

# 7.

## The crisis impact on the political discourse of Portuguese social partners

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## INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a sociological perspective on citizenship at a time of crisis enriched with data analysis techniques from computer engineering and linguistics. We base our research on the assumption that citizenship assumes a political and civic dimension illustrated in an exemplary way through the development achieved and role performed by trade unions and employers' associations in our societies.

The recent crisis imposed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in Portugal (2011-2014). This compromise challenged the already consolidated democratic institutions, inclusive social dialogue mechanisms, through which both trade unions and employers' representatives acquire the status of "social partners" in corporatist regimes. In fact, through social concertation, but more through collective bargaining, these civil society organizations assume a unique hinge function. We contribute to the volume on "citizenship" with the understanding of the evolution of social partners discourse in the context of the crisis. We hope to add to the debate about the quality of democracy, providing empirical evidence on how Portuguese social partners were affected by the supra-national intervention of the troika (IMF, EU, ECB).

We assume that the asymmetric positions associated with the structural nature of social partners in our societies lead to very different perceptions concerning the neo-liberal policies implemented by the supra-national intervention; and that their distinct ideological orientations are reflected in their political programmes as far as they are the result of a consensus found through a collective understanding. Furthermore, these written discourses serve as guidelines for action in the coming years reflecting the appropriate solutions for a problem, and may, as a result, help to predict cooperation/resistance. This is how we came to analyse social partners' final documents of general meetings during the most important period of the crisis: before, during, and after the troika presence in Portugal.

In this chapter we answer two main questions: to what extent is the crisis associated with the troika by the social partners? Did the supra-national intervention change social partners' attitudes toward democratic mechanisms of social dialogue?

The first two sections of this chapter embed our research in the discussion about the destruction of corporatism by neoliberal policies, and the external but also internal reasons for the lack of Europeanization of union (in particular)

opposition. Then we present and justify our methodological choices and, finally, we present and discuss our findings, first by organization and then comparing the selected cases.

### THE SUPRA-NATIONAL ACTORS' IMPOSITION OF AUSTERITY

According to Culpepper and Regan (2014), trade unions were not invited to negotiate paths of economic adjustment in the countries hit especially hard by the crisis due to their declining legitimacy, based on membership.

However, based on the Portuguese case, we sustain that trade unions have attained a crucial position in European societies that cannot be judged (only) by the gatekeeper function of social peace. Although trade unions' membership has been falling in what has been called the "unionism crisis" and the European social model has been eroded – witnessed through the freeze of the European social dialogue, for instance – trade unions are also labour market regulators. Through collective bargaining in particular, trade unions together with employers' representatives define wages and working conditions, providing benefits to those beyond their members.

In fact, trade unions were not invited to negotiate the paths of economic adjustment in countries like Portugal – despite the celebration of a social pact in 2012 with the weakest union partner, which did not prevent it from joining general strikes some time later – because the supra-national intervention is dominated by a neoliberal ideology.

As James Raymond Vreeland (2003) explains, during crises, Governments use conditionality, that is specific policy prescriptions imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in exchange for loans to developing countries, to impose unpopular policies. Also Balbona and Begega sustain that governments seem to use "...the imposition of austerity as a mechanism for the avoidance of blame" (2015, 289).

For Vreeland (2003), the IMF programmes have a negative effect on economic growth but these effects are distributed unequally and some are not even hurt. Moreover, the reforms may lead to different levels of political opposition, inclusively from the trade unions and other representative civil society organizations (Moury and Standing 2017).

In its lending and advisory role, the IMF, as Eichengreen and Woods (2015) state, intervenes in national affairs, raising the risk of weakening democratic

institutions. The weight of member countries such as the United States in IMF decision-making, in keeping with how voting rights depend on the quota size, is one reason for some passionate reactions it raises. Balbona and Begega sustain that in the recent crisis we went “from bargaining to imposition” (2015, 272). In fact, the institutions of social dialogue became at risk of demolition, as the Spanish authors say, but not only because of social concertation, which has a pure consultative role, but in particular through the offensive addressed toward collective bargaining (Stoleroff 2015).

In the same sense, decision-makers considered the centralization of European economic policy, and therefore destruction of corporatism, as the best process for guaranteeing Eurozone stability and this furthermore required austerity measures (Prosser 2016). However, one of the alternative solutions called for by some authors (Stockhammer 2013) was European solidarity and an “...institution-building that guaranteed a role for labour organisations (or more broadly labour and capital) in the administration and funding of the decisions of the institution. Effectively, these measures would amount to the creation of a European welfare state” (Stockhammer 2013, 16-17).

The IMF ideology, as that of other international institutions, usually is presented as the doctrine of economic neutrality. This doctrine, which assumes that politics stays to one side and that economic decisions are neutral, provides an ideological smokescreen for Western nations to intervene in favour of free trade capitalism. However, such international aid calls national sovereignty into question even while the opposite sides of the labour relations conflict may see this differently. As a neoliberal approach, this is expected to satisfy employer interests and be to the disfavour of those of workers. Having presented IMF mission aims as “...to ensure the stability of the international monetary system—the system of exchange rates and international payments that enables countries (and their citizens) to transact with each other” (<http://www.imf.org/en/About>), the IMF presence may clearly lead us to expect to generate opportunities for the entrepreneurs, and a threat to the power of trade unions and socially protected workers.

In sum, the centralization of European economy seems to be the path found to guarantee Eurozone stability and, according to the leading actors of that process, supra-national institutions, that path implies the exclusion of social partners.

## THE LACK OF SOCIAL PARTNERS CAPABLE OF COPING WITH SUPRA-NATIONAL ACTORS

The analysis of the reaction toward a supra-national intervention of a neoliberal actor, such as the IMF, seems limited to organizations at a European level (Müller and Platzer 2017). According to Erne (2008), trade unions are not expected to take political positions against European trends because they remain submerged in national specificities. The author considers that unions adopt technocratic and national strategies in response to the EU integration process, because national diverse identities, the integrated European market, and the supranational EU governance structures prevent European collective action.

Neoliberal actors seem to count on a crucial asymmetry in European policies to impose their view (Erne 2008). While economic policy takes on a European scale, social policy has a national base and that contributes to a deficit of European reflection in national debates. As Scharpf explains:

In the nation state, both types of policy had been in political competition at the same constitutional level. In the process of European integration, however, the relationship has become asymmetric as economic policies have been progressively Europeanized, while social-protection policies remained at the national level. As a consequence, national welfare states are constitutionally constrained by the “supremacy” of all European rules of economic integration, liberalization and competition law. At the same time, they must operate under the fiscal rules of monetary union while their revenue base is eroding as a consequence of tax competition and the need to reduce non-wage labour costs. (Scharpf 2002, 665-666)

If there are concerns over social inclusion in European treaties or a European Employment Strategy, there is also a corresponding need to respect the diversity of national contexts (Scharpf 2002; Erne 2008). Thus, despite the last financial crisis having created similar problems in different countries, social policies were left behind on the need for convergence. And this is how social policies contribute to a weak response from the workers' side. There was opposition and mobilization in countries like Portugal, namely through general strikes, which doubled its number in a few years, but with no political consequences before the elections.

National specificities weaken trade unions' action at a European level, making it more difficult to develop common strategies (Müller and Platzer 2017).

In these national specificities, we must contemplate the reality of entrenched national parochialisms as a major constraint upon the possibility of supranational institution-building (Abbott 2011). The European trade union movement has simply not had enough influence: “The crisis did not stop popular protest. However, European trade unions primarily fought pressing defensive struggles at the company or national level and therefore recurrently lacked the resources necessary to engage in longer-term transformative struggles” (Erne 2015, 358).

Based on their comparison of European trade union organizations, before and after 2008, Müller and Platzer (2017) identify how trade unions went from a period of organizational consolidation and improving institutional power resources toward a less European engaged movement having a new economic governance framework, which only reinforces the asymmetries.

These authors conclude that trade unions need to present plausible alternative policies. And they cannot only lobby for reform of the institutional set-up of the new economic governance framework. They also need to overcome the national sphere. In the authors’ words: “[trade unions] need to grant a higher priority to ‘Europe’ and all that this implies in terms of specific activities, in terms of both strategies and organisation, and reflect this in the allocation of scarce staff and material resources” (Müller and Platzer 2017, 310). In the same sense, Lima and Artiles also said: “Trade unions are still capable of mobilizing workers when needed, but national trade union action must be coordinated with regional and European action to develop alternative policy options” (Lima and Artiles 2011, 400).

One must have in mind that trade unions usually focus on the national level because this is where workplace problems can be identified and factors influencing national unions are more easily identified. Furthermore, as Erne (2008) stresses, the choice to act at a certain level is primarily determined by the means available.

Literature does not seem to relate much the scarce national unions’ opposition toward neoliberal policies with the mobilization capacity of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). Corinne Gobin noticed that this supra-national organization performs a unionism of the top (Gobin 1997, 137) and is not politically influential. The ETUC took position on austerity, having organized demonstrations or holding its congress in Athens in 2011, but demonstrations were relatively weak: May 2009, 250,000 participants; September 2010, 100,000 participants; November 2012, hundreds of

thousands of demonstrations (Degryse 2013). The ETUC considers austerity measures mainly as counter-productive. In fact, the ETUC is a mega-structure but assembles very distinct organizations, not only from different European regions but also from the same country.

In sum, although it would be important that the “...unionists perceive[e] the EU as an effective framework for collective action and not just a threat” (Erne 2008, 194), there are external and internal reasons for the lack of Europeanization of union strategies.

## METHODOLOGY

We here intend to ascertain which ways social partners discourses evolved within the context of the crisis and in particular considering the supra-national intervention of the troika as a defining moment in Portuguese history. Hence, we analysed social partners “voices” before, during, and after the troika presence (May 2011-May 2014).

There are two main reasons to use the written discourse as a good source of data. First, it ensures the comparative exercise, which would be less reliable through interviews for instance when taking into consideration the distance from the events and the trend to rebuild discourses. Second, the written discourse is both a set of ideas and an interactive process (Schmidt 2002), which means it may be a way to gain agreement for reform from relevant policy actors. Therefore, we analysed the political programmes of social partners. These documents are based on a collective consensus and serve as guidelines for a mandate (usually 3-4 years), for both internal and external audiences, binding the respective organizations with future claims and actions.

We analysed the written discourses of the CGTP-IN-Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses-Intersyndical (General Confederation of Portuguese Workers) and CIP-Confederação Empresarial de Portugal (Confederation of Portuguese Business). These are the two most representative, influential, and oldest Portuguese social partners, although there are neither objective nor legal criteria to assess its representativeness, prevailing a “mutual recognition” system (Eurofound 2016).

We undertook a multidisciplinary analysis considering the use of techniques from other scientific fields. First, we applied word extraction with the help of computer engineering to identify key-phrases (words or sequences of words

that represent entities and/or topical phrases), together with their occurrence (frequency) and centrality, i. e., how relevant a key-phrase is when considering each document as a connected web of possible key-phrases (Won et al. forthcoming). We have additionally considered specific and topically-related words,<sup>1</sup> namely “Europe”, “EU”, “troika”, “crisis”, “sovereignty”, “interference”, and two social partners at a European level (the ETUC and BusinessEurope), not automatically identified as key-phrases from the algorithm. Then, with the help of linguistic expertise, we analysed the ideological discourse of the segments in which those key-phrases were found, seeking to understand the sense associated with those words. Having found a very low frequency of words like “Europe”, we benchmarked it considering also the frequency of “Government”, assuming they are comparable in the political system.

Table 7.1 identifies the documents analysed.

**Table 7.1** *Political documents analysed*

	BEFORE THE TROIKA ARRIVAL	DURING THE TROIKA PRESENCE	AFTER THE TROIKA DEPARTURE
<b>CGTP-IN</b>	2008 Programa de congresso (11 <sup>th</sup> general meeting programme)	2012 Programa de congresso (12 <sup>th</sup> general meeting programme)	2016 Programa de congresso (13 <sup>th</sup> general meeting programme)
	2010 Plano Actividades 2010-12 (activity plan)	2011* Plano Actividades 2011 (activity plan)	2017 Candidatura 2017-19 (electoral programme)

Source: CGTP general meeting programmes (2008, 2012, 2016); CIP activity plans (2010, 2011, 2017).

\* We also considered in a first moment the CIP Programme for the triennium 2014-2016, because the 2011 document was published in March, thus before the troika arrived in May 2011. However, the 2014 document is shorter than usual (12 pages instead of about 50) and its content does not change our findings significantly.

1 The analysis was obviously made in Portuguese, words being presented in English only in this chapter.

## FINDINGS

### THE BACKGROUND

Over the last four decades, not only has the Portuguese economy changed, following the European Economic Community integration and the subsequent stages in the European project, in particular the Eurozone, but the Portuguese labour relations system has also acquired a level of maturity. The stabilization of the national industrial relations system in the beginning of the 1990s illustrates this as all representative organizations were included in the social concertation council. Although the main union organization, CGTP-IN, started by refusing to participate in social concertation, it joined and signed the first social pacts in 1991.

In addition to the transposition of a normative framework and other legislative aspects, European integration has contributed to the emergence of a new pattern of social relations, marked by the institutionalization of social dialogue at the national level (Royo 2012). For many social actors, Europe represented not only economic encouragement for adopting free markets but also a political opportunity for pluralist regimes (González 2012).

The polarization of labour relations in Portugal also concerns the European project. While for CGTP the European integration was an “adventure” (Cartaxo 2011) and its initial rejection at the European Trade Union Confederation seems to reflect it (Castanheira 1985), for CIP, one can identify an important receptiveness, considering the strengthening of the free market and the support provided for democratic regimes. Despite the ideological division amongst employers between those oriented toward the Atlantic economy and those interested in the European economy, the European project seemed to push employers further into Europe in conjunction with the problems arising in the ex-colonies (González 2012).

Portugal has made recourse to a supra-national support on three occasions since the advent of democracy: in 1977-79, 1983-85, and in 2011-14. The first two were an IMF intervention and the last was a troika intervention, thus also including the European Central Bank and the European Commission. In fact, the first and second IMF interventions in Portugal were held in a period of preparation for joining the European Economic Community with the membership application process running from 1977 through to accession in 1986. For the last intervention, Portugal was not only integrated into the

European Union but was also a Eurozone member-state, which meant it was particularly exposed to the crisis due to the interdependences within the Eurozone.

By the time of the last IMF intervention in Portugal, the industrial relations system and social dialogue mechanisms were consolidated. CGTP expressed their protest against austerity and the other union confederation signed a social pact that did not prevent a political crisis (Lima and Artiles 2011). In fact, the situation grew worse until the troika arrived. According to Lima and Artiles, trade unions opposed not only governments but also supra-national actors: “General strikes and mass demonstrations were called against the austerity plans of governments, but were also an expression of a generalized opposition to external constraints and impositions” (Lima and Artiles 2011, 399).

We will see next the importance of the supra-national intervention during the crisis from the perspective of the two main social partners: unions and employers. We will address our attention to how this supra-national intervention changed the social partners’ attitudes on democratic institutions, namely social concertation and collective bargaining.

### CGTP-IN

The CGTP-IN was founded in 1970 (before the Carnation Revolution of 1974), and until 1978 was the only main trade union organization. From the outset, its social composition spanned the industrial and services sectors, with the founding sectors including the metallurgic, wool, banking, and sales sectors (Cartaxo 2011). The CGTP follows an ideology of class struggle unionism and is one reason why Portuguese industrial relations are considered as still marked by the heritage of authoritarian corporatism (Royo 2012). Its repertoire of action often extends to street demonstrations and strikes, and, in addition to its late membership of the social concertation committee, the CGTP rarely signs social pacts. Through the years, experts and opinion makers consider its action as following a clearly partisan orientation, usually explained by a strong communist influence (Castanheira 1985; Rebelo and Brites 2012; Lisi 2013; Stoleroff 2015). Although this relation can be illustrated by the publicly-known affiliation of the general-secretaries of CGTP in the Communist Party, there is no empirical evidence in literature.

Analysing the CGTP political documents, a common idea emerges, that the CGTP serves as an important tool for defending workers' rights against "capital", "multinational companies", and "financial capital". The enemy is either a vague entity or arises out of the global economy. CGTP uses the word "fight" and other belligerent expressions, endowing a warlike dimension to its discourse that increases in the following meeting. In fact, after the troika departure, these warlike words have decreased but there remain an important number of deontic terms, such as "requires" and "unavoidable", for instance.

It comes as no surprise that the top six key phrases in all the CGTP documents analysed include "workers", "rights", and "collective bargaining". But if in 2008 the focus seems to be on employment, in 2012 we would highlight action, and in 2016 collective bargaining.

The Portuguese situation itself seems to gain only a low level of importance, at least in the introduction to these documents. Before the troika arrived, at its XI general meeting, in 2008, the CGTP set out general criticism addressed to neoliberal policies in Europe, and less so as specifically regards the Portuguese case. In this discourse we can already identify the questioning of the neoliberal argument as to the lack of alternatives to austerity:

A summary analysis of the current situation shows us that the world is being governed by the hegemonic interests of the financial capital and the power of the multinationals in the context of a process of capitalist and neoliberal globalization, as a unique solution for the future of humanity, leading to serious imbalances and contradictions in development between countries, a generalized climate of insecurities, a sharp increase in social injustices and inequalities, and increasing threats to peace in various regions of the world.  
(in Preamble 2008 – authors' translation)

In the next general meeting, in 2012, the specific problems are considered the obvious theme. In the table of contents, for instance, we identify a full chapter addressing the Welfare State with specific sections on social protection, the national health system, etc. After the troika departure, in 2016, CGTP considered that the troika is not the only signal of a supra-national intervention in the country. Sovereignty is in fact a word present in the discourse during the troika presence. In 2012, CGTP considered that Portugal is an occupied country.

The CGTP clearly assumes a political orientation in its written discourse. The CGTP is on the left-wing and supports the renegotiation of debt:

This is an exhausted but not defeated model, which requires the mobilization and enlightenment of all, to continue the struggle for an alternative, from Left wing and Sovereign, that the country needs and the people demand. (2016, 4 – authors' translation)

The CGTP clearly expresses political opposition toward the neoliberal orientations for both economic and social reasons:

Fifteen years after the introduction of the Pact of Stability and Growth (PEG) and the rules of the Economic and Monetary Union, the Memorandum of the Troika and now the Budget Treaty, these instruments have been put in motion as backward movers, which impose economically erroneous decisions and limitations socially unbearable. (2016, 54 – authors' translation)

In fact, in 2016, references to the new national political situation, that is, the political alliance among left-wing parties in Parliament, were very restrained and not completely positive. The most positive aspect seems to be that the CGTP is responsible for the political change even while remaining less clear its assessment of the current situation:

The CGTP-IN action and the workers' struggle were decisive for the creation of a new political framework which, being more favourable to the realization of its just demands, requires the continuation and intensification of our intervention. The first months of this new phase of national life confirm positive advances regarding the replacement of rights but reveal contradictions that are not unrelated to the pressures of the great patronage, which adapts to the new reality and tries to maintain the privileges accumulated in recent years. (2016, 7 – authors' translation)

The reversion of the collective bargaining situation would allow unions to regain power and, if that had already gained an important position in the 2008 document, it deserves no less space in the following documents. The CGTP seems to opt to underline the association of the *status quo* with the former right-wing government:

Fight for the repeal of legislative changes which weaken and hamper the right to bargain and collective bargaining enshrined in the Constitution, which requires repealing the rules on the expiry of conventions and reinstating the provisions prior to the 2003 Labour Code, in particular, the principle of automatic renewal of conventions and

more favourable treatment for workers, and the replacement of duties which have been eliminated or reduced as a result of changes resulting from revisions made after 2003. (2016, 27 – authors' translation)

At the same time, the attitude toward social concertation has clearly worsened. If CGTP is known for not signing most social pacts, the signature of a social pact in 2012 by UGT, which later was disappointed, may have been the last straw. If, before the troika, the CGTP had included a section in its document entitled: “Tornar mais efectivo o diálogo social, a concertação social e a participação institucional” [Making social dialogue, social consultation and institutional participation more effective], this then subsequently disappeared with social concertation beginning to be imprisoned by the enemy:

... it is a fact that during the 31 years of its existence, social concertation has been confirmed as an instrument at the service of the interests of the big capital and has often been used as a simple registry, intended to legitimize negotiations behind-the-scenes, as happened with more than two dozen agreements that, guaranteed by the UGT, as a divisive instrument used by employers and governments, were very burdensome for workers. (2016, 30 – authors' translation)

## CIP

The founding of CIP dates to 1974, in the immediate wake of the Carnation Revolution. It represents some of the largest Portuguese companies, such as SONAE, Galp, and EDP, and employer associations from all sectors with the exception of the primary sector. In 2010, CIP underwent an important restructuring process in 2010 with the merger of the former CIP and two centenarian business organizations, a longstanding project that apparently only became possible with the new and current CIP leader. The CIP mission involves promoting the right to free enterprise and private activity. In its early years, the CIP was associated with the right wing. Although its political party orientation has not gained much reference since then, its headquarters were inclusively subject to an arson attack in 1975 (Sanchez Cervelló 1994).

Considering the key-phrases of all the documents analysed, there is little surprise that the top six key phrases of its political documents highlight “enterprises”, “market economy”, and “competitiveness”.

The political documents seem to play a role of self-reaffirmation:

... we will develop actions that reinforce the position of CIP as the most representative confederation of the business associative movement for its history, notoriety and credibility, and at the same time strengthen its role as a connecting entity of a vast network of associates. (2017, 2630 – authors' translation)

We would note that the 2010 document also served for the assumption of the need for internal changes required by its members:

In any case, not wanting to dispense with responsibilities that must surely be shared by all without exception, we would like to underline that the people who make up the Board have long been demanding a different action from the CIP. In due course, suggestions were made in this context for the effective improvement of this Confederation. Naturally, these suggestions have now been invited to this Programme, adding to a number of others that we believe could contribute to the goal of making the CIP stronger, more efficient and more cohesive. (2010, 3 – authors' translation)

In general terms, we may identify the pragmatic content of CIP political documents even while they are also clearly ideological. The CIP ideology is liberalism as it defends the market economy and strongly opposes the state taking an active role in the economy. Before the troika period, in 2010, the CIP was already calling for more flexibility and adopting the same arguments of international institutions. CIP, focused on the national case, considers that Portugal maintains a rather rigid legal framework, especially regarding individual dismissals, collective lay-offs, and the regulation of temporary work:

The Portuguese labour legislation has been, and rightly, pointed out, along with other constraints, as a demobilizing element when making investment decisions. The rigidity of labour legislation, where Portugal is the OECD country with the highest labour protection index, contributes to the increase in the weight of fixed-term contracts. In the three indicators of labour flexibility (protection of individual contracts of permanent employment, collective lay-offs, and regulation of temporary and fixed-term work), Portugal remains very poorly placed in terms of flexibility in individual employment contracts. (2010, 22 – authors' translation)

Thus, before the troika's arrival, CIP had already nominated the state as an enemy. According to the CIP, the state is bureaucratic, nosy, and unable. Furthermore, the state was, in general terms, responsible for the crisis and had an abusive intervention during the crisis:

The shock of the financial crisis subsequent to 16 September 2008 has had perverse effects on the world economy. Private initiative was stigmatized and there was a false legitimacy to a greater intervention of the State in the economy. This is truly paradoxical. After all, at the origin of the crisis, more than any other actors were the states themselves, which failed to fulfill their essential obligations: regulation and supervision. It is indeed fundamental that, as far as Portugal is concerned, a point of order should be made here. And the CIP must have a decisive say in this, publicly assuming its values. (2010, 14 – authors' translation)

Targeting the state is a constant feature in CIP discourses. In fact, CIP sustains the idea of a lean state:

Conscious of a reconciliation between the sustainability of public finances and the stimulus to economic growth, it is necessary to reduce current public spending, and CIP is available, in particular, to collaborate in structural reforms to reduce the weight of the State in the economy, in order to obtain a sustained reduction of sovereign debt and a general decrease in the tax burden. (2017, 7 – authors' translation)

However, in the period following the troika, there are very few derogatory expressions. The CIP discourse dropped its warlike tones and became more reconciliatory, inclusively considering the use of the first person plural, and non-explicit criticism of the state, and instead targeting the fiscal authorities, for instance.

... CIP is aware that economic development requires a broad social consensus, involving the State, Business Associations, and Trade Unions. A broad consensus that defines goals and means and ways to control, with the definition of public policies that transcend the normal duration of government cycles. (2017, 7– authors' translation)

CIP's demands switched from a focus on the lean state and reducing costs toward economic growth. The title of the president's introduction states this clearly: "*Make growth happen*" (2017, 2).

CIP mentions social concertation in a brief but supportive way in the post-troika published document, while there was no reference in the document for the period prior to the troika's arrival. Simultaneously, collective bargaining also deserves a very brief reference in both periods. The CIP position sustains that nothing is able to change the *status quo*, in particular in the period following the troika. This reflects how the CIP intends to lobby for the maintenance of the deregulation reached since the implementation of the Labour Code in 2003:

In particular, CIP will be intransigent in maintaining the legal framework in force for collective bargaining, in particular as regards negotiation space, validity, and oversight, as well as the legal regime on working time and organization, duration of vacations, and compensation for extra work. (2017, 19 – authors' translation)

#### COMPARING CGTP AND CIP DISCOURSES ON THE IMPOSITION OF AUSTERITY BY SUPRA-NATIONAL ACTORS

Comparing the discourses of the two main social partners, CGTP and CIP, we realize they are not only ideologically distinct but opposite, polarizing the two sides of labour relations. Both discourses are ideological and assume a belligerent tone. They clearly identify the “enemy”: on the one hand, capital, on the other, the state. The warlike language is common to both organizations although the written CGTP discourse also includes interjections, while CIP is softening its discourse following the departure of the troika.

The pragmatic positions of the social partners emerge out of their most important key phrases, as Table 7.2 shows.

**Table 7.2**

*Top three innovative relevant key-phrases before and after the Troika*

	DURING THE TROIKA PRESENCE	AFTER THE TROIKA DEPARTURE
CGTP-IN	Labour market	Collective bargaining
	Enterprises	Rights
	Employment	Right-wing policy
CIP	Market economy	Members' network
	Portuguese economy	Economic growth
	Judicial system	Compromise

Source: CGTP general meeting programmes (2008, 2012, 2016); CIP activity plans (2010, 2011, 2017).

Although both social partners always present the same first key phrase (“workers” in the CGTP case, and “companies” in the CIP case), the relevant new words emphasize their contextual concern, which clearly is the national situation. Thus, the CGTP seems mainly concerned about the high unemployment rate before the troika arrival, changing its focus to the need to recover the collective bargaining power after its departure. We would explain this shift in the core demands by the slight decrease in the unemployment rate after the troika left but especially by the perception of an opportunity to reverse the *status quo* within the newly prevailing political configuration.

On the other side of the divide, faced by the troika, CIP elected the judicial system as the focus of its campaigning. It considered that the judicial system posed an obstacle to the development of the Portuguese economy. This issue loses importance after the troika left. We can explain the judicial system’s loss of importance both through considering the troika’s changes to the legal framework, and also through the emergence of a new concern. In fact, after the troika left, the CIP focused on the compromise associated with the maintenance of the *status quo*, and seemingly adopting a reconciliatory discourse. Finally, the post-troika CIP document also displays concerns over its own members. This internal question probably stems from the loss of members or the need to recover their trust. We would note that in March 2014, the former CIP presidents accused the current incumbent of harming members’ interests when signing a petition calling for the renegotiation of the public debt (Negócios 2014).

In no social partner discourse does Europe or any corresponding word, like EU or Brussels, achieve importance, although CGTP makes more references to “Europe” than CIP. This does not mean that Europe was expected to present a high score, because the subject is in principle not the focus of the programme of a national organization meeting, but it could assume a more important position considering the troika composition and its austerity policies. The benchmarking with words like Government and troika showed that Europe is more important although still with few occurrences. In any case, we also observe a decrease of importance of Europe and related words in the discourse of CGTP while it increases in the CIP discourse after the troika departure. Note for instance that a section of the 2017 CIP document is entitled: “A Confederation committed to Europe United around Competitiveness”. Also the reference to the supra-national social partners in which CGTP and CIP are affiliated (ETUC and BusinessEurope respectively) is low, as we can see in Figure 7.1.

**Figure 7.1** CGTP and CIP occurrences of selected key-phrases



Sources: CGTP general meeting programmes (2008, 2012, 2016) and CIP activity plans (2010, 2011, 2017).

The position of selected key phrases in both discourses seems to show that the “crisis” disappeared quite soon from the social partners’ discourses. And while “troika” for instance never entered in the CIP discourse, it decreases the importance achieved in CGTP discourse. In fact, while CGTP emphasizes the troika as its enemy, CIP tends to convey the impression that troika’s intervention was normal.

The great capital and the executors of right-wing politics are responsible for the problems with which the workers, the people, and the country are confronted. All problems were aggravated by the implementation of the Pact of Stability and Growth (PEC) and the “aggression programme”, but the “end of the troika” did not represent an end to interference in Portugal. (2016, 24)

When making a general comparison between CGTP and CIP, CIP emerges as more innovative. In fact, while CGTP documents contain almost 50% new key phrases, CIP deploys about 60% of new key phrases when compared with previous documents. We can illustrate this by its introduction of new subjects, such as climate change, which falls beyond the scope of CGTP’s discourse. Such innovation does not necessarily mean that CIP explored this subject in any progressive fashion. In fact, in 2017, the CIP maintained that it would not support any norms more advanced than those of the EU, especially in the environmental field. We should also take into account how, in 2010, CIP also intended to introduce the debate on nuclear energy as a potential alternative energy source (2010, 31).

In sum, the political programmes seem to play ideological roles addressing members while simultaneously clarifying the values of these antagonistic actors. While the CGTP elects “capital” as its enemy and stands in favour of more solidarity and equality, reaching further in its political position by affirming its leftist affiliation, CIP elects the “state” as the enemy and reaffirms the value of market solutions and individual responsibility. Their ideological orientations did not change over the period of the troika’s intervention. Their discourses softened as they moved on from the height of the crisis, although the CGTP’s references to the right-wing policies emerged more clearly, as well as social concertation criticism. Furthermore, in the most recent documents, both organizations stress their concrete priorities for the Portuguese economy in the coming years: increases in wages and recovering collective bargaining powers for the CGTP and the reduction of the weight of the state in the

economy to enable its growth as framed by CIP's European commitments. Their pragmatic positions may also be summarized as a pro or con attitude toward the *status quo* left behind by the troika.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The centralization of European economy seems to be the path found to guarantee Eurozone stability, and that path implied the exclusion of social partners from the compromise between the Portuguese government and the troika, in May 2011. Social partners were not invited to negotiate paths of economic adjustment in Portugal because the supra-national intervention is dominated by a neoliberal ideology, IMF conditionality usually being used to implement unpopular policies.

Portuguese union confederations, and CGTP in particular, revealed an important opposition to the presence of the troika, as the entity mainly responsible for austerity measures and a supra-national intervention of neoliberal actors. General strikes were called and CGTP is known for its communist influence, thus, we could expect that its political written discourse showed a protest reaction more than CIP a supporting one. Nevertheless, our findings show that the crisis seems to disappear quite soon from both social partners' discourses and that both CGTP and CIP discourses give a much lower importance to supra-national actors than during the troika presence, a few years before. In fact, the crisis and national problems seem older than the troika presence and framed by a more in-depth fight against an abstract enemy. This ideological attitude of Portuguese social partners may help to explain why the crisis disappeared so quickly from the political programmes. Our findings show that the belligerent tone of the discourse is, not only a union feature, but, having found it in employers' discourse also, we consider it a characteristic of our labour relations system. Both organizations have clear enemies, abstract, and polarized: capital for CGTP and the state for CIP.

National problems consume most attention of both Portuguese social partners, which joins literature findings when it considers that national organizations and unions in particular stay submerged in national problems. While CGTP keeps focused on the recovery of its collective bargaining power, CIP intends to establish compromises in order to preserve the already achieved deregulation of the labour market. Both social partners seem to adopt a less

belligerent attitude after the troika's departure, motivated by different reasons. While CGTP intends to recover collective bargaining power but is aware that the issue is not mentioned in the agreements between the socialist party and the other left-wing parties with a seat in the parliament, CIP intends to apply pressure using social concertation, in which it possibly will not meet CGTP, at least in the last stage of negotiations.

Apparently, the supra-national intervention only underlined the CGTP opposition toward social concertation, based on the inefficient social pact signed with the UGT in 2012. CGTP seems to depreciate social concertation as if the government used social pacts for its own democratic image, contributing to the decline in unions' legitimacy, which is supported by some literature.

The two Portuguese social partners do mutually share a broad lack of attention to the broader European scenario, which also joins literature on the topic. This happens, concerning not only European institutions, but also European social partners with which they are affiliated. One cannot neglect the fact that the absence of an articulation between the European and the national organizations contributes to a less cohesive and influential movement. And this articulation problem seems therefore an important research topic for a near future providing new insights on why the European union movement is not capable of dealing with centralized neoliberal policies.

Although our results contribute to knowledge about the evolution of social partners in the face of the economic crisis and Europe, especially on how important was the supra-national imposition of austerity, our research also took place under constraints. An important limitation stems from the nature and partiality of the documents analysed. Only through considering other documents may we gain an effective overview of the written discourses of social partners. Other sources also hold relevance, including press releases, board member interviews, and diverse Internet platform content, even if the political programmes are supposed to be the result of a collective consensus and other sources are less systematic. Furthermore, one must be aware that although the political documents analysed are guidelines for action, actors' strategy is also the result of a daily reflection built upon unexpected events and interactions.

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