

Actor Configurations and Coalitions in Contentious Episodes

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Chapter 5: Actor configurations and coalitions in contentious episodes

Theresa Gessler and Swen Hutter

Introduction

So far, we have mapped what the three stylized actors did in the (more or less) contentious episodes, treating all three actors as unitary entities. This chapter takes the analysis a step further by describing features of the coalitions and actor configurations. In doing so, we answer *who* the actors involved in the conflicts over austerity and institutional reforms were and how they are typically *related* to each other. Available protest event studies on the Great Recession indicate at least three organizational features of the recent protest wave in Europe (e.g., Carvalho 2019; Diani and Kousis 2014; Hunger and Lorenzini 2019; Portos 2016, 2017; Portos and Carvalho 2019). First, they highlight the crucial role of institutionalized actors, particularly labor unions, in bringing the masses to the streets early on when the crisis hit the European continent in 2008 and 2009. Second, newly established and loose networks played an essential part in the Southern European countries hit hardest by the crisis – the Portuguese *Geração à Rasca*, *Democracia Real* and the *Indignados* in Spain as well as their Greek counterpart *Aganaktismeni* are illustrative of this dynamic. Third, the moment of such non-institutionalized players who entered the protest scene tended to be relatively short-lived. Remarkably, even in Spain, there are indications of a process of institutionalization, as formal organizations (trade unions and political parties) became more important again in later phases of the protest wave.

CEA's methodological toolkit allows us to go beyond descriptions of the actors that had called for, taken part in, or organized a protest (as done in classical protest event research). It enables us to both breakdown and relate the challenger coalition to the other parties involved in the conflict. While such an encompassing and relational view of claim-makers and their

objects is central to the DOC program (McAdam et al. 2001), we also take up previous concepts from the political process approach. The approach's application has been criticized for being overly static and institutional (e.g., Goodwin and Jasper 1999), but its conceptual apparatus has always incorporated features of the actor configuration and even interaction dynamics (for an overview, see Kriesi 2004). A crucial distinction is between the configuration of allies and the configuration of adversaries (e.g., della Porta and Rucht 1995; Kriesi 1985; Kriesi et al. 1995). In our case, the former refers to the actors that publicly intervene on behalf of the organizations and networks which oppose a proposal through contentious performances; the latter, by contrast, refers to the actors that engage on behalf of the government and its stance.

As Rucht (2004: 199) aptly noted, such a dualistic view of actor configurations comes at the expense of “neglecting the role of additional (and important) reference groups of movements: bystander publics, third parties, and mediators.” While CEA does not consider the role of bystanders, it systematically incorporates the function of third parties – the umbrella term under which all actors who publicly engage in the conflict over the respective policy proposal without being a member of any one of the two opposing coalitions, i.e., the government and the challenger, are subsumed.¹ In this regard, CEA follows more relational approaches in social movement research (e.g., Diani 2013, 2015). Our approach allows us to *empirically* answer the question to what extent third parties act as mediators or whether they clearly side with the government or the challenger. Apart from uncovering the diversity and institutional character of the main contestants, this chapter thus considers the different

¹ As defined in Chapter 1, the government category includes all public authorities that propose the policy change and are linked to the government, i.e. the head of government and other members of the cabinet as well as all public officials. By contrast, the challenger category includes all actors who oppose the government's proposal at least partly outside the routine, institutionalized arenas of interest articulation by means of sustained and coordinated collective action.

functions played by third parties in the 60 episodes. Thereby, it improves our understanding of actor coalitions in contentious politics during the Great Recession.

We follow Rucht's (2004: 202) caveat that such an interactionist conceptualization of social movements and contentious politics becomes "quite complicated," and ultimately, "complex relationships and processes can only be grasped step by step in a process of gradual disentangling." Therefore, we structure the analysis as follows: At first, we introduce the institutional character of all coded actors (Section 1) before we zoom-in on the challenger coalitions (Section 2) and clarify the functions and nature of third parties (Section 3). Section 4 combines all information on the actors and their relations to map the differing actor configuration across countries and episodes.

Institutional characteristics of the actors in contentious episodes

To get an overview of the actors who have been the most active in the contentious episodes covered by our research, the first three columns in *Table 5.1* present 20 different actor categories, the total number of observations for each category, and their share across all episodes. As with the first cut at the action categories in Chapter 4, we disregard the division into 60 episodes and instead treat each action equally. The 20 actor categories refer to institutional characteristics of actors, ranging from international bodies through national government institutions to parliamentary opposition, social movement organizations (SMOs), and unions. The categories are based on a first aggregation, given that we coded the actors in great detail (see Chapter 2).

Table 5.1: Institutional character of all actors: percentages

	N	Overall share	Share among government	Share among challengers	Share among third parties
international actors					
EU actors	205	3.0	-	-	8.9
Troika-ECB-IMF-Eurozone	198	2.9	-	-	8.7
foreign governments	129	1.9	-	-	5.6
other international actors	110	1.6	-	0.2	4.6
national governmental actors					
government	1,865	27.3	88.9	1.4	0.8
technocratic government	104	1.5	5.0	-	-
president	89	1.3	0.3	0.6	2.9
local/regional authorities	121	1.8	-	1.9	3.2
national bank	53	0.8	-	-	2.1
other government institutions	187	2.7	1.8	1.8	4.6
government parties	506	7.4	3.8	5.7	12.5
business, experts, media					
business	244	3.6	-	2.8	7.6
experts-media	125	1.8	-	0.8	4.6
opposition parties					
mainstream opposition	868	12.7	-	15.5	20.9
radical left opposition	276	4.0	-	8.7	2.5
radical right opposition	87	1.3	-	1.3	2.4
civil society					
non-governmental orgs	137	2.0	-	2.2	3.5
social movement orgs	364	5.3	-	11.8	2.9
student orgs	66	1.0	-	2.5	-
unions					
unions	1,107	16.2	-	42.5	1.6
Total	6,841	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: The table shows the distribution of 20 actor categories in the overall dataset (N=6841 actions). The top-3 categories per actor type are highlighted in bold.

As is apparent from *Table 5.1*, national governments and their members (27.3 percent) are the single most active group across all episodes. At some distance, they are followed by unions (16.2 percent) and parties from the mainstream opposition (12.7 percent). Most of the other specific actor categories shown in the table account for only a small share of the actions coded for all 60 contentious episodes - including individual governing parties (7.4 percent) and social movement organizations (SMOs) (5.3 percent).

Table 5.1 also presents the share of each category among the three stylized actors (we highlight the three most prominent categories per actor type in bold). As expected, there are apparent differences in the composition of each of the stylized actors. Unsurprisingly, the government almost exclusively consists of national governments and their officials – heads of government or cabinet ministers – strictly understood (88.9 percent). The figure gets even higher if we consider the five percent of so-called technocratic governments, mainly referring to the Italian Monti and the Greek Papademos government, which came into office within days of each other in November 2011. Less than four percent of all government actions are attributed to what we call ‘governing parties,’ i.e., members of governing parties that do not hold an executive office (e.g., leaders of parliamentary groups).

In contrast to the government, the challenger’s institutional characteristics are more diverse, although labor unions are by far the single largest group, with 42.5 percent of all challenger actions. This finding mirrors previous results based on protest event analysis (e.g., Hunger and Lorenzini 2019; Portos and Carvalho 2019), and it also reflects our emphasis on economic policy proposals. The second most important challengers are political parties, both mainstream and radical left opposition parties (15.5 and 8.7 percent, respectively). Note that parties from the radical right hardly appear in the contentious episodes studied in this volume. SMOs, by contrast, constitute a bigger group, making up 11.8 percent of the challenger actions. The first cut at the dataset supports claims about the crucial role of labor unions in challenging the national governments in the Great Recession.

The category of third parties is most diverse in terms of its institutional characteristics. The mainstream opposition is relatively important in this group (20.9 percent), just like speakers from governing parties (12.5 percent). In contrast to the other two stylized types of actors, there is also a significant share of international actors, including EU institutions, Troika and Eurozone actors, other national governments, and other international actors (each

constituting between 4.6 and 8.9 percent of third-party actions). Using the terms by Koopmans and Statham (2010), we observe both horizontal and vertical Europeanization/internationalization. Moreover, the data suggests that the third parties are mainly composed of conventional institutional actors, rather than more peripheral actors. The share of civil society actors, unions, and the two types of radical opposition parties add up to roughly 13 percent across all episodes. The overrepresentation of institutional ‘insiders’ complements the finding from Chapter 4 that most actions by third parties referred to the governments’ proposals and actions and not to the challengers.

Who is challenging the government?

Having outlined the broad picture, we now focus on the two most diverse stylized actor categories, i.e., the challengers and the third parties. First, we answer which actors launched the challenge to the reform proposals in the Great Recession. We use two characteristics to describe the challenger coalition (understood as ‘objective’ coalitions²). First, we look at its *diversity*: Is it a narrow set of actors that aims to challenge the government’s proposal in a given episode, or is the challenger coalition composed of a diverse group of actors? Second, we analyze its dominant *institutional character*: Which types of actors dominate the challenger coalition? Were the governments faced with a more conventional institutional challenge or a more grassroots one? Are there cross-actor alliances at play?

As we break our analysis down to the level of individual episodes and given the small shares of many of the categories shown before, we summarize the organizations in a reduced set of four groups: (1) *Unions*, as the most critical category among the challengers; (2) *civil society organizations* (CSOs) (including SMOs, NGOs, students as well as business actors,

² Objective coalitions refer to actors that are bound together by a common objective but not necessarily by common actions.

experts, and media representatives); (3) *opposition parties* of all kinds; and (4) *governmental actors* (mainly referring to members of governing parties that joined forces with the challengers). These four groups encompass the spectrum of the institutional character of the challenger coalition. The diversity of the challenger coalitions is assessed by the distribution across the four groups: The more equal the representation of these four groups, the more diverse the alliance. To construct an indicator, we followed the agenda-setting literature (e.g., Boydston et al. 2014). We calculated Shannon's diversity measure, ranging from zero to the natural logarithm of the number of categories.

In *Table 5.2*, we show the average diversity of the challenger coalition and the share of each of the four actor groups per country. Note that we now focus on episodes as our units of analysis (N=60 overall, 5 for each country). Compared to the theoretical maximum, the average challenger coalition is not that diverse, with a value of 0.74 compared to the possible maximum of 1.38. Interestingly, the Portuguese episodes stand out with the broadest coalitions, followed by Ireland and Greece. In contrast, the challenger coalitions in France and Italy are most limited in terms of diversity.

As already visible from our previous analysis in *Table 5.1*, the low diversity within the challenger coalition is due to the strong presence of unions. Unions make up for 68 percent of all coded challenger actions in France and almost 75 percent in Italy. On average, 40.3 percent of challenger actions are by unions, although they are mostly absent in Germany (3 percent) and Hungary (16 percent). In Hungary, the challenge has been launched by civil society actors and opposition parties. In Germany, the most important actors that challenged the government's proposal have come from within its party ranks. As the last column in *Table 5.2* indicates, the strong presence of governmental actors is exceptional for the German episodes and – to a lesser extent – the Romanian and Greek cases. By contrast, the most

common challenger coalition type has been unions *plus* opposition parties (Portugal and Spain) or unions *plus* civil society organizations (Latvia, the UK, and France).

Table 5.2: Diversity and institutional character of challenger by country

Country	average diversity	labor unions	opposition parties	civil society	governmental actors
PT	1.03	34.2	31.1	16.2	18.6
IE	0.97	28.0	33.8	25.7	12.5
GR	0.91	51.6	11.0	17.2	20.1
HU	0.85	15.6	34.4	43.1	6.9
LV	0.78	44.2	6.5	41.8	7.6
UK	0.78	35.8	18.5	31.6	14.1
ES	0.76	41.2	44.5	13.1	1.2
RO	0.73	38.6	32.7	0.0	28.7
PL	0.69	48.2	12.1	24.4	15.4
DE	0.66	3.3	26.6	13.3	36.8
IT	0.43	74.9	13.2	10.8	1.1
FR	0.24	68.0	0.3	31.7	0.0
<i>Average</i>	<i>0.74</i>	<i>40.3</i>	<i>22.1</i>	<i>22.4</i>	<i>13.6</i>

Note: The table shows the average diversity of the challenger coalition (Shannon's diversity measure) and the proportion by actor category. The numbers are calculated as an overall average (N=60 episodes) and by country (N=5 episodes). Categories with more than 25 percent highlighted in bold.

Moving from country averages to the level of individual episodes, we reduce the complexity of the available measures further by indicating whether one of the four types of actors (unions, opposition parties, CSOs, or governmental actors) are represented with more than 25 percent, i.e., overrepresented as compared to equal representation. *Table 5.3* shows the distribution of the eleven empirically observed combinations. The second to the last column shows the frequency of the respective challenger coalition among the 60 cases. The

bottom row lists the number of episodes in which the particular actor type has been a central part of the challenger coalition regardless of its varying allies.

Table 5.3: Types of challenger coalitions

Unions >25%	Opposition >25%	CSO >25%	Government >25%	No. of episodes	Average Contentiousness by challenger
✓	✓	✗	✗	16	0.50
✓	✗	✗	✗	14	0.41
✓	✗	✓	✗	6	0.39
✗	✓	✓	✗	6	0.31
✗	✗	✗	✓	5	0.33
✗	✗	✓	✗	3	0.32
✗	✗	✓	✓	3	0.11
✗	✓	✗	✗	3	0.20
✓	✗	✗	✓	1	0.66
✗	✓	✗	✓	1	0.08
✗	✓	✓	✓	1	0.07
37	27	19	11		

Note: The number of cases in the second last column indicates the number of episodes with a particular challenger coalition. For example, 16 episodes are characterized by a strong presence of unions plus opposition parties. The number of cases in the last row indicates the number of episodes in which a certain type of actor is represented with more than 25% regardless of what the share of the other actors is. For example, unions are represented with more than 25% in 37 of the 60 episodes.

Again, the findings in *Table 5.3* underscore that labor unions have been central in challenging austerity and institutional reforms in Europe since the onset of the Great Recession. Unions form a fundamental part of the challenger coalition in more than 60 percent of all episodes (37 out of 60 cases). The two most common coalitions are unions with a strong presence of opposition parties (N=16) or unions alone (N=14). The other three patterns which are present in at least five episodes are (a) unions with CSOs (N=6), (b)

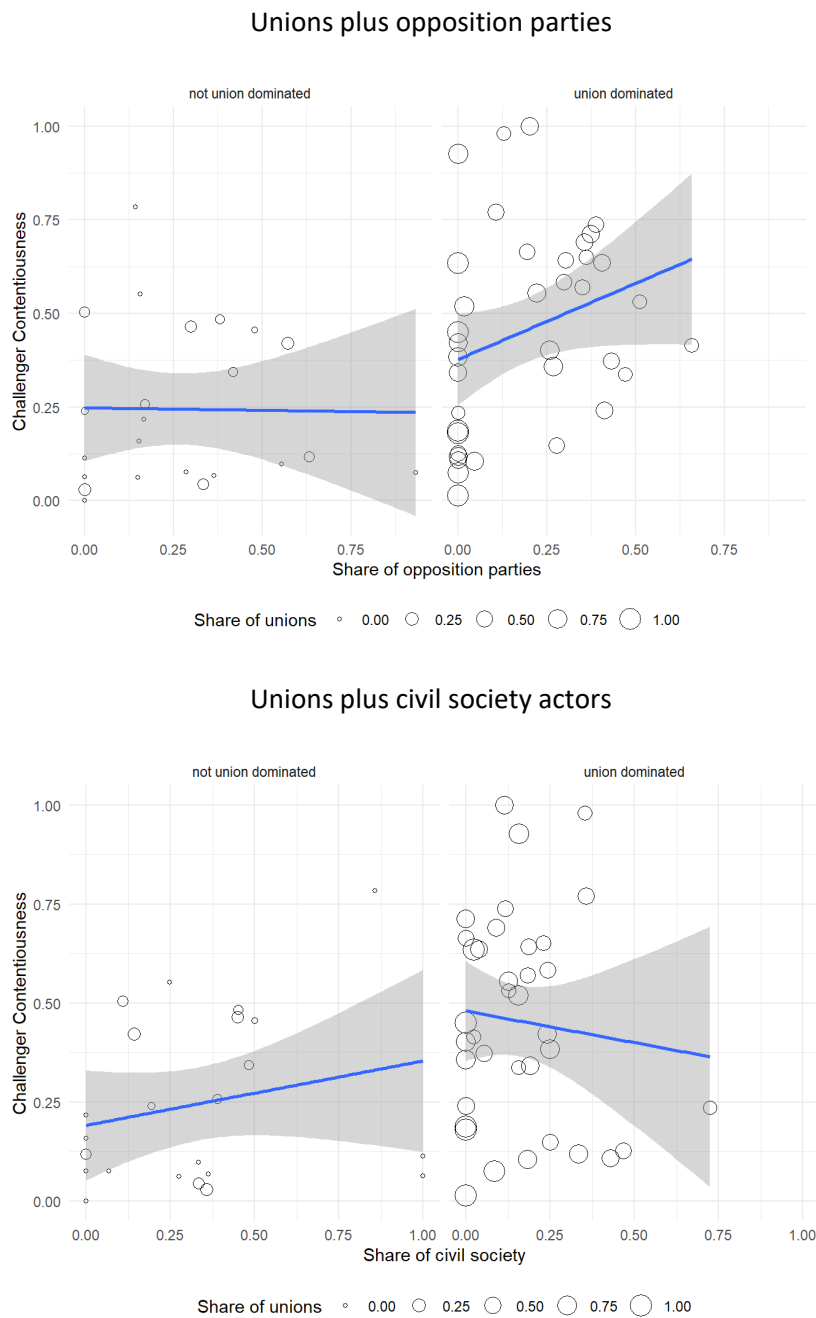
opposition parties with CSOs (N=6), and (c) opposition from within the government (N=5). All other potential combinations, particularly the ones involving governmental actors, are far less common.

The aggregate numbers shown in *Table 5.3* qualify the findings from the previous chapter, which suggested that a more diverse coalition implies a more serious threat as it is associated with higher levels of challenger contentiousness. On the one hand, the focus on the characteristics of the challenger coalitions underlines that this is a positive but weak association. Several types of challenger coalitions can result in highly contentious conflicts. To illustrate, we can draw a useful contrast between the two episodes with the broadest coalitions in our study: the events surrounding the first bailout in Germany and the midterm adjustment in Greece. With a challenger diversity of around 1.3, both episodes are sustained by far more diverse coalitions than the average episode. However, in Germany, this coalition was mostly inactive despite the inclusion of various actors (challenger contentiousness = 0.04). The Greek coalition, by contrast, was among the most active with 4.96 adversarial actions per week, mobilizing masses in its wake and resulting in a very high level of contentiousness (0.98).

On the other hand, the results indicate that union presence, especially in alliance with opposition parties, is associated with a slightly higher contentiousness level. Apart from the one case in which unions and government actors joined forces (this was the first austerity-related episode in Romania), the highest average value of 0.50 reported in *Table 5.3* refers to cases when labor unions and opposition parties joined forces to challenge a government proposal. Above-average challenger contentiousness characterizes 12 of the 16 episodes in this group: All four economic episodes in Portugal, two Spanish cases (the ones centered around Zapatero's first austerity package and the one introduced by his successor Rajoy in 2012; ES_eco1 & ES_eco3) but also the Irish conflicts over the IMF bailout and the related

first and second austerity budgets (IE_eco1 to IE_eco_3). The exclusively union-dominated episodes have a slightly lower average of 0.41. Highly contentious examples from this group are all four economic episodes in Italy, three of the Greek episodes (the first two bailout episodes [GR_eco1 & GR_eco3]) and the one related to the closure of the public broadcaster [GR_inst]) as well as the conflicts around the 2010 pension reforms and freezing of the budget proposed by then French President Sarkozy and his Prime Minister Fillon (FR_eco1).

The constellation most often examined in social movement research is when civil society forces either align with unions or opposition parties. The most contentious cases for the former dynamic are the episodes around the Greek mid-term adjustment program (GR_eco2) and around the second austerity program of the Spanish Zapatero government in 2011 (ES_eco2), which ultimately triggered the Indignados movement. Thus, our CEA-based measures confirm the crucial difference in the organizational makeup of the challengers in the streets of Spain and Portugal in 2011: Much more union-dominated in Portugal as compared to Spain (Carvahlo 2019; Portos 2016, 2017). Regarding the alliance of CSOs and opposition parties, the episodes with above-average contentiousness are the institutional one in Hungary, the water tax in Ireland (IE_eco4), and the UK's 2011 welfare reform (UK_eco4). As shown in Table 5.2, civil society organizations are highly active in the Hungarian episodes more generally. In the institutional reform episode, which concerned a law that increased state regulation of independent media, they succeeded in bringing together a coalition of opposition parties from all sides with civil actors representing the media and loose networks on Facebook to reach an unusually high conflict level.

Figure 5.1: Types of challenger coalitions and contentiousness by the challenger

Note: Episode classified as more, respectively, less than 25% involvement of unions.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the main findings on the relationship between the institutional characteristics and a coalition's ability to intensively and disruptively challenge the government proposal. First, we do not find a strong association between the institutional makeup of the challenger coalition and its contentiousness, indicating that several types of

alliances may lead to the same outcome. Second, although we do not find a relation overall, union-dominated coalitions are linked to higher levels of challenger contentiousness (as indicated by the much higher values in the graphs on the right). Finally, the upper-level graphs show that the more unions join forces with opposition parties, the stronger the challenge they pose (note that the direct effect of union presence and its interaction with an opposition dummy are also statistically significant in a simple OLS regression).

What game do the third parties play? And with whom?

Having described the diversity and institutional characteristics of the challenger coalition, we turn to the third parties that also engage publicly in the episode without being a member of neither the government nor the challenger coalition. As posited in the introductory section, the third parties may vary in institutional character and play different roles: ranging from mediators to players with a firm place in either the configuration of allies (when visibly siding with the challenger coalition without being engaged in contentious performances themselves) or the configuration of adversaries (when visibly siding with the government without being a member of the governing coalition or any state institution). Therefore, we are first interested in the positioning of the third parties before considering their diversity and institutional character.

To understand the positioning and roles of the third parties in the 60 episodes, *Table 5.4* presents another set of indicators by country. As in the previous chapter, we analyze the average position taken by the third parties when looking at what we labeled there as ‘adversarial actions,’ i.e., actions that side with one of the two major contestants. As the results show, the average position across all 60 episodes is 0.16 (on a scale from -1=full support of the government to +1=full support of challenger). This means that the third parties do indeed occupy varying positions in the actor configurations across episodes. Moreover, we

find clear-cut country differences. In most countries, the third parties lean towards the challengers' side and thus belong to the configuration of allies (most strongly in Ireland and Hungary). By contrast, we observe a relatively strong bias towards the government's side in Spain with an average position of -0.42, which might be another reason for the sustained protest mobilization that Spain experienced in the period under scrutiny (for a comparative assessment, see Kriesi 2020).

Table 5.4: Positioning of third parties by country

	Average position	Proportion with target government	Weekly number of adversarial actions	Weekly number of mediation actions
Ireland	0.44	0.97	2.1	0.2
Hungary	0.39	0.82	1.3	0.3
UK	0.33	0.92	2.5	0.1
Portugal	0.28	0.89	1.1	0.2
Poland	0.25	0.91	0.3	0.0
Italy	0.25	0.93	1.6	0.3
Germany	0.21	0.99	2.5	0.6
Latvia	0.20	0.94	0.4	0.1
France	0.18	0.96	1.2	0.0
Greece	-0.05	0.95	6.8	0.2
Romania	-0.10	0.78	1.4	0.3
Spain	-0.42	0.86	1.0	0.1
Average	0.16	0.91	1.8	0.2

Note: The table shows the average position of the third parties, the proportion of actions targeting the government as well as the weekly standardized numbers of adversarial actions (siding clearly with one of the main contestants) and of mediating actions (aiming for a compromise and negotiations between the two). The numbers are calculated as overall (N=60 episodes) and country averages (N=4 episodes).

While their place in the actor configuration varies across countries, the third-party actions mainly target the government and not the challenger. As shown, the average

proportion of statements by third parties that target the government amounts to more than 90 percent (see the second column in *Table 5.4*). The high numbers underscore that third parties mainly interact with the government, positively or negatively. The strong government focus reflects that episodes under scrutiny in our study are triggered by the threat induced into the political debate by the government's reform plans and not by mobilization from below.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the absolute number of coded adversarial actions by third parties varies considerably across countries and episodes – once more indicated by their weekly counts shown in *Table 5.4*. The numbers are an instructive benchmark when judging how frequently third parties acted as mediator, either by suggesting the proposal's modification or acting as a broker in negotiations between the challenger and the government. Mediation is an exception. We only observe an average of 0.2 mediating actions per week as compared to 1.8 adversarial actions. In both absolute and relative terms, the third parties in Germany have most strongly acted as mediators – often mediating among the opposing factions from within the governing parties. By contrast, we observe hardly any mediation in France and Poland.

In sum, the country averages already suggest that the so-called third parties mainly target the government and hardly intervene as mediators in the contentious episodes around austerity and institutional reform we analyze here. Before delving into episode-level differences, we first analyze the actors' institutional characteristics included under the broad third-party label. To do so, we use a slightly modified grouping, following the distribution of actors that we have previously analyzed (see *Table 5.1*). Unlike our categorization of challengers, we do not single out unions but instead introduce a distinction between other governmental actors and government parties. Specifically, we distinguish between four groups: (a) governing parties (members of the governing party); (b) other governmental actors (including what we have labeled international actors and national executive actors); (c)

opposition parties; and (d) civil society *plus* unions. *Table 5.5* outlines the diversity and institutional character of the third parties overall and by country.

The third parties are not more diverse than the challengers, with an average diversity of 0.81 compared to 0.74 for the challenger coalition. Generally, the overview shows that governmental actors are the most prominent group among the third parties (with almost fifty percent), followed by opposition parties (25 percent). CSOs (incl. unions) and governing parties are responsible for less than 20 percent of all actions across all episodes. If we consider that the opposition category is mainly composed of mainstream parties, it is fair to conclude that the third parties are institutional insiders. The most diverse countries regarding third parties actively engaged in the contentious episodes are in Southern Europe (Greece, Italy, and Portugal), followed closely by France. In contrast, a single type of actor dominates the third parties in three Eastern European countries (Poland, Latvia, and Hungary).

Table 5.5: Diversity and institutional character of third parties by country

	diversity	governing parties	other government actors	opposition parties	civil society / unions
GR	1.02	0.11	0.47	0.34	0.07
IT	1.01	0.36	0.30	0.26	0.09
PT	1.00	0.15	0.59	0.13	0.13
FR	0.97	0.12	0.35	0.49	0.04
RO	0.92	0.05	0.57	0.13	0.26
DE	0.89	0.10	0.45	0.08	0.36
IE	0.89	0.04	0.20	0.28	0.47
UK	0.85	0.21	0.28	0.17	0.34
ES	0.80	0.00	0.37	0.47	0.16
HU	0.55	0.02	0.77	0.15	0.06
LV	0.40	0.15	0.83	0.00	0.02
PL	0.39	0.14	0.31	0.55	0.00
<i>Average</i>	<i>0.81</i>	<i>0.12</i>	<i>0.46</i>	<i>0.25</i>	<i>0.17</i>

Note: The table shows the average diversity of the third parties (Shannon's diversity measure) and the proportion of each of the four categories. The numbers are calculated as overall (N=60 episodes) and country averages (N=4 episodes). Categories with more than 25 percent highlighted in bold.

The share of each actor included in *Table 5.5* shows the origins of low diversity in Eastern Europe; the third parties in Hungary and Latvia are dominated by governmental actors, which make up roughly four out of every five third party actions. In contrast, the Polish third parties are dominated by the partisan opposition and other executive actors. The latter combination is also characteristic for the third parties in Greece, France, and Spain. In Romania, Germany, and the UK, the most visible third parties are other government actors joined by actors from civil society. Interestingly, Italy is the country with the by far highest share of actors from governing parties listed among the third parties. This indicates that the governing parties did not fully embrace the government's position but rather aimed to mediate or even oppose the government's proposal (critical instances have been the conflicts over Monti's reform proposal and the Jobs Act, IT_eco3 & IT_eco4); next in line is the UK, which is mainly due to the Brexit episode.

Table 5.6 identifies the most common combinations of third-party actors in the 60 episodes. Overall, varieties with a large share of other governmental actors dominate (42 out of 60 cases). The most frequent configurations are either other governmental actors (both domestic and European/international) alone (N=16) or in combination with opposition parties (N=13). All other varieties are represented less than ten times in our sample. In general, the table indicates no pronounced differences regarding the third parties' contribution to the contentiousness of the conflict, their average position, and targeting. There tends to be no systematic relationship between *who* the third parties are and *what* they do in a contentious episode. We observe only one deviation from this pattern: When governmental actors and civil society organizations (incl. unions) act as third parties (N=7), they tend to intervene more in the conflict and are more likely to side with the government's position. It is important to note that three of these cases are from Germany (the institutional episode around the constitutional debt brake, DE_inst, and the debates around the bank bailout and the

establishment of a bad bank, DE_eco1 & DE_eco2). However, this group's most illustrative case is the Brexit episode when the coded third parties mainly sided with the majoritarian position within the government and opposed the challenger coalition, which favored to leave the European Union.

Table 5.6: Types of third-party configuration

Gov. parties >25%	Other Gov. >25%	Opposition >25%	CSO/unions >25%	No. of episodes	Contentiousness by TP	Average position	Share target government
✗	✓	✗	✗	16	0.29	0.15	0.87
✗	✓	✓	✗	13	0.29	0.09	0.90
✗	✗	✓	✗	8	0.31	0.38	0.93
✗	✓	✗	✓	7	0.47	-0.35	0.92
✓	✓	✗	✗	5	0.25	0.30	0.94
✗	✗	✗	✓	4	0.38	0.44	1.00
✓	✗	✓	✗	2	0.24	0.53	0.97
✓	✗	✗	✗	2	0.26	0.03	0.93
✗	✗	✓	✓	2	0.46	0.60	0.92
✗	✓	✓	✓	1	0.36	-0.03	0.95
9	42	26	14				

Note: The number of cases in the fifth column indicates the number of episodes with a specific third-party configuration. For example, 16 episodes are characterized by a strong presence of only other government actors. The number of cases in the last row indicates the number of episodes in which a certain type of actor is represented with more than 25% regardless of the share of the other actors. For example, governing parties are represented with more than 25% in 9 of the 60 episodes.

Allies and adversaries: The overall actor configuration

In the final section, we put the three stylized actor categories back together and present the actor configuration in an integrated way. We adopt the distinction between the four types of contentious episodes introduced in Chapter 4: *fully-fledged*, *bottom-up*, *top-down*, and *low-intensity* episodes. We distinguish the cases according to the involvement of challengers and

governments as well as third parties. We do not consider the 20 ‘low-intensity episodes’ characterized by a relatively weak involvement of all stylized actors. So-called fully-fledged and bottom-up episodes (N=15 and 14, respectively), by contrast, are what McAdam et al. (2001) have relied upon to illustrate their approach. These are episodes characterized by the emergence of a strong challenger that relies on contentious performances. The key difference between the two types is that, in fully-fledged cases, we also observe a comparatively active involvement of the government and third parties. In contrast, these institutional insiders are much less involved in bottom-up episodes. The final type, top-down episodes, is characterized by the relative absence of challengers, with the government and third parties being actively engaged in conventional forms of public claims-making (N=11).

The following figures identify the typical patterns of these configurations. The key aspects are the involvement of each actor type and their positioning towards the two other actors. To show these aspects, *Figure 5.2* is based on all actions of the three actor types, varying the size of the label as a function of the total number of actions attributable to the actor in question. The arrows show the relations of support and opposition between each pair of actors. Their width reflects the total number of actions addressed to the other actor in the corresponding pair. Support is portrayed by arrows in light gray, opposition by arrows in dark gray. Finally, we show the third-party alignment in a simplified fashion (alignment with government, challenger, and no alignment) by positioning the third party label.

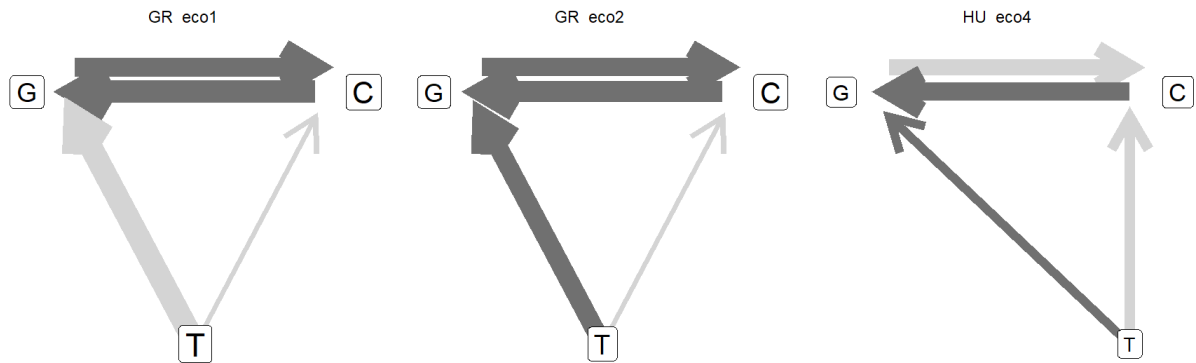
Among the fully-fledged episodes, we can identify three typical patterns: the first pattern corresponds to an intense conflict between government and challenger, and the third parties siding with the government. We observe such a configuration in six of the 15 fully-fledged episodes. Four of them center on bailouts and involve a substantive share of international actors: the three Greek bailout episodes (including the first one used to illustrate the configuration in *Figure 5.2*) and the Irish one in late 2010. The remaining two cases with this

configuration are the Brexit episode in the UK and the Romanian episode related to the labor market reform (RO_eco4). The second type of configuration shows an intense conflict between highly unified challengers and the government as well. The difference is that the third parties take on a more neutral or even negative position towards the government. This pattern is the most common configuration among the fully-fledged episodes (8 out of 15). The Greek midterm adjustment episode (GR_eco2) serves as a prototype for this pattern.³ For the final configuration shown in *Figure 5.2a*, we could only identify one case, i.e., the so-called internet tax episode in Hungary. This exceptional case is one of the few in which a government gave in to the challengers' demands and completely withdrew its reform proposal (see Chapter 7).

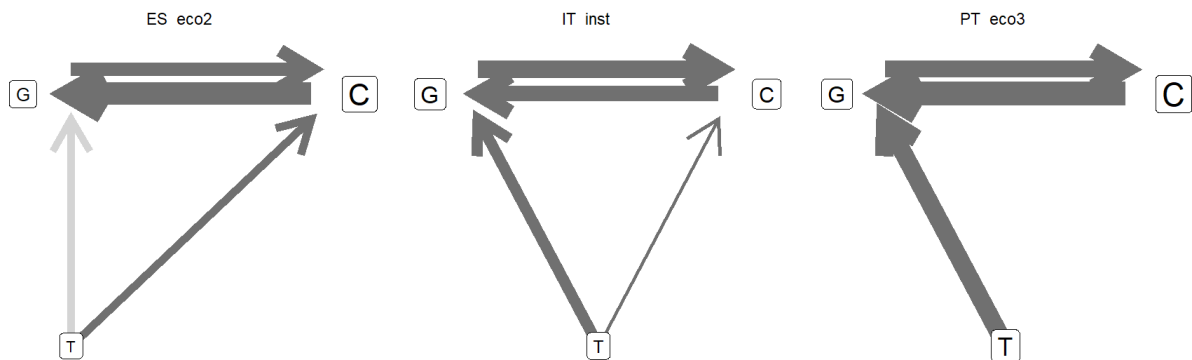
³ We observe a similar pattern in the institutional episodes around the closure of the public broadcaster in Greece (GR_inst) and the controversial media law in Hungary (HU_inst) and five additional economic episodes: The conflicts over the bank guarantee and the 2009 austerity package in Ireland (IE_eco1 & IE_eco2), labor market reforms in Italy (IT_eco1 and IT_eco4), and the 2010 austerity package in Romania (RO_eco2).

Figure 5.2: Types of actor configurations

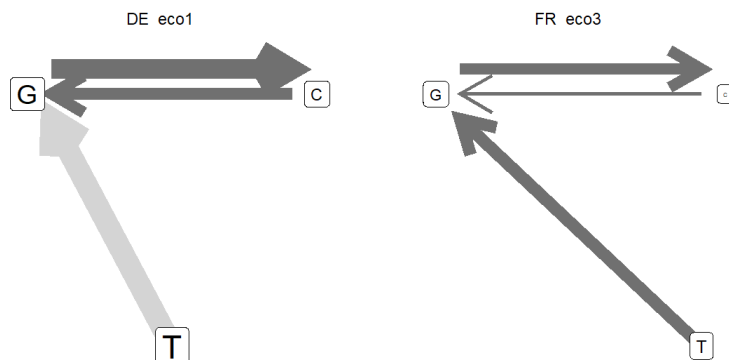
a) Fully-fledged episodes



b) Bottom-up episodes



c) Top-down episodes



Note: The graph shows illustrative examples for the configurations among the three stylized actors. The examples are presented for the three most relevant types of contentious episodes identified in the previous chapter, neglecting the twenty cases of ‘low-intensity episodes.’

Among the bottom-up episodes, there are also three types of actor configurations. First, there are several episodes, mainly from Southern Europe, which are characterized by a strong challenger-government conflict and third parties that side with the government (5 out of 14).

As the example of the second austerity package by Zapatero (ES_eco2) in *Figure 5.2b*

indicates, in contrast to the fully-fledge episodes, the challenger coalition is much more visible. In contrast, the government's engagement is lukewarm – at least on the public sphere's front stage.⁴ Second, five episodes are characterized by a similarly high level of conflict but a third party coalition that opposes the government. These cases include the Portuguese bailout episode (PT_eco3) in which the third parties do not positively relate to the challenger but strongly disagree with the government. We show this episode in *Figure 5.2*, but two other Portuguese episodes (PT_eco1 & PT_eco2), the French Sarkozy-Fillon episode (FR_eco1), and the 2011 austerity episode in the UK belong to this group as well. Finally, four cases among the bottom-up episodes stand out because of a division within the third parties that oppose the government and the challengers alike. We present the example of the Italian institutional episode (IT_inst), a controversial judicial reform promoted by Berlusconi. Still, three other cases of mutual third party opposition exist in our dataset: the water tax in Ireland (IE_eco4), the first austerity package in Spain (ES_eco1), and 2012 austerity package in Portugal (PT_eco4).

Finally, we identify two actor configurations among the top-down episodes. In these episodes, where the challenger is far less active, there is either a government-third party controversy or a government-third party consensus. The former pattern occurs more frequently (8 out of 11 cases): In *Figure 5.2c*, we present the first austerity package of the Hollande government (FR_eco3) as an example.⁵ Importantly, these episodes usually boil down to a conflict between institutional insiders, as shown when focusing on third-party composition. The final configuration of consensus is far less frequent, occurring in a total of three cases. As illustrated in *Figure 5.2c* by the German bank bailout episode (DE_eco1), the

⁴ Similar dynamics emerged when Zapatero aimed to amend the Spanish constitution (ES_inst) and when his successor Rajoy presented his major austerity package (ES_eco3). Other cases in point are our prime example from Portugal (PT_eco2) and the Italian episode triggered by Monti's austerity plans (IT_eco3).

⁵ The other episodes were the German ones around the first and third Greek bailout (DE_eco3 & DE_eco4), the Hungarian ones around austerity and pension reforms (HU_eco 2 & HU_eco3), the only Latvian one among the contestes ones (LV_eco3: the second austerity package in 2009), and finally the institutional episode from Romania (RO_inst: impeachment referendum).

challenger is somewhat invisible. Instead, the actor configuration reflects broad support of the government's decision to bail out the German banks by the involved third parties. Similar arrangements emerged in the Polish episode triggered by the constitutional court reform (PL_inst) and the Romanian IMF bailout episode (RO_eco1).

Conclusion

This chapter provided answers about the actors involved in the 60 contentious episodes and how they are typically related to each other. CEA allows us to go beyond classical protest event research and describe how challenger coalitions are embedded in a broader actor configuration. To do so, we examined the institutional characteristics, diversity, and configuration of the three stylized actor types at CEA's core in four steps.

At first, we described the set of actors in the overall dataset. This step already highlighted the strong presence of government actors, unions, and the mainstream opposition. These three categories were far more visible in the conflicts over austerity and institutional reform than parties from the fringes and civil society organizations (including NGOs and SMOs). The analysis also highlighted that the challengers and third parties are much more diverse in their institutional characteristics than the government (mainly covering national governments and their officials strictly understood).

Second, we also examined the challenger coalition – defined as an objective coalition with shared goals but not necessarily joint actions. We described the diversity of the actors challenging the governments' proposals by unconventional means. Also, we identified dominant institutional characteristics and potential cross-actor alliances. From this perspective, the challenger coalitions have not been that diverse given the significant role of labor unions. Labor unions have been by far the most visible opponents of the reform proposals. More than 40 percent of all challenger actions in this period of austerity could be

attributed to labor unions, while only around 20 percent were due to opposition parties or civil society actors. Analyzing the patterns across episodes, we showed that unions formed a fundamental part of the challenger coalition in more than 60 percent of all episodes: the two most common alliances were unions with a strong presence of opposition parties or unions alone. All other combinations were far less common. While this mirrors previous research relying on protest event analysis (e.g., Carvalho 2018; Diani and Kousis 2014; Hunger and Lorenzini 2019; Portos 2016, 2017; Portos and Carvalho 2019), our CEA-based measures bring out the role of unions in politicizing austerity in even more detail.

There is no strong link between the type of coalition and the contentiousness of an episode. Still, our findings suggest that union activism, particularly in alliance with opposition parties, leads to more contentious interactions. Simultaneously, some of the most controversial episodes show the pattern most studied by social movement research, i.e., coalitions of civil society organizations with unions. Among these cases, we find the Spanish episode linked to the rise of the Indignados movement in 2011 and the highly contested mid-term adjustment program in Greece, which saw the emergence of *Aganaktismenoi*, the Greek Indignados' counterpart, a few months later. By contrast, the Portuguese episode around that time is classified as a 'unions plus parties' coalition. This interpretation differs from research solely based on protest event analysis. The latter tends to underestimate the role of opposition parties in Portugal because they were not as visible as protest sponsors (e.g., Portos and Carvalho 2019: 8). Still, they relied on more conventional actions to contest austerity as our CEA approach highlights.⁶

Third, we honed in on the third parties, i.e., the actors who publicly engaged in the conflict without being a member of neither the government nor the challenger coalition. Our

⁶ Note that Carvalho (2019) and Portos and Carvalho (2019) emphasize this as well when they consider reasons for why Spain saw a sustained protest wave during the Great Recession and Portugal did not.

results are instructive as they highlight that third parties are mostly institutional insiders. Most visible are actors belonging to government institutions, both national and international, followed by actors from the mainstream opposition. In more than two-thirds of all contentious episodes, government actors dominate the category of third parties. The most frequent constellations are other government actors alone or in combination with opposition parties. Third parties mainly target the governments (instead of directly targeting the challenger), and they rarely intervene as mediators. However, we do not find systematic differences between third-party composition, on the one side, and their positioning, focus on the government, and contribution to public controversy, on the other.

Finally, combining all the elements, we showed the varying actor configurations across the types of episodes identified in the previous chapter. We reduced the complexity to eight configurations. The analysis revealed the crucial but variable role played by third parties. They tend to target the government, either supporting or opposing it, depending on the episode. The challengers vary in intensity but are hardly ever the direct target of third parties. In some cases, we thus observe conventional public debates of institutional insiders, where the challengers play a marginal role at best. While in others the challengers are embedded in very different actor constellations depending on the third parties, highlighting the benefit of an integrated approach to the study government-challenger interactions.

Overall, this chapter has taken advantage of CEA to summarize such interaction patterns throughout a full episode and to single out different configurations. The chapters in the third part of the book will focus more closely on the dynamics of government-challenger interactions and the contextual factors that influence them.

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