

# Movements as a challenge for political parties?

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Franziska Fislage and Karsten Grabow

with Martin Friedek, Julie Hamann, Vít Hloušek, Wilhelm Hofmeister,  
Caroline Kanter, Bartosz Rydliński and Silke Schmitt



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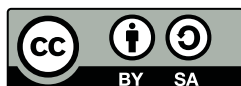
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# 1. Introduction

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Political movements<sup>1</sup> are gaining in importance around the world and are trying to establish themselves as an alternative to the already long-standing parties in their countries. The best known and most successful movement is undoubtedly the movement En Marche!, founded by Emmanuel Macron in 2016, which brought its founder to the Elysée Palace only a little over a year later. Six weeks later, the then renamed movement La République en Marche (LREM) won an absolute majority of seats in the National Assembly. But other movements and the parties that have emerged from them have also achieved far more than just a few respectable achievements: the party of the Five Star Movement in Italy, founded in 2009, won the parliamentary elections by a clear margin in 2018 and governed the country together with the right-wing populist Lega until September 2019. In the Czech Republic, the party of the Action of Dissatisfied Citizens, founded in 2011 by businessman Andrej Babiš (ANO 2011), has been by far the strongest political force since 2017, with Babiš as Prime Minister. In Spain, the Vox movement, founded in 2013, attained 10.3 percent of the vote in the early parliamentary elections in April 2019, making it the fifth most powerful political force in the country, which caused particular worry to the conservative People's Party.

Political movements are gaining in importance worldwide.

At the same time, the lustre of some movements has faded somewhat. As the star of LREM and its leader began to sink, the harder it became for president Macron to implement his ambitious reform agenda against massive resistance and strong interest groups.<sup>2</sup> Structural weakness and errors in communication also contributed.<sup>3</sup> However, the protest against LREM and Macron was not expressed by the established parties, but by the grassroots movement of the so-called yellow vests (Gilets jaunes), which is much more disorganised, spontaneous, anarchic and therefore unpredictable than LREM or the already previously mentioned movements ever were.

All of these movements and their parties evidently emanate a special attraction for people who no longer feel adequately represented by any other political movement or party. Increasing voter volatility, declining party affiliation, a heightened interest in temporary engagement and a recognisable loss of trust in political institutions in many countries – due, among other things, to a persistent inability to solve problems, to corruption and to nepotism, favour these developments. However, the movements are not just scooping up those people who are “left behind” or dissatisfied and giving them a voice, a face and power. They are themselves also considered as democratic in a grassroots way, unconsumed, free of entanglements in the existing political system, open to everyone – and thus also to those coming from other walks of life – and, finally, as a particularly “pure” form of citizen participation. However, as the examples of the Five Star Movement, La France insoumise, Podemos or the Polish Kukiz'15 show, movements are also susceptible to authoritarian leadership styles, both left and right-wing populism, and sometimes even extremist tones.

Increasing voter volatility, declining party affiliation and a growing loss of trust in political institutions promote the success of political movements.

Against the background of these developments, the phenomenon of political movements ought to be examined more closely. How did these political movements come about, and what conditions are favourable for their foundation and success? Are

movements, or the parties that result from them, a new form of political participation and exercise of interests? Are these new movements and their parties displacing the political establishment and well-known forms of political opinion-making and leadership that parties have practised up until now? Are we perhaps experiencing a revolutionization even of the previous institutional systems and processes of political decision-making in some European countries due to these movements and their parties, which, in the end, will replace the traditional parties?

We will investigate these questions in this study on the basis of eight case studies from five European countries.<sup>4</sup> Although some of these movements have since been converted into parties or registered themselves as a party in order to participate in elections, we define these new political movements and their parties on the basis of the following criteria:

- › political-secular, no fundamentalist religious understanding
- › anti-elitist, with the basic focus being directed against the existing political establishment
- › a deliberate distancing from the existing parties by means of name, self-designation and self-image (even if they themselves have had to assume the status of a party for formal reasons); a claim of being “different”
- › designed for permanence; no sporadically active election committee or alliance that ceases its activities after elections
- › a pronounced grassroots-democratic self-image and comparatively poorly developed formal structures
- › consist mainly of people coming from other walks of life and political newcomers; at the top is often a strong leader, usually the founder.

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1 Most of these movements have by now, for legal reasons, assumed the status of a political party in order to participate in elections as such. Nevertheless, they have maintained structures, procedures and principles of movements, notably their anti-elitist, “anti-establishment” basic orientation, their open, roughcast, grassroots-democratic organisation, their amateur quality and spontaneity, and sometimes also anarchy, and their self-image as movements, with the result that we also call them movements, even after or when a party is founded in addition. The term “new party” would be much too general and would not do justice to the special characteristics of these groups.

2 Cf., for example, Kempin, Ronja (2019): *Macron, die Gelbwesten und die nationale Debatte: Spiel auf Zeit statt Weg aus der Legitimitätskrise der Politik.* (Macron, the yellow

vests and the national debate: playing for time instead of a way out of the legitimacy crisis of politics). Berlin: SWP-Aktuell. No. 13, March 2019.

3 Cf. Devčić, Jakov and Fislage, Franziska (2019): *Die Gelbwesten in Frankreich: Gelbe Karte für Macron?* (The yellow vests in France: yellow card for Macron?) *Analysen und Argumente* No. 337. Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

4 The editorial deadline for this study was 26th March 2019. For the English translation, the results of the European and the parliamentary elections in Spain, which have taken place in the meantime, have been taken into account and the text has been adapted accordingly.

## 2. Country studies

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### 2.1 France | Julie Hamann

France's party system has always been particularly susceptible to shifts, change and rearrangements. So it is not surprising that general trends and upheavals that are currently occurring in almost all Western democracies are particularly visible in France. The ideological fragmentation of the political landscape has opened up an experimental field for new forms of political organisation. The aim in what follows is to examine in greater detail three political movements which are very different, and yet similar in terms of their significance as examples of fundamental transformations: La République en Marche! (LREM), the movement with which the French elected their president Emmanuel Macron as head of state, the opposition movement La France insoumise (LFI), led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon and, lastly, the still young and diffuse movement of the gilets jaunes, the yellow vests. Although, in the latter case, it is difficult to assess if and in what form it will endure, it has already had an enduring influence on France.

General trends and political changes within the Western democracies are especially visible in France.

The changes that characterise these movements go deeper than the frequent newly formed alliances or pure name changes<sup>5</sup> that have been seen up until now. This is indicated by three observations: firstly, all three movements fit into a larger debate about the reorganisation of the political spectrum that goes beyond the classical division along "left" and "right". While LREM made the core of its brand about breaking up the bipolar party system and declaring it outdated, LFI wants to make precisely these poles visible again with the claim that it represents *the* force on the left. The yellow vests, on the other hand, have so far escaped any ideological classification based on the left-right scheme – despite this being openly attempted. Secondly, they call in question previous modes of decision-making and demand or practise reflection on internal democracy as well as institutional changes in the French political system. Finally, they contribute to a blurring of boundaries between previously established political forms of organisation: not only does it become increasingly difficult to demarcate between parties and movements, but also the logic and organisational form of social movements and protests is changing and leading to further destabilisation of political processes.

Movements have changed the political system.

#### La République en Marche: From start-up movement to presidential party

In April 2016, Emmanuel Macron, then Minister of Economic Affairs in the socialist government of François Hollande, announced in his hometown of Amiens the foundation of En marche, an "open movement" that will be "neither right nor left", that wants to "build something new" and overcome "blockades in society".<sup>6</sup> Paired with a range of online tools, strong digital communication and an attitude of political entrepreneurship, the movement gave itself the image of a young political start-up from the very beginning. About one month after the movement had been kicked off, Macron declared his goal of garnering the concerns, ideas and wishes of the French people in thousands of door-to-door talks by around 2,000 volunteers under the

LREM has the character of a political start-up.





slogan "Grande marche", in order to provide a "diagnosis" of the state of France and thus the basis of a new political programme.<sup>7</sup> Of course, he himself had long since made a diagnosis for France: without more rigorous implementation of reforms for liberalisation and increasing flexibility of France's economy, the country would remain blocked in a state of immobility. Such a programme would not be able to be implemented within the socialist party to which he had hitherto felt he belonged, since the socialists themselves were crumbling under ideological disputes.

Macron shelved the polarisation between right and left and tried to create a new dividing line: progressives against populists.

Liberal parties that position themselves in the middle politically do not have it easy in France, because political liberalism has always played a subordinate role there, and the polarisation between right and left is strongly rooted in the structure of the political system. By rhetorically shelving this very polarisation and instead drawing up a new dividing line between "progressives" and "conservatives", later between progressives and populists or nationalists, he was able to remove himself from the existing political context and strip the topic of reforms away from any ideological debate.

Even more than the new movement's focus on reforms, his promise to renew the political class acted as the driving force of En marche!. He thus responded to the widespread sense of lack of representation in politics and the general mistrust in elected officials or parties. The fact that the topic of "morality" took centre stage in the election campaign after the bogus-employment scandal involving the conservative candidate François Fillon and his wife also helped Macron. Regarded as belonging to the fossilised system of career politicians, Macron countered him with an understanding of politics in which civil society is more involved, from the formulation of policies



right through to decision-making. The “Grande marche” approach testifies as much to this as does the call for candidacy applications for the parliamentary elections via an online platform, and the promise of a government made up of members from civil society. The result: of the 308 LREM representatives elected to the National Assembly in 2017, 169 have not previously held political office. In terms of political provenance, 126 representatives originate from the left (of whom, 83 were previously PS), 17 from the centre, 48 from the conservatives, and 117 declare themselves as not belonging to any political movement.<sup>8</sup> In the first government under Prime Minister Edouard Philippe (formerly Les Républicains), eight of the 22 ministers came from civil society, with particular expertise in their respective departments, but without having previously held political office. Key posts such as interior affairs or the economy are occupied by political heavyweights such as Gérard Collomb (PS) or Bruno Le Maire (LR).

More than half of LREM representatives had not held political office before the 2017 election.

With its successful entry into the National Assembly and a strong political majority, LREM became the presidential party in a very short time. However, the pressure that results from rapid professionalisation is not without problems. A particular field of tension is the internal organisation: Macron continues to be the face of the movement, even though he ceded his leadership after his election. The party leadership comes from his direct environment and acts in close coordination with the Elysée Palace. In November 2017, the first party congress elected Christophe Castaner as party leader – an election with no opposition candidates that sparked protests among some *Marcheurs*.<sup>9</sup> Castaner, formerly PS, supported Macron as press spokesman during his election campaign and since 2018 has been Minister of the Interior as successor to Gérard Collomb. His successor, Stanislas Guerini, has been in Macron’s inner circle since 2015 and is one of the founding figures of LREM. This way of functioning particularly conflicts with the movement’s approach of fostering local engagement and enabling the direct introduction of own initiatives and ideas. A key challenge for LREM will now be to become established at the local level and to incorporate this into the way the party operates. Since there are no elected representatives at the local or regional level, it is difficult to counter the impression of a movement “from above”.

In addition to internal organisation, local roots are another challenge for the party.

There has been success in involving a greater number of “newcomers”, as stated above. However, the resignation of the most popular cabinet member in autumn 2018, environmentalist Nicolas Hulot, highlights the limitations of this approach. Hulot did not feel sufficiently supported in his promotion of environmental policies.<sup>10</sup> Added to this is the strong focus on executive functions, and in particular on President Macron, who received the label of “President of the Rich” following the measures at the beginning of his term of office, and whom the majority of the French people perceive by no means as a “political newcomer” but rather as a representative of the “elite”. The emergence of the “yellow vests” makes this very clear, as the rejection of the previous elite is a strong unifying element of this protest movement. Voters’ desire for renewal has in the eyes of many not been realised: the old elite has not disappeared through LREM; it has simply been replaced by another one.

Macron is considered the “President of the Rich”.

How things will progress for LREM following its narrow defeat to Marine Le Pen and her party in the 2019 European elections is still unclear. This result was not entirely unexpected for the still young party, but it was a bitter blow. The upcoming municipal

The *Républicains* still have difficulties distinguishing themselves from Macron. The Socialists have suffered most from Macron's electoral victory and have not yet been able to recover from it.

elections in France in 2020 are also of great importance, as the lack of local establishment that still exists in the town halls is dependent on these. The biggest challengers for LREM are France's right wingers, although the conservative *Républicains* are still having difficulties distinguishing themselves from both Macron and Le Pen and sharpening their profile. The Socialists, on the other hand, suffered most from Macron's electoral victory and have still not been able to recover yet. The French left is now dominated by one man above all: Jean-Luc Mélenchon with his movement *La France insoumise*, "indomitable France".

### **La France insoumise: the right strategy at the right time**

"The goal of *La France insoumise* is not to be democratic, but collective," says Mélenchon of his movement, which is "neither horizontal nor vertical, but gaseous"<sup>11</sup>. As is the case with LREM, a part of *La France insoumise* (LFI) is its constant distinction from parties in order to form its self-identity and communication strategy, even though it has long since become involved in political activity, participates in elections, and forms its own group in parliament, with 17 members. LFI shares some other features with LREM too: the great importance of a charismatic founder and leader, the emphasis on local engagement, the extensive use of digital communication tools, and the promise of restoring the direct relationship between citizens and politics.<sup>12</sup> In both movements, there is a low-threshold for engagement: a click on the homepage and an email address are enough to participate in the offers for supporters – online votes, webinars, eLearning, coordination of local groups. While Macron has more or less stripped the socialist party of its reformist wing, Mélenchon has been scooping up its voter potential from the radical left and disappointed former socialists for quite some time now.

A click on their homepage and an email address are enough to participate in votes and webinars.

Mélenchon himself belonged to the left wing of PS until 2008, before he left the party due to disagreements regarding the focus of its substance and, with the *Parti de gauche* (inspired by Germany's Left Party), founded a new leftist party with the aim of greater collective movement. In 2009, he was elected to the European Parliament under the electoral alliance *Front de gauche*, to which the Communist Party (PCF) belonged. In the presidential election of 2012, he achieved fourth place as a candidate for this alliance, with eleven percent of the vote. With LFI, Mélenchon has again separated himself from the alliance partners to develop his basic idea of the *Parti de gauche* under the auspices of an open civic movement and thus to achieve its goal: of creating a "new" left that breaks the previous dominance of PS and PCF in the left camp.

The LFI program was designed as an open process in which supporters could participate by submitting demands.

The political programme of the movement was designed as an open process in which supporters could participate in elaborating its detailed demands and whose result was put to the vote. In terms of its substance, it includes, among other things, the demand already long put forward by Mélenchon for a constituent assembly for a Sixth Republic, strong elements of eco-socialism, the demand for a renegotiation of European contracts in order to move from a "neoliberal" to a "social" Europe, an increase in the minimum wage and the rejection of free trade agreement negotiations.<sup>13</sup> LFI sees itself as part of a global left movement, which finds its political expression, among others, in Pablo Iglesias and the Spanish *Podemos* movement or in Bernie Sanders, and which is close to the theories of political scientist Chantal Mouffe. However, in the context of her concept of a "populism of the left", the question as to what extent LFI is to classify itself as "populist" is leading to disagreement within the movement. Especially



with regard to topics such as migration, points of friction are thus arising between a “left” and a “populist” line. The breadth of the movement holds potential for conflict – even if the populist approach is currently in the minority.

The decisiveness with which Mélenchon deposed socialist candidate Benoît Hamon in the presidential elections shows that a high electoral potential exists for political movements such as LFI: at 19.6 percent and in fourth place, it missed the run-off by not even two percentage points, while Hamon was well beaten at 6.4 percent. Unlike the voter profiles of the other parties on the left, Mélenchon was particularly successful among the 18–24 age group. At 30 percent, he was also the candidate with the most overall votes from this age group.<sup>14</sup> It is also revealing that a particularly large number of those who did not feel affiliated to any political party voted for Mélenchon.<sup>15</sup> Both numbers show the potential of LFI to mobilise voters who have no firm political identity.

Even two years after joining the National Assembly, LFI is still fluid in nature, due to its still decentralised organisation, without statutes, organisational charts, delegates or internal party elections. Supporters can continue to be members of other parties. Around 5,000 local groups guarantee a strong foundation at the grassroots level, which fits into other structures and commitments. However, as with LREM, this is precisely where a conflict arises: the results of local decision-making processes barely find a way up to the leading figures in the movement.<sup>16</sup>

To make matters worse, Mélenchon’s role as a charismatic leader is both a factor of success and a problem: he has been politically crippled since the search of his apartment and the premises of the former Parti de gauche in connection with

On the subject of migration, the points of friction between a leftist and a populist line become apparent for LFI.

LFI has particular potential with those that do not have a solid political home.



Mélenchon is controversial: the voices looking for an alternative to the one-man-show seen up until now are increasing in number.

investigations into election campaign financing. In addition, as a figure in France's political life who is equally admired and disliked, he provokes controversy that prevents many leftists from voting for him. Within the potential electorate, there are increasingly voices seeking an alternative to the previous one-man show. The young representative François Ruffin, who was a journalist, filmmaker and founder of the protest movement *Nuit debout* before his election, is considered a possible bearer of hope.<sup>17</sup>

For the time being, Mélenchon's strategy has at any rate paid off: LFI holds its status as the strongest power of the left opposition – the Socialists are currently unable to counter this. Many young people are currently experiencing their political socialisation through LFI. They are hardly likely to return to classic party structures.

### Gilets jaunes: a protest beyond political parties

The protest movement of the yellow vests, which has expanded from rejecting the increase in fuel taxes to demands for increased purchasing power and more direct democracy, is too young and too heterogeneous to be allocated a clear place in France's society. The strength of their mobilisation reached its climax at the beginning of November 2018, with almost 300,000 people taking part in the protests. However, the number of participants had fallen significantly by March 2019. Although the further development is unclear, its effect on the entire society and its significance for public discourse is already so strong that it will not remain a spontaneous exception.

Alongside LREM and LFI, the yellow vests are a third form of the same development. Albeit to varying degrees, the questioning of the existing political system with its elites and forms of participation that are limited to elections, a distancing from previous partisan organisations and the break-up of classical right-left schemes motivate all three groups in equal measure. Clear demarcations are difficult, but it seems plausible that LREM and the yellow vest supporters, in particular, originate from distinctly different social milieus: LREM voters mostly earn good money and are resident in big cities, while yellow vest supporters are strongly represented in rural areas with weak infrastructure and, on average, have a monthly income just below the French median.<sup>18</sup>

Strong politicisation alongside a simultaneous huge distancing from political life characterise the yellow vests. Around 55 percent say they are demonstrating for the first time; for 60 percent, the division of the political spectrum from left to right does not reflect their own political identity.<sup>19</sup> However, they are not apolitical: 60 percent consider themselves to be fairly or strongly interested in politics. Those who place themselves in this camp politically are more likely to view themselves as on the left (65 percent left, 28 percent right).<sup>20</sup> These numbers illustrate why the yellow vests have been relatively immune to attempts at party usurpation, whether by Mélenchon and LFI or by Le Pen and RN. The ideological disparity also has little destructive effect on the movement: common demands, such as those following the introduction of referendums at the initiative of the people (referendum d'initiative citoyenne, RIC) and feelings of political "repression" against the movement, strengthen the common identity of the protesters beyond supposed ideological contradictions.<sup>21</sup>

The effect the yellow vests are having on society and public discourse is strong.

60 percent of yellow vest supporters do not align themselves with either the left or right political camps.





Even after several months of mobilisation, the movement of the yellow vests remains without any internal structure, and without a leader or spokesperson. Attempts to carry the protest movement over onto a list of electoral candidates for the European elections sprung from an initiative of individuals who never had a majority of the movement behind them. In addition, they have so far failed due to the inability to agree on a common programme. With his proclamation of a “grand national debate” (grand débat national) in response to the yellow vests, Macron is now building on the Grande marche of the election campaign period and offering talks on all political and societal levels on issues such as democracy, purchasing power and fiscal equity. In doing so, he has responded to a great need for participation – the weeks of support for the yellow vests, from about 70 percent of French people, testifies to this. For now, Macron has taken the wind out of the move-

Macron tries to offer talks in response to the yellow vests with “great national debates”. By doing so he was able to take the wind out of the sails of the movement for the time being.

ment’s sails with this decision, but he now has to keep his promise and translate the results of the debate into clear policy measures. In the long run, however, there is a real danger that similar movements will reoccur unless a combination of political cultural change and economic consolidation provides an answer to the widespread and deep distrust many French people hold towards “the” political system.

### Conclusion

The confidence of the French people in their political system has reached a low point. This is shown by the most recent survey for the long-term study Baromètre de la confiance politique: in this, 88 percent state that they have no or a greater tendency for no confidence in parties.<sup>22</sup> While mistrust of parties is high in other Western democracies too, France holds a special position in this respect, with this being so strongly pronounced. For comparison: in Germany, this proportion is 63 percent.<sup>23</sup> Added to this is the general dissatisfaction with the state of democracy: 70 percent of respondents felt that democracy in France does not work well. The three movements LREM, LFI and the yellow vests can be read as very different yet related responses to these numbers. Are they a symptom of a deep crisis of trust, parties or even democracy? Or can they be the catalyst for a democratic revival?



## 2.2 Italy | Caroline Kanter and Silke Schmitt

### Movimento Cinque Stelle (M5S)

The Five Star Movement (originally Movimento Cinque Stelle, M5S) became the strongest political force in Italy for the first time in the parliamentary elections in March 2018, achieving a result of 32 percent. It has been in government since June 2018, first in a coalition with the right-wing populist Lega, later with the Partito Democratico (PD). The movement was able to chalk up this political success barely ten years after its founding.

Italian comedian Giuseppe Piero (“Beppe”) Grillo launched the movement in October 2009 after being rejected as a candidate in the primary elections of the social democratic party “Partito Democratico” (PD). Grillo had been advertising his ideas on his blog since 2005 already. He had set up this internet platform ([www.beppegrillo.it](http://www.beppegrillo.it)) together with internet entrepreneur and marketing strategist Gianroberto Casaleggio. Like Casaleggio, Grillo dreamed of direct democracy at the click of a mouse. Communicating through the blog made an important contribution to the success of the movement, in addition to mobilising citizens in marketplaces in large and small communities throughout Italy.

M5S defines itself as post-ideological – neither right nor left. Their decisions are not based on any common bedrock of values. The movement’s anthem states: “We are not a party, we are not a caste. We are citizens, full stop and basta. Everyone is equal to each other”.<sup>24</sup> This idea is reflected in the movement’s selection of elected representatives: Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte describes himself as a “simple citizen” and has no political experience – like many of the elected representatives, who are taking up office without any previous political involvement. That’s important for the movement. For M5S, honesty also means standing apart from the political caste.

According to analysts and experts, the rise of M5S has become possible because the Italian political elite is in deep crisis: “Today’s politics are dead. It has no resources. It has only one role left: as a scapegoat for the citizens’ anger,” said the historian Giovanni Orsina shortly after the parliamentary elections of 2018, in which every second Italian voter opted for an anti-system party.<sup>25</sup> The beginnings of this crisis go back to the 1990s. The “Mani Pulite” corruption scandal in Italy led to a breach of trust between citizens and political parties. Beppe Grillo was one of the first to denounce corruption in the parties in his shows. Neither the Christian Democrats nor the political left have succeeded in regaining the confidence of the citizens. Neither the entrepreneur Silvio Berlusconi nor the former EU commissioner Mario Monti were able to be persuasive on the political stage. Many Italians felt the so-called government of technocrats under Monti (2011–2013) was forced upon them by the European Union. However, the desire for new elections was ignored. Experts see this as a reason for the increasing strength of the anti-establishment movement M5S and the right-wing populist party Lega. Both the Five Star Movement and Lega can score points with voters with their plans to “send the old political caste home” in order to radically change the face of Italian politics.<sup>26</sup>

Many of the elected representatives have no political experience.

The rise of M5S became possible due to the crisis of the Italian political elite, the origins of which date back to the 1990s.



Yet, quite apart from the political crisis, Italians' trust in political institutions was overall very low. However, under the new government, this has improved: 20.8 percent of Italians confirm their trust in political institutions (13 percent in 2018 and only 7.7 percent in 2017). Satisfaction with regard to the work of the government has also increased by 15 percentage points compared to the previous year, sitting at 36.7 percent.<sup>27</sup>

Just like the voter base, the senior leadership and elected representatives are characterised by heterogeneity. These people come from both the right and the left spectrum, and therefore represent different positions. They also have different levels of education. A common feature of the senior leadership and elected representatives is that they have little to no political experience. The movement has a hierarchical structure. A few people control the fate of the movement and make all the decisions when it comes to substance and staffing.

The founder, Beppe Grillo, is called the guarantor of the movement. From its foundation in 2009 up until the first parliamentary elections in 2013, the movement has revealed an informal organisational structure that is closely tied to Grillo. Grillo was in close contact with followers through his blog and his events. In January 2018, however, he disconnected his private blog from the movement's official website. At times, he seems to be wary of estrangement in the anti-establishment movement, which in the meantime has itself become part of the political establishment.<sup>28</sup>

Quite apart from the political crisis, Italians' trust in political institutions was overall very low.

Since M5S have been in government, it has been steadily losing support.

Since September 2017, Luigi Di Maio has been at the head of the movement. The 32-year-old is Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Economic Development, Labour and Social Policies. He represents the “right” wing of the movement. During the election campaign, he went in for a moderate tone in order to still any fears that entrepreneurs, financial markets and countries abroad might have of the movement. Di Maio wants to rule. Through him, M5S is becoming part of the political class. However, he does not shy away from mobilising his followers with simple rhetoric and polemical attacks. Since M5S has been in government, it has steadily lost support in the country and has now been overtaken by Lega in the polls.<sup>29</sup>

Alessandro Di Battista, a representative of the Party’s extreme “left” wing and of the anti-institutional side, is an expert in development policy. After the parliamentary elections, he had disappeared and left the political stage to Luigi Di Maio. Di Battista presents himself as a kind of free spirit: he manages to appeal to the electorate who embody the antisystemic and original values of the movement. He is close to the base and can inspire people in piazzas. The movement relied on him as its driving force in the EU election campaign.

Other key figures in the movement include Roman mayor Virginia Raggi. Although she has had little success in the capital, she enjoys a great deal of popularity on Facebook.<sup>30</sup>

Davide Casaleggio is the real mastermind of the movement. He wants to abolish parliaments and replace them with online forums.

The real mastermind of the movement, however, is the entrepreneur Davide Casaleggio. He ensures the movement’s success in the digital sphere. Marketing strategies from his own agency, the careful evaluation of opinion polls and “pushing” appropriate messages ensure success on social media. Like his father, he is consistently advancing the concept of direct democracy by mouse click: the aim is not only the abolition of representative democracy, but the abolition of parliaments in general, which could be replaced by electronic parliaments. In this way, a new bond between institution and citizen is to be created.<sup>31</sup> Casaleggio has also set himself the goal of exporting the operational system of direct democracy abroad. The monthly “contributions”<sup>32</sup> of M5S members of parliament to Casaleggio’s company – around 800,000 euros a year – served this purpose.<sup>33</sup>

Deputy Prime Minister Di Maio offered the Rousseau platform to the French yellow vests to use.

The “Platform Rousseau” was supposed to realise this dream of democracy by mouse click. It forms the connection between the company Casaleggios and the movement’s policy issues. It is a web-based participation tool: Registered members of the movement have the opportunity of participating in important political decision-making processes. The staff and substance of M5S are determined in this manner – for instance, the selection of candidates or the vote on the political agenda. The “Rousseau platform” is an important part of the organisational structure of the movement and an essential differentiating characteristic compared to other political movements in Italy. Deputy Prime Minister Di Maio offered the Rousseau platform to the French yellow vests to use.<sup>34</sup>

There is no room for troublemakers at M5S. Members of parliament are forced to toe the party line.

However, the values of transparency and honesty propagated by the movement are absent in the structures of movement: troublemakers are expelled from the senior leadership without any reasons being given. This lack of transparency in the selection of candidates or the subsequent modification of electoral manifestos that have already been adopted by the members online have engendered criticism in the past.<sup>35</sup>

With regard to the policies of the movement in government today, the lack of clear positioning and the absence of a set of basic values is evident. The Five Star Movement of today has little in common with its original fundamental convictions. The principles published on 8th March 2009 in the founding manifesto of the “Carta di Firenze” movement were marked by concrete social-ecological concerns. The “Five Stars” stand for water (against privatisation of the water supply), environmental protection, energy, transport and sustainable development. The original five goals of the movement can today hardly be found in the current agenda. It is becoming less and less about reducing consumption in the so-called society of excess and more and more about criticism of the “political caste” and their “privileges”. The topic of environmental protection barely appeared in the elections of 2013, and in 2018, too, they played a subordinate role. When formulating political positions, M5S is guided by the current mood among the population. Opinion polls play an important role. The voter base is heterogeneous, volatile and guided by short-term common interests for concrete goals, including the introduction of a citizens’ income.<sup>36</sup>

The original goals of the movement can today hardly be found in the current agenda. M5S is guided by moods among the population.

In the parliamentary elections of 2013, the movement entered the Senate and Chamber of Deputies for the first time, with a surprising result of about 25 percent. Since then, the anti-establishment movement that identified the “political caste” as its real opponent has been part of the political system in Italy – on a local, regional and national level. The election results show that the movement is predominantly finding supporters in southern Italy. When M5S first entered parliament in 2013, it strictly rejected so-called *inciuci*, political horse-trading or “hanky panky”, and made itself unavailable for government coalitions. Members of parliament, ordinary citizens with no political experience, at first found it difficult to cope with the political environment and needed to grow into their roles.

In the parliamentary elections of 2018, the party rose up to become the strongest political force.

In the parliamentary elections of 2018, the party rose up to become the strongest political force, with Luigi Di Maio as leader and Beppe Grillo as a guarantor. In this role, Di Maio identified many candidates independently and tailored the campaign to his person. Grillo worked behind the scenes as the anchor of the movement.<sup>37</sup> With 32 percent, M5S rose to become the strongest political force in the Italian party system.

In the regional elections in Abruzzo and Basilicata in the spring of 2019, M5S was unable to convince the voters and achieved just under 20 percent of the vote. In the parliamentary elections of 2018, around 40 percent of people in these regions voted in favour of M5S. The regional elections served as a test of the mood to come for the European elections in May 2019, which proved to be a nightmare for M5S. The party achieved only 16.7 percent, and thus only half the share of the vote achieved in the parliamentary election a year earlier. The bad election result puts M5S under pressure and sparked a debate about a realignment of the movement. Di Maio initiated a critical discussion about the movement’s positioning in terms of staffing and substance. Some experts see this as the development of the movement towards becoming a classic party.<sup>38</sup>

The poor performance in the regional elections puts the movement under pressure.

At the municipal level, the movement supplies 49 mayors throughout Italy (of 8,000 municipalities). That is just under 0.5 percent of all municipalities. However, M5S representatives have governed in major cities such as Rome and Turin since



the municipal elections in 2016. These, but also the other M5S incumbents, were only drafted in by the movement because they were “simple honest citizens”. They lacked any experience in political and administrative business whatsoever and now, as mayors, they are having great difficulty finding their bearings in this role.

At the European level, the Five Star Movement has hitherto belonged to the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) faction, where, alongside the UK Independence Party (UKIP), they make up the strongest group. M5S wants to found a faction with “like-minded people” in the EU parliament. According to statements from M5S, the Croatian party Zivi Zid, the Finnish party Liike Nyt, the Greek party Akkel and the Polish Kukiz’15 are said to belong to this faction.<sup>39</sup> M5S also showed interest in a partnership with the yellow vests. The Five Star movement is thus targeting parties and movements of other EU member states who neither feel they belong to the right-wing nationalist parties nor are part of the “traditional” political forces who have so far been in charge of the European Parliament.

### Outlook

The political reality forces M5S to make decisions that are incompatible with the basic principles the movement once imposed on itself. In the long term, there is a risk of the movement imploding or exploding. There is disagreement over whether or not to become a fixed part of the political establishment in future.

M5S is today part of a political system which the movement originally wanted to abolish. M5S has already succeeded in initial “corrections” within the system.<sup>40</sup> However, the question still essentially remains as to whether the movement wants to bring about change from the “inside” or from the “outside”, and how the movement will itself change in this “government of change”. It remains to be seen whether it can and wants to make the leap to become an established force of the political system, that is, a kind of party. To do that, it would have to leave behind some of its political beliefs and its original support base. Added to this are considerations of a direct democracy, which generally calls into question parliament’s right to exist. Here, too, it remains to be seen in which direction these considerations actually develop. Some political scientists see the Five Star Movement as a populist phenomenon that in the Italian party system resides in the sector that is occupied by right-wing political forces in other European countries.<sup>41</sup> Both Grillo and Prime Minister Conte refer to themselves as “populists”. However, they try to assign their own meaning to the term.<sup>42</sup> The movement has lost support during its coalition with Lega. The initially much smaller partner has grown: in recent surveys, Lega has grabbed hold of M5S’s initial position with over 33 percent of the vote.<sup>43</sup>

In the traditional political parties such as the social-democratic Partito Democratico (PD) or Forza Italia (FI), there are strong reservations about M5S. Clear distinctions are made. This applies to both the substance and the strategic direction, even if individual voices from the PD are in favour of working together with M5S. Whether and in which form the two political forces could converge or cooperate depends firstly on M5S and secondly, to a great degree, on the future direction of the social-democratic PD under the leadership of Nicola Zingaretti. Some experts believe that M5S is getting weaker and that this could lead to a split in the movement. Parts of M5S and the PD could then join forces or come together with a newly established political left.

M5S wants to found a faction with “like-minded people” in the EU parliament. Ties were also established with the yellow vests.

M5S is today part of a political system which the movement originally wanted to abolish.

The movement has lost support through its coalition with Lega.



Despite this speculation concerning convergence, it should be noted that the Five Star Movement is quite simply a political opponent of both the PD and FI. M5S has to some extent even mutated into a bogeyman. With sharp rhetorical attacks, they try to distance themselves from them, both in terms of their positions and methods. However, M5S has certainly contributed to the awareness of the fact that there has indeed been an alienation between voters and politicians in recent years, and that this distance must be overcome.



## 2.3 Poland | Bartosz Rydliński

### Kukiz'15

Kukiz'15 is a political force that emerged in 2015 after the spectacular result of rock musician Paweł Kukiz in the presidential election, in which he won more than 21 percent of the vote in the first ballot. For the first time in the 30-year history of the 3rd Republic, a person who up until that point was only known as a stage artist became an important political figure of this kind. Kukiz's result and his principal demand for the introduction of a majority voting system based on constituencies with a parliamentary seat in a sense played one of the key roles in the second ballot during the presidential election, in which Andrzej Duda was elected president.

Former president Bronisław Komorowski, also a candidate in this election, called for a constitutionally questionable national referendum aimed at paving the way for the introduction of the electoral system demanded by Paweł Kukiz. However, the referendum ended in a significant defeat. The turnout was only 7.8 percent. Komorowski himself lost the presidential election, although Paweł Kukiz's demands drew great attention to him in the public debate, and his movement Kukiz'15 gained political significance.

The Kukiz'15 association and election committee attempted to involve citizens in a broader project. The goal was to "extract the state" from the traditional parties. The principal demand of Paweł Kukiz and his association, which deliberately did not become a political party, is the introduction of a general majority voting system with single-member constituencies and national referendums in Poland, in which citizens would have the opportunity to influence political decisions.

The rock musician Paweł Kukiz became an important political figure thanks to his movement.

Kukiz'15 has a strong anti-establishment focus and a nationalist character. Its manifesto includes the following:

*"We love Poland. We are members of a great and magnificent people. We are the voice of the people, who have woken up and want to regain control of their nation. We know that the best things about our country result from Poland's patriotism, diligence, and innovative strength. We do not consent to the huge potential and ambition of Poland continuing to be wasted (...). The power in Poland cannot belong to party oligarchies, nor can it belong to foreign governments, international corporations or foreign media. The sovereign authority in our country should belong exclusively to the people!"<sup>44</sup>*

This section reflects the ideological colouring of the movement. In addition, attention must be drawn to the fact that this movement again and again makes reference to dangers arising from globalisation, the over-dependence on the European Union and foreign capital.

In the parliamentary elections of 2015, the Kukiz'15 election committee took third place with 8.81 percent of the vote. From this election committee, members of other right-wing-oriented political parties, including Ruch Narodowy, Unia Polityki Realnej or Kongres Nowej Prawicy, also made it into the Sejm. Although Kukiz'15 calls itself an apolitical movement, this formation is viewed as a right-wing populist movement. In addition to the manifesto, statements from other representatives, which do not hide the nationalist, anti-liberal and anti-establishment focus of their views, also testify to this. In January 2016, Kukiz'15 announced they were starting to collect signatures for a societal application to implement a national referendum. The aim of this referendum was to stop the admission of refugees from the Middle East as part of a so-called EU relocation proposal.

Due to internal conflicts, many representatives left the Kukiz'15 faction. While at the beginning of the period of legislature it still consisted of 42 representatives, in February 2019, it had only 26 representatives.

The Kukiz'15 faction itself shows an at least ambivalent attitude to other right-wing groups, including the party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS). Kukiz'15 votes together with the PiS faction on numerous issues, as far as questions of one's worldview or politics of the past go. The representatives of Kukiz'15 tried several times to "pass" to the right of PiS and outdo it in the radical nature of its tone of voice. The former Kukiz'15 representative Adam Andruszkiewicz has been actively participating for years in manifestations and demonstrations of the radical and fascist right-wing camp. He also demanded more frequently than some PiS politicians that the former Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland and the Chairman of the party Platforma Obywatelska (PO) and the current president of the European Council, Donald Tusk, should be placed in front of a state tribunal. PiS, who sees that there is a danger of losing potential voters, is trying to draw the politicians who were elected from the Paweł Kukiz electoral committee to its side. In early 2019, Andruszkiewicz became part of the PiS government. Kornel Morawiecki, father of Prime Minister of the governing party PiS, Mateusz Morawiecki, had previously left the Kukiz'15 faction and formed a group of representatives called Wolni i Solidarni, consisting of a few

Kukiz'15 has an anti-establishment focus and a nationalist character.

Kukiz'15 tried several times, to overtake PiS on the right.

members, which is currently considered an unofficial coalition partner of the PiS party in the Polish Parliament. All other parties of the so-called liberal opposition did not cooperate with Kukiz'15.

Despite the weakness in parliament, Kukiz'15's influence on the public debate is strong.

It is noteworthy that the influence of Kukiz'15 on public debates is disproportionately strong despite the faction's current weakness. The amendment of the law on the National Memorial Institute can be cited as an example, which says that attributing participation in German Nazi crimes to the Polish people should be a punishable offence. Under pressure from the US and Israel, the PiS government removed this provision from current law. However, Paweł Kukiz called this decision "dilettantism" and "cowardice". In addition, the leader of the movement is repeatedly accused of anti-Semitism because he repeatedly holds Jews jointly responsible for crimes of Stalinism which occurred in Poland from 1945 onwards.

In the local elections in 2018, Kukiz'15 achieved 5.6 percent of the vote. However, the movement failed to get even one representative appointed to the voivodeship councils. Kukiz'15's only success was the victory of its candidate as mayor of Przemyśl. The average result of the polls from last month puts the movement's share of the vote at about seven percent. Continued support at this level would secure the movement both representation in the European Parliament and in the Sejm.

### Razem

The aim of Razem was to establish a new social left.

The party Razem (English: "together") was founded in May 2015 in order to participate in the parliamentary elections in October of the same year. The aim was to establish a new social left. This was to represent marginalised and unemployed persons, those in precarity, and all those who lack leftist representation in the Sejm.

Razem is a leftist protest movement. An important aspect of its self-image is a clear anti-establishment focus. At the beginning of its manifesto it is written:

*"We founded Razem because we are fed up. We are fed up with precarious work and loans for 30 years. We are fed up with tax breaks for large corporations and banks. We are fed up with the caste of politicians who do not know how ordinary people live."<sup>45</sup>*

The founders of Razem were inspired by Podemos in Spain or Syriza in Greece.

The movement was founded by former members of Młodzi Socjaliści, a youth organisation that separated from centre-left Unia Pracy in 2005, and Partia Zieloni. The founders were mostly well-educated young people inspired by left-wing social movements and anti-establishment-oriented parties such as Podemos in Spain or Syriza in Greece. A link with the Spanish new left can be seen not only in the views or the deliberative and participatory style of the party's leadership, but also in the purple colour scheme used.

From the start, Razem refrained to focus on just one leadership figure. This would be in contradiction to the democratic nature of the movement, although it is a feature of many other movements. Nevertheless, Adrian Zandberg is the best-known representative of the movement. Razem attained 3.62 percent of the vote in the 2015 election. This was regarded by many as a success, although the movement did not get into the Sejm. However, the result allowed the new left to participate in state party financing.





In previous years, Razem tried to develop into an alternative not only to the strongest Polish party on the left, Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (SLD), but also to the two other major parties, Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) and Platforma Obywatelska (PO). Razem was keen to establish a strategic relationship with the “red” union headquarters Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych (OPZZ) by helping to initiate the “My rights are being violated” campaign. The aim of this campaign was to raise public awareness of the issue of the disregard for workers’ rights.

In addition, Razem focused on issues such as wage increases, raising the top tax rate to 75 percent for natural persons, the construction of public housing, a prohibition on forced eviction, preventing privatisation of the health system, the liberalisation of abortion, increasing the budget for education, including increasing salaries for teachers, decentralisation of the state, lowering the salaries of parliamentarians and tying them to minimum wage, and the transformation of the Polish economy, towards clean industry with numerous jobs.

In May 2018, Razem announced that it was collecting signatures to campaign for drafting a bill that would cut weekly working hours from 40 to 35 hours. However, it was from this point on that the biggest problems of the new movement began. The party failed to collect the required 100,000 signatures. In the end, the movement was not even able to produce half of the necessary signatures. This clearly showed that the organisation is ineffective, has no well-developed and efficient structure, such as is necessary for any political party to function well. This is particularly significant in view of the fact that the demand for reduced working hours was one of Razem’s most fundamental points. This defeat also had a direct impact on the

Razem tried to represent an alternative to the traditional parties.

The failure to collect signatures testified to massive structural deficits.



The only success was the election of the mayor of Leśna, though even he resigned from the movement after the election.

catastrophic result in the municipal elections of 2018. Despite considerable funding from the Treasury, Razem lacked presence across the country. The result was only 1.57 percent of the votes in Poland as a whole. Not a single candidate was voted into any of the voivodship councils. All candidates who were supported by Razem in the elections for city presidents and city councils achieved very poor results. The only success was the victory of Razem's candidate in the mayoral election for the small town of Leśna. However, the candidate resigned from the Razem movement after the election.

Following these defeats, Razem proposed founding a joint left-wing coalition for the 2019 European elections. SLD, the Greens and Razem founded an alliance and began preliminary considerations for a manifesto. However, the project quickly stalled after the former mayor of the city of Słupsk, Robert Biedroń, founded his own movement with Wiosna, making it clear that this movement would not join the alliance. SLD and the Greens, on the other hand, decided to join the broad opposition alliance under the banner of Koalicja Europejska. The Razem party then began talks with Wiosna about a joint alliance in the next European elections. However, a publication came to light about the progress of these negotiations which made reaching an agreement seem unlikely. According to Razem, the new formation headed by Robert Biedroń demanded around one million złoty from Razem, that the movement renounce its name in the electoral committee, and that the participation of candidate Adrian Zandberg, who was said to be too popular and too closely associated with the Razem party, be prohibited. Wiosna sensed a danger that its appearance could become a problem for the "new" party. In return, Razem was to be given the opportunity to occupy first and second place on the list of candidates. The next day, board member Agnieszka Dziemianowicz-Bąk announced her resignation from the Razem party.

In February 2019, several articles were published in *Krytyka Polityczna*, an influential journal of the Polish new left, which stated that the Razem party no longer had any reason for existence in the current political situation. As early as July 2018, a significant decline in membership became apparent, as many former Razem supporters joined Robert Biedroń's Wiosna movement. Their average result from the most recent surveys is now lower than one percent, and so the Razem movement can now be considered irrelevant.

The Razem project failed.

## 2.4 Spain | Wilhelm Hofmeister and Martin Friedek

In Spain, new parties that have emerged from movements have been experiencing a lot of popularity for some years. Of particular interest are Podemos and Vox, which could also be called political movements, depending on idea and definition of these. However, both have been registered as parties since 2014. By now, they command a fairly high degree of structural organisation and are geographically widely distributed.

### PODEMOS: From protest movement to consolidated party

Podemos was created in the wake of the protest movement 15-M, a large demonstration at Puerta del Sol, Madrid, that, starting on 15th May 2011, lasted for 28 days and sparked further demonstrations in other parts of the country. The protest of the so-called Indignados (indignants) was triggered among other things by dissatisfaction about the Spanish economic crisis that started in 2008 and caused youth unemployment to virtually explode, enthusiasm about the “Arab Spring”, during the course of which some actors wanted to finally implement “real democracy” in Spain as well, criticism of the Spanish two-party system of PP and PSOE (called PPSOE), and criticism of the corruption existing in both big parties, as well as the upcoming municipal elections in May 2011, during which the “indignants” wanted to demand more direct, participatory democracy. The organisers of 15-M always claimed to be a non-partisan, non-union-affiliated, social protest movement. However, some leaders of the protest movement then started to organise the Indignados, who belonged to heterogeneous layers of the electorate, under a party-political mantle and thus stabilise the political movement.

The dichotomy between political demands for change and the simultaneous rejection of fixed political structures and hierarchies still characterises the rhetoric of Podemos as before. In practice, however, it has long been an established party. The sociologist Kerman Calvo even makes the following diagnosis: “15-M has created the intellectual base for political projects such as Podemos, Ganemos and others”. Leading figures in the protests, such as Pablo Padilla, later emerged on Podemos’ lists of candidates. The current party chairman Pablo Iglesias was not an active politician back then and worked in the background as a consultant for Izquierda Unida. It is precisely this distance to the establishment, which Podemos always canvased for as a protest party, coupled with his civil society involvement in the extreme left, that ultimately brought Iglesias the top candidacy at Podemos in 2014 in the European elections. Podemos was presented in January 2014 as a movement, but then registered shortly thereafter as a party. In the European elections in 2014, it won five seats right of the gate.

The main founding members of Podemos were Luis Alegre, Carolina Bescansa, Juan Carlos Monedero, Tania González, Íñigo Errejón and Pablo Iglesias. With the exception of the latter, all others have now quit the party leadership. Internally, there are two main currents: the pragmatists organise themselves behind Íñigo Errejón, but are in the minority. The ideologues and so-called progressives gather around Iglesias. A third but weaker current is constituted by the anti-capitalists, who sooner side with Iglesias than Errejón in cases of doubt. Carolina Bescansa recently tried, unsuccessfully, to establish her own fourth current.

Podemos’ origins lay in expressions of dissatisfaction about the Spanish economic crisis in 2008, in the enthusiasm of the Arab Spring, and in criticism of the two-party system.

Most of the founding members have quit the innermost circle of the party leadership due to differences with Pablo Iglesias.



Critics of Iglesias are quickly removed. In doing so, he takes advantage of his role as leader and the extensive powers that Spanish party law grants to chairmen.

other party leaders of the political establishment in Spain. He is taking advantage of his strong leadership role and the extensive powers that Spanish party law grants to chairmen. Iglesias can only be regarded as charismatic towards his own supporters and the closer party circles of Podemos. In the general opinion polls, in terms of his degree of popularity with voters across camps, he has for years been in last or next-to-last place, which is also connected to Podemos' general approval ratings.

Although Podemos does have consolidated party structures, in the 2016 parliamentary elections it entered into an electoral coalition with other left-wing groups under the name of Unidos-Podemos ("United We Can"). This will be repeated in the elections at the end of April 2019. In the majority of Spanish electoral districts, Podemos only manages to present candidates in conjunction with other national and regional splinter parties. The most important coalition partners include, inter alia, Izquierda Unida (United Left) nationwide, into which the former Communist Party of Spain merged, Compromís in Valencia, En Comú in Catalonia and En Marú in Galicia. Trotskyist writer and philosopher Santiago Alba expresses how the party has managed to integrate itself into the political establishment in just half a decade, causing disappointment among many voters in search of a permanent revolution: "Podemos has become conventional, has drifted, and wants to set itself up to be comfortable. Many voters are disappointed, even though they are probably still voting for Podemos with gritted teeth, just as one used to do with PSOE"<sup>46</sup>.

The party can count over 515,000 sympathisers, although these can simply register online and do not make any monthly contribution payments. Only very few also pay for their membership. For 2014, Podemos boasted only around 6,800 paying members.

Errejón and his followers lost more and more influence. However, not content with his defeat, the party's co-founder secretly negotiated a collaboration with the left-populist platform "Más Madrid" for the municipal elections in May 2019. When Errejón announced in January that he was running on Carmena's Más Madrid list as the top candidate for the post of Regional President of the Autonomous Community of Madrid, this news came as a total surprise to Podemos. Although Podemos got Errejón to give up his seat in the national parliament, he nevertheless refuses to give up his party posts because he says he is the "true" candidate of Podemos. Iglesias has been additionally weakened, not least since Podemos' poor election result in the regional elections in Andalusia, where the party lost three seats.

Any leading figure who has thus far dared to express criticism of Iglesias has been removed from the inner circle of the party leadership, generally even by means of party-internal elections. In doing so, Iglesias is behaving exactly like the

Podemos's manifesto belongs on the left of the political spectrum. In its first two years, especially, the party (leadership) headed by Pablo Iglesias, tried to win new voters from among the disappointed, the indignant and those who lost due to the crisis by exercising blanket criticism of the "political caste", who had supposedly taken possession of all state institutions. Therefore, only Podemos was in the position to create true democracy in Spain, by putting an end to the privileges and the power sharing of PP and PSOE, which endured regardless of the results of any election.

In the first years, especially, Podemos tried to win new voters from among the disappointed, the indignant, and those who lost due to the crisis.

However, Podemos not only positions itself against the traditional political elites, but also criticises the social and political establishment as neoliberal. The combination of a privileged elite with business interests and a neoliberal order leads in Podemos's eyes to poverty and a loss of social and political participation rights for broad swathes of the population. Due to the general criticism of the established elites and based on their own claim of collectively representing the will of a broad (socially disadvantaged) layer of the population, the rhetoric of Podemos is in principle to be classified as populist.

The current economic and financial policy ideas of Podemos on the one hand stem from the electoral manifestos for the whole of Spain in 2016 and for Andalusia in 2018, and on the other hand were clear in the budget negotiations with the PSOE for adopting the state budget in 2019. Podemos' strategy in its economic and financial policy is, and remains, above all, to demand higher tax revenues and a redistributive tax policy, although potential revenues are notoriously estimated too highly. In the economic programme for 2016, additional expenditures of 24 billion euros a year were demanded until 2019, which were said to only be vaguely offset by higher income taxes for higher earners, higher corporate tax rates and a "multiplier effect" of two thirds thanks to the expansionary economy. Knowing in advance that these goals could probably not be achieved, in the same manifesto, Podemos also called for a change to Constitutional Article 135, to put an end to "prioritising debt repayment above all other economic considerations" and thus be able to increasingly take on new debts.

Core demands of Podemos are increases in taxes for higher earners, and billions in additional spending.

In terms of energy policy, Podemos claims to be green. However, most of its objectives are to be achieved through state-interventionist instruments rather than innovation and market mechanisms, which makes it questionable whether these could be sustainably implemented in a competitive way. For example, the profits of the energy companies would have to be controlled, and their participation in the costs for the provision of energy for the socially disadvantaged ensured. In housing policy, too, the group relies on interventionist instruments: rents are to be set by the municipalities and squatters are to be allowed to stay in uninhabited buildings unpunished for at least a year.

Podemos surprisingly won over 1.2 million or 7.98 percent of the votes in the European elections in May 2014, and, with five seats, became Spain's strongest force in the European Parliament. This trend continued in the parliamentary elections in 2015 and 2016. Podemos and Izquierda Unida won 71 seats in December of 2015 (24.33 percent), but then, in the joint election alliance Unidos-Podemos, slipped down by 1 million votes during the new elections in June 2016 to 21.4 percent, although for the time being this did not change anything in terms of the number of seats attained: 71.



**Podemos' high-flying days are over.**

**Iglesias' rejectionist attitude during the course of the coalition negotiations led to new elections in June 2016.**

In March 2016, Unidos-Podemos refused to support the PSOE and Pedro Sánchez for trying to form a minority government with Ciudadanos that would have needed the votes of Podemos to obtain his investiture. Iglesias instead called for an “authentic government of political change” that could only come about through the PSOE cooperating with Podemos. At the same time, he designed far-reaching staffing plans for his party leadership in government. However, there was no parliamentary majority for this. The rejectionist attitude of Iglesias ultimately resulted in re-elections in June 2016.

These tactics, the internal quarrels and Iglesias' increasingly centralised leadership style within the party did not seem to appeal to many supporters. Iglesias' erratic attitude towards the Catalan nationalists' claims for independence is also not supported by many left-wing voters in Spain. The party on average suffered considerable losses in popularity in all major opinion polls in favour of the PSOE. The support of the minority government of Pedro Sánchez from June 2018 and Iglesias's futile canvassing among the Catalan nationalists for their approval of the draft budget of Sánchez's government also did not help Podemos. In the early parliamentary elections of 2019, Podemos dropped to 14.3 percent of the vote.

**Both Vox and the People's Party, PP, and Ciudadanos ruled out a coalition with Podemos.**

The right-wing populists of Vox, the centre-right-aligned People's Party, the PP, and (social) liberal Ciudadanos categorically ruled out any coalition or substantive cooperation with left-populist Podemos. This is particularly interesting in the case of Vox, as some analysts accuse the right-wing populists of having about a fifth of their economic manifesto in common with Podemos – for example, the explicit demand for a reindustrialisation of Spain – even if, in matters of taxation, Vox sooner pursues a liberal rather than a redistributive logic – at least on the outside.<sup>47</sup>

The socialists have a special relationship with Podemos, marked by tension and competition. They have moved significantly to the left under Pedro Sánchez, similar to in the days of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, and to the displeasure of some traditional PSOE associations, most notably the Andalusia association, with the highest membership. Sánchez has thus lost more moderate voters to Ciudadanos. However, it has not hurt the PSOE, because the party increased to just under 29 percent in 2019, becoming the strongest party by far, and Pedro Sánchez remained prime minister, though he is not able to rely on an own majority.

Despite all the rivalry, PSOE and Podemos toyed with the idea of entering into a coalition government after the elections. The PSOE already moved a long way towards Podemos during the failed budget negotiations of 2019, which resulted in re-elections, and has made far-reaching concessions on the minimum wage, on tenancy rights, on new borrowing and on social spending. After the elections, which were brought forward to April 2019, the PSOE and Podemos were not able to agree on a coalition. The country is now even once more threatened with re-elections.<sup>48</sup>

What can be said is that Podemos formed a party with a grassroots-democratic, leftwing autonomous basic understanding, which opposed the legacy of the transition to democracy in 1978. In broad parts of Spain, Podemos competed in elections in a coalition with Izquierda Unida – in Valencia, Catalonia and Galicia – and

also regional parties. Podemos has since 2014 participated in all elections that have taken place since then, and in the process won seats in the European Parliament, in the Spanish Parliament, and at the regional and local level. The party consists of many people from other walks of life, but has extensive party structures as well as (a) national and regional electoral manifesto(s). Those who came from other walks of life are professionalising themselves very rapidly and are working swiftly on their political careers. Pablo Iglesias is a strong leadership figure, but one who is increasingly also internally controversial; his popularity among the total population is poor. The party without doubt has a basic understanding that is in part radical and grassroots-democratic; moreover, it experiments with new forms of participation such as the raffle of offices. The anti-establishment character against the PPSOE, the “political caste” and neoliberalism is a basic drive for Podemos. Most of the party’s 500,000 sympathisers are more like “followers” than members. Simple registration on the website is enough to join Podemos. However, the party’s good networks within the cultural scene, the autonomy scene and the left-wing pre-political space should not be underestimated. In these social spheres, there is a great deal of far-reaching cohesion with the partisan organisation of Podemos.

Podemos admittedly consists of many newcomers from other walks of life, but has meanwhile built up extensive party structures.

Simple registration on the website is enough to join Podemos.

## VOX

Vox was co-founded in 2013 by former PP representative in the Basque regional parliament Santiago Abascal, among others, who left the People’s Party in disappointment over the pragmatic political style of Mariano Rajoy and the PP’s alleged loss of conservative values under Rajoy. Through marches and radical slogans against the Catalan nationalists, complaints about the supposedly too lax attitude of the Rajoy government and of the other parties towards the separatists, and then also against illegal migrants and Muslims, Vox gained more attention throughout the course of 2018. Following the illegal referendum in Catalonia in October of 2017, Vox was the only party to act as a co-plaintiff in the trial of the Catalan secessionist leadership from the outset.<sup>49</sup> This has since given the party a lot of political visibility. The surprising rise of Vox can thus on the one hand be explained by the deep dissatisfaction of a certain group of voters with the overall state policy towards the independence movements in the north of the country, especially in view of the radicalisation of the secessionist movement in Catalonia. On the other hand, Vox claims to want to prevent the ETA crimes and their 853 casualties from being gradually glorified into a romantic fight for freedom.

The rise of Vox can be explained by the dissatisfaction of a certain group of voters with the independence movements in the north of the country.

The other co-founders, José Luis González Quirós, José Antonio Ortega Lara and Ignacio Camuñas, are also former UCD and PP members. Former senior prison officer Ortega Lara was imprisoned by ETA in a dugout for 532 days in 1996/1997. As a result, he spoke out against Zapatero’s negotiations with ETA. Ignacio Camuñas was a UCD representative and Minister of Parliamentary Relations at the end of the 1970s. Party president Santiago Abascal was a PP member in the Basque Country from 1993 to 2004 and had held posts as a city and district councillor and as a regional representative in the Basque Parliament. Secretary-General Javier Ortega Smith was a member of the military’s special forces, and in the run-up to the elections is trying to win over particularly high-ranking and respected military officials to get involved in the party.



**Vox's rapid growth presents the party with structural challenges.**

Based on its own reports, Vox exceeded the minimum membership of 30,000 paying active members at the end of January 2019. For comparison: in January 2018, there were still only 5,085 members. The newspaper *La Razón* is already talking of 35,000 members in February 2019. This rapid growth presents the party with structural challenges. The party leadership said it was trying to prevent opportunistic newcomers and candidates who do not share the core of party's philosophy, but want to pursue a career. The internal primary election system was thus abolished in January 2019, a decalogue was issued that every party member must obey. In the case of violations of these commandments, there is a threat of expulsion from the party or expulsion from offices. The ten points were adopted at the delegates' party in February 2019 with 97 percent. However, some points are kept very vague, so in the future that the party leadership can likely also expel people arbitrarily on the basis of subjective criteria. In addition, the identity of the members of the party's guarantee committee is not known, which is problematic for a democratic party.

**The most important issue for Vox remains criticism of the Catalan and Basque independence movements.**

Vox's most important manifesto positions include the defence of the "Spanish nation", regaining a more important international role for Spain, the abolition of regionalism and the autonomous communities, an independent judiciary (without the parties having influence on the choice of judges), and the defence of a "culture of life and the family", though some observers see a refusal here to approve abortion and the laws for women's equality. Vox criticises the growing number of migrants in a way that is termed xenophobic and which was never before articulated in this way in Spain. This is accompanied by a pronounced anti-Islamism. The most important issue for Vox, however, remains criticism of the Catalan and also

of the Basque independence movements, and thus also criticism of the incumbent government of Pedro Sánchez as well as the other parties, due to their supposedly too lax response towards these independence movements.

Vox also criticised the government's erratic attitude with regard to reburial of the corpse of dictator Francisco Franco very sharply, without the party leadership explicitly defending the Franco dictatorship. There is a discussion in Spain about whether Vox should be called right (populist) or right-radical. One candidate had to resign before the parliamentary elections in April 2019 due to accusations of anti-Semitism. Vox does not strictly call the foundations of the Spanish constitution into question, but it wants to abolish the system of regional autonomy, which would require a profound constitutional change. Ultimately, there are too many issues on which the party has no clear manifesto positions, but rather limits itself to hurling a few antagonistic words into the political space in a populist manner, which then lead to violent reactions from other parties or public opinion, which in turn serves Vox, presenting it as a counterbalance to the "system parties" and accordingly skimming off the votes of a part of the dissatisfied population. For example, shortly before the assassination in New Zealand, Vox called for public facilitations in the purchase and carrying of weapons for personal protection. Given the low rate of violent crime in Spain, members of the police have also expressed their lack of understanding for this proposal. Nevertheless, Vox was in the media for a few days. Similar provocations by right-wing parties can also be observed in other European countries. Although Vox's contacts with right-wing populists in other countries are still limited, they appear to become more closely linked in the run up to the European Parliament elections. Steve Bannon, former Advisor to Donald Trump, who now wants to build a right-wing nationalist movement in Europe from Rome, has claimed to have contacts with Vox; he wanted to visit the party in the run-up to the Spanish parliamentary elections.<sup>50</sup> Due to its efforts to clearly mark itself off from the "system parties" and to present itself as the only true representative of the Spanish "nation", Vox is clearly to be characterised as a populist party.

In the 2014 European elections, Vox received 244,000 votes. However, it was 55,000 votes short of winning a seat. In the national elections of 2015 and 2016, the party received only 0.23 percent (2015) and 0.2 percent (2016) of the vote and did not win any seats in the house of representatives. It was not until the nationalist backlash against the independence movement in Catalonia in mid-2017 that Vox gained strength nationwide. Nevertheless, it was not expected that Vox could win a larger share of votes until the elections in Andalusia. It was therefore a big surprise when Vox achieved just under eleven percent and almost 400,000 votes on election night, winning twelve seats in the regional parliament. Above all, however, it was now on this party that chances of the first change of government in Andalusia hung after a good four decades of PSOE government.

This success and the media attention that followed led to the party's polling numbers for the upcoming parliamentary elections on 28th April 2019 and the European, regional and local elections on 26th May 2019 skyrocketing. Vox then attained 10.3 percent of the vote and 24 seats in the parliamentary elections, and 6.2 percent in the European elections.

Vox presents itself as a counterweight to the "system parties" and tries to serve the dissatisfied part of the population.

Increased awareness of Vox only came in mid-2017.



More than a quarter of Vox voters come from the PP.

Vox is understood by the People's Party as a "fake copy".

Vox is made up less of those entering from other walks of life and more from those formerly active in the PP, predominantly.

## Outlook

For the time being, Vox seems to be establishing itself in the Spanish party system and making it more difficult for both the People's Party (PP) and Ciudadanos to get better results. Vox gained its biggest growth in voters from the PP; thus, about 28 percent of Vox voters are former PP voters. Vox has also taken about one-fifth of Ciudadanos' voters away from it. In addition, Vox is also mobilising those who did not previously vote.

Although Vox silently backed the historical change of government in Andalusia of PP and Ciudadanos and many PP leadership groups have no difficulties getting closer to Vox, Vox is nevertheless not a positively disposed, automatic coalition partner of the PP per se. The PP thus finds itself in a difficult position: on the one hand, the party leader Pablo Casado is trying to put a brake on the migration of dissatisfied voters due to sharper ideological positions, and, on the other hand, he attacks Vox as a "fake copy" of the PP.

For Ciudadanos, the fear of contact with Vox is much greater than it is for the PP, since the attempt of chairman Albert Riveras to position his party in the political centre and, in particular, to profit from the "left" PP voters and the "conservative" PSOE voters is challenged by Vox. These target groups react much more sensitively to any collaboration with Vox than do disappointed liberal-conservative and national-conservative PP voters. The PP is therefore assigned a hinge role between Vox and Ciudadanos, which threatens to wear down the People's Party. In all discourses, PSOE, Podemos and the separatists directly call Vox "fascists" who, if necessary, would have to be fought from the streets.

Vox does not fundamentally call Spain's basic constitution into question, but it has claimed in its electoral manifestos that it argues for better defence of national institutions against constitutional violations. However, Vox places more emphasis on national institutions than on regions and wants to subsequently abolish the Autonomous Communities.

For the most part, the party is not made up of those coming from other walks of life but of former PP participants, lawyers and entrepreneurs, although civil servants, especially the Spanish police, the Guardia Civil and the military, also represent a special target group for Vox. There is an anti-establishment-directed rhetoric, above all towards the PP and the PSOE, whom Vox accuses of failing to protect the Spanish Constitution against separatists and corruption. The chairman Santiago Abascal presents himself as a strong leader and at the last meeting of party delegates in February 2019 tailored the party even more strongly to himself. It remains to be seen how he and the party as a whole will react both in terms of substance and structurally to the rapid growth.



## 2.5 Czech Republic | Vít Hloušek

### ANO 2011

Andrej Babiš, a billionaire of Slovak descent, had already been active in Czech industry as a chemical and later a media entrepreneur since as early as the beginning of the democratic transformation process. However, he did not announce open political ambitions until September 2011. At that time, he criticised the political establishment of the republic as corrupt and incompetent. At the same time, he announced the foundation of the Citizens' Forum initiative to combat corruption and the incompetence of politicians and to enforce laws. Shortly thereafter, the initiative was renamed as the campaign of dissatisfied citizens ("Akce nespokojených občanů"), opting for the pun ANO 2011 as an abbreviation.<sup>51</sup>

Babiš' media campaign and his statements on corruption, alleged "godfathers" in the economy, politics and administration, or a "Czech Palermo", quickly gained popularity and at the same time were underlined by the frequently amassing scandals of the then coalition government under Petr Nečas of the civic conservative party (ODS). Founded in October 2011 already as a civic association, though it was not allowed to run in the elections, its transformation into a political movement then came in May 2012.

After initial hesitation, Babiš took over the leadership of the new movement, and in the summer of 2013 headed the election campaign for the election for the house of representatives, which had been brought forward. Numerous political marketing experts were hired. Together with other top candidates, Babiš underwent intensive

The founder of ANO 2011, Andrej Babiš, criticized the political establishment as corrupt and incompetent.

Intensive media, language and marketing training paid off: in autumn 2013, Babiš was considered one of the most popular Czech politicians.

media, language and marketing training. These investments paid off: in the autumn of 2013, Babiš was considered one of the most popular politicians among the Czech public. His charisma undoubtedly contributed to this, as well as the fact that he embraced the sensitive issue of corruption and the corruption scandals of the two parties then in government, ODS and the now disbanded Věci veřejné (Public Affairs).<sup>52</sup> The combination of these factors made ANO not only a firm component of the Czech party landscape following the parliamentary elections of 2013, but now even a defining one.

Babiš is also the most important donor of the movement, thanks to his fortune, which he acquired as a chemical entrepreneur. Before 1989, he worked in Czechoslovakia's foreign trade and was a member of the Communist Party. From 1980 onwards, Babiš was cited as a confidant of the state secret service STB, which he denies massively. After 1989, he set up the company Agrofert. From the mid-1990s, it grew into a powerful holding in the chemical and food industry. Babiš himself became one of the richest entrepreneurs in the Czech Republic and has since had influential connections to Central and Western Europe.

Until 2011, he refrained from direct political intervention, concentrating on expanding and consolidating his economic activities. He cultivated political contacts, in particular, with representatives of the Social Democratic Party (ČSSD), but in some cases also with the ODS. As these connections broke away, Babiš' need to enter politics increased. However, there was another motive that is not to be underestimated: Andrej Babiš always felt superior to the politicians. He regarded most as incompetent and was convinced that he could offer voters a better alternative. His economic interests, combined with a somewhat idealist political messianism, ultimately led to a successful entry into Czech politics in 2013.

The movement ANO 2011 is an entrepreneurial party in which the founder pursues his own interests.

At this point, it can be said that ANO was an excellent means for carrying out this kind of involvement. The movement corresponds to a flawless entrepreneurial party, comparable to Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia or Team Stronach from Austria. Characteristic of such parties, in addition to the dominant role of the founder and party leader, are his economic personal interests, the transfer of business-related modes of action into the sphere of politics and extremely centralised decision-making processes. This leads to a very low level of intra-party democracy, to a limited member base, of which many from the management level of Agrofert joined the party, to rigidly managed and centrally controlled admission of new members, and, finally, to a similarly managed nomination process for candidates for elections at all levels. Babiš' leading role in the decision-making process is best characterised by his own statement: "I pay, I decide."

For all the deficiencies regarding inner-party democracy, this mechanism of central supervision of members and candidates manifests its strength and effectiveness in the establishment of unity and fellowship among the members of parliament and other elected representatives of the party. These form a monolithic and extremely reliable voting entity for their leader.<sup>53</sup>

Not only the organisation, but also the orientation of ANO's manifesto is more in line with a company than a "seller of political goods"<sup>54</sup>. The cornerstones of ANO's strategy were professional marketing methods and virtually limitless pragmatism in matters

of substance. This allowed the movement to make its manifesto very flexible and to change it again and again. To put it simply, prior to the election of the Chamber of Deputies in 2013, ANO sought to target the centre and right-wing camps of the political spectrum. This was a success because ANO was able to win over dissatisfied voters from the coalition parties of Nečas' civic conservative government.

In 2017, the party's focus shifted to the left, winning many former Social Democratic voters. Furthermore, after the 2014 European elections, ANO became part of the liberal ALDE faction in the European Parliament, which makes the vagueness of the manifesto even clearer.<sup>55</sup> In 2013, the key to the manifesto's success was still the rejection of the "established" political elites, the fight against corruption, a plan for economic modernisation, and the vision of an effective, technocratically managed state based on the model of a business enterprise. These principles were retained for the 2017 elections; however, social aspects such as higher pensions, improved consumer protection and more quickly available, better-quality social benefits received greater emphasis.

As of 2017, social aspects received greater emphasis.

In the context of the migration crisis and the associated agitated reactions of the Czech public and the political leadership<sup>56</sup>, the safety of citizens also became a priority for ANO. The issue of European integration, which was perceived as sensitive in the public sphere, was also addressed very pragmatically. Their statement, "The aim is to reform the Union so that it does much less, but in return does that much better"<sup>57</sup>, can be interpreted in different ways. ANO effectively became part of the Czech mainstream of moderate Eurosceptics without closing the door to pro-migration policy, in case this were to prove useful to the party.

Babiš has a management-technocratic notion of politics, which above all has to be one thing: "effective".<sup>58</sup> According to this idea, he attaches great importance to topics such as modern technologies, improving transport infrastructure, development of so-called smart cities etc. What is problematic about his idea of politics is the tendency in his work to centralise power and decision-making, to strengthen the executive branch at the expense of legislation, and to limit the separation of powers. For example, in 2017, Babiš proposed abolishing regional administration and the Senate. He wanted the number of parliamentarians to be halved and to change parliament's rules of procedure, which would have resulted in limited political debates. He also wanted to strengthen direct democracy at the expense of representative democracy and to expand the political control of civil servants. Babiš thus contributes to the de facto weakening of the mechanisms of liberal democracy.<sup>59</sup>

What is problematic about Babiš' political style is a tendency to centralise power and decision-making processes.

It is interesting that ANO has been very successful from the beginning, despite recognisable democratic deficits. The following table provides an overview of select election results:



**Table 1: ANO election results 2013–2019**

Elections	Chamber of Deputies	European Parliament	Regional elections
Year	2013	2017	2019
Election-result (%)	18.65	29.64	21.2
			2016
			16.13

Source: www.volby.cz

Since the election in 2017, ANO's popularity has remained constant at around 30 percent.

In the 2013 elections, ANO was still the second strongest party. In 2017, they were finally able to win the elections. ANO's popularity has since remained constant at around 30 percent. In the years from 2013 to 2017, ANO ruled in the coalition government of Bohuslav Sobotka, along with the Social and Christian Democrats. ANO received one third of all ministerial posts, and Babiš became Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister. With massive support from President Miloš Zeman, Babiš succeeded after the 2017 elections in forming a minority government. However, this failed to win the support of the assembly of members. It was not until June 2018 that Babiš was also able to obtain the consent of the Communists for his minority government, then in coalition with the Social Democrats. ANO provided eleven of the 16 ministers. However ANO also entrusted some of the ministries to independents.

What are the reasons for the success of ANO? The movement was undoubtedly able to benefit from the disillusionment of many voters with the traditional parties, and successfully exploited the political scandals and the public demand to fight corruption. At the same time, the economic situation in the Czech Republic favoured the success of ANO. The boom, which started in 2013, peaked between 2017 and 2018, enabling large public expenditure, such as for pension increases. The country is characterised by historically low unemployment and solid economic growth, accompanied by a tangible growth in wages. Babiš presented these as successes of the policies of the finance ministry he once led, and from 2017 onwards, as successes of the entire government. The image of a party that can manage the state as efficiently as a successful company has further strengthened Babiš, with projects such as the electronic sales register and associated higher tax revenues. He was also successful in pushing failures in other ANO-led ministries into the background, thanks to an intense, professional and ingenious communication campaign.

Failures were suppressed by sophisticated communication campaigns.

The party's pragmatism makes it easy for it to radically shift its manifesto and policy priorities. Ahead of the 2017 parliamentary elections, the party appeared more competent than its coalition partners, the Christian and Social Democrats.<sup>60</sup> However, the support of President Miloš Zeman also played an important role, especially during the formation of the government in 2017/18. At the same time, in some cases, ANO also secured the votes of the right-wing party Svoboda a přímá demokracie (Freedom and Direct Democracy) from Tomio Okamura, without having to pay for this with an excessive shift to the right in their agenda.

Andrej Babiš managed again and again to bounce back from affairs that accompanied both his private life and his previous professional life as a businessman. Nevertheless, they always ensure a high degree of public attention and polarise the population. An example here might be the “Čapí hnízdo” (Stork’s Nest) farm. This concerned an allegation of subsidy fraud to the tune of millions of a farm that belonged to Babiš’ Agrofert holding, though it has since been divested. Both the Czech police and the European tax authority OLAF investigated. This scandal has pursued Babiš since 2016 already. Nevertheless, he repeatedly managed to convince his voters that it was merely an expedient media incrimination with the aim of discrediting him.

What has been critical for his success, in addition to the electoral marketing and communication experts, was also the fact that, after his entry into politics, Babiš came into the possession of the important media group Mafra. He acquired this media group from a German owner as early as in June 2013, to which belongs, among others, two of the most important daily newspapers and the most popular private radio broadcasters. These media outlets make a major contribution to improving the media image of Babiš and ANO.

**Babiš controls his image through his media group Mafra.**

Although all established parties have rejected ANO, the Social Democrats have been part of a coalition government with ANO since 2013. The Communists have been supporting this government since 2018. Nor is ANO the main political opponent for the right-wing party Svoboda a přímá demokracie. ANO’s opposition is consistently made up of democratic parties of the right and centre-right camps. They even formed the Democratic Bloc after the 2017 elections, in order to counter the hegemony of ANO and the Socialists in the occupation of posts in the assembly of members. However, they are too heterogeneous to be dangerous for ANO, the strongest force of the Czech party system. In the long term, the voters, dissatisfied with the coalition government, will flee to ODS as a conservative alternative and to the Pirates as a liberal-progressive alternative.

**Democratic parties of the right and centre-right camps are too heterogeneous to be dangerous for ANO.**

The dwindling support for the Social Democrats and the insecure support for smaller parties in the political centre and right, which are sitting close to the five-percent mark in the long run, combined with the inability of the opposition parties to cooperate, make the fight against Babiš merely a rhetorical endeavour.

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- 20 Ibid.
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- 26 Cf. Borcio, Roberto and Natale, Paolo (2018): Il Movimento 5 Stelle: Dalla protesta al governo. Mimesis Edizioni, p. 98.
- 27 Cf. Eurispes (2019): Eurispes Rapporto Italia 2019. Available online at: <https://eurispes.eu/news/eurispes-rapporto-italia-2019-i-risultati/> (08.02.2019).

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- 32 Each parliamentarian undertakes to provide 300 euros a month from his parliamentary allowances to finance the platform. On this, cf. Agi (2018): Quanti soldi arrivano alla piattaforma Rousseau dai parlamentari M5s? Available online at: [https://www.agi.it/fact-checking/rousseau\\_fondi\\_parlamentari\\_m5s\\_casaleggio-3690856/news/2018-03-28/](https://www.agi.it/fact-checking/rousseau_fondi_parlamentari_m5s_casaleggio-3690856/news/2018-03-28/) (11.02.2019).
- 33 Cf. Fittipaldi, Emiliano in L'Espresso, from 03.02.2019: Come esplodono le stelle, p. 30.
- 34 Cf Repubblica, 07.01.2019: Di Maio, elogio dei gilet gialli. «Vi offriamo Rousseau». Parigi: «Salvini ei 5stelle facciamo pulizia a casa loro». Available online at: [https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2019/01/07/news/di\\_maio\\_gilet\\_gialli\\_rousseau-216014942/](https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2019/01/07/news/di_maio_gilet_gialli_rousseau-216014942/) (08.02.2019).
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- 38 Cf. Adnkronos vom 13.02.2019: Abruzzo, Di Maio rompe il silenzio. Available online at: [https://www.adnkronos.com/fatti/politica/2019/02/13/abruzzo-maio-rompe-silen-zio\\_uO11MM4wzml2ZRnkqVn4oK.html](https://www.adnkronos.com/fatti/politica/2019/02/13/abruzzo-maio-rompe-silen-zio_uO11MM4wzml2ZRnkqVn4oK.html) (15.02.2019).
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### 3. Conclusion: Competition through movements?

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In the European countries studied here, movements and the parties that emerged from them have changed the balance of political power considerably. In three countries – France, Italy and the Czech Republic – they are now at the head of government and have replaced long-dominant parties. In Poland, it at least looked as if the young party Razem would be able to fill the gap left by the fallen Social Democrats, while, in the right-wing camp, the Kukiz movement, founded only in 2015 and named after its initiator, has already developed to become the third strongest political force in the country.

Movements are a phenomenon of crisis. They arise and thrive where the elites of the past have proved incapable of making politics for the good of the country. Against this endemic torpor, usually in connection with vanity, corruption, mismanagement and massive distribution problems, protest articulates itself in the form of movements. In most cases, such movements are headed by a charismatic founder, who not only denounces the numerous grievances, but is himself considered the bearer of hope for improvement, or stages himself as such.

Movements try to be consciously different from the so-called established parties. Even if, for formal reasons, they are now themselves registered as parties or have founded a party “offshoot”, they are different from the established parties due to their self-image as well as their procedures and structures. Movements mobilise against “the establishment”. They open themselves to political newcomers and entrants from other walks of life. They have the claim – at least to the outside – of being a special kind of grassroots democracy. They organise and mobilise their followers on social media, sometimes even using their own participatory and decision tools that have been specially programmed for the movement. They use the public space as a stage, even once they have been elected to parliaments.

The combination of torpor on the part of the established players, on the one hand, and the emergence of a new, different kind of movement with a dynamic bearer of hope at its head, on the other, has stirred up the party systems of the countries that have been examined more closely in this study. In France, the triumphant rise of Macron’s movement came at the expense of the traditional parties in the left and centre-right camps. The left-wing radical, but peacefully emerging movement/party of La France insoumise under Jean-Luc Mélenchon has also worried the socialists and has further split the left in France. In Italy, the Movimento Cinque Stelle is now the strongest left-wing political force. In Poland, it looked as though Razem might be able to replace the troubled Social Democrats. Podemos firmly anchored itself as a left-wing protest movement against globalisation and restrictive budgetary policies within the left spectrum of the Spanish party system, making life difficult for the socialists and blocking the formation of a majority government.

Movements are a  
phenomenon of crisis.

Movements have changed  
the party systems greatly.  
In part, the established  
parties have been replaced  
by movements.

On the other hand, movements such as the Action of Dissatisfied Citizens in the Czech Republic (ANO 2011) and Kukiz'15 provide competition for the established civic-conservative parties or, as in the case of the Czech Republic, have by now replaced them.

What at first glance seems like an inevitable answer to the numerous failures of the hitherto dominant parties and politicians, or even like a hopeful new start in politics by fresh actors and new forms of civic participation, at second glance, however, reveals a number of shortcomings and weaknesses. Apart from France's yellow vests, the other movements are "top-down" organizations where founders and leaders often lean towards authoritarian leadership styles. The fact that successful businessman Andrej Babiš has led first his movement and then, since taking over the office of prime minister in the Czech Republic, the entire country like one of his companies, namely based on criteria of efficiency, in an authoritarian way, and always to his advantage, is no longer surprising. However, the fact that even the Italian Five Star Movement, which once started out as a grassroots-democratic, anti-corruption movement, or the left-socialist Podemos do not tolerate party-internal dissent and massively attack critics of the leadership, is in stark contradiction to the noble claims of these movements.

Several movements show democratic deficits.

What is also striking is that movements and their parties are themselves quite prone to crisis. This is most evident in the case of the Polish Razem, which was still treated as a new star on the left before the year was up, but is now close to disbanding. For other movements or their parties, their sometimes spectacular ascents were quickly followed by disillusionment. In France, President Macron and his movement was met by massive opposition from the yellow vests. The popularity of the Five Star Movement has suffered greatly since taking control of the government in the summer of 2017. In both cases, this, for one thing, certainly has something to do with the difficulties of government work. In part, however, a lack of an organisational foundation, and shortcomings in organisational routines and in the focus of their agendas are taking their toll.

Movements and their parties are prone to crises. Fast ascents were followed again and again by disillusionment.

Movements are in a dilemma, so to speak: they often found themselves as the anti-thesis of the previous political elite, but then become part of it themselves, and a target of protests. Both M5S and Podemos still spend a lot of energy on discussing whether they want to become (even more) a part of the truly hated political operations or stay a movement, but then barely be able to exert any political influence. In this question, today's movements and their parties are similar to all new political formations, which repeatedly have to find their fundamental strategic orientation.<sup>61</sup>

For all the cases considered here, it has to be stated that movements do not inevitably represent an increase in quality for democracy, in particular, for party-internal democracy, or represent a gain in stability. Individual movements have undoubtedly succeeded in spectacular mobilisation and electoral successes and have been able to rapidly change party systems. However, these successes have so far been largely unsustainable, because touchdown into reality has harmed the movements, since they are lacking the resources needed to become more deeply established, such as organisation or leadership experience among top executives, or these do not behave any more democratically or any more aligned with the public good than former offi-

cial. Viewed in this light, the high-flying success of political movements that is seen from time to time is rather an expression of the political uprooting of a growing part of the population, and of disappointment and protest of citizens about the lack of achievements of the “established” parties and their representatives, as an adequate substitute for the long-established political model of organisation and representation that is the “party”.

**Movements will  
not replace parties.**

Even if there may be a weak connection between organisation (party or movement) and behaviour (torpor or eruption), exchanging the organisation is not in itself a guarantee for a better democracy. You can also “govern well” in and with (established) parties. However, the movements have undoubtedly sent a signal, once and for all. They have shown that protest can be organised much faster and with more spontaneous clout than in parties. The “established” parties will have to do more in the future if they want to defend their ancestral role as “top dogs” of political decision-making and leadership that is oriented towards the public good.

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61 Cf. Kitschelt, Herbert (1989): *The Logics of Party Formation. Ecological Politics in Belgium and West Germany*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, here, esp., chapters 4, 7 and 9.





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