

During the sovereign debt crisis, the EU imposed stringent measures that had severe economic and political consequences for peripheral countries such as Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Italy. This master's thesis examines the Greek and Portuguese economic situation during the crisis and how they increasingly sought cooperation alternatives outside the EU, focusing on China. The research contributes to the largely unexplored literature on the European member states' rationale behind their rapprochement with China. In order to answer the question, "Under what conditions were EU members states more likely to change their economic and political relationship with China and how it has changed their behaviour towards the EU?", this study employs a qualitative comparative research design of foreign policy analysis. The main preliminary findings demonstrate how changing Greek domestic politics interacted with growing antipathy towards the EU, leading in expressions of foreign policy de-Europeanisation and increased cooperation with China. Portugal also increased its cooperation with China, but its opposition to the EU is more moderate.