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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THATCHER'S VICTIMS VS BEVERIDGE'S SONS *The new cleavage of European parties*

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ABSTRACT: The Rokkans' theory of cleavages has traditionally been a valid helpful instrument, although questionable, to interpret the nexus between social dynamics and party models. Thanks also to this theory, during the hundred years between 1885 and 1985, European political party classification, at least where their origins are concerned, is reasonably straightforward. At the end of the sixties of '900, the performance of the political actors in terms of policy stimulated a level of feedback on the social conditions of populations to the point of reducing the impact of the traditional cleavages. The thirty-year "Golden Age" steadily led the population to believe in a world where the affirmation of universalistic social rights was an acquired right regardless of offsetting economic measures. But in the following forty years, with this conviction still holding, the economic conditions for the sustainability of that model were overturned, and the prospect, therefore, of social benefits for all changed radically. Especially after the 2008 crisis, a new cleavage explodes with such an intensity that it actually squares the interests of the "protected" (state employees with steady jobs, workers of large and medium-sized firms protected by the Unions) with the "non-protected" (the unemployed, self-employed and seasonal labourers), in other words those of the established and non-established. In this framework, if they want to survive, the political parties both old and new, are continually being pressurised by an agitated electorate to realign themselves. And while in the short term gain votes populist and nationalist parties, the nature of the latest cleavage seems therefore to be a challenge especially for those parties which find themselves managing the "social blocs", generated from the classic cleavages, and the identity nuclei.

KEYWORDS: Political Parties, Cleavages, Crisis, Welfare State, Non-Established.

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1. The question

The study of European political parties has often seen their origins interrelated with the historical dynamics of socio-economic and ideological-religious models together with polity. A particularly significant interpretative key on the subject has been Stein Rokkans's theory of cleavages.

The question raised here is in some way reversed compared to the direction which goes from society to politics: in our opinion in the last century, the performance of the political actors in terms of policy stimulated a level of feedback on the social conditions of populations to the point of reducing the impact of the traditional cleavages.

The new cleavage, in our view, amounts to this: in Europe up till the 1970's, a widespread model of Welfare State model is implemented with universalistic trends and expectations; from the mid-1970's this model enters a state of profound crisis thus consolidating the existing division between old insiders and new outsiders.

Our premise is that the governing political forces between the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st have been profoundly conditioned by this latest cleavage in particular, and consequently have assumed considerably different identities from those of the past.

2. The theoretical approach

The theory of cleavages has traditionally been a valid helpful instrument, although questionable, to interpret the nexus between social dynamics and party models. Thanks also to this theory, during the hundred years between 1885 and 1985, European political party classification, at least where their origins are concerned, is reasonably straightforward (Bartolini and Mayer 1990).

In Rokkans' classic formulation (Lipset and Rokkan 1967, Rokkan 1970, Rokkan 1999), the two parallel processes of the Construction of the National State and the Industrial Revolution produce four cleavages that give rise to the parties (nationalist, regionalist, conservative, liberal, religious, socialist) which are to be found on the cutting-line of the relative conflicts: a) conflict between those who support State centralization and those who defend socio-identity expectations (aspirations) of the provinces and the outskirts (centre vs. periphery); b) conflict between the affirmation of autonomy and supremacy of political power and the privileges of the historical status held by the Church (State vs. Church); c) conflict of interests between agrarian landowners and the emerging industrial middle classes (land vs. industry); d) conflict of owners and em-

ployers with the class embracing tenants, seasonal labourers and workers (owner vs. worker).

Rokkan's theory opened the way to a wider methodological debate leading to precisions and developments which are operatively significant. The first question has examined the need to define more clearly the nexus between cleavage and parties. Numerous authors (Bartolini and Mayer 1990; Lawson, Römmele and Karasimeonov 1999; Bartolini 2000 e 2005, Deegan-Krause 2007) have pointed out how that nexus is really to be understood as the expression of "organized conflict", resulting from three elements converging 1) the existence of a cross-cutting line according to class, religion, ethnic group, status or education; 2) the awareness of a collective identity by the social groups found on that cutting line and the transformation of their sense of belonging into commitment to mobilisation; 3) the conversion of that mobilisation into organisation terms through the driving forces of parties, unions and churches.

From these factors a nonetheless important consequence is to be taken into consideration: it is the nature of this or that cleavage which irrevocably conditions the main ideological-programmatic, organizational and consensual aspects of the parties that activate there.

The second question has arisen around the dynamic/static problem of the same cleavages. Here, the debate has had to reckon with the mutation of the original conditions of Rokkan's cleavages; compared to the freezing proposition formulated by Lipset and Rokkan, dealignment and realignment are what are realistically spoken about, indicating in dealignment the weakening of the old cutting lines and in realignment the gradual appearance of new ties between parties and social groups (Dalton, Flanagan and Beck 1984; Kriesi 1998; Manza and Brooks 1999; Martin 2000; Mayhew 2000; Karvonen and Kuhnle 2001; Whitefield 2002; Zielinski 2002; Deegan-Krause 2007; Elff 2007; Enyedi 2008).

Two further interrogatives project us right into the present. They are: could not the inclination to override the original cleavages depend largely on the intentional action of the political subjects who have emerged and developed out of these same cleavages, besides the changes caused by objective factors (technology, division of labour, markets etc.)? Can there also be new cleavages, different from those initially identified by Rokkan, and new political forces with characteristics that are ideologically, organizationally and consensually different from those of the old parties?

These aspects have often been analysed, also for historical reasons, regardless of the reference to the cleavages theory. As a result there have been numerous written contributions dedicated to the parties and their changes, concentrating in particular on their structure, functions and output, especially in the light of variables concerning

where they stand in respect to the political system (internal or external), the constitutive criteria of institutional government (parliamentary, semi-presidential or presidential), the electoral system (proportional or majority), new means of communication (old and new media), the relationship between leader and followers, the personalisation of politics.

Through these a sophisticated historical-typological classification has appeared, neatly summed up by the sequence “parties of notables/mass parties/catch-all parties/cartel parties/personalized parties/ movement parties” (see Segatori 2012 for further details). Even one of the more up-to-date studies on the subject (Revelli 2013) has re-linked the present transformation of the political parties (from big and bureaucratic to slim and flexible) to a similar organisational type with the size and management changes in factories, firms and bureaucratic corporations.

In our view, these descriptions, no doubt useful, could have acquired or could acquire a sounder basis if associated with a renewed application of the cleavages theory. In the following pages we shall therefore continue along this route, drawing out the relationship between some of the basic transformations of European society and the evolution of political party profile. In particular, we shall dedicate our attention to the last two interrogatives, that is to say: can the collective political actors compete to mend the original cleavages from where their movements arose? And therefore, is it possible to identify new cleavages that transversally cross the old ones?

Outlining this research we are aware that: a) the emergence or appearance of the cleavages (those of Rokkan or others) did not, nor do always, come about in a synchronized and/or similar way in the various European countries, and this fact contributes to explain the typological differences in time and space of the different party models; b) even if the four cleavages described by Rokkan have proved to be so and tend to reappear autonomously as in the case of the centre/periphery conflict which generates the ethno-regional parties, in the Western Europe experience they have often gelled around the symbolic and practical meaning of the latest cleavage (the conflict between owner and worker), leading to the fundamental antithesis of right and left.

3. The three classic macro variables

The socio-political history of the last two and a half centuries is clearly characterized by three macro variables; however, in the last one hundred and thirty years a fourth one that has steadily appeared on the scene has drastically modified the relationship between European citizens and politics. We will develop this fourth variable further on,

to concentrate for the moment on the three original variables. They involve respectively: a) the processes of polity with the definitive settling of nation states, at least up to the end of the 1980's, compared to the centrifugal thrusts of the 'small nations' towards autonomy and towards the nostalgic desire for the empire; b) the tenacious political repositioning of religious cultures after the affirmation of political secularisation; c) the socio-economic dynamics concerning types of production and use of wealth (agriculture-industry, ground rent - industrial profit) and the consequences in terms of social conflict (productive bourgeoisie versus aristocratic landowners first, the proletariat versus middleclass capitalists, after).

The first variable is divided into long historical transitional phases. Continental Europe and Oriental Europe were only able to consolidate internal borders with (except for spurts of conflict around and after 1989) World War I ending with the dissolution of the Hapsburg Empire, and World War II which led to the defeat of nazi-fascist hegemonic aspirations.

The strengthening of national States proceeds at the same rate as the trend towards the centralisation of political power. Those to come out disorientated, among others, are the inhabitants of the small nations who are to cause the underlying conflict that Rokkan links to the urban-periphery cleavage. We shall see further on how the above conflicting element reappears - particularly as a concurring reason - at every mention of the redefinition of territorial polity orientated at fixing new centres and new periphery. The second macro variable is concerned with the birth and evolution of the confessionary parties. The religious wars which cause so much bloodletting in Europe between the 1500's and the 1700's end (here also at different times non-conterminously in the various countries) with the principle of secularisation heralding victory. During the 1800's, the Catholic Church in particular tries to check the liberal and anticlerical forces with organized associations of the masses in defence of professed religious beliefs and their own real social power. From here, the Christian parties gradually start budding (popular and Christian democrats) in countries like Belgium, the Low Countries, Austria, Germany and Italy.

The third variable is the one which traces more incisively the relationship between the social political spheres. This is due to the fact that in this case the logic of material interests intersects with the logic of symbolic-cultural identity. The process is described clearly by Karl Marx. From the second half of the 1700's in England, and then during the 1800's in the other continental countries (first in Central and Western Europe and then in Southern and Eastern Europe), the Industrial Revolution progresses at two different rates. Added to this are two further correlated processes, namely the great migrations (internal, but also between different States) and urbanisation.

It is common knowledge that these events convert into two great social conflicts which, in the more developed countries, tend to appear in succession. The first is between the rentiers and industrial manufacturers; the second, between capitalist industrialists and the proletariat. The birth of the liberal State originates from the first conflict, where citizen civil rights (including freedom of speech and liberty of movement) are asserted primarily to guarantee the proto-industrialists the opportunity to detach agricultural labourers anchored in the land and move them as manpower to the factories in the urban centres. The second conflict creates the acutely strong-felt claims which lead to the founding of the Trade Unions and syndicates in general, as well as the organization of the socialist parties.

It is well to remember that as regards the reconstruction outlined above, the situations present differentiated phases, not only in time and space, but also in the articulation and combination of political aggregation models and parties.

What happens is this:

a) the rightwing and centre parties, as can easily be imagined, tend to identify themselves among the conservatives-landowners, liberal-free traders, interclass-faiths, without relinquishing the right to pursue, in particular historical times, lines of convergence on positions of antisocialism and anticommunism;

b) the leftwing parties find themselves wavering between extreme radicalism (especially when they take on the part of communist revolutionaries) and a progressive orientation in the socialdemocratic sense.

This is, therefore, the situation that Rokkan photographs at the end of the 1960's and reaffirms in essays shortly afterwards. In the light of this, a long political and publicist tradition, partly founded on the same factors taken into account by Rokkan and partly inspired by ideological-symbolic motives dating back to the French Revolution, fixes the central axis of the political arena in the right/left contraposition. The impact of this juxtaposition is such that this is where the majority of individuals, for the past two centuries at least, have identified themselves politically.

4. The fourth macro variable

The processes described in the preceding paragraph – the transformation of ways of production, internal migrations, shifting of the growing masses to urban centres, the intensive exploitation of factory labour – generate, primarily, particularly critical social conditions. The first problem for the growing working-classes is finding solutions for their own specific precarious and vulnerable conditions. In the face of this, the mutual

aid societies develop in primis, followed by - as an inevitable self-defensive corollary – the trade unions and the labour and socialist parties. While on the political rights level universal suffrage gradually spreads (first for males only) between the mid-1800's and mid-1900's, and then during the last twenty years of the 1800's the question of citizens' social rights explodes (accident safety protection, social assistance and health-care, social security, education, housing) (Marshall, 1964; Zincone 1992).

It is common knowledge that we owe the first systematic social policy programme to the German Chancellor Bismark, back in the 1880's. In short, this is the starting point of a phase destined to evolve into the universalistic formula of the Welfare State.

For the purposes of this article, the reconstruction of the three phases of growth of the WS that precede the crisis beginning towards the end of the 1900's, the emphasis is not so much on the analytical details of the various policies amply considered (Briggs 1961; Hecló 1974; Titmuss 1974; Wilensky 1975; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Flora and Heidenheimer 1981; Ferrera 1993; Girotti 1998), rather it is to draw out the fact that, through the contrasting attitudes of the right and left wing political forces adopting this model, a political culture instilled in the majority of European citizens seems to take for granted that overall state aid covering basic social needs is a basic right.

The first season, which sees the introduction of political social assistance bodies, covers the period from 1880 to 1920. It is here where the Bismark model spreads throughout Europe. From a political aspect – only apparently paradoxical - it is the monarchic-authoritarian regimes which first adopt such policies and only afterwards do the parliamentary ones follow. On one side there is in fact the conservatives' concern about the risks linked to the weakening of social cohesion, on the other, the intent to anticipate and control any likely mobilization of workers' movements. It is not a coincidence that Bismark combines the introduction of compulsory insurances between 1883 and 1889 with norms aimed at limiting the rights to hold meetings and to demonstrate. In the span of four decades the "contributory model" of WS spreads from Germany and Austria to most of the European States: France, Luxemburg, Holland, and then, immediately after the Great War, to Italy, Belgium and Great Britain.

The second season coincides with the period between the two World Wars. The authoritarian and totalitarian (headed by Fascism and Nazism) regimes consolidate this policy with the double intent of gaining further consensus and to keep the potentially fermenting revolutionaries under control. In the systems open to a wider social-democratic leadership (Denmark and Sweden), from the twenties and thirties, means-tested forms of universalistic welfare are experimented with. From a political point of view it is the socialist communist parties, even in liberal regimes, which are the most hesitant about what position to take. While in fact the Catholic trade unions and the

social democrat groups accept the line of gradual improvement in employment conditions, the radical-left parties oppose the idea of being openly associated with the social integration strategy adopted by States they consider bourgeois so as not to forfeit the hypothesis of soviet style revolutionary change.

The third season of the Welfare State (1945- 1975) is of the expansive type and is characterised by the so-called thirty year 'Golden Age'. The improvement in economic conditions with the post war boom, the development of the construction and manufacturing industries (from cars to domestic appliances), the reorganization - Fordist-style - of large companies, the same State intervention in the economy, all bring about a level wealth that has an immediate effect on the welfare system. To bridge the gap between the previous period and this, the Beveridge plan of 1942 comes into operation in Great Britain, extending social security to all citizens independently of the contributions paid (according to a "universalist model" similar to the experience of WS Swedish), and which is improved on between 1946 and 1948 with the introduction of National Security, aimed at assisting citizens "from the cradle to the grave".

These premises represent a boost in the reinforcing of the Welfare State throughout Europe. Since liberal echoes are not lacking, at least in the fifties and with America as an example, the models adopted remain basically two: the "universalistic" one, typical of the Scandinavian countries and Great Britain, and the "occupational" one, more widespread in continental Europe (the "residual" type model finds space particularly in the USA) (Titmuss 1974, Esping-Andersen 1990, Ferrera 1993).

In spite of the differences between the two models (the former financed through means-testing with generalised fiscal coverage, the latter financed on a contribution basis with category coverage), up to the seventies the two models gradually converge leading the occupational one to adopt mixed forms. There are even countries, like Italy, that achieve this change of direction in the strategic sector of healthcare (with the introduction in 1978 of the National health system), when, by now, the period of the thirty year 'Golden Age' is drawing to a close. The fact is that between 1965 and 1975 the world is swept by an impetuous "season of movement" which, as well as using pro-revolutionary idioms, the political agenda also lists demands for greater participation and especially more social rights.

This third phase ends, in short, in the light of policy practices and, in particular, with convictions held by the majority of the population, that suggest a future characterised by the widespread growth of a "universalistic model" of Welfare State.

5. The break

The double oil crisis of 1973 (with the Kippur war sparking off the Opec countries' retaliation against the West) and 1979 (as the consequence of the Iranian revolution) triggers off a series of shock waves in the European economies. The sudden increase in oil prices hits, first and foremost, those States which depended on oil as their main source of energy, compelling them to adopt austerity measures by cutting public spending in tandem with the collapse of internal markets, the rise in unemployment and the growth of inflation at rates touching double digits due also to stock market speculation. The result is the onset of a period profoundly shaken by the sudden end to the GDP high growth rates which characterised the fifties and sixties.

Apart from the economic austerity measures opted for, the political response to the economic crisis of the seventies follows two divergent courses: a) a brusque return to free trade, with Margaret Thatcher's drastic remedy, (and Ronald Reagan's in the United States); b) an attempt to survive on the standards of social policies attained (and therefore hold onto social consensus) through increased public borrowing.

The former is the one followed in Great Britain when the Conservative Party leader, Margaret Thatcher occupies the Prime Minister's chair from 1979 to 1990. Internally Thatcher implements a strict neoconservative policy with a far-reaching agenda that includes denationalization (privatisation of state-controlled companies), finance market deregulation and the curtailing of strikers' rights which provokes head-on clashes with the miners and dockers.

The paradox is that Great Britain, from where Lord Beveridge's Universalistic Welfare State blueprint spread worldwide, is the first country to take a step backwards in social policies, returning to a mixed system with private funding formulas.

The latter, followed in those states with their particularly predominant tradition of catholic and social democratic parties, seeks to maintain a high level of social integration at the expense of economic equilibrium. This means that the Mediterranean countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain), but also Ireland and Belgium, from the eighties, begin to feel the side-effects of increased public expenditure which, in the following decades, is unavoidably to be an increasingly heavy burden on the national economies (not least because of the interest charges due).

One of the ways to counterbalance the twin drifting on both courses is to rely on the so-called Welfare Pluralism or Welfare mix. Rather than provide social services solely through the public sector, nearly all the European countries increasingly begin to invest in the Third Sector (voluntary associations, social cooperatives) (Powell 1987; Johnson 1987; Ascoli 1987; Anheir and Seibel 1990). This practice – starting at the end of the

seventies and growing rapidly in the next three decades – achieves a two-fold advantage: substantially reducing the cost of healthcare provision and creating more flexible methods of care.

The phenomenon spreads throughout Europe: from the North (see Kuhnle and Selle 1990 for Norway; Brenton 1985 for Great Britain), to the Centre (Seibel 1990 for France and West Germany), and to the South (Pasquinelli 1989 for Italy). It is clearly a compromise solution but at least it allows little used social resources to re-circulate.

But when, to the economic disruption in the seventies, we add the financial difficulties of the early nineties, the restrictions at the beginning of 2000 (binding the EU consenting countries to the strict regulations for entry in the eurozone) and in particular the effects of the dramatic financial crisis starting in 2008, the Welfare state model built up in the thirty-year “Golden Age” and kept alive by Welfare pluralism finally begins to crumble.

In the meantime, new social needs and new issues appear on the horizon. Firstly there is the ageing population and the shift in the demographic structure, due to the inverse ratio between young and old; then, the late eighties and early nineties see the uncontrolled surges of migratory waves from the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe. Both phenomena are ambivalent: extended life expectancy is a good illustration of the excellent level of proficiency reached by European care systems, yet at the same time the social security and social-healthcare sectors are progressively overburdened (Segatori 1996). The arrival of immigrants compensates the low birthrate of indigenous populations and supplies youth labour at low cost, but where this happens haphazardly and not budgeted for it opens up many problems of social integration.

However, the real weakness lies on the employment front: technological progress in the more developed countries means less employment, and the social dumping of workers from deprived areas diverts manpower from countries where labour costs are higher.

The practical consequences of high unemployment, particularly in Southern Europe, coupled with an ageing population, mean lower tax revenues for the State (either direct or indirect), and additional costs for social policies (for employment, training, social benefits, housing, etc).

For more than twenty years European countries have been involved in repeated legislative attempts to rationalise and modernise the Welfare system. Priority issues are the costs incurred by social security and youth employment (but also the reinstatement of workers laid off the production chains). At a faster pace in Central–Northern Europe and a slower one in the Southern countries, remedies have converged onto the return to deduction-based insurance schemes rather than the logic of universalistic

coverage based on tax revenue. As regards pension schemes, Italy for example, first passed from a tax-and-transfer system (where contributions paid are unrelated to pension received) to a direct contributory system (contributions and pension inter-related); then the progressive raising of the retirement age inevitably followed (Jessoula 2009; Bonasia 2013). Moreover, if the introduction of such amendments has lesser consequences for the older labour sector, their application inevitably creates uncertain pension perspectives for those starting late to pay contributions (Assi 2013).

Where employment policies are concerned there is an increasing tendency to favour forms of flexicurity as in Denmark, the other Scandinavian countries and Holland (Andersen and Svarer 2006; Phillips et al. 2007). In these cases, given a buoyant labour market, the young and unemployed exchange a minimum wage for medium-short-term periods to be available for in-training and re-training courses and flexible forms of employment. This formula, however, is thwarted by the unions in those countries with very high unemployment levels since they deeply mistrust the labour market's capacity of assimilation, and they particularly fear that flexibility could mean only lifelong temporary employment (for the specific Italian case, for example, see Barton, Richiardi and Sacchi 2009).

In socio-cultural terms, in the seventy years following the second World War the message passed on to Western European citizens altered after the first thirty years. The thirty-year "Golden Age" steadily led the population to believe in a world where the affirmation of universalistic social rights was an acquired right regardless of offsetting economic measures. In the following forty years, with this conviction still holding, the conditions for the sustainability of that model were overturned, and the prospect, therefore, of social benefits for all changed radically.

This is reflected in a real difference of social security levels for following generations in the 1900's. People born in the thirty years before the Second World War and in the twenty years immediately following could rely on (and they still seem to be able to do so) good or reasonable healthcare and social assistance. Those born in the last forty years, especially in Southern Europe, are finding they are faced with inadequate (and perhaps nonexistent in the more backward regions) welfare and unemployment benefits.

A socio-psychological process similar to this, although in completely different historical, political and economic conditions, occurred to the populations of ex-socialist Eastern European countries. Before 1989 the regimes under the Soviet Union were characterised by the flouting of civil rights (with the precariousness of habeas corpus, the denial of freedom of speech and liberty of movement, the absence of private property) and political rights (with elections neither free nor pluralistic), in exchange for a stand-

ard of basic (nominal) democracy which guaranteed work and social assistance for all, albeit in terms of only a modest standard of living.

The changes after 1989, which set into motion a confused phase of “democratic transition”, opened the floodgates to “wild” privatisation and deregulation manoeuvres (Eyal, Szelenyi, and Townsley 1998) leading to the curtailing, if not the loss, of even basic social benefits (work, pensions, social and health assistance) guaranteed by the preceding authoritarian and totalitarian regimes (Ringold 1999; Sotiropoulos, Neamtu and Stoyanova 2003).

The result has seen, also in this case, a generational rift between the older one nostalgic for security benefits (modest but all-inclusive coverage) from a benevolent State, and the younger one on the continual lookout for new directions for self-fulfilment (Jeffries 2002; Barr 2005).

6. The consequences of the new cleavage: the changes in the political forces

After the 2008 crisis the new cleavage explodes with such an intensity that it actually squares the interests of the “protected” (state employees with steady jobs or permanent contracts, workers of large and medium-sized firms protected by the Unions) with the “non-protected” (the unemployed,

self-employed and seasonal labourers), in other words those of the established and non-established (Viviani 2009). Consequently, even towards the end of the last century politological literature began to point out that there was a changing shift in party lines (Franklin, Machie and Valen 1992; Katz and Mair 1994; Morlino 1998), although it seems the right/left axis still continues to dominate (Kutsen and Scarbrough 1995).

However, it is clear by now that the traditional left and right parties, in order to keep their grip on the electorate, are obliged to undergo acrobatic manoeuvres, since their ideological baggage and the collateral associations of the past (the large employers and workers unions) can no longer interpret or represent the demands of the “non-established”. The former conceptual distinction between conservatives and progressives seem no longer to make sense.

This double motion (socio-economic and political) is accelerated by a few significant intervening variables. On the social level the migratory waves from the south and East intensify, and coincide – provoking social alarm – with the industrial crises and an increase in the number of indigenous unemployed especially in Southern Europe. On the political level, the parties try to neutralise the loss of militants and members by becoming “cartel party” (Katz and Mair 1995), financed by the State. Among their executives,

however, the cases of corruption increase, becoming an almost endemic phenomenon especially Southern and Eastern Europe countries (see the annual Corruption Perception Index published by Transparency International).

There are even more significant changes where political communication and the role played by the European Union after 1997 are concerned. The advent of commercial television and the way aggressive national leaders (in this case the Italian tycoon Silvio Berlusconi) exploit television media lead, on the one hand, to a tendency to exaggerate the personalization of politics and, on the other, to conjecture the real possibility of it sliding towards a "spectators' democracy" (Manin 1997).

As for the EU, it has always been more preoccupied with the economic equilibrium of the member states than with the recognition of their rights to social equality. In particular, the Union takes the path towards economic-financial convergence in view of the changeover to the euro envisaged by a first treaty in 1997. The screw is tightened further with the Fiscal Stability Treaty (or Fiscal Compact) signed on 2nd March 2012 by all the member countries except Great Britain and the Czech Republic. One of the first results is that, for the countries with a high national debt and the continual risk of breaching the 3% deficit limit, the possibilities of increasing public expenditure in investments and social security coverage – typical Keynesian measures to cope with times of economic/occupational crisis - are drastically reduced.

All together, therefore, the variables accumulating around the cleavage between established and non-established, rather than helping mend it, appear to be doing the opposite. Among the younger population and outsiders in particular, there is a growing sense of aversion towards the existing political situation. Such aversions are emotive before they are rational, and gel around three nuclei: a) the search for an enemy or scapegoat in the face of increasing hardship; b) the need for reassurance about problem resolving; c) the search for a leader who seems to have the right answers, capable of making rapid decisions (Segatori 2010).

In this framework, if they want to survive, the political parties both old and new, are continually being pressurised by an agitated electorate to realign themselves. What is necessary from a politological point of view is to review a few of the practices emblematic of the two supposedly dominating political currents - (centre)-right and (centre)-left - and emerging or re-emerging movements identifiable with neither, projecting all to the 2014 European elections and trying to be alert to the signals of change.

One of the first emerging aspects concerns the extreme personalization of politics, which is not only a result of the new forms of mass media communication, but also the reflection of how much the electorate need to identify with leaders who are able to choose the path best suited to the new season.

The European centre-right of the last twenty years may be summed up by the following figures: Silvio Berlusconi (Forza Italia, four times Italian prime minister since 1994), Angela Merkel (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands, CDU, German chancellor from 2005) and Nicolas Sarkozy (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire, UMP, President of the French Republic from 2007 to 2012). All their official agendas hold elements common to the conservative tradition: free trade inspiration, market deregulation, reduced unemployment benefits, high priority to law and order (especially in Sarkozy's), income tax reduction schemes (especially for higher incomes, as in the case of Berlusconi, and in the case of the flat tax in Merkel's). These policies are simultaneously mitigated by opposing measures, accentuated by bouts of populism in Berlusconi (warnings against the alleged communist threat) and Sarkozy's defence of national corporates considered to be strategic in the face of heavy financial losses, investments in strategic public works, promises of millions of additional jobs, transfer of European funds from their original destinations to gain the consent of categories strongly influenced by the unions, etc. (see, for a profile of the three leaders, Ignazi 2014; Kornelius 2013; Baldini e Lazar 2007).

This mainstream enabled the European People's Party to gain a majority in the 2014 European elections with 29.43% votes and 221 out of 751 MEP's, plus an additional 9.32% votes and 67 ECR (European Conservatives and Reformists) euro deputies, as well as the percentages and deputies elected from smaller groups (for these data and those that follow, see: www.europar.europa.eu; for Italian data the source is Ministry of the Internal affairs).

However, this slant wasn't deemed sufficient enough to reassure the extreme right political forces electorate (Hainsworth 2000, Carter 2005). Out of this galaxy the parties in fact re-emerged as Le Pen's National Front in France (in the 2014 European elections Marine Le Pen gains 26% of the French vote), in Britain Nigel Farage's UK Independence Party (UKIP) which, with more than 30% of votes in the European elections, overtook David Cameron's Conservative Party, Heinz-Christian Strache's Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) in Austria (20.1%), Laikos Syndesmos-Chrysi Avgi (Chrysi Avgi) in Greece (9.3%), not to mention the German neo-Nazis of Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD), which won one seat, entering Strasbourg for the first time. At the last European elections these parties re-adopted, with a fair amount of success in the first three cases, key slogans typical of the populist, nationalist, xenophobic and eurosceptic right: "no immigrants", "no euro", protectionism in economic affairs.

Albeit with their own characteristics, resulting from their different historical backgrounds, connotations of nationalism, populism and (at times) Euroscepticism are also

to be found in the major parties of post-communist Eastern European countries like Poland and Hungary (Pisciotta 2007).

The evolution of the centre-left parties is to a certain extent parallel to the centre-right forces. Here too, we can identify with three personalities who embody radical transformation: Tony Blair (New Labour, British Prime Minister from 1997 to 2007), José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (Partido Socialista Obrero Español, PSOE, President of the Spanish Government from 2004 to 2011) and Matteo Renzi (Partito Democratico, PD, President of the Italian Council of Ministers from 22nd February 2014, after winning the party leadership elections on December 8th, 2013).

Except for a few differences over civil rights and anti-clericalism where Zapatero's fighting spirit makes him stand out from the other two leaders, economic and social policies tend to be the same, following the pattern initially set out by Tony Blair. His new agenda is inspired by the "Third Way" concept, theorised by Anthony Giddens as the middle road between Thatcherite free trade and traditional left state intervention (1994, 1998, 2000). In practice it means the old socialist ideas of huge state subsidies in the productive and services sectors are abandoned, the same privatisation measures adopted by previous centre-right governments continue (also for cash-flow reasons), there are attempts to re-launch employment through reforms that, in the presence of difficult economic situations, tend towards greater labour flexibility. Many of these choices are made with a clean break from the old powerful trade unions links. To counterbalance these "liberal" type policies new ways are tried to safeguard the more vulnerable, especially the young, with various incentives for training, apprenticeships/jobs and housing facilities; systematic ways to combat tax evasion is seen as a priority; axing political spending and public expenditure (the cost of public employees) are desirable targets. Figuratively speaking, Matteo Renzi makes his debut on the national stage with his party banner slogan "the old political class on the scrap-heap", along the lines of what Tony Blair did to Old Labour (see, for the three leaders, Faucher-King, Le Galès and Elliott 2010; Field 2011; Lavia, Mauro, De Angelis e Colombo 2014).

In the 2014 European elections, due mainly to the PD's success with Matteo Renzi obtaining 40.8% of votes in Italy, the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats gains an overall 29.43% votes and sees 191 MEPs elected.

Even here, as in the centre right's case, the evolution of the major democratic left parties are tormented with lacerations and landslides towards the radical left, whose election results generally fluctuate inversely with those of the moderate left (March and Mudde 2005; Hudson 2012). If only to highlight examples of recent decades, compared to the PSOE, the PS, the SPD and the PD, in Spain the radical Left finds itself in the Izquierda Unida group, in the Front de Gauche in France, in Germany in Die Linke,

in Italy in Rifondazione and SEL (Ramiro and Verge 2013; Brie and Hindelbrandt 2005; Damiani 2011). Again with reference to the European elections, the transnational list headed by Alexis Tsipras, leader of SYRIZA (Tsakatika and Eleftheriou 2013), obtains in Greece 26.4% votes, and Podemos, the party formed on January 17 2014 out of the the indignados movement reaches 8% votes in Spain.

In general it concerns movements, rather than eurosceptic political groups protesting against "bankers' Europe" claiming wider social rights, free access to the common good (from water to soft technology innovations), a more equitable redistribution of wealth and general employment subsidies.

As well as the two currents examined above, the political spectrum is coloured by three other actors not immediately identifiable with 'right/left'. We are referring to the Green movement, the ethno regionalist parties and populist parties in general.

The Greens were among the first in Europe to champion environmental issues (Bomber 1998). Having battled for years against the exploitation of natural resources, as well as campaigning for nature preservation and sustainable energy, they arrive divided at the 2014 European elections and find themselves together with other allied parties in two different European Parliament groups: GUE/NGL (European United Left/Nordic Green Left) with 6.92% votes and 50 MEPs, and Greens/ ALE (Greens/European Free Alliance) with 6.66% and 48 MEPs.

The ethno-regionalist parties, in their turn, come from a long tradition of clashes with their respective national states (De Winter and Türsan 1998). Filippo Tronconi (2009), who examines 24 cases for 17 European regions, makes the distinction between parties "guardians" of ethnic identity and the "challenging" parties of the existing party-political system. The tightening hold of the European Union, which even conditions the internal regulations of member countries, becomes for many of them the new arena to fight out battles for self-assertion, individual rights, their own identity and autonomy (Di Sotto 2009). On this front, there is no shortage of parties claiming to be ethno-regionalist although somewhat dubiously or with "false foundation", like the Italian Lega Nord (Gomez-Reino Cachafeiro 2002). The fact remains that by exploiting basic Euroscepticism especially against the euro, and xenophobic bouts, it is precisely the Lega Nord, that after a period of decline, saw its consensus grow in the 2014 European elections gaining in Italy 6,16 % votes and sending an unexpected 5 deputies to Euro parliament.

Finally there is the phenomenon of the return of populism. The term, of course, refers to the action of those leaders who appeal directly to the "people" (especially to those who feel "displaced" by the prevalent socio-economic situations) proposing themselves as alternatives to the professional politicians, economic lobbyists and the

so-called "different" (Mény e Surel 2001). Populist can describe either a style of leadership - as we have seen in both the right and left parties - or a movement with ambivalent traits. The most recent and striking example of the latter is Beppe Grillo's Italian "Movimento 5 Stelle" ('5 Star Movement') (Corbetta e Gualmini 2013). Set up with the intention of pursuing objectives like preservation and water nationalization, environment, transport, and energy development ("Carta di Firenze" 2009), as well as combatting the political classes with criminal records, the Movimento 5 Stelle peaked in the 2013 Italian general election with 25,56% votes in the House, gaining 108 deputies and 54 senators. On this occasion Beppe Grillo gained consensus especially from among the unemployed, the self-employed, workers and students, drawing them mainly from the Partito Democratico and the Popolo della Libertà (Osservatorio elettorale LaPolis 2013).

In the 2014 European elections, while not achieving the same results as in the general election, the Movimento 5 Stelle gained in Italy 21,16% votes, sending 17 MEPs to Strasbourg.

7. Understanding the transformations

Assessing the performance of the contending political forces in the results of the 2014 European elections two things seem to be evident: a) the popularity of the major centre-right and centre-left parties is confirmed, but with a significant drop in voter support; b) the populist, radical (both right and left) and ethno-regionalist groups see an increase in votes obtained but fail to reach the force of the principal agglomerations. Put this way, nearly all the parties have failed to provide the right answers for all: some good at taking on particular petitions, but all incapable of representing large cohesive electorate blocs. To interpret this situation it is appropriate therefore to return to the theoretical study of political parties. What is it, ultimately, that defines a political force? What are the fundamental issues that allow it to achieve consensus? The answer lies in where a party stands in relation to three nuclei: emotive, identity, programmatic.

The emotive nucleus corresponds to the mobilisation of motivation and can act either positively (for someone) or negatively (against someone). In times of crisis it capitalises on the unrest of the discontented and is apt to be pre-empted by the new arrivals who, at least initially, raise expectations for something new or at least different.

The identity nucleus concerns the existence of areas of solidarity, similar to, on an objective level, the concept of social blocs based on common interests, and on the sub-

jective level, a strong sense of belonging sustained by conscience and shared values. The identity nucleus is the pivot on which party stability and their fate hinge. The classic identity nuclei are primarily those with their origin in the cleavages described by Rokkan.

Lastly the programmatic nucleus represents the translation of the other two nuclei thrusts into coherent policy programmes.

In the light of this, what is clearly evident is the disruptive effect produced on the traditional social blocs and the old solidarity areas of the socio-economic dynamics described above. As we have seen, since the eighties of the last century the economic and productive world scenario has changed radically. Financial speculative capitalism has overridden the pursuit of mere industrial profit; electronic soft technology has overtaken hard technology and the Fordist employment models of the traditional sectors; mass production can now be achieved with less manpower; "society of producers" has given way to a "consumer society" (Baudrillard 1970), if not a "society of mass borrowers"; populations world-wide are increasingly mobile, driven by needs induced also by the global media.

However, a new cultural paradigm, regarding possible forms of wealth redistribution and social protection differing from "free market mainstream", has not associated itself with these phenomena. The expectations, first, and then the crisis of the universalistic model of welfare state have therefore increased indigenous uneasiness within European countries; parallel with this is the increasing fragility of the less organized nations, from the central and semi-suburban areas defined in Wallerstein's classic distinction between central States, the peripheral and semi-peripheral.

The impact of the latest cleavage between insiders and outsiders with respect to the new economic order has turned out to be highly disruptive on the three constitutive nuclei of the European political parties. The populist movements are the ones to have profited most from the protest throbs which concern the emotive nucleus. But the relative indecision and the ambiguous aspects of the other two nuclei (identity and programmatic) seem to have commended them to a fate of momentary success and gradual eclipse in the future.

The ethno-regionalist and extreme right parties, besides profiting from the emotive nucleus anti-European thrusts, have pursued the identity nucleus reconstruction by returning to the past, that is to say, to community type self-defensive closed attitudes (nationalism and autonomy of the small countries), particularly hostile towards the "different". Their success in the 2014 elections, over and above possible future surges of consensus, suggests that they have a significant, although not generalized, power of attraction.

The new cleavage has particularly affected the major centre-right and centre-left agglomerations. The identity nucleus of the former saw the defection of the indigenous middle classes, traditionally belonging to the moderate area, with a change for the worse in their conditions and status. The centre-left parties have also suffered a similar fate since the high increase in redundancy and unemployment has destabilised the social bloc on which the old Left built their identity.

The radical-left groups have reacted by looking for a solution in the re-composition - emotive and identity together - of the old proletarian so-called anti-capitalist solidarity. But the electorate's response proved tepid to a proposal that seemed to be inspired by past historical seasons, when Marxism had solid grounds to claim success based on the theory that the proletariat had more credit to its name than the other classes (Segatori 1997).

The nature of the latest cleavage seems therefore to be a challenge especially for those parties which find themselves managing the "social blocs", generated from the classic cleavages, and the relative identity nuclei. The current earthquake has forced them to act on the programmatic nucleus (made up of incisive policies) to respond primarily to the needs of the young, the unemployed and the impoverished or shrinking middle classes, to put together the pieces recomposed from the social blocs of the old order.

We have seen that this is a very complex undertaking where economic and social policy remedies do not appear to ease the short term social conflict. What happens in the second decade of the XXI century will affect how this process evolves.

The panorama we see is contradictory. The centre-right parties try to recover lost loyalties by aiming to protect capital stratifications, reduce income tax rates, develop free trade. The social democratic parties, in order to bond where possible old and new forms of solidarity, are trying to introduce politically (and with uncertain time schedules) a cultural alternative to the "free market ideology" to champion employment for the young, the fragile categories and all those who risk losing, with unemployment, their dignity.

However the real problem is that, in contrast to the historical social cleavages, where almost immediately either a *pars destruens* or a *pars costruens* surfaced, the characteristic of the latest cleavage is an area of conflict immediately emerging, whereas an eventual re-composition of the existing social imbalances is unforeseeable in the near future

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