.

\*\*Don't know and no answer have been excluded from calculation of vertical percentages.

Source: Banco de Datos, CIS, #2,154

To this point we have argued that cultural antipartyism is part of a broader syndrome of political disaffection, while reactive anti-party attitudes are conceptually and empirically distinct, and appear to be related to clusters of attitudes associated with political discontent and dissatisfaction with the incumbent government. But what are the origins of these two sets of attitudes? We began this exploration of anti-party sentiments in Spain with a comparison of various age cohorts, and we found that cultural anti-party sentiments were much more commonly found among older Spaniards than among the young. We speculated that these persisting ‘cohort effects’ were the long-term products of socialization experiences,

particularly those encountered during the crucial formative periods of each respondent's life. Indeed, the basic characteristics of these experiences varied greatly among age groups: those individuals in the older cohorts passed through their most formative periods of socialization when parties were playing political roles that had dramatically negative consequences (especially during the Second Republic and Civil War), or when the Franquist authoritarian regime was systematically disseminating propaganda hostile to parties and liberal democracy in general. In contrast, younger Spaniards' attitudes should be expected to bear the imprint of much more positive images of parties—particularly in light of their constructive roles in the highly successful processes of transition to and consolidation of democracy. But before we could conclude that these macropolitical developments were the cause of such sentiments, it is necessary to explore systematically the impact of another powerful socializing agent: formal education. Not only does a country's education system serve as a vehicle for the delivery of a regime's propaganda and self-legitimizing messages (which, in the case of Spain, changed dramatically in the 1970s), but it also develops intellectual and technical skills that are relevant to political engagement and participation. In short, it helps to build social capital that facilitates citizen involvement in politics.

Our analysis of survey data collected in 1995 reveals that education is negatively associated with the holding of cultural anti-party attitudes ( $\text{Tau-b} = -.19$ ). Those respondents with low levels of education are far more likely to adopt a cultural anti-party stance: fully 49 percent of those holding cultural anti-party views had completed the primary level of education or less, while only 30 percent of those with pro-party attitudes fell into these low-education categories. This finding is compatible with our interpretation of cultural antipartyism as forming part of the political disaffection syndrome. If corroborated by analyses that impose controls for potentially confounding influences, this would suggest that there is a strong social-capital-building effect of education: those individuals who have fewer of the kinds of skills and personal resources relevant to political participation are attitudinally marginalized from involvement in politics, and the holding of cultural anti-party attitudes is one manifestation of this political disaffection.

But before a conclusion of that kind could be justified, it is necessary to attempt to separate two distinctly different socializing influences that in Spain are highly correlated with

one another. Educational opportunities for Spaniards were very sharply limited under the Franco regime (in large measure, due to its persistent underfunding of public education [see Gunther 1980, 67-68]), but they expanded greatly beginning in the 1970s. Thus, one possible interpretation of the cohort effects that we observed earlier is that older Spaniards may have more negative attitudes towards parties as a by-product of their lower levels of educational attainment. But while older Spaniards may, in the aggregate, have received substantially less formal education than their children and grandchildren, they also passed through their most formative period of life when anti-party messages were either being learnt through the tragic experiences of the Second Republic and Civil War eras, or intentionally disseminated by the authoritarian regime of General Franco. Given the colinearity between educational opportunities and these differing kinds of socialization experience, it is not possible to reach a conclusion about the true nature of these cohort effects without introducing a 'control' variable into the analysis.

In order to separate these two distinctly different kinds of socialization processes, we shall re-examine the relationship between years of education and cultural antipartyism after first dividing the sample into two sets of age cohorts: the younger age group includes those who were most intensively socialized during the final years of *franquismo* (characterized by economic development and partial liberalization) and during the transition to democracy, while the older group includes those whose key formative periods corresponded with the Second Republic and Civil War, as well as the early, harsh period of the Franco regime. The resulting data, presented in Table 8, reveal that both types of socialization had an impact on the development of cultural anti-party attitudes, but that years of formal education have by far the more powerful impact. Within each age group, the better educated the respondent, the less likely he/she is to hold cultural-anti-party attitudes. This is a particularly interesting finding, since better educated older respondents were less likely to be negative in their attitudes towards parties than the less well-educated, even though they were exposed to more years of anti-democratic and anti-party socialization through the authoritarian regime's education system. This provides some empirical evidence in support of the commonly expressed opinion that most Spanish students (at least in the 1960s and 1970s) refused to take the regime's heavy-handed efforts at socialization seriously. Instead, and somewhat paradoxically, the principal legacy of the former regime in terms of cultural anti-party

attitudes appears to result from the fact that Spain's education system under that regime remained seriously underdeveloped until the 1970s, leading to an underdevelopment of social capital among Spain's citizens.

An examination of the relationship between education and reactive antipartyism produces a very different picture. Contrary to the predictions of some scholars, who portray critical attitudes towards parties as the product of greater familiarity with their misbehavior and shortcomings (and, hence, would expect to find stronger anti-party sentiments among the better educated), the data presented in Table 8 revealed that the extent of a respondent's formal education is not consistently or significantly linked to such attitudes. Informal socialization experiences during childhood also differentiate the origins of reactive antipartyism from those of cultural antipartyism. There is a strong negative association between the frequency of discussion of politics within the family when the respondent was a child and the development of cultural anti-party attitudes. A 1997 survey (CIS study #2,240) revealed that 59 percent of those holding cultural-anti-party attitudes had 'never' discussed politics with other members as a child, as compared with only 35 percent of those with pro-party attitudes ( $\text{Tau-b} = -.18$ ). With regard to reactive antipartyism, there is no statistically significant relationship between the two ( $\text{Tau-b} = .02$ ).

**Table 8.** *Anti-party sentiments and educational attainment in Spain, 1995\*\** (In horizontal percentages)

| <b>(a) Younger cohorts</b> |                    |         |            |       |                    |         |            |       |
|----------------------------|--------------------|---------|------------|-------|--------------------|---------|------------|-------|
| Education level            | Cultural dimension |         |            |       | Reactive dimension |         |            |       |
|                            | Pro-party          | Neutral | Anti-party | (N)   | Pro-party          | Neutral | Anti-party | (N)   |
| Uneducated                 | 26                 | 26      | 47         | (49)  | 62                 | 31      | 7          | (45)  |
| Primary                    | 23                 | 37      | 40         | (419) | 65                 | 31      | 4          | (368) |
| Secondary                  | 30                 | 35      | 35         | (735) | 60                 | 35      | 6          | (697) |
| College prep.              | 38                 | 36      | 26         | (567) | 57                 | 38      | 5          | (554) |
| University                 | 53                 | 33      | 14         | (390) | 61                 | 35      | 4          | (378) |
| <i>Tau-b</i>               |                    | -.20*   |            |       |                    | .03     |            |       |

| <b>(b) Older cohorts</b> |                    |         |            |       |                    |         |            |       |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---------|------------|-------|--------------------|---------|------------|-------|
| Education level          | Cultural dimension |         |            |       | Reactive dimension |         |            |       |
|                          | Pro-party          | Neutral | Anti-party | (N)   | Pro-party          | Neutral | Anti-party | (N)   |
| Uneducated               | 18                 | 38      | 44         | (204) | 77                 | 21      | 3          | (160) |
| Primary                  | 27                 | 31      | 42         | (608) | 71                 | 26      | 3          | (343) |
| Secondary                | 31                 | 33      | 36         | (115) | 64                 | 31      | 4          | (112) |
| College prep.            | 22                 | 41      | 37         | (82)  | 70                 | 24      | 5          | (74)  |
| University               | 44                 | 33      | 22         | (90)  | 60                 | 38      | 2          | (85)  |
| <i>Tau-b</i>             |                    | -.10*   |            |       |                    | .08*    |            |       |

\* Significant at .01.

\*\* Don't know and no answer have been excluded from calculation of horizontal percentages. *Uneducated* includes illiterate, and has never attended school but can read; *Primary* includes complete or incomplete elementary education; *Secondary* includes complete junior-high-school education and elementary professional training; *College prep.* includes Bachillerato (university-preparatory high school) and advanced professional training; and *University* includes complete and incomplete university or advanced technical school education.

Source: Banco de Datos, CIS, #2,154.



Additional indications of the political disengagement of those holding cultural anti-party attitudes can be seen in their low frequency of exposure to political information through the media or discussions of politics with other persons. As can be seen in Table 9, there are significant and strong negative relationships between cultural antipartyism, on the one hand, and the frequency with which respondents read newspapers ( $\text{Tau-b} = -.23$ ) and discuss politics with other persons ( $\text{Tau-b} = -.21$ ). Persons holding cultural anti-party attitudes are also significantly less likely to watch television programmes dealing with politics and listen to radio programmes that deal with politics, although the relationships are of more modest strength ( $\text{Tau-b} = -.10$  and  $-.12$ , respectively). Once again, the correlates of reactive antipartyism are quite different from those of the cultural variety. Only exposure to television news shares a statistically significant negative association with anti-party attitudes ( $\text{Tau-b} = -.06$ ). The frequency of exposure to other sources of political information are statistically insignificant and, with regard to political discussion and newspaper reading, of the wrong sign.

To what extent are these attitudes linked to support for democracy—a core element of the legitimacy of a democratic regime? In Table 10, we present data showing the relationship between both kinds of antipartyism and a questionnaire item that asks respondents to choose among the following options: ‘Democracy is preferable to any other form of government’; ‘Under certain circumstances, an authoritarian regime, a dictatorship, is preferable to a democratic system’; and ‘For people like me, one regime is the same as another’. The most striking conclusion is that overwhelming majorities of Spaniards support democracy irrespective of their attitudes towards parties. It is also clear, however, that both kinds of anti-party sentiments are associated with lower levels of support for democracy ( $\text{Tau-b} = -.20$  and  $-.10$ , respectively).

**Table 9.** *Anti-party sentiments and exposure to political information in Spain, 1995\*\** (In percentages)

| Frequency of exposure                     | Cultural dimension |         |            | Reactive dimension |         |            |
|---|--------------------|---------|------------|--------------------|---------|------------|
|   | Pro-party          | Neutral | Anti-party | Pro-party          | Neutral | Anti-party |
| <i>Reads political news in newspapers</i> |                    |         |            |                    |         |            |
| Every day or several days                 |                    |         |            |                    |         |            |
| per week                                  | 37                 | 25      | 16         | 27                 | 29      | 21         |
| Once a week                               | 25                 | 22      | 16         | 22                 | 24      | 14         |
| Sometimes                                 | 11                 | 12      | 13         | 12                 | 13      | 9          |
| Never/almost never                        | 27                 | 41      | 55         | 39                 | 35      | 55         |
| (N)                                       | (1,054)            | (1,137) | (1,091)    | (1,927)            | (981)   | (131)      |
| <i>Tau-b</i>                              |                    | -.23*   |            |                    | .01     |            |
| <i>Watches television news programmes</i> |                    |         |            |                    |         |            |
| Every day or several days                 |                    |         |            |                    |         |            |
| per week                                  | 57                 | 48      | 44         | 52                 | 49      | 38         |
| Once a week                               | 20                 | 20      | 18         | 20                 | 20      | 18         |
| Sometimes                                 | 11                 | 12      | 12         | 11                 | 11      | 13         |
| Never/almost never                        | 14                 | 19      | 25         | 16                 | 20      | 31         |
| (N)                                       | (1,051)            | (1,136) | (1,087)    | (1,921)            | (929)   | (130)      |
| <i>Tau-b</i>                              |                    | -.10*   |            |                    | -.06*   |            |
| <i>Listens to radio news programs</i>     |                    |         |            |                    |         |            |
| Every day or several days                 |                    |         |            |                    |         |            |
| per week                                  | 34                 | 26      | 22         | 30                 | 28      | 21         |
| Once a week                               | 16                 | 16      | 13         | 15                 | 15      | 14         |
| Sometimes                                 | 9                  | 13      | 11         | 11                 | 11      | 13         |
| Never/almost never                        | 41                 | 45      | 54         | 45                 | 46      | 52         |
| (N)                                       | (1,053)            | (1,135) | (1,091)    | (1,924)            | (981)   | (131)      |
| <i>Tau-b</i>                              |                    | -.12*   |            |                    | -.02    |            |
| <i>Discusses politics</i>                 |                    |         |            |                    |         |            |
| Every day or several days                 |                    |         |            |                    |         |            |
| per week                                  | 21                 | 11      | 10         | 14                 | 16      | 12         |
| Once a week                               | 26                 | 21      | 13         | 21                 | 22      | 24         |
| Sometimes                                 | 26                 | 25      | 24         | 25                 | 28      | 23         |
| Never/almost never                        | 28                 | 43      | 54         | 40                 | 33      | 52         |
| (N)                                       | (1,037)            | (1,134) | (1,080)    | (1,907)            | (971)   | (131)      |
| <i>Tau-b</i>                              |                    | -.21*   |            |                    | .03     |            |

\*Significant at .01.

\*\*Don't know and no answer have been excluded from calculation of vertical percentages.

Source: Banco de Datos, CIS, #2,154.

**Table 10.** *Anti-party sentiments and support for democracy in Spain, 1995\*\** (In percentages)

|  | Cultural dimension |         |            | Reactive dimension |         |            |
|--|--------------------|---------|------------|--------------------|---------|------------|
|  | Pro-party          | Neutral | Anti-party | Pro-party          | Neutral | Anti-party |
| Support for democracy                        |                    |         |            |                    |         |            |
| Democracy is preferable                      | 88                 | 82      | 66         | 83                 | 77      | 61         |
| Authoritarian regime<br>sometimes preferable | 7                  | 10      | 14         | 8                  | 13      | 21         |
| No difference                                | 5                  | 8       | 20         | 9                  | 11      | 18         |
| (N)  | (1,037)            | (1,113) | (1,054)    | (1,878)            | (963)   | (124)      |
| <i>Tau-b</i>                                 | -.20*              |         |            | -.10               |         |            |

\*Significant at .01 level.

\*\*Don't know and no answer have been excluded from calculation of vertical percentages.

Source: Banco de Datos, CIS, # 2,154.

### **Anti-party sentiments in Portugal, Italy, and Greece**

To what extent are the attitudinal correlates and the likely origins of anti-party sentiments the same in other Southern European countries? If we were to find these same general patterns in the other three countries in this region, despite their differing historical experiences and political cultures, this would substantially reinforce the construct validity of the attitudinal dimensions that we are exploring in this paper. In Table 11, we present some of the correlates of cultural antipartyism in these three countries. The similarities among these relationships (not to mention their compatibility with the Spanish data that we presented above) is most impressive. By far the strongest linkages are between cultural-anti-party attitudes and four variables that our already mentioned studies (Montero, Gunther and Torcal 1997 and 1998; Gunther and Montero 2000; and Torcal 2000) have demonstrated belong to a broader political disaffection syndrome: these include three measures of 'political efficacy', and the respondent's self-described level of interest in politics. Those who hold cultural anti-party attitudes in all three countries are substantially less interested in politics. Indeed, the differences in level of political interest between anti- and pro-party respondents

are quite extreme: 39 versus 77 percent in Greece; 9 versus 41 percent in Portugal; and 21 versus 59 percent in Italy. Those with cultural anti-party attitudes are lower in internal efficacy, more cynical towards politicians, and much less exposed to newspapers. Only the lack of a consistent relationship with television viewing and the weakness of the relationship with radio listening do not fit with our Spanish findings, and this is most likely the result of a significant difference in the wording of questionnaire items.<sup>11</sup> With regard to the origins of these kinds of attitudes, it is noteworthy that there is a strong link in each country with low levels of education and a positive evaluation of the former authoritarian regime. Thus, there is prima-facie evidence that our speculations about the origins of such attitudes in earlier socialization experiences appear to be credible as hypotheses explaining their appearance in these other countries as well.

Similarly, our Spanish findings are also consistent with those from Greece, Italy, and Portugal concerning reactive antipartyism as well. As can be seen in Table 12, there is no significant or consistent relationship with regard to exposure to the print or broadcast media, and the link with the respondent's level of educational attainment is extremely weak. The only noteworthy departure from our findings from Spain is that, in Italy, there is a relationship of moderate strength between this kind of anti-party orientation, on the one hand, low levels of political interest, high levels of political disaffection, and a preference for moderate social and political reforms, on the other. In short, in Italy there is some overlap between the cultural and reactive types of antipartyism. These relationships are much weaker in Greece, and in Portugal they are non-existent. Thus, with the partial exception of the Italian case (which we hypothesize is a product of certain specific features of Italian party politics in the mid-1980s<sup>12</sup>), these findings provide further corroboration that reactive antipartyism is not part of

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<sup>11</sup> The relevant questions in the 1985 Four Nation Survey simply asked about the frequency with which the respondent watched television and listened to the radio, not the frequency with which political news was followed on television or radio. Since the great majority of programmes broadcast over both media are non-political, this difference in wording is bound to weaken the relationship. In the case of newspaper reading, this is not much of a problem, since political information dominates the news reported.

<sup>12</sup> This may be a product of the fact that, at the time the 1985 survey was conducted, there had been no alternation in government. The DC had governed without interruption since the 1940s, and opposition parties of the left (the Partito Comunista Italiano) and the right (the Movimento Sociale Italiano) had been permanently

**Table 11.** *Correlates (Tau-b) of cultural anti-party sentiments in Portugal, Italy, and Greece, 1985*

| Indicators  | Portugal | Italy | Greece |
|---|----------|-------|--------|
| Political efficacy**                                |          |       |        |
| Politicians don't care                              | .23*     | .22*  | .25*   |
| Politics too complicated                            | .29*     | .27*  | .31*   |
| Those in power only look out for personal interests | .25*     | .32*  | .38*   |
| Interest in politics                                | -.30*    | -.30* | -.28*  |
| Exposure to political information                   |          |       |        |
| Frequency of newspaper reading                      | -.18*    | -.15* | -.15*  |
| Frequency of radio news listening                   | -.08*    | -.03  | -.01   |
| Frequency of TV news viewing                        | -.09*    | .04   | .05*   |
| Reformist attitudes towards social change           | -.09*    | -.01  | -.06*  |
| Educational attainment                              | -.17*    | -.18* | -.17*  |
| Support for democracy                               | -.06*    | -.08* | -.10*  |
| Evaluation of former authoritarian regime           | .17*     | .13*  | .32*   |

\*Significant at .01 level.

\*\* The wordings of the following questionnaire items are: 'Politicians don't care what people like me think'; 'politics is so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is happening'; and 'those in power are only looking out for their own personal interests'.

*Source:* The Four Nation Study.

excluded from power. Thus, as in the case of supporters of opposition parties elsewhere, their voters should be expected to have adopted conjunctural anti-party attitudes. In the Italian case, however, the electorates of both of these parties included more deeply alienated individuals: the MSI was an explicitly anti-system party, and the PCI had, until quite recently, also maintained an anti-system stance. Thus, the cleavage between supporters of government and opposition parties was deeper, more suffused with additional meaning, and more long-lasting than it was in those countries that had experienced alternations in power and lacked significant anti-system parties.

the political disaffection syndrome, and is distinct from cultural antipartyism. Finally, as in the case of cultural antipartyism, there is a relationship of moderate strength between these negative orientations towards parties and positive assessments of the previous authoritarian regime, as well as lower levels of support for democracy.

**Table 12.** *Correlates (Tau-b) of reactive anti-party sentiments in Portugal, Italy, and Greece, 1985*

| Indicators  | Portugal | Italy | Greece |
|---|----------|-------|--------|
| Political efficacy**                                |          |       |        |
| Politicians don't care                              | .01      | .11*  | .04    |
| Politics too complicated                            | .00      | .03   | -.01   |
| Those in power only look out for personal interests | .07      | .12   | .04    |
| Interest in politics                                | .01      | -.11* | -.07*  |
| Exposure to political information                   |          |       |        |
| Frequency of newspaper reading                      | .05      | -.01  | .01    |
| Frequency of radio news listening                   | .05      | -.00  | -.03   |
| Frequency of TV news viewing                        | .02      | -.04  | -.04   |
| Reformist attitudes towards social change           | .03      | .11*  | .08*   |
| Educational attainment                              | .03      | .04*  | .05    |
| Support for democracy                               | -.15*    | -.14* | -.06*  |
| Evaluation of former authoritarian regime           | .13*     | .09*  | .09*   |

\*Significant at .01 level.

\*\* The wordings of the following questionnaire items are: 'Politicians don't care what people like me think'; 'politics is so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is happening'; and 'those in power are only looking out for their own personal interests'.

*Source:* The Four Nation Study.

In short, these findings provide strong corroboration for our assertion that these two different kinds of anti-party sentiments are both conceptually and empirically distinct. Despite the significant differences among the historical experiences and political cultures of these four countries (and even some questionnaire-item wording differences that weaken our measures of statistical association), the same patterns can be seen consistently across all four countries. These patterns suggest that cultural anti-party sentiments are part of the broader syndrome of political disaffection, while reactive antipartyism appears to be associated with political discontent, and, in particular, dissatisfaction with the performance of the incumbent government.

### **The behavioral consequences of anti-party sentiments**

It has often been argued that anti-party sentiments, or the broader crisis of confidence in political institutions in modern democracies, can have grave implications for the quality of democracy. Among the various behavioral consequences that have been associated with this cluster of attitudes are the erosion of voters' psychological attachments of parties, decreases in electoral participation, increases in electoral volatility, a decline in the number of party members, and an increase in support for anti-system parties (Poguntke 1996). In light of our findings about the existence of two distinctly different dimensions of anti-party attitudes, let us examine some of the behavioral correlates of these orientations.

Tables 13 and 14 present data measuring the relationships between anti-party attitudes and three different aspects of political participation. The first of these involves the simple act of voting itself, and separates those who cast a ballot (valid or not) from those who abstained from electoral participation altogether. The next two are based on (1) casting a ballot for or against the incumbent government party (with blank or otherwise invalid ballots counted as votes against the government) and (2) giving electoral support to an antisystem party (the PCP in Portugal, the MSI in Italy, and the KKE in Greece). Closely related to these behavioral manifestations of partisanship is the development of a psychological attachment to

a political party—or, as it is more usually described, party identification.<sup>13</sup> An additional dependent variable is membership in various kinds of secondary associations, including cultural, religious, partisan, professional, trade union, or recreational groups. This provides a measure of the degree of active integration of the respondent into civil society and (in some cases) partisan organizations. But electoral participation and membership in organized groups are only two of the several ways in which citizens can participate within their democratic political systems. Since the late 1960s, in particular, non-traditional or unconventional forms of participation have been regarded as significant channels for political activity (see Barnes, Kaase, et al, 1979; Muller 1979). Some such unconventional arenas for participation are regarded in most democratic countries as entirely proper and legitimate forms of citizen involvement. While peaceful protest demonstrations fall into this category, other forms of non-traditional political participation are not regarded as acceptable forms of behavior. Illegal sit-ins and occupation of factories, and, especially, engagement in acts of violence, are not only proscribed in most democratic systems, but it can be argued that they represent a violation of democratic rules of the game that can have dangerously polarizing consequences for a democratic system. Thus, Tables 13 and 14 separate these other forms of political involvement into three categories: conventional participation (including work for a party, participating in party meetings, efforts to convince others how to vote, and attentiveness to politics through the media); unconventional forms of political participation (involvement in strikes, demonstrations, and sit-ins); and illegal protests (consist of blocking traffic, destroying property, and painting graffiti in public places).

Table 13 presents Tau-b coefficients measuring the association between these various forms of involvement in politics and the cultural form of antipartyism. As can be seen, cultural anti-party attitudes are associated with each and every form of participation in the table except voting--and the absence of a relationship in that case is somewhat surprising, given the important role that parties play in mobilizing voters during election campaigns. Overall, these findings strongly reaffirm our earlier interpretation of cultural antipartyism as

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<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, our analysis includes a measure based on a five-point scale, with 1 indicating that the respondent regards him/herself as very close to a political party, and 5 reflecting a great psychological distance from parties.



part of a broader syndrome of political disaffection and marginalization from active involvement in politics in all four countries. Respondents with cultural anti-party attitudes tend to avoid the development of a sense of identification with parties, shun involvement with organized secondary associations, tend to vote for antisystem parties, and abstain from both conventional and unconventional forms of political participation and protest. The only significant cross-national difference is that cultural antipartyism is closely associated with a vote against the incumbent government party in Italy and Greece, but not in the other two countries. Perhaps the most surprising finding to emerge from this analysis is the moderately strong negative association between cultural anti-party orientations, on the one hand, and participation in various non-party forms of political involvement—including conventional, unconventional, and violent protests. These data suggest that, rather than reflecting a preference for other channels for political participation, this kind of anti-party sentiment is indicative of a far-reaching passivity and disaffection from politics in general.

With regard to the reactive form of antipartyism (see Table 14), it is much easier to interpret its behavioral consequences: with some exceptions, there are none. Quite surprisingly, in none of these four countries is reactive antipartyism associated to a statistically significant degree with voting turnout, membership in secondary associations, or participation in illegal protests. And with regard to its relationships with our conventional and unconventional participation scales, a statistically significant association is (with the exception of Spain) weak or completely absent. What is perhaps most surprising is the weakness of the relationship between these anti-party sentiments and the respondent's self-described psychological proximity to political parties. Only in the cases of the propensity to vote against the incumbent party in Spain and Greece, and with regard to unconventional participation in Spain,<sup>14</sup> do we see a significant behavioral consequence of the holding of reactive anti-party attitudes. Aside from these two exceptions, the overall impact of reactive anti-party attitudes on the quality of democratic life is virtually nil: individuals who hold

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<sup>14</sup> This Spanish finding fits with previous interpretations of the extremely frequent waves of demonstrations, interruptions of traffic, and other forms of protest that have characterized Spain's democracy since the mid-1980s (Orizo 1983, 232; and 1991, 163). Accordingly, the frequency of such unconventional protests might be interpreted as a logical response to a lack of confidence in parties as a vehicle for political participation and the expression of demands. This positive finding makes the absence of such a relationship in the other three countries all the more puzzling.

such negative attitudes towards parties are no less likely to vote, join social and political organizations, engage in a wide array of both conventional and unconventional forms of political activities, and are only slightly less likely to identify psychologically with political parties.

**Table 13.** *Relationships between cultural antipartyism and forms of political participation in Southern Europe, 1985*

| Participation                         | Spain | Portugal | Italy | Greece |
|---------------------------------------|-------|----------|-------|--------|
| Electoral participation               | -.05  | -.05     | .00   | -.07*  |
| Vote for incumbent-government party** | -.02  | -.06     | -.09* | -.11*  |
| Vote for anti-system party***         | --    | -.12*    | -.08* | -.09*  |
| Party identification                  | -.09* | -.03     | -.12* | -.09*  |
| Secondary association membership      | -.11* | -.02     | -.12* | -.12*  |
| Conventional participation scale      | -.19* | -.25*    | -.21* | -.15*  |
| Unconventional participation scale    | -.33* | -.24*    | -.15* | -.21*  |
| Violent protest participation         | -.16* | -.17*    | -.01  | -.10*  |

\* Significant at .01 level.

\*\* In Spain, this was the PSOE; in Portugal, the Socialist Party; in Italy, the Christian Democratic party; and in Greece, the PASOK. Non-voters were excluded from this analysis, although blank and otherwise invalid ballots were counted as a vote against the incumbent party.

\*\*\* Excludes non-voters and those who cast blank or otherwise invalid ballots. In Portugal, measures votes for PCP; in Italy, the MSI; and in Greece, the KKE. Spain is excluded because support for anti-system parties is statistically insignificant.

*Source:* The Four Nation Study.

**Table 14.** *Relationships between reactive antipartyism and forms of political participation in Southern Europe, 1985*

| Participation                         | Spain | Portugal | Italy | Greece |
|---------------------------------------|-------|----------|-------|--------|
| Electoral participation               | -.01  | .03      | -.02  | -.02   |
| Vote for incumbent-government party** | -.13* | -.05     | -.01  | -.08*  |
| Vote for anti-system party***         | --    | .05      | .02   | .00    |
| Party identification                  | -.08* | -.05     | -.11* | -.07*  |
| Secondary association membership      | .00   | -.04     | .03   | .04    |
| Conventional participation scale      | -.10* | .03      | -.05* | -.07*  |
| Unconventional participation scale    | -.23* | -.02     | -.04  | -.02   |
| Violent protest participation         | -.04  | .01      | .06   | .08    |

\* Significant at .01 level.

\*\* In Spain, this was the PSOE; in Portugal, the Socialist Party; in Italy, the Christian Democratic party; and in Greece, the PASOK. Non-voters were excluded from this analysis, although blank and otherwise invalid ballots were counted as a vote against the incumbent party.

\*\*\* Excludes non-voters and those who cast blank or otherwise invalid ballots. In Portugal, measures votes for PCP; in Italy, the MSI; and in Greece, the KKE. Spain is excluded because support for anti-system parties is statistically insignificant.

*Source:* The Four Nation Study.

## Concluding observations

In this paper we have explored one important aspect of the alleged ‘decline of parties’: anti-party attitudes among citizens. On the basis of our analysis of over a decade of survey data, we have found that there is no general tendency towards higher levels of anti-party sentiments in Southern Europe. Instead, this appears to be a phenomenon that is specific to each individual country. We have found, moreover, that such attitudes should be separated into two distinct dimensions. We have referred to the first as *cultural* antipartyism,

which we found to be quite stable over time, and is linked to low levels of education and political information, and to the broader syndrome of political disaffection. What we have referred to as *reactive* antypartism, in contrast, does not appear to be rooted in primary socialization experiences, educational attainment, or level of political information, but is related to temporary political circumstances, especially the respondent's level of satisfaction with the government and the incumbent party. Accordingly, such attitudes fluctuate over time, in a manner that stands in contrast with the general stability of the 'cultural' variety of antipartyism.

These two varieties of attitudes towards parties also have differing implications for political behavior. While reactive antipartyism has only a slight impact on voting turnout, cultural antipartyism has far-reaching effects pertaining to psychological attachments to parties and various forms of conventional participation. What is particularly striking is that, in contrast with the findings of some studies (e.g. Scarrow 1996b), cultural antipartyism in Southern Europe is also linked to low levels of involvement in unconventional forms of political participation. It appears to be part of a general syndrome of apathy and political disaffection, in which certain types of citizens remain marginalized from politics and distant from political elites. In this sense, it can be regarded as potentially undermining the quality of democracy. At the same time, however, it is important to note that anti-party attitudes are not strongly associated with a low level of support for democracy, or with support for anti-system parties. Thus, such attitudes may have significant implications for the quality of the linkages between citizens and political elites, but not for the stability of the democratic regime itself.

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