WHY AND HOW WE WON

Center-Right Parties in East Central Europe and Their Return to Power in the 2000s

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(editors)

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Preface

In 2005, the International Republican Institute (IRI) published *Why We Lost: Explaining the Rise and Fall of the Center-Right Parties in Central Europe, 1996-2002,* which summarized the experience of center-right parties in Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia in the second half of the 1990s. These parties had defeated their leftist and nationalist rivals on the promise of implementation of political and economic reforms and acceleration of the accession processes to the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Association (NATO). By the time the next electoral cycle was complete, most of them had lost power and been ousted from governments by their leftist counterparts. *Why We Lost* attempted systematically to identify the major reasons behind these defeats and to highlight their importance for the learning cycle of center-right parties in the region.

Several years later, IRI believes the time is ripe for producing a similar analysis of the further evolution of the center right in the region. In the middle of the past decade, some of the center-right parties studied in *Why We Lost* returned to power. In some places, other center-right parties which did not exist yet at time of the writing of the first book moved into the political space they had occupied and succeeded in doing the same. IRI believes it is important to understand how and why the traditional center-right parties and those that succeeded them were capable of regaining popular support and positions in government, and therefore has decided to produce another set of case studies.

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This book aims to analyze how and why center-right parties in the region succeeded in regaining popular support and returning to power after a cycle out of power in the early 2000s. It strives to examine processes within the parties, as well as within the respective societies under study, that made such developments possible. A common observation is that in some countries a substantial organizational reconfiguration and distinguishable ideological shift of center-right parties – rather than just a reinvigoration of old messages – took place and enabled them to move forward. Thus it is possible to distinguish at least two successful strategies of recovery: 1) a successful resurrection and *reinvigoration* of the appeal of the traditional parties of the moderate right, and 2) a *replacement* of the traditional moderate center right by new – and in many aspects different – parties.

The "reinvigoration" strategy assumed a rejection (or, at least, a suppression) of certain questionable aspects of the previous term in office and, in some cases, the retirement of those who embodied them, but largely maintained continuity with the older incarnation of the party. It also included a deep reflection and adoption of new outlooks as a prerequisite for convincingly presenting new views and policy proposals and/or a new party image. A primary example of the successful reinvigoration strategy can be found in the Homeland Union–Lithuanian Christian Democrats.

The "replacement" scenario, on the contrary, inevitably involved also an organizational and ideological revamping of the appeals of the "old," traditional right. This was typically accompanied by a process of putting distance between the newly formed incarnations of the center right and the traditional right, with emphasis placed on their newness in generational, organizational and other terms. In short, the new, successful center-right parties at issue did not spare their traditional predecessors from criticism as anti-establishment sentiment was an important element of their appeal to the general public, as the cases of Bulgaria and Romania remind us. Therefore, country chapter authors were encouraged to judge their cases also through the lenses of the aforementioned dichotomy, in addition to their own assessment of the factors leading to the successful resurgence of center-right parties and movements.

In terms of selection of cases, the collection contains eight country studies. Only the Hungarian, Lithuanian and Macedonian chapters deal with the same parties that were included in the *Why We Lost* analysis. Poland does this in part. Bulgaria and Romania are examples of the replacement approach, so these chapters focus on new party incarnations of the center right. The Slovak case has not been included in the current collection, and Croatia and Slovenia were added instead. The former fell out of the logic of the succession of power in 2006, and the latter two were out of tune with such logic in 1990s, which was the reason for their absence in *Why We Lost*. We have, however, decided to include Croatia and Slovenia to illustrate the way center-right parties in these two countries learned to be a true opposition and eventually the governing alternative to their ideological opponents. While these cases did not fit the paradigm in 2005 when the analysis was about learning from losing, they fit much better the objective of the current book, which deals with winning and complements the picture of the ascent of the mainstream right to power in the region in the middle of the previous decade.

This analysis covers periods preceding – and, in some cases, also following – the milestone elections for the countries and parties at issue: 2003 in the case of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), 2004 for the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), the 2005 and 2007 elections in case of the Polish right, 2006 for the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), the 2008 elections in case of the Lithuanian and Romanian right, the 2009 elections marking the success of Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) and, finally, the period preceding the landslide victory of Fidesz in Hungary in 2010.

In general, the analysis involved in this project was meant to go beyond the "pendulum--swing" metaphor to identify the main factors in the resurrection of the center right's capacity to win elections and govern. Can we discern a distinguishable learning curve of the center right in the region? If yes, what are its major characteristics? Have center-right par-

ties become effective power-seekers? If yes, has there been any price – in terms of ideology, policies or political conduct – they had to pay to become effective at seeking office? Have they retained their capacity to implement right-of-center reforms? If not, why?

These questions originate in a widely-held opinion that the center right's eagerness to implement a reform agenda in a second period in office often seems to pale when compared to the reformist commitment they showed in their first turn in government in the 1990s. If this is true at all, is the reason to be found within the parties or within the societies in which they operate? It might be the case that the parties at issue believed that their respective societies no longer need – let alone demand – extensive reforms. But it may also be useful to ask whether center-right parties, while in positions of power, rule based on an identifiable political philosophy of reform, or are simply overwhelmed by concerns of consolidation and retention of their position. This provokes another set of questions to be addressed by serious analysis of the contemporary center right in East-Central Europe: Having become relatively effective power-seekers, have center-right parties lost the interest or capacity – or both – to push through right-of-center policies in practice? Or is their (alleged) decrease of reform commitment the result of a learning process? Have they concluded that reforms might be counterproductive from the point of view of obtaining and retaining power? Have they become political pragmatists to the extent of shying away from too great an emphasis on ideological principles that put in danger their prospects of holding power? Or are they just waiting for the time their positions become more certain to take the risks related to reforms with a greater degree of security? Is constant reform, in fact, the essence of the center-right politics and good governance? Also, what might be the mid- to long-term future of these parties? And how are they likely to weather their next period out of office?

Finally, all manuscripts in this collection were finished in summer and fall 2010.[1] In the intervening time, many things have become clearer and some murkier. Some of the ideas or conjectures offered in individual chapters may have been overcome by events, and authors might want to formulate some arguments differently today. Still, the basic analysis of the reasons for center-right victories remains valid. While individual case studies differ in style, format, genre and degree of academic rigor (note that this was never meant to be an academic study), we hope they will be able to give political practitioners and center-right party activists a deeper understanding of key causes and factors leading to the renewal of political parties after defeats. Findings, recommendations and lessons learned should be able to be implemented by political parties and their leaders and representatives.

1 While this book was published by IRI, opinions expressed in it can not be considered official opinion of IRI. Chapters collected in this publication include political characteristics and evaluations of individual political parties that can be attributed solely to their authors.

Did We Ever Lose? The Bulgarian Center Right Reborn

Roumen Iontchev

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I. Introduction

When we look back at the past 20 years of democratic development in Bulgaria, there is one thing that cannot remain unnoticed – the lasting political model of small and fluid majorities in parliament, make-shift coalitions and, as a result, governments that lack a clear profile of ideas and objectives and end up in failure. It started like this right from the beginning with the first free and relatively fair elections in 1991, when the leaders of the democratic forces claimed with satisfaction that the center right had won "by a small margin, but forever." Carried on the wings of change and encouraged by popular support they could have hardly known that they were actually wrong. Or were they?

The years that followed did not give a very clear answer to this question. If we look at the vote of the people in elections during these years, we can see that each time a vast majority of them voted differently; each time there was a new messiah, and each cycle ended with a great deal of disappointment. However, with the exception of the elections in December 1994, post-communist nostalgia never took over and never played an important role in people's decision making. Bulgarian voters consistently supported a center-right reform agenda and rightfully noted that there was actually not a great difference among the programs of all major parties. After all, the country had to go through a fundamental transition from a highly centralized and inefficient communist economy and a society controlled by a totalitarian ideology and its secret police to a modern market economy with all the characteristics of a free and democratic political system. That meant crossing a long bridge where there were not many ways to go, making it crucial to walk straight ahead and hurry up.

There has been a lot of talk throughout Central and Eastern Europe about how to cross that bridge and how to make it easier for the people, but, fundamentally, there was no other option for change or another way that led to any success elsewhere. This explains why throughout the Bulgarian transition there was very little difference in terms of the substance of policy, but major differences appeared when it came to the speed of reforms and decisiveness of those who had to lead the country through them. At the end of the day it all came down to the credibility of the political parties and the leaders who had to conduct this process. They had to make the tough decisions, to cut off dead tissue from the body of an economy that had been living on life support for quite a while, to create incentives for the newly emerged private sector, to dismantle the apparatus of the communist regime and to open up the files of the past and expose the truth about 45 years of tyranny. At the same time they had to lay down the foundations – the checks and balances of a modern democratic society and the rule of law – to make politics a transparent process and, meanwhile, maintain the support of the electorate. And this is where everyone failed; this is where the Bulgarian transition became a mess.

Two decades of relatively consistent center-right economic policies led Bulgaria to be a member of the European Union, financially stable, with a free and growing market economy and some of the lowest rates of taxation in all of Europe. At the same time this success was actually reversed by a lack of decisiveness by all governments to implement some of the toughest political decisions concerning the communist past, the origin and growth of organized crime and the corruption and inefficiency of the administration. On

top of this came the slow reform in critical areas of social policy, such as health care and education, which remained far behind the course of economic reform. The result has been a weird hybrid of a successful economic transition dominated by a failed political model. Of course the question is whether that model is sustainable, and if there is a way out of it. And the answer to that question lies in yet another question: why did we win? Why did the center right in Bulgaria get a second chance?

II. Why Did We Lose in the First Place

Before we start talking about victory and the return to a center-right government in Bulgaria, we should probably try to look back again at why and how we lost. Maybe with the distance of time, and with the wisdom of what we have seen over the past decade, we can have a better understanding of what really happened. Why did a relatively successful government and majority of the post-communist center right lose so badly in 2001? And how did that remain unseen by those same leaders of the center right who had all the credit for the tough reforms of 1997-2001? The coalition government of the Allied Democratic Forces (*Obedineni Demokratichni Sili,* ODS) did much for the recovery of Bulgaria from the deep economic crisis of 1996-1997 and made some big steps in the transition. For the first time after a decade of internal fighting all center-right parties were united and campaigning together. The People's Union (*Naroden Sajuz,* NS), which was a coalition of two old traditional parties – the Agrarian Union (*Balgarski Zemedelski Naroden Sajuz*, BZNS) and the Democratic Party (*Demokraticheska Partiya,* DP) – was back together with the Union of Democratic Forces (*Sayuz na demokratichnite sili*, SDS). These three parties formed the Allied Democratic Forces and achieved what seemed so difficult before – a united center right. So what went wrong? Was this not what center-right voters had been waiting for?

There have been many theories within the center right about the loss, blaming it mostly on voters who were disoriented by the populist message of the newly emerged party of former King Simeon Saxecoburgotski. But the populism of others can be no excuse for failure in elections. Yes, indeed, Simeon's overall message was populist and very appealing to a nation that had lost patience with a transition that had lasted too long. But no one actually went to the basics of that message, which were quite simple and straightforward. The National Movement of Simeon II (*Nacionalno dviženie Simeon II*, NDSV) party won an election based on the idea of restoring decency and justice in society and the dignity of the Bulgarian people. These were fundamental issues that had somehow remained neglected in the process of reform. Yet, these are intrinsic values of the center right about which a center-right government had completely forgotten.

There was hardly any argument in the 2001 campaign about the course of economic reform and the necessity to go further and faster. However, the whole center-right political construction had lost one of its pillars – the Christian-democratic moral and political values of decency and dignity which transcend all aspects of politics. The whole opposition focus on Saxecoburgotski's promise to fix the country in 800 days seemed interesting, but did not touch the substance of what the public really voted for at the ballot box. People knew that the country's economy was on the right track and that, painfully but surely,

Bulgaria was going back to normal and efficient private business. This explains why, when the 800 days were over and nothing substantially had changed with the economy, there was no immediate backlash at the prime minister, and there was no significant protest in rejection of the NDSV government. The public expected something different that could not be measured in 800 or more days.

One can credit the successful public-relations policy of the government, which managed to conceal the fact that there had been no significant change at the time, but history is telling us something different. The fact that we can speak now about the NDSV mostly as a thing of the past means that the verdict of the voters was very clear. The NDSV government failed exactly where it should not have and cheated the expectations of the public for decent politics, for closing the accounts of the past and bringing morality back into politics. Yet these were popular and not populist values and ideas.

Failed to Learn or Learned to Fail

In many ways the general elections of 2005 exposed all the flaws of the political system that had been taking shape since 1990. The campaign itself, the way the elections were held and the political haggling that went on afterwards demonstrated openly how far the system had been corrupted and how little actually depended on the vote of the people and on their political ideas and orientation.

The 2005 elections gave a snapshot of the political balance at that time and produced a scattered parliament that did not have a clear winner and a logical majority. With 82 out of 240 seats, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (*Bulgarska sotsialisticheska partiya*, BSP) and its coalition partners on the left got far less than they expected and proved that they had neither recovered from their collapse in 1997 nor overcome their communist heritage and reformed the party in a way that would appeal to a large majority of the Bulgarian people. In spite of a creative and active campaign, the failed party of Simeon Saxecoburgotski got only 53 seats (starting with 120 in 2001), making it the second group in parliament and diminishing its actual influence on policy. The actual winners of the elections were two seemingly marginal groups. One was the newly established nationalist movement called Attack (*Ataka*), which managed to score 21 seats in a month-long campaign that proved that in times of political decay, extreme ideas and policies can quickly take root. The quick success of this marginal group formed around its leader and his television show was actually built upon the complete failure of the NDSV government to deliver on its promises of decency and dignity in politics. The lack of transparency in the work of the government and the constant corruption scandals caused by dubious privatization deals and public procurement contracts served as an excellent basis for the growth of such ideas that were actually extreme left in their substance. The talk of renationalization of key industries and immediate arrests and prosecution of ministers and prominent figures in the administration found a good audience in the public, which was bitterly disappointed with the failure of the NDSV to deliver. On top of this, there was the Movements for Right and Freedoms (*Dvizhenie za prava i svobodi,* DPS), the party of ethnic Turks in Bulgaria, which gained a great deal of influence over a divided and weakening NDSV. The role of this party largely exceeded its actual weight in society – a fact that its leader, Ahmed Dogan, emphasized quite bluntly in all his public appearances. At the end of the day, there seemed to be a trace

of DPS in every aspect of corruption and government wrong-doing; this became the cornerstone of the newly emerged Bulgarian nationalist movement.

Not surprisingly, the center right came out of the 2005 election even further divided. Following the loss in the parliamentary elections in 2001 and in the presidential elections later that same year, there were two clear alternatives. One was to analyze the losses and to start reforming the parties of the center right, to bring new leaders and new faces to the fore that could identify once again with the popular values and ideas of economic freedom, democracy and justice and restore decency in politics. This could not have happened without a certain effort to consolidate the center-right groups under one roof (be it a coalition or initially a loose party structure) and focus their message.

What happened instead was that the parties focused mostly on themselves and their leadership issues. The SDS, which was still the largest party on the center right, never gave a clear account for the loss. Although former Prime Minister and party Chairman Ivan Kostov resigned and took a lot of the responsibility upon himself, he never openly addressed the issues that brought down his government and undermined trust in the ability of the Bulgarian center right to deliver more than long-term successful economic policies. Being a relatively new party at that time, the SDS did not find the strong roots and firm ideological basis to answer openly the questions about the loss and consequently became obsessed with its leadership – a debate that was not of any interest to the public. No matter how different from Kostov, the SDS leaders that came after him were part of the same failed elite and were largely identified with the past of the SDS and not with its future. Thus the party continued losing its base, as was demonstrated in the 2003 municipal elections.

On the other hand, the remaining smaller center-right parties (most of them created as splinters from the SDS) focused mostly on their – and their leaders' – survival and stopped doing actual politics, which reduced their support to its very core, still maintaining the image of a center right bitterly divided by personnel issues and run by people branded with the failures of transition. Old, traditional parties like the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union and the Democratic Party slipped into internal fighting, their leaders committed to staying on at any cost. This caused their People's Union coalition, which for ten years had acted as the smaller, more moderate center-right group in parliament, to fall apart, adding to the confusion of the electorate.

Although Bulgarian voters had already clearly stated their opinion in 2001and 2003, in the general election of 2005 they were faced with basically the same center-right parties with the same leaders and the same confusion. The splintering, regrouping and renaming did not help to conceal the fact that these parties were built around the survival attempts of their leaders, rather than meant to do politics. The post-Kostov leaders of the SDS failed to realize that the main objective of their party was to put together all the splinters and focus on their Socialist opponents. Instead, they continued fighting the enemy inside the party. The split by former Prime Minister Kostov with a group of SDS members of parliament and the subsequent creation of Democrats for Strong Bulgaria (*Demokrati za silna Bălgarija*, DSB) did not surprise anyone and did not mobilize any new energy among center-right supporters. This time the election results were not unexpected, and although each of the three small groups that crossed the four-percent threshold claimed success, their combined number of elected members of parliament did not exceed 50, roughly the

same as the 51 mandates scored in 2001. The Bulgarian center right had wasted four years and given way to a weak and unconvincing Bulgarian Socialist Party to win the elections and come back to power.

One might ask why to spend so much time to dwell again and again on the failures of the past when our target is the future and the success of the center right in Bulgaria. The only reason is that in order to explain how we won in Bulgaria, we have to understand the process of rebirth of the center right. The road for the new Bulgarian center right was actually paved by the failure of the old, traditional Bulgarian parties and the first generation of post-communist center-right parties (also called parties of the transition) to respond to election loss and reform themselves. That is why the lessons of 2001, 2003 and 2005 are so important, as they clearly demonstrate that the so-called "authentic" center right (a term coined by those same "authentic" leaders) refused to do two things which are fundamental in politics and critical when tackling crises caused by lost elections – to take clear personal leadership responsibility and to go back to those same values and ideas that are the reason for their existence.

III. The Birth of the New Center Right

The slim success of the Socialists in 2005 and the visible decay of the NDSV, which went into a coalition with the BSP after making promises that this would never happen, opened a wide space for a center-right advance. Bulgaria was run by a government that claimed to be Socialist, but could not change any of the ill-fated practices of the previous administration of NDSV and the DPS. The latter two parties became part of the new coalition and were essential to the survival of the BSP government and young Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev. Moreover, the Socialist prime minister was actually elected only on the third and last ballot and therefore nominated by the third largest group in parliament – that of the DPS, not without the blessing of Socialist President Georgi Parvanov. This wedlock was, therefore, sealed for the whole parliamentary term, as any resignation of the prime minister would necessarily lead to new elections.

From the beginning it became clear that this coalition was glued together not by ideas and programs for the development of Bulgaria but by corporate interests and corrupt practices. The official European theme of the coalition and its dedication to preparing Bulgaria for joining the European Union in 2007 were quickly dissolved in the widespread corruption and administrative weakness of the government. The "three-party coalition" and its 8/5/3 formula of "splitting the cake" became quickly notorious. The young Bulgarian democratic political system exposed a vulnerability in which the so-called oligarchs could actually buy votes in elections, force parties into coalitions across ideological borders, form comfortable majorities in parliament, and practically run the country from behind the scenes based entirely on their business interests.

All this was happening not because there was anything wrong with democracy and the way it was interpreted in Bulgaria, but largely because the democratic model of left, right and center had been distorted by the absence of a real and viable right-of-center alternative. Clearly, the Bulgarian center right had failed to play its fundamental role in the dem-

ocratic balance of power, thus allowing the political system to be twisted to ugly proportions. And as in politics gaps cannot remain open, this situation could not last long. The stage was set for the appearance of a new center-right force that would bring the political landscape back to normal.

All opinion polls before and after the 2005 elections showed that a wide majority of Bulgarians was clearly oriented right-of-center. These voters were very sensitive to issues of justice, transparency, economic freedom and development, and they did not identify with any of the existing parties. In other words, the political apathy that existed on the surface of Bulgarian society had been wrongly interpreted by the center-right parties. It was not that voters did not want to hear about politics – left or right – but that they were growing increasingly alienated from the leaders and parties that were currently trying to represent them. The new center right had already been born in the expectations of a large number of people, and it was only a matter of taking leadership and successfully identifying with the values and ideas of these people in order to form and lead a strong political party.

Today there are many theories as to how the new center right was formed in Bulgaria. Was it centered around the charisma of one political leader or born in the wide-spread social dissatisfaction with the course of events in politics? Did it rest on genuine center-right values and ideas, or it was a compromise incubated in the offices of the same oligarchs that used to run the show? Were there real programs and ideas about the future of the country, or it was a temporary ad-hoc solution that had no real future? Maybe there is a little bit of truth in all of these, but what matters is that someone managed to respond to the need of society and fill the large gap left by the old center-right parties. Finally the frustration of center-right voters that had long been disguised as apathy was overcome, and a new party was born. One could interpret this as harnessing the power of that majority of voters that wanted justice, law and order to prevail and to put the country back on the track of normality. As often happens in center-right politics, this could not have been done without the personal effort of a strong and charismatic leader.

The leader in this case, Boyko Borisov, was a newcomer to Bulgarian politics, although he was no stranger to anyone in Bulgaria. Having served as secretary general in Bulgarian Ministry of Interior under the NDSV government, General Borisov managed to build himself a reputation as a genuine policeman, someone who was professionally dedicated to the cause of law and order, which was quite in contrast to the overall activity of the government for which he worked. In the 2005 general elections Borisov tested his popularity in politics on the party lists of NDSV, winning convincingly in both constituencies where he headed the list. He resigned his parliamentary seat immediately after the elections, sticking to his professional commitment with the interior ministry.

Strangely enough, the new Socialist administration in the interior ministry refused to keep him and rest on his experience and popularity. Instead, they forced him to resign and practically pushed Borisov back into politics where he had before obviously felt uncomfortable. However, this time he had to respond to the call of his friends and associates to do something in politics. The seat of the mayor of Sofia became vacant after former Mayor Stefan Sofianski chose to become a member of parliament and presented an excellent opportunity for Borisov to state his political ambitions.

At that time Borisov tried to stay away from the tainted notion of a political party and ran as an independent candidate, though it was already clear that he had a large number of followers that constituted the backbone of a new party. He won the elections by a wide margin and became mayor of Sofia. This position gave Borisov the platform that he needed to address center-right voters and, although he still resisted the drive to announce a party, people around him headed by his former staff member, Tzvetan Tzvetanov, in February 2006 formed what they called a civic, non-profit association called Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB). The goal of this association was to provide a forum for public discussions and social activity and, although it was not officially linked to Mayor Borisov, it was largely perceived as his creation.

GERB quickly became a household name and attracted a large number of seemingly indifferent center-right-minded people. Therefore, it was only a matter of time before it was transformed into a political party. This happened in December 2006 at a massive convention in Sofia which brought together people from all over the country. This time Borisov was already fully involved and in his speech he stated clearly the main goals of the new party – to fight organized crime and corruption, to work for real reform in the judiciary, to protect family values and to stand for the energy independence of Bulgaria. All these were issues that had come under question with the government of the three-party coalition. This time the convention could not elect Borisov as party president since there was a legal ban on acting mayors being registered as members of the governing bodies of political parties. However, he was confirmed as the undoubted leader of GERB, and he put forward his claim to become leader of the center right in Bulgaria.

One could easily argue whether the new party was born at the convention in December 2006 or back in October 2005 when Borisov became mayor of Sofia. This all depends on how much importance we might want to place on the personality factor, as undoubtedly the figure of Borisov was instrumental in the creation of the new center right. On the other hand, the room for a new center-right movement was already there long before Borisov and his associates became available. These were the same politically active supporters and voters that rallied behind the Allied Democratic Forces in 1997, many of whom pushed forward Simeon Saxecoburgotski in 2001 and were let down both times in their expectations for a state of freedom, justice, law and order. However, besides being the right person at the right place and at the right time (though maybe a few years late), Borisov managed to formulate and successfully identify with the key message to the center-right voters, one thing which none of the other center-right leaders and parties had done before. In that respect, his role for the creation of the new center right in Bulgaria should never be underestimated.

IV. The Road to Success

The creation of GERB as the new center-right movement in Bulgaria was just one of a series of events that marked the return of the Bulgarian center right to power. Arguably, being the first event in that series, it offered an organized form of political activity which people needed in order to express their views about the government and get involved in politics once again. In 2007 Bulgaria was already a member state of the European Union,

the national goal of joining the European family after so many years had been achieved, and once again public attention was focused on internal politics. The scattered center--right parties in parliament hardly managed to act as opposition to the government of the three-party coalition and there were huge opportunities for GERB to take over the role of opposition by providing adequate response to government policies. Moreover, GERB was not represented in parliament and had nothing to do with the corrupt system of forming majorities there, with the business lobbies and the notorious practices of the 40th National Assembly, which had approval ratings in the single-digits.

Actually, being in non-parliamentary opposition gave a better opportunity for GERB to address issues and to do politics. As mayor of Sofia, Borisov was already one of the key players in Bulgarian politics, yet still had all the independence to conduct his own policies and to stand for his ideas. Right from the beginning GERB was standing very high in the polls. It still, however, needed elections to confirm its leadership. The year 2007 offered two opportunities. The European Parliament elections came first, to fill in the seats allocated to Bulgaria as a new member state in the European Union.

There could have hardly been a better opportunity for GERB to test its real weight with the public than these elections. It was all about Europe, a topic that was so close to the center-right voter, who had been the first to stand for freedom and democracy in 1989, and who had dreamed about and worked for a modern and European Bulgaria. Yet that same voter saw a Socialist (post-communist) prime minister sign the accession treaty and a corrupt government fail to bring the benefits of EU membership to the people of Bulgaria. Although voter turnout was rather low and the elections were strongly influenced by better motivated groups of ethnic Turks and other minorities, as well as the so-called controlled votes (those that are determined by different ways and means of corporate influence and financial stimuli), GERB managed to prevail over the BSP by a small margin and sent five Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to Brussels – the same number as the Socialists.

The sad story for the center right in these European Parliament elections was the performance of the old center-right parties – the SDS, DSB and the Agrarian People's Union – each falling short of the threshold for electing MEPs. Contrary to what everyone expected – that in the case of low turnout, it would be parties that have a strong nucleus and solid base that would be successful – none of these three parties managed to pass the threshold, scoring altogether a little over 200,000 votes and missing a chance to add another two or three MEPs and win an outright victory for the center right.

These results should have served as a reminder for the parties and their leaders who had in the meantime continued their series of losses with the failure to produce a credible presidential candidate in the 2006 elections and were now suffering the erosion of their core voters. The issue of responsibility for the loss was no longer relevant to the party leaders alone, as they did resign, but rested with a wider circle of party elite who kept re--electing the same leader again and again. What happened in the SDS with the resignation and withdrawal from politics of former President Petar Stoyanov, who had gone back to his party in an attempt to reinvigorate it, actually proved the fact that the party had not managed to go back to its roots and to reestablish itself with the support of the center-right voters.

The success of GERB and the failure of the old parties gave a very clear sign of what was to happen on the center right. In a matter of just six months GERB had managed to win over the confidence of a large majority of center-right voters in Bulgaria and to establish itself as the leading party. Though being out of parliament, GERB was widely recognized as the party in opposition and was already engaged in the daily political debate with the government. The Bulgarian center right had come back to politics; it was strong and ready for elections.

The year 2007 presented another opportunity for a political clash – municipal elections in October. The opportunities for GERB were endless, as it was starting from having one mayor in Sofia and for the first time could compete for positions as mayors and councilors throughout the country. The results were better than expected, as GERB candidates won in most of the bigger cities and took control of the city councils there. At the same time, the Bulgarian center right managed to break the post-communist monopoly of the BSP in small municipalities where Socialist candidates had traditionally prevailed. This was also the first real success of the new center right, as it clearly established a national presence, motivating and involving thousands of people throughout Bulgaria to participate in politics once again.

The success in the municipal elections gave the new center right the chance to go beyond its opposition rhetoric and start showing what it could do for the people. It also gave the party a national presence and a permanent touch with the electorate that it needed in order to properly identify issues in society and formulate precise policies in response. This was what turned GERB from a spontaneous, popular expression of frustration and anxiety into a mature party. What really helped this quick growth and maturity was the fact that once GERB started going national and selecting its candidates for mayors and councilors, many long-time political activists either joined the party or became its candidates. Thus they contributed their experience and understanding of the local political scene to the party and allowed it to mature quite rapidly.

Though it may seem that GERB was consigned to grow and succeed by the very circumstances that caused its creation, it would be very superficial to say that this progress was achieved without an organized effort. Right from the beginning, there was a team of young and talented people headed by then party President Tzvetan Tzvetanov, who traveled the country, met with local activists and put in place a party structure in a modern and efficient manner. Later on a series of conferences and seminars on key political topics helped GERB elaborate its platform and formulate policies. That was the content that the new party needed in order to claim power and the ability to govern the country. Success in the municipal elections, an adequate party structure and the development of policy documents gave GERB the final boost and prepared it for the biggest challenge in a parliamentary democracy – the general elections.

V. Winning It All

The year 2009 was another challenging one for Bulgaria, as it was again a year of European Parliament elections and a year of elections to the national parliament. What happened in 2009 represents a case that is worth studying, as the Socialist-Liberal government of the

three-party coalition did everything it possibly could to lose the elections. The government had built itself a reputation for corruption, tolerance of organized crime and inefficiency with regard to EU funding and projects. However, strangely enough, this was the government that had been able to implement the most expansive center-right economic policies since the beginning of the transition. One reason for this was that for the first time in many years the economy was going well, foreign investment was pouring into Bulgaria and the treasury was enjoying a healthy surplus. Bulgaria became one of the countries with the lowest taxation in the EU, with corporate and income tax going down to a flat rate of ten percent, relatively low social security payments and 6 percent unemployment. Normally, such a policy would have been very hard for a center-right party to challenge, as the numbers looked good for the government.

However, the business environment was not that positive, the administration was corrupt, all national energy and infrastructure projects were stuck in administrative deadlock and EU funds were officially suspended by Brussels on suspicion of corruption. At the same time organized crime was becoming too obvious, the judiciary system was not functioning properly and there was no sense of justice in society. After almost 20 years of transition, it seemed that Bulgaria was back to where it started. The economy was better, but freedom and democracy had failed to bring justice and decency to the lives of ordinary people.

This situation presented an incredible opportunity for center-right parties to go into a campaign that was all about justice, and this opportunity was very correctly interpreted by GERB. Although the global financial crisis had already had an impact on the Bulgarian economy and the effects were becoming visible, the main theme of 2009 was justice and decency – values that are just as characteristic of the center right as is economic freedom. While all party platforms were focused on preparation for the crisis, economic incentives and management of public finances, only one party was genuinely talking about justice and restoring the rule of law. Moreover, GERB was probably the only party that could come up with a strong team of credible politicians with proven experience in this field. And this was exactly the one topic where the government had achieved nothing and had all the responsibility for the poor situation.

Sensing imminent failure, the BSP and its coalition partners decided to use any technical and legislative ways and means to minimize their losses and reduce the chances of the center right taking over. Election legislation was delayed until the very last minute in order to surprise the opponents with new rules and the introduction of a pseudo-majoritarian element to the system. This came in response to the deep dissatisfaction among the public with the anonymity of party-list candidates that later become members of parliament. The new invention was to elect 31 out of 240 MPs in single-member districts with a simple majority, hoping that the split center right would never produce a strong candidate and would eventually lose most of these seats, securing an advantage for the Socialists. On top of this the majority in parliament introduced a higher threshold of 8 percent for coalitions in an attempt to get rid of all the smaller center-right parties that might otherwise join in a coalition. That threshold was later repealed by the Constitutional Court and was never implemented.

Unlike most other European countries where elections to the European Parliament are sometimes held together with national elections in order to save public money and stimu-

late turnout, the European Parliament elections were scheduled only a month before the elections for the national parliament. Again, the government was hoping that a low turnout would diminish the superiority of the center right and give a more favorable appearance to the three-party coalition on the eve of national elections. At the same time the government went into a spending spree with the existing budget surplus, putting money into projects that were neither needed nor bound to succeed and trying to create the impression of government intervention to combat the first symptoms of the economic crisis.

In general, everything the government and the majority in parliament did in the last few months before the elections was meant either to damage the chances of the center-right opponents of winning the elections and forming a majority, or to cover up the administrative mess that they were about to leave behind. Of course, that could not remain unnoticed by the public and the results of the European Parliament elections held on June 7 indicated what the Bulgarian government did not want to see. Although turnout was rather low at 37.49 percent, GERB came out as the clear winner, securing five seats in the European Parliament. The SDS and DSB, which went into a coalition, managed to win one more seat, thus increasing the center-right victory to six seats out of 16. The picture was quite clear, and all parties geared up for what was already perceived as the second round of elections.

Unfortunately, the attempt of the three-party coalition to use the European Parliament elections as part of its strategy to minimize losses in the national contest prevented a real debate on Bulgaria's European agenda and did not allow voters to make their decision based on real European issues. The campaign was dominated by the domestic agenda and somewhat naturally continued until the national elections which were scheduled for July 5. The strategy of a low-profile campaign adopted by GERB, with a lot of local events and direct contact with the voters and little national advertisement proved to be a success, as it contrasted the pompous and expensive campaigns of the parties in government. Yet GERB took part in all public debates and focused on the one topic, that not only they, but the public, had already identified as the main theme of this campaign. Whether the debate was about health care, education, public finances or the economy in general, the issues of justice and decency were always present. Restoring order in society and bringing those who were responsible for the shady and criminal aspects of the Bulgarian transition to justice was a priority set high by the voters, and no other party could identify itself with this goal as successfully as GERB.

The election results seemed quite predictable, and the only factor that polls could not really forecast was turnout. Was the public exhausted by a campaign that was already too long? Had the government achieved at least one of its goals by scheduling the elections in July when most people have switched to their vacation mood and pay little attention to politics? The answer came on July 5, when turnout exceeding 60 percent surpassed all forecasts and made election history. GERB took 39.71 percent of the proportional votes, plus 26 out of the 31 so-called majoritarian seats. That meant that, with small exceptions (constituencies dominated by ethnic Turks), GERB had won the elections in all parts of the country. The Blue Coalition, in which the UDF and DSB had joined forces, managed to get over the threshold and reconfirm the survival of the old center right. Although GERB came up five seats short of an absolute majority, it could now rely on the support of some of the smaller groups in parliament.

At the same time, the BSP suffered its worst loss in 20 years of democratic elections. The NDSV had apparently lost all its former glory, and the party of Simeon Saxecoburgotski did not manage to get over the four-percent threshold and enter parliament. Voters had decided to send the three-party coalition into history and did so in a big way. The center--right message had come across, and the newly elected parliament was loaded with expectations. There was another opportunity for the center right to deliver and very little patience in the public to wait.

VI. Swimming in Rough Waters

Though showing a convincing victory for the center right, the 2009 election results put GERB in a rather delicate position. The concept of coalitions had been so badly exploited by the previous government and sounded so negative with the public that it had to be avoided at any cost. GERB's 116 seats in parliament were not enough for an absolute majority, and the party had to opt for a minority government supported by the Blue Coalition and the Order, Law and Justice (*Red, zakonnost i spravedlivost*, RZS) party, which fell apart soon after the elections and lost its parliamentary group. Surprisingly Attack, the extreme nationalist movement that had managed to keep its presence in parliament, suddenly saw a lot of common ground with the ideas of GERB. All these parties voted for the cabinet of Boyko Borisov without being directly involved with ministerial positions. GERB wanted to avoid the idea of power sharing which had become synonymous with irresponsible government.

The challenge of taking Bulgaria through a period of global recession and instability seemed quite great for a new government consisting of ministers that had little or no political experience. The Borisov cabinet actually turned upside down all traditional concepts of politics, putting in ministerial positions people who had a proven record of professional success in corporate business – people who had power to run big companies and organizations but never had to deal with politics. This in itself was a risk well assessed, as Borisov and GERB did not hesitate to initiate cabinet changes as soon as they realized they were necessary. This approach also proved very successful as long as ministers were less involved with the life of the party and more dedicated to their respective ministerial tasks. This had been a problem that plagued previous cabinets and prime ministers, where individual ministers were acting more as party functionaries, rather than policy makers, building their own fiefdoms in the party, and eventually ending up with a new party of their own.

The weakness of this approach, and of the Borisov government in general, was the lack of a coherent program or set of measures and actions that would be implemented without hesitation by all cabinet members and would lead to a consistent shift in policy. GERB was formed in a relatively short time, and the quick ascent to power caught the party without a detailed government program. Moreover, the turbulent economic environment of late 2009 and 2010 required coordinated action which could not be expected of a team that had been compiled in a matter of a few months. In the campaign, the party and its leaders demonstrated a very fine ability to sense the issues and problems that moved society and managed to translate these into a center-right message that was well accepted by the voters. Now they had to prove that they could deliver.

The newly elected government rightfully rushed into implementing its promises to crush organized crime and restore justice. Results soon followed, and Prime Minister Borisov and Minister of Interior Tzvetanov earned a great deal of recognition for their effort to resolve some of the worst cases of organized crime that had been neglected for years. They initiated a much needed and long overdue reform of the judiciary system and improved transparency in justice. But the need for reform did not end there. The financial crisis had taken its toll on the Bulgarian economy and exacerbated some of the inherited problems of the past, especially in the field of social security, health care and education, as well as the development of a profitable and independent energy sector.

As foreign investment faded and export markets stagnated, the economic surge that had produced budget surpluses and fed the optimism of the Socialist government quickly turned into a dip. While companies and people were desperately struggling to find markets for what they had to offer and to preserve jobs, the government did not respond. Amid accusations that the previous administration missed so many chances to preserve national wealth and took unreasonable financial commitments for so many years ahead, there was no policy proposal other than to increase taxes and hold budget payments. This on its own was not exactly a center-right policy, and certainly not one that could resolve an economic crisis of global proportions. At the same time social security and health care suffered shortages, and payments were delayed and occasionally stopped. While the government's economic team was arguing about the necessary measures to lead the country through the crisis, important reforms in the sectors of health care and social security were still on hold. The economic policy debate that originated from arguments within the government was quite useful, however, as it prevented GERB from implementing premature ideas like the one to increase the value-added tax from 20 percent to 22 percent. This debate also helped raise public awareness of all the risks and threats that were facing the Bulgarian economy.

On the other hand, this uncertainty exposed the lack of a clear idea within the government and the party in power about how to address the crisis and also further delayed the necessary reforms. The same pattern was repeated when it came to the debate about the substantial public investment and long-term commitment needed to secure the energy security and independence of Bulgaria, to create new and to diversify existing sources of energy. Once again, instead of decisions and reforms, the government produced a debate that remained unresolved. Meanwhile, in spite of some serious effort on behalf of the relevant government ministers and the appointment of a minister dedicated to this issue, EU structural funds, which could have been a fresh and much needed source of investment in the country especially when it comes to agriculture, infrastructure and public works, remained to a large extent unabsorbed.

The hesitant steps to reform critical sectors of the economy, to reform and cut spending in some of the most sensitive sectors like social security and health care, to speed up the absorption of EU funds and to launch a stimulus package for businesses, came in sharp contrast with the achievements in the field of justice, security and the fight against crime. Although one would agree with Prime Minister Borisov that stopping the leakage of public funds through all sorts of criminal channels, guaranteeing a safe business environment and restoring the rule of law should be the first anti-crisis measures, it is certainly not all

that was needed. A center-right government must have the right ideas and the courage to implement them in order to assist business and people to overcome the crisis. It is exactly in times of crisis that center-right parties have been most efficient and have successfully implemented critical reforms.

In spite of the challenges of the crisis and its hesitant reform agenda, the cabinet of Boyko Borisov and GERB as a party managed to maintain and even increase their appeal to the Bulgarian people. Subsequent elections for mayor of Sofia and a few other towns and villages showed stable support for the party and guaranteed success to its candidates. This can be seen as a credit of trust, an additional window of opportunity to implement reforms, to stabilize the economy and to bring Bulgaria back on the track of normal European development.

VI. Conclusion: The Power Game

So was it the pendulum that had swung to the right or was there anything more to it? Was it simply a predictable game, in which one just has to wait for one's turn? In the case of the Bulgarian center right the answer would be rather "not," as political developments over the past two decades have offered a picture much more colorful than the simple swing to the left and to the right. Since 1997, the country has enjoyed a relatively long period of consistent center-right economic policies which led to the successful integration in NATO and the European Union and preserved financial and economic stability in the long run. However, these policies were conducted by different governments, both center-right and Socialist-Liberal, all of them failing in their own way to deliver on one of the fundamentals of modern democracy – that is justice and the rule of law. The Bulgarian transition was marked by a huge deficit of justice that could not be compensated for by relative economic success. Perhaps the first real center-right government elected in 1997 would have achieved a second term and led the country to its accession to the EU had it been able to deliver more than sound economic policy. Maybe the Bulgarian center right would have come back to power much sooner had its leaders been able to understand that democracy cannot walk on one leg, that economic freedom goes only with the rule of law, and that at the end of the day decency is the only way in politics.

Instead of reinventing and reinvigorating the center right, those leaders became busy inventing new parties that served themselves more than any other purpose. As a result, for a period of 10 years, those that claimed to represent the Bulgarian center right lost touch with the people, with the real issues facing society, and in a way put behind some of the values that define the center right today. That is why the pendulum defied its own rules and did not swing back – ideological barriers among left, right and center became blurred, and strange coalitions came on stage. It became more and more obvious that people had to take things into their own hands and replace the old parties with their own creation.

Instead of experiencing a resurrection, the center right was reborn in a unique way and no matter how much we attribute to the personality of Boyko Borisov, or to any other single man or woman, this massive movement would not have taken place without the thousands of people who believed in it and worked for it. Moreover, the new Bulgarian

center right will not last very long if that basis is lost and scattered around. For it is one thing to win an election and another thing to steer successfully a country still at the end of a painful transition through the shallow waters of a global economic crisis. And once again, in times of hardship it is so much more important to stick to the values that define the center right.

Experience also taught us that one cannot win elections forever, and that parties have to confirm their support with the voters again and again. But being in government is a unique chance for a party, for its members and supporters to leave their mark in the development of their country. On the other hand government always takes a toll on those involved, tough decisions are not admired by all, and eventually parties end up in opposition. That again is an opportunity for parties to do politics, to become that essential element of the democratic system of government and guarantee that there will be a balance of power. The re-born Bulgarian center right has seen enough of the past and will not slip once more into the position of a silent and useless opposition.

Though a short time in history, two decades are a long time in politics, and a whole new generation of leaders and activists has been shaped and trained to become the new center--right. They have already proven their ability to win elections and to gain power. The new Bulgarian center right has managed to put behind it some of the issues that burdened the minds of the older generations that had grown out of the communist prison camps and suffered years of deprivation. The communist past is rarely mentioned in modern political discourse, and rightfully so, as it is of less and less interest to the new generation of voters more concerned about job security and safety on the streets. Yet the center-right movement in Bulgaria, as well as in all other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, has its roots in the anti-communist resistance, and the assessment of the past will remain a major point of difference with the post-communist socialist parties. Many of the new activists of the center right have lived with the victories and losses of the old parties of the transition and will transfer this experience in the future. The values of democracy, freedom and justice will continue to lead them in their political endeavor.

As we try to analyze today the course of events that led to the success of the center right in 2009 in Bulgaria one might ask: did we ever lose? Did the center-right reform majority ever disappear? What happened to those enthusiastic people that elected the Allied Democratic Forces into power, and are they the same as those who handed GERB the responsibility to take Bulgaria through the years of crisis? They were probably there all the time, and they always constituted the majority, but somehow remained silent; their votes did not count as they did not have anyone to vote for. Actually, the ones who lost were those parties and their leaders who refused to deliver on their programs and platforms, and continued losing until people decided to reclaim the center right. After all, it is a people's party and the people can never lose.

The Center Right in Croatia – How to Win, Again?

Davor Ivo Stier

CONTENTS:

I. Introduction

A few months before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica,* HDZ) was founded in illegality as the political organization designed to articulate the Croatian people's aspirations for freedom – freedom from communism and freedom from Belgrade's domination. It was immediately depicted by the communist rulers of the day as a "party of dangerous intentions." And indeed, the HDZ's intentions and political objectives represented a real and dangerous threat to the *ancien régime*.

By advocating for Croatia's sovereignty based on democratic values, the HDZ broke the monopoly to dialectically decide on Croatia's fate that the extreme left and right held until 1990. The former, the communists, claimed a monopoly on the anti-fascist struggle of World War Two as a source of legitimacy for the 45 years of the Yugoslav communist dictatorship. The latter, a variety of different organizations condemned to exile after the communist revolution, raised the flag of independence, but was unable to definitely and unequivocally break ties with the pro-nazi collaborationist past. Thus, by providing the figure of an external enemy to the regime, they helped to reinforce the very source of legitimacy claimed by communist Yugoslavia and to prolong its existence.

The HDZ's new political formula was simple, but powerful: "Democracy = Independence + Europe." On that platform, the HDZ overwhelmingly won the first free and democratic elections in spring 1990 and set the course for the establishment of an independent and democratic Croatian state embedded inside Euro-Atlantic structures. Pictures from the popular celebration of the HDZ victory at Zagreb's main square in 1990 show historic Croatian flags (without the communist red star) waiving along with Europe's banner, thus sending a clear message of hope for national and individual freedom combined with a European vocation and identity.

The HDZ's original political formula, which revolutionized Croatia's political scene at the time, can be reduced to two key elements which have gone hand-in-hand in most cases with national emancipation ever since the French Revolution: a national and a liberal component intertwined into the single concept of "democratic change." In that sense, HDZ probably did not offer anything unseen before in similar situations in European or world history. Yet it was the first to do so in Croatia in a convincing and effective manner. While other non-communist, newly born parties focused on individual rights and liberal reforms to the existing Yugoslav system, the HDZ linked this process to the cause of national emancipation. At the same time, the HDZ's strong national position did not allow other pro-independence groups of radical and anti-European orientation to prosper within the country in the aftermath of the collapse of communist Yugoslavia.

In that sense, from the very beginning HDZ occupied a leading position on the political scene from the center to the right. It became the mainstream force of Croatian democracy and a point of reference for all other political parties in the country. On this basis, the HDZ won five out of the first six parliamentary elections held in independent Croatia. The historic context and the complexity of the HDZ's political strategy surely varied along its two decades of existence. Yet in all its victories, the HDZ showed the ability to rally the right-of-center electorate, while successfully attracting more centrist voters convinced that HDZ could effectively run the country and guarantee its place in Europe.

The intention of this chapter is to describe briefly how the HDZ platform was successful in renewing the confidence of Croatia's citizens in the center right and to analyze what is left from the original formula which granted HDZ a leading position within Croatian politics. As the equation "Democracy = Independence + Europe" is being successfully resolved, it seems to be the right time to open the process of forging a new and motivating platform for future victories that will provide a guideline not only for future elections but also for the next decade. Without any ambition to exhaust all aspects of such an exercise, this chapter aims to provide some possible elements for the center right's next formula for success.

II. One Step Ahead

One of the HDZ's most precious advantages in relation to its political opponents was its ability to be, at the crucial time, one step ahead of others. To be sure, it should be said that HDZ also benefited from a recurrent inability of the left to offer something new to the Croatian electorate, thus covering the center right's shortcomings and emphasizing its advantages. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the HDZ in 1990 did not offer anything unseen before in world history. Yet it was the first to raise the flag of Croatian sovereignty and provide the Croatian people with a political framework able to articulate its long -standing desire for independence.

On the contrary, the left in Croatia remained one step behind. Unlike their Slovenian colleagues, the League of Communists of Croatia (*Savez komunista Hrvatske*) failed to effectively and decisively oppose Slobodan Milošević[1] and his expansionist policies. Instead of galvanizing the population behind Croatia's constitutional and moral right to sovereignty, the communist leadership in Zagreb insisted on an ill-advised strategy of defending Yugoslavia at all costs. Their inability to accept the new realities even brought them to leave the parliament for the historic vote on the Declaration of Independence on June 25, 1991. Eventually, the League of Communists, later turned into the Social Democratic Party of Croatia (*Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatske,* SDP), reconciled with Croatia's independence and joined the National Unity Government at the peak of Milošević's aggression. Yet boycotting the Declaration of Independence remained a sort of SDP original sin in Croatian political life. This terrible mistake was partially compensated by the SDP's wise reaction in trying to catch up on the second part of the original platform of "Independence + Europe" successfully launched by HDZ in 1990. However, it took the Social Democratic Party an entire decade to return to power, which they again lost as soon as HDZ restored the original balance between the national and liberal reformist components of its political platform.

This national-liberal balance was, in fact, the key to the HDZ's ascendance to power, both in 1990 and 2003. Yet once in government, it is also true that the balance eroded several

1 After taking control of the League of Communists of Serbia (*Savez komunista Srbije*) in the late 1980s, Slobodan Milošević became Serbia's strongman at the time of Yugoslavia's dissolution. He waged four wars (against Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo) and, after the democratic changes in Belgrade took place, was turned over to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague, where he died in 2006.

times, thus letting populist deviations grow. This was especially the case in the late 1990s, when one of President Franjo Tuđman's advisors, Ivić Pašalić, pretended to succeed late Defense Minister Gojko Šušak as leader of the HDZ's right wing and practically hijacked the party structure, marginalized the pro-European elements and diverted the party onto a path of frontal collision with Western partners and the pro-Western sentiments of the vast majority of Croatia's population. It was only then that the Social Democratic Party found an open road for its return to power in the 2000 elections.

Before the erosion of its pro-European component and especially during the first half of the 1990s, when one third of the country was still occupied by Milošević's forces, the HDZ enjoyed an undisputed, dominant position in Croatian politics. With the end of the war, however, popular aspirations quickly refocused on the next goal: integration into the Euro-Atlantic community of prosperous Western democracies. In its first political manifesto, the HDZ stressed the right of Croatia to return to the family of European nations and join the Euro-Atlantic structures of peace and stability. In doing so, the European and Western vocation was highlighted as an essential element of Croatia's identity and a powerful tool in the process of differentiation and national reaffirmation which took place in the context of Yugoslavia's dissolution. Such a predominantly historic approach to Euro--Atlantic integration, though, overshadowed the far more substantial requirements and Croatia's genuine necessity for adopting and implementing demanding EU and NATO standards on a vast array of political, economic and social issues. As a result, Croatia missed the opportunity to catch up with other Central European countries which, without the heavy burden of war and nation-building, devoted more focused efforts to dismantling their socialist political and economic systems and made faster progress towards EU and NATO membership. In other words, the HDZ started to lose its advantage in the late 1990s, when it began to lose the balance between the national and liberal components intertwined in its original political platform of "Independence + Europe." However, once the balance was restored – a process that began with Ivo Sanader's victory over Ivić Pašalić in the 2002 HDZ internal elections[2] – HDZ reconnected again with the Croatian electorate.

It is important to note that this "national-liberal" balance does not imply necessarily an equal measure of both components, but rather the right and appropriate measure of each according to concrete political circumstances. In this sense, stressing the national component in the early 1990s relates to the imperative of unifying Croatian society against the real threat of extermination posed by Milošević's aggression. Against this HDZ position stood not only the reformed communists, but also political groups and incipient NGOs which disapproved of the HDZ's insistence on the national question and preferred to focus on the development and the deepening of a liberal democracy. They questioned the HDZ's path of establishing an independent state in the first place and then of working on its democratic organization. They advocated a different course of promoting democratic changes within the Yugoslav framework in view of a gradual solution to the national question, which might or might not lead to independence.

2 Ivo Sanader won the HDZ internal leadership elections running on a pro-European platform. On the same basis, he became prime minister in 2003 and was re-elected in 2007. Sanader left the government and the party leadership in July 2009 in the midst of an economic crisis and a year-long blockade of Croatia's EU accession negotiations.

It is my view that this option, represented in the first democratic elections in 1990 mostly by the National Accord Coalition (*Koalicija narodnog sporazuma*), which gathered some top intellectuals and leaders from the 1971 Croatian Spring, would have ended up with a double failure, both on the national question and on the liberal reforms. Due to its multiple internal contradictions and tensions, the Yugoslav state was not a suitable framework for sustainable democratic processes, but rather a source of instabilities and a generator of various nationalisms. Therefore, resolving the national question was a precondition for establishing a sustainable liberal democracy. Without a doubt, a full 20 years after its independence, Croatia has developed a democratic and open society, fully compatible with other democratic nations in the EU and NATO.

However, it is important to recognize that this would have been impossible had the ruling HDZ not already included a liberal component in its original political platform. By "liberal," I do not mean an ideological or partisan affiliation – especially not with liberalism on social issues – but rather the acceptance of the Western model of liberal democracy and free-market economy as elements incorporated in the center right, modern conservative and Christian-democratic orientation. It was certainly the HDZ's shortcoming not to increase the measure of this liberal component immediately after the Homeland War, instead of waiting for the 2000 electoral defeat. Yet the new "national-liberal" balance was eventually found while in opposition by refocusing efforts on the second part of HDZ's original platform of "Independence + Europe."

In that period of party reform, the HDZ was accepted into the European People's Party (EPP) and also built new bridges of cooperation with the Republican Party in the United States, as well as with other modern conservative groups around the globe. In the domestic arena, it put special emphasis on promoting the values of dialogue and tolerance in Croatian society, as well as on respecting our history, but turning our look to a future of cooperation with neighboring countries in a common quest for European integration. With this renewed formula of success by the parliamentary elections in 2003, the HDZ was again one step ahead of others, rallying successfully the right-of-center electorate, as well as restoring its position in the political center as the party best fitted to bring Croatia into the EU and NATO.

III. Avoiding Old Paradigms

While HDZ was in most cases one step ahead of others, its main opponents, the Social Democrats, sometimes became hostages of old and failed paradigms. I have already mentioned the SDP's original sin of leaving parliament when the Declaration of Independence was adopted due to its adherence to the failed Yugoslav paradigm. It took the SDP considerable time to recover from that situation. However, it needs to be acknowledged that SDP leader Ivica Račan[3] made a serious reformist effort to modernize the Social Democrats as a Croatian and democratic party, thus setting into place a beneficial process for the overall democratic stability of the country. Yet especially after Račan passed away, the left in Croatia somehow lost this capacity for continuing its ideological modernization. In the

3 Ivica Račan was the last leader of the League of Communists of Croatia. Under his leadership, the Communist Party became the Social Democratic Party. He was prime minister of Croatia from 2000 to 2003.

absence of such a strategic framework, it increasingly tried to find refuge in old and failed paradigms.

A clear example was Croatia's bid for NATO membership. The SDP won the 2000 elections running on a pro Euro-Atlantic platform. With its victory, the doors of Washington and Brussels opened widely, and Croatia joined the Partnership for Peace in 2000 and became a NATO candidate member in 2002. Instead of rallying on these achievements, the SDP-led government of 2000-2003 allowed relations with Washington to deteriorate, and a process of revalidation of Tito's non-aligned tradition was started by the left. This tendency became even more pronounced when the SDP returned to the opposition, although the official party policy remained pro-NATO. In this situation, supporters of the SDP and the left in general became the most NATO-skeptic constituency in Croatiaby 2007.

The disengagement of the left from the bid for NATO membership endangered at some point even Croatia's prospects to receive an invitation to join the Alliance at NATO's April 2008 Bucharest Summit. In the run-up to the November 2007 elections, the SDP championed the slogan "No NATO Without a Referendum." In a moment of high anti-US sentiment all over Europe, an eventual SDP success in forcing a referendum of that sort would have probably have prompted a NATO Summit decision to postpone the invitation for Croatia. It is important to note that the Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats (*Hrvatska narodna stranka-liberalni demokrati,* HNS-LD) of Vesna Pusić, although in opposition, sided at that time with the HDZ government in opposing a referendum for NATO, thus leaving the SDP isolated in its position.

A similar situation happened again in 2009, when Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor reached an agreement with her Slovenian colleague Borut Pahor on resolving an 18-year-old border issue through arbitration, thus unblocking Croatia's negotiations with the European Union. Again, the HNS-LD became an ally of the center-right government in softening the SDP's opposition and securing the required two-thirds majority for ratification of the agreement in the parliament. The SDP finally voted for the agreement. Yet it was amazing to witness how the party that followed a paradigm of boycotting the Declaration of Independence in 1990 came to the brink of blocking Croatia's path towards the European Union two decades later.

IV. A barrier Against Populism

The left's tendency to return to old and failed paradigms surely creates a tactical advantage for the HDZ and the center right. This is an advantage that the HDZ can use, but not enjoy and celebrate, since the leftist revival of past paradigms, especially when it comes to the glorification of communist symbols and leaders, has the potential to compromise the further progress of Croatia's democratic system. Such a backward-looking orientation is negative in itself, but can also provoke reactions from the extreme right and feed all sorts of populist attitudes. With its strong national position, the HDZ has so far prevented populist and far-right forces from establishing themselves as relevant political factors. In this sense, the HDZ, as have other center-right parties in Europe, has successfully played its role as a barrier against populism and right-wing extremism.

However, the challenge of populism is still present all over Europe, and Croatia is no exception. One case in point is the Croatian Democratic Party of Slavonia and Baranja (*Hrvatski demokratski savez Slavonije i Baranje,* HDSSB), which scored relatively good results in the 2009 municipal elections. As happens in other democracies, these populists usually present themselves as the people's candidates against the political establishment. In fact, however, they mostly target traditional HDZ constituencies and divide the right-of-center electorate, thus allowing the SDP to surpass HDZ candidates. Preventing populism from growing should continue to be one an HDZ's priority in order to keep its leading position in Croatian democracy. In addition, by confronting populism, the HDZ will not only safeguard its partisan interests, but also protect democracy from one of its biggest challenges.

Indeed, populism poses a serious threat to the republic by challenging the legitimacy of its mechanism for citizen representation. Instead of strengthening a parliamentary democracy, populist leaders favor governing by referendum and other forms of demagogic manipulation of the masses. In this sense, populism is nothing but the corruption of the republic, where citizens cease to exist in order to give place to a mass that is not served, but owned by the populist leader. History gives us several examples of populist leaders gaining power when democratic center-right parties weakened and failed to stop them. In this context, it is important for Croatia's democracy that the HDZ continue to be a barrier to populism and preserve its leading position on the right.

V. The Next Formula for Success

In the parliamentary elections of 2011, the HDZ could well find itself in a cross-fire between the SDP on the left and a grouping of populist politicians on the right. While the first would attempt to occupy the political center, the populists again would target traditional HDZ constituencies on the right of Croatian politics. Such a scenario could certainly reduce the center right's chances, but also pose a real challenge to the further development of Croatia's democratic system, if the populists became a relevant political factor.

So far, Prime Minister Kosor has been successful in impeding this scenario. Since she took over the government in July 2009 in the midst of a galloping economic crisis, she was confronted with an opposition strategy that basically mirrored the left's strategy from a decade ago. This is a strategy which is based less on the promotion of an alternative policy and more on the charge that the HDZ government brought Croatia to a situation of near bankruptcy, widespread corruption and no European future.

In fact, when Ivo Sanader suddenly resigned and Kosor was inaugurated, Croatia's bid for EU membership was heading nowhere due to a year-long Slovenian blockade[4]. Without a European perspective on the horizon, the difficulties of the serious economic downturn appeared even greater. In many political circles, the new Kosor government was given small chances of staying afloat to the end of the year. Yet in the first six months, the new prime minister and HDZ president managed to reverse the course. She took unpopular

4 Due to an unresolved maritime border dispute with Croatia, Slovenia effectively blocked the EU accession negotiations at the end of 2008, arguing that the documents presented by Zagreb in the negotiations prejudiced the border delimitation.

but necessary measures to stabilize public finances. She made the fight against corruption one of her top priorities and managed to convey a credible message about it.

Finally, Kosor surprised almost everyone by finding a win-win solution to the border issue with Slovenia and unblocking the accession negotiations with the European Union. Her agreement with Slovenian Prime Minister Borut Pahor and her determination to defend it before the parliament and the Croatian public provided the country with the necessary leadership to bring Croatia to the final phase of its two-decade-long aspiration to join the European Union. These achievements strengthened Prime Minister Kosor's position and brought the necessary political stability to avoid early elections.

At the same time, with the probable completion of the Accession Negotiations in 2011, the original HDZ formula of "Independence + Europe," which served the party well in its first 20 years of existence, will be practically fulfilled. Therefore, as we approach the very end of that process, it seems to be the time to forge a new and motivating formula that will serve well the center right and the country in the next period. This new formula can and should be built on the legacy of past achievements, but it cannot be a mere revival or return to old messages. The role of HDZ and President Tuđman in leading the country toward independence, as well as its defense against Milošević's aggression, is an essential element of the center right's legacy. It should be cherished and adequately honored. But HDZ cannot count on this legacy to motivate voters in 2011 and beyond.

The same applies for NATO and EU membership. Both are paramount achievements, and the HDZ did great service to the country in leading the process of Euro-Atlantic integration. After seven decades of Yugoslav dictatorship, both under the Serbian monarchy and Tito's communist rule, Croatia rejoined the community of Western countries as an independent and democratic state. This new status, though, requires new policies and a vision of how to make Croatia successful as a NATO and EU member. In this respect, there are some aspects where the center right should take the lead, providing answers to the new challenges with which Croatia is or will be confronted. In doing so, the center right will be forging its new formula of success, which again will need to intertwine a national and a liberal-reformist component.

In the coming period, the reform effort will require the dismantlement of residual elements of the socialist era and socialist mentality, still present in the society and in the economic system, which impede the creation of wealth and block genuine and sustainable development. The Kosor government set the path in this regard with a comprehensive Economic Recovery Program. On that basis, it launched an initiative to modernize labor legislation and the pension system. Both reform initiatives provoked an immediate anti-reformist reaction on the left, in conjunction with labor unions and right-wing populists. In tactical terms, this fierce opposition scored some points with the electorate and reduced the government's ability to carry on with reforms at the desired pace. Aware of the importance of concluding the EU accession negotiations, the government opted for a consensus-building approach, securing political and social stability instead of a frontal confrontation with the left and other anti-reformist forces.

In strategic terms, however, a new dividing line was created between the reformist and the anti-reformist camps. And while a political and social consensus would be preferable, it seems that a confrontation course is more probable. The HDZ should not stand down

from that confrontation, but rather champion the reformist agenda and the liberalization of old and inefficient social and economic structures.

However, as in the case of political reforms, this process of liberal economic reforms cannot be sustained without its being intertwined with a national component. National pride and identity, as well as the sense of belonging to a national community, are the basis for social responsibility and solidarity. Despite the left's usual practice of mocking national sentiments, they are a real and powerful force that can forge positive citizen behavior where the state cannot or should not reach with its regulatory and police powers. Strengthening and preserving national identity, including its traditional values linked to our Christian background, is not only a flag to be raised, but a concrete set of policies to be further developed by the HDZ in the future.

This is especially so in a situation in which Croatia's population is declining and a new labor force will be necessary to sustain economic development. According to the State Statistic Agency, the current Croatian population of 4.4 million could decrease to 4.2 million inhabitants by 2016 and to an alarming 3.1 million by 2051. In the meantime, regardless of the current crisis, the economy will start growing again, especially after the positive impact of EU membership translates into increased economic activity. The aging Croatian population, however, will not be able to provide the necessary labor force, and a new page in Croatian history will be open: immigration.

The HDZ should already prepare to lead a process which will allow not only the acceptance of immigrants, but also their integration into Croatian society. The experience in Western Europe shows that a radical, liberal-secularist approach, which neglects or rejects the country's Christian roots, has not been able to integrate immigrant communities and has allowed the appearance of new forms of anti-immigrant sentiment. On the contrary, promoting traditional national values in society, including its Christian compassionate elements, is a path that more effectively leads to social stability. These values, of course, cannot and should not be imposed, nor should the center right compromise the separation between the church and the state. Yet the center right can and should lead the efforts for a fruitful cooperation between them. As a Christian-democratic party with a strong national standing, the HDZ's new political formula for future successes should focus on the value of strengthening national identity while promoting liberal reforms of old-fashioned and decaying economic structures.

In conclusion, if in the 1990s the independent state was established to save the nation, now the state must be reformed in order to serve the nation. Only in this way will Croatia be able to articulate and secure its national interests within the European Union and become a competitive economy in a globalized world. This is a path to be followed in the overall effort of forging the HDZ's new political platform for electoral success and successful service to the country.

A Long Hard Road out of Opposition: Explaining the Success of Fidesz–Hungarian Civic Union

Márk Szabó

CONTENTS:

I. Introduction

Clichés, it is assumed, tend to survive the test of time because they contain strong elements of truth. This is very much the case when one attempts to understand and analyze the April 2010 landslide victory at the polls of the center-right Fidesz--Hungarian Civic Union (*Fidesz-Magyar Polgári Szövetség*): former Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's return to power may hardly be explained without taking into consideration the consequences of two general election defeats, one in 2002 and the second in a row in 2006. Marking the end of eight years in opposition, the results of the 2010 elections have not only led to a near-complete reconfiguration of the Hungarian party and political system, but were preceded by a systemic reshuffle within Fidesz itself. Between 2002 and 2010, Viktor Orbán's party managed to implement campaign skills and techniques which had already proven to be a success abroad, while at the same time the center right gradually deconstructed the left's strongholds in the media and the cultural sphere. Being the only party in Hungary capable of bringing an end to post-communism, Fidesz is also the strongest right-of-center political organization in East-Central-Europe.[5]

In terms of ideology, Fidesz managed to avoid the "cultural war" it had to fight during its first four years in office from 1998-2002, when the party occupied the position of the last remaining actor involved in Hungary's democratic transition. This became all the more clear as the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats (*Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége,* SzDSz) and centrist Hungarian Democratic Forum (*Magyar Demokrata Fórum,* MDF), former key players in the regime change, remained steadily below the five-percent legal threshold. As with any party seeing its support rise from 28 percent (in the 1998 general elections) to 42 percent (in 2002 and 2006) then to 52 percent (in 2010), Fidesz also had to broaden its reach within the electorate. By nature that involved a shift in communication, as well as policy proposals, towards the center, and, especially in the campaign leading up to the 2006 elections, incorporating certain ideas attributed to the left. However, as will be pointed out in detail, Fidesz has left its core values unaltered and has remained to this day an anti-communist party committed to the ethos of the "civic" man, the Transatlantic community and the national interest. (For an explanation of "civic" in Hungarian context see below; also, in detail, see Lánczi, 2005.)

Examining the strategy of Fidesz includes understanding how the party managed to win two European Parliament elections (in 2004 and 2009), to lose (in 2002) and win (in 2006) municipal elections and to suffer a close (in 2002) and an uncontestable (in 2006) general election defeat – all under unquestioned leadership of party Chairman Viktor Orbán. It is, therefore, difficult to clearly identify whether Hungary's center-right party walked the road of a "resurrection" or a "replacement" strategy – if one wants to refer to the terms

5 The notion of post-communism is a central theme in Hungarian political science. Professor András Lánczi explains that "[p]ost-communist societies may have adopted democratic rules, and may apply a number of democratic standards or have passed the test of a genuine democracy, post-communism does exist as a bizarre mixture of democratic procedures and obfuscated communist frame of mind or diluted communist culture." (Lánczi A. 2007: 67). Referring to Richard Sakwa, who argues that "[p]ost-Communism is by definition a negative concept, defining the present in terms of the past," Lánczi concludes that "post-Communism belongs to the story and not the history of communism" (ibid. 69–70). Post-communism, in this context, means that while Hungary, by Western standards, fulfils all necessary criteria of a functioning and consolidated liberal democracy, the presence of the "tradition" of communist habits in the democratic political culture distinguishes the Hungarian political agenda from that of other Western democracies.

offered in the introduction to this publication. At first glance, the victory in 2010 was made possible largely by the latter, including, as will be elaborated later, a new party structure based on Hungary's 176 single-member constituencies, instead of the previous approach, which focused on county-level organizations. On the other hand, even a first look at Prime Minister Orbán's second government reveals notable personnel continuity: as many as three out of eight of his ministers already had served a full four-year term in his previous cabinet. The number of state secretaries who held public office between 1998 and 2002 is even higher.

This paper will argue that the landslide victory of Fidesz in 2010 that produced an unprecedented two-thirds majority for the party in parliament, can be traced back to the mutual interplay of three major factors. Most importantly, the structural revamping of the complete party structure and the "opening up" of a relatively small organization in order to produce a Western-type people's party contributed to a competitiveness both in terms of grassroots organizations and in communication vis-à-vis the Hungarian Socialist Party (*Magyar Szocialista Párt,* MSzP) and its allies. This, however, proved insufficient in itself, as was observed in the 2006 general elections, and a new strategy of mobilization was implemented which included, *inter alia*, a constant mobilization of activists. Secondly, a new approach towards the media was crafted: a more proactive attitude towards the press, perceived to be an important asset of the left in its election campaign, replaced old reflexes, while, at the same time, new, unabashedly right-of-center channels, dailies and radio stations helped amplify the Fidesz message. In a complete contrast to Fidesz's cautious, if not negative, approach to web-based and social media campaign techniques in 2006, the party already began to rely heavily on these tools in the 2009 European Parliament elections. Thirdly, Fidesz learned that winning the political and communication battle "at home" was a necessary, yet at the same time insufficient, condition for a decisive victory, because reactions from influential foreign opinion leaders and decision makers had an effect on the domestic agenda. The center right also understood that in order to craft a positive image of itself in the foreign press, think tanks similar to those present in the United States needed to be established.

II. The Internal Reform and the "Opening Up" of the Party: From Defeat to Defeat, 2002–2006

Following its narrow defeat at the polls in 2002, the leadership of Fidesz decided that the party's reliance on "a low number of members, a simple, monolithic structure and a media-party character" (Navracsics, 2005: 217) had to be replaced by a new organization and structure more akin to those of Western European people's parties. This meant, as has been highlighted and detailed by Lánczi, a model that combined the German and Austrian right-of-center parties' institutional frameworks with a membership boosted by citizens who had previously been only loosely attached to Fidesz (Lánczi, 2005: 45). Fidesz was the first of all Hungarian political parties to shift its organization from the traditional township level towards individual constituencies. This meant that the 176 chairmen of

these electoral units were assigned the job of preparing for the general election, including the recruitment of activists, the creation of a local network and the organization of events throughout the constituency. Since Hungary's individual constituencies have, on average, some 25,000-75,000 voters, this meant a radical breakaway from the previous system where local units were mainly centered in larger towns and cities. In order, however, for this strategy to succeed, Fidesz had to meet two further criteria: the party needed human resources and for this to succeed, its image and communication required certain changes to make the center right look more "welcoming" for centrist voters and those who had not had institutionalized relations with the party.

The task proved to be complicated: on the one hand, reelected Chairman Viktor Orbán's popularity among supporters of the center right remained unquestioned, yet it was exactly the defeat in 2002 which reminded Fidesz and its leaders that mobilizing these voters was insufficient for a return to government in 2006. Mixing continuity with a change in rhetoric and policies, together with reforming the party's internal organs and keeping the organization competitive with MSzP, proved to be an uneasy combination at first. As the welfare policies of the government of former Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy started losing financial backing and support for the Socialists began its slow descent by mid-August 2003, Fidesz opted for a new kind of communication. Speeches by Orbán started having less direct and value-centered messages aimed at center-right voters. The party's main communication themes were "softened" and pragmatism, as well as certain leftist elements, started to prevail. Amply illustrating this shift in rhetoric is an excerpt from the traditional "state of the nation" speech delivered by Orbán in February 2004, already gearing his party up for the European Parliament election campaign in the summer:

Many are those in Hungary today who feel they have lived a better and safer life in the previous regime. They may feel uneasy and even anxious hearing us rejecting socialism and those who have agreed to make certain compromises, yet the only thing they wanted was to make some sort of living one way or another, to be happy and to be able to provide a safe life for themselves and their loved ones. We […] must show the older people that we understand them and their lives. We as well have understood that no matter who governs we must have food on our tables; we have to be able to educate our children and look after the elderly. […] It is worth noting that people lived happily even when no-one had heard of any "-isms," when there was no conservative, liberal or socialist movement."[6]

Pragmatism and rhetoric centered around security, social justice, the value of work, respect for the older generation and a new "contract" between those who lived a greater part of their lives during communism and those who played an active role in Hungary's democratic transition started taking shape in early 2004. If the Socialist-Liberal government was criticized it was no longer mainly because of its links to the communist regime of *János Kádár*, but because it consisted of "bankers" who did not understand the basic needs of the people.

This change in rhetoric would not have sufficed for the party to be successful. In order to bring in those who had not had any institutionalized relationship with Fidesz, the party

6 The speech is available in video format: http://www.hirtv.hu/?tPath=/view/videoview&videoview_id=2282 and is scripted: http://www.mpee.hu/dok/hirek.shtml (both accessed on June 20, 2010). Also quoted in Lánczi (ibid. 46)

opted for methods of direct democracy that had already been tried and tested in Western democracies, most notably in the 1994 "Contract with America" by Newt Gingrich. To combine the aforementioned criteria of "opening up the party" and shifting its themes towards the political center, Fidesz, in March 2004, announced the launch of the "National Petition," which it hoped would be supported by at least one million voters. The petition included demands for reducing the price of medicine, increasing the state subsidy for those employed in agriculture, reinstating the expansive housing policy of the center-right government, halting the entire privatization process and imposing a five-percent limit on the annual increase in the price of energy, notably natural gas used in households. This element of direct democracy was then used as a tool for mobilizing voters for the 2004 European Parliament elections, and the selection of its themes proved successful, albeit the first in a long series of steps to rebrand Fidesz as the party of social equity.

The "opening up" the party was thus a twofold strategy: it meant more emphasis on issues that had previously been occupied by the left and included techniques encouraging voters to join direct democracy initiatives. Perhaps the biggest push towards the center-left came from a referendum that had not been initiated, but was swiftly joined, by Fidesz in the fall of 2004, aiming to halt the privatization of hospitals and other health care institutions. The issue divided the Hungarian political spectrum with, on one side, Fidesz opposing the privatization and the governing MSzP, the liberal SzDSz, as well as the MDF (once a coalition partner in Viktor Orbán's center-right government) in favor of involving private business in health care. The referendum was eventually held on December 5, 2004. Despite a convincing, almost two-thirds majority (65 percent) of voters rejecting privatization, the referendum had no binding effect on parliament due to insufficient turnout. It should be noted that the decision of Fidesz to keep the state-owned health care sector on the domestic political agenda in Hungary coincided with David Cameron's party chairmanship in the United Kingdom and his decision to completely change the Conservative Party's policies towards the National Health Service (NHS), dropping the Thatcher-era's pro-privatization stance.

The years 2003 and 2004 may thus be summarized by a strategic shift in the rhetoric and policies of Fidesz, putting more emphasis on economic, that is, materialistic issues, and in turn abandoning themes that had been deemed by the party leadership to have only a limited reach within the electorate. Security, social justice and state aid, a strong criticism of unconstrained economic liberalism, hand-in-hand with privatization and the left's austerity policies became central elements of the party's communication. In terms of campaign techniques and party organization, more emphasis was put on mobilization, direct contact with voters and GOTV techniques. While the former was seemingly effective in terms of electoral support, the latter lacked immediate success, as was proved by the 2004 referendum. In fact, the lesson learned from the referendum was that a decisive chunk of Hungarian society could still be mobilized around social welfare issues, even in situations where this results in a deep divide between Magyars in Hungary and those living in neighboring countries.[7] In an interview some three months subsequent to the fiasco in the referendum, the Fidesz leader acknowledged the existence of such tensions:

7 The socialists understood this "current of thought" of the Hungarian electorate; they built a successful campaign against then-Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's "Status Law," threatening that some "23 million Romanian jobseekers" would "flood Hungary" as a consequence of it. In the 2004 referendum on dual citizenship one of their main

We [Fidesz] knew that due to Hungary's economic difficulties, the majority of the people, mostly those in a precarious situation, could easily be turned against one another on materialistic versus value-centered issues. We also understood that this applied to our voters, as well.[8]

The failure of the 2004 referendum was thus an indicator for Fidesz and Viktor Orbán that the battle for the undecided and left-leaning voters could not be won unless the "national" agenda were dropped from the party's main communication themes. This decision was made all the more urgent following the appearance of new MSzP Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány, who succeeded Péter Medgyessy after the party's devastating result in the 2004 European Parliament elections. Gyurcsány's entry into the Hungarian political arena was perceived by the leaders of Fidesz as a factor facilitating the party's communication shift towards the center. A politician-turned-billionaire and former leader of the Communist Youth Alliance (*Kommunista Ifjúsági Szövetség*, KISz) in the late-1980s, Gyurcsány embodied the very characteristics of "gauche caviar" heavily criticized by Fidesz. For a while, it seemed that this reconfiguration of MSzP's leadership would help Fidesz achieve a strategic change of Hungary's political context, enabling the opposition party to challenge and hopefully discredit the Socialists on their own "battleground," that is, on welfare issues.

By mid-2005, a decisive victory seemed well within reach for Fidesz. After the party successfully mobilized its voters in the 2004 European Parliament elections, it managed to defeat the left-liberal majority in parliament in June 2005 to have László Sólyom, its presidential candidate, elected head of state.[9] Despite having no direct electoral consequence, the vote in parliament still proved a catalyst in public support for the main opposition party which, according to polls conducted between June and August 2005, managed to increase its lead over the Socialists from seven to 10 percentage points within the total population.[10] To capitalize on its success in parliament, Fidesz embarked on a "national consultation," a massive campaign for the summer of 2005 within which millions of questionnaires were sent out to citizens asking them to indicate what their major concerns were regarding Hungary's future. A "board of trustees" overseeing the campaign was also set up to symbolize the party's openness, consisting of intellectuals only loosely affiliated with Fidesz. Even a former reform communist, Imre Pozsgay, who by then had long since defected from the left and MSzP, was invited.

The strategic shift that Fidesz embarked upon in 2003 had seemed to reach completion by autumn 2005; the party was able to criticize Prime Minister Gyurcsány's government and its economic policies from a center-left position, insisting that the cabinet had been "hijacked" by neo-liberal ideas. Fidesz, from a pragmatic position, put pressure on the government for its focus on big business interests as a threat to the social situation of families,

messages was that should the majority support the initiative, it would threaten the Hungarian welfare system, most notably pensions.

8 "We'll Make It" – interview with Viktor Orbán in: Heti Válasz, February 17, 2005, pp.15–18.

9 The president of the Republic of Hungary is elected indirectly by members of parliament. The election, in the third round, of László Sólyom was made possible in large part by an internal split between the governing MSzP and its liberal coalition partner SzDSz, with the latter refusing to vote for then-House Speaker Katalin Szili, the socialist candidate.

10 Poll conducted by Median in August 2005. http://www.median.hu/object.83b6e943-a9e6-40d0-b081-9f17e-930c83e.ivy (accessed: June 28th 2010)

young couples and the elderly. The opposition party and its leader began systematically attacking the government for allowing privately owned providers of electricity, water and gas to reap "extra profits" at the expense of the Hungarian consumers. Summing up his criticism in an interview in September 2005, Fidesz leader Viktor Orbán stated:

Our approach may be summed up by the notion of a "protected" society, as opposed to the governing parties' idea of an "open" society. We believe that the people have to be protected from certain harmful effects of the market and the society. […] It is clear to everyone that the cabinet is pursuing an extreme liberal economic policy. […] In fact, the government consists of two liberal parties, one larger and one smaller.[11]

The strategy was clear: to label the governing coalition as a "liberal" cabinet while rebranding Fidesz as a "European people's party" that "leaves no one behind." Throughout the early stages of the campaign for the 2006 general elections, from 2004 to late 2005, the dominant area of competition between the main opposition party and the governing coalition's leading member, MSzP, was on economic and social policies. As the elections came closer, however, the comfortable advantage enjoyed by Fidesz slowly but surely started decreasing. By December 2005, the party had stabilized at a level of 35 percent support within the total population, while MSzP produced a considerable surge and saw its popularity rise from 27 percent in June to 32 percent in December, thereby reducing the difference to a mere three percentage points behind Fidesz.[12] In part, this was, of course, a natural consequence of the election campaign, usually resulting in a narrowing of the gap between the leading parties. On the other hand, the relative advantage enjoyed by Fidesz began to fade away as Prime Minister Gyurcsány's cabinet decided to "reconquer" the arena by increasing government spending and welfare expenditures. Among the public policies adopted in late 2005 and early 2006 was a five-percentage-point cut in the value-added-tax rate (VAT), followed by a five-year plan promising to further decrease the tax burden. Widespread welfare expenditures were introduced and election promises were made to expand spending on pensions, should the MSzP win. In fact, the Socialists' election manifesto explicitly promised to introduce fourteenth-month pensions until 2010. The political battle, therefore, started to be fought on the very issues that Fidesz had brought up during the preceding months, but on which, by nature of its position, the government could reposition itself as the "real" left-wing contender. By this time, however, the campaign was in full swing, and negative advertisements and billboards of Fidesz pointed out the government's underperformance in social welfare areas, paraphrasing Ronald Reagan's famous campaign in 1980: "we're worse off than four years ago."

Why and How Fidesz Lost the 2006 Election: Causes and Consequences

This chapter argues that the landslide victory of Fidesz in the 2010 elections is in large part a consequence of the party's internal structural reform, the "opening up" of an organization that had until then been characterized by an insignificant membership and a monolithic structure and the introduction of Western, mainly American, GOTV techniques.

11 "Too Many Politicians May Be Harmful" – interview with Viktor Orbán in: Heti Válasz, September 22, 2005, pp.16–18.

12 Poll conducted by Median in December 2005. http://www.median.hu/object.5fd03e05-26da-4e50-bc7f--e45686e63f33.ivy (accessed: June 29, 2010)

In fact, it took only a year after the party's congress in May 2003 for Fidesz to test its new organizational model in the 2004 European Parliament elections, in which the center right secured a decisive victory, receiving 47.4 percent of votes cast. Starting in spring 2004, the party introduced various forms of petitions against the incumbent government, collecting signatures on a whole set of issues ranging from a call to halt all further privatization to expressing support for potential presidential candidates. Direct-voter-contact techniques, paired with specifically targeted political marketing tools and a new local party organization based on the 176 single-member individual constituencies, were all introduced to help Fidesz overcome the strategic GOTV advantage of MSzP which helped the left oust Viktor Orbán's cabinet in 2002. The assessment of the key to the left's victory in 2002 was valid four years later as well. Lánczi argued that "[t]he success of the MSzP campaign, which began in 2001, was built on the simple concept of creating a local network based on interpersonal connections that emphasized fieldwork by party activists. […] It [MSzP] also utilized the media and direct-marketing tools to maximize mobilization." (Lánczi, 2005: 43).

In addition to adopting the latest techniques in voter mobilization, Fidesz made the strategic decision of making social welfare issues the main political battleground of the 2006 elections. There are, according to James Harding's recount, two traditions of campaign strategies used in United States presidential elections (Harding, 2008: 78): one focuses on those voters who have shown loyalty to either of the parties and crafts its message with the aim of mobilizing them at the expense of relatively little attention paid to undecided voters. The other strategy presupposes the support of loyal voters as granted and emphasizes the occupation of the political center to be able to collect the required majority of votes cast. Clearly, Fidesz opted for the latter in its 2006 campaign in order to maximize its power-seeking capacity. The result was a mainly materialistic approach designed to reach into a territory of the electoral market where the post-communist left had its strongholds: the elderly, pensioners, those disappointed by the failure of the democratic transition and market capitalism to guarantee welfare and the perceived relative security linked to the pre-1989 communist regime. While the pieces seemed to fit and certain elements of the campaign proved successful, the following reasons contributed to the defeat of Fidesz against MSzP at the polls in 2006:

A badly timed campaign: Fidesz started its campaign with negative messages on billboards and in advertisements, blaming the Socialist government for making people "worse off than four years ago." At the same time, MSzP ran a positive campaign which gave the image that the left, in power, still possessed the capacity to govern the country, while Fidesz devoted all its energies to criticizing the cabinet. By the time Fidesz realized this and shifted towards more positive campaign elements, these seemed incoherent with the party's initial messages.

A failure to change the context: an opposition party, by nature and definition, can criticize the government's public policies but will never have the capacity to define the incumbent majority's maneuvering space. Therefore while Fidesz seemed successful in the years 2004 and 2005 in criticizing "gauche caviar" and in suggesting that MSzP was in fact "hijacked" by the neo-liberal policies of its junior coalition partner SzDSz, when it came to lowering the VAT and introducing a five-year tax-reduction plan, Fidesz found itself on the defen-

sive again. As the election results showed, MSzP was capable of retaining its hold on the social agenda.

A disunited right: the decision to shift the focus from "too divisive" right-of-center themes toward the center had not only perplexed some of the traditional supporters of Fidesz, but also raised the question of relating to MDF, a former junior member of Orbán's government. The small party which positioned itself as the "true" conservative alternative to the "populist" Fidesz was successfully, and not without indirect help from Prime Minister Gyurcsány, framed as a "moderate" and "European" center-right party. Whereas post--election analyses clearly revealed that supporters of MDF were not in the right's camp by 2006, the notion of a "disunited" right proved to be a dilemma for Fidesz for the years to come.[13]

Lack of a narrative: Fidesz, upon discovering that it was not in a position to outperform the Socialist government in the welfare arena, failed to counter the MSzP communication offensive led by Prime Minister Gyurcsány. The opposition party seemed to lack a grip on the left's leader and looked halfhearted in criticizing his communist past, a phenomenon that could be explained by the strategic attempt of Fidesz to seduce disaffected leftist voters. As a consequence, by the time the opposition party discovered its comparative disadvantage in policies relating to social welfare issues, Fidesz had no clear narrative to offer to the voters.

Repositioning Orbán: parallel to the attempt to rebrand Fidesz as a party capable of seeking votes from the center and the left, the opposition's leader had to undergo a change in image so as to avoid inconsistency between the message and the medium. The need for this repositioning derived from the success of MSzP's strategy in the 2002 campaign to demonize Orbán. The then-prime minister was framed as a threat to liberal democracy, the constitution and political pluralism in Hungary. Removing Orbán from the arena of political conflicts to "soften" his image, however, caused uncertainty among core Fidesz voters and, as the results showed, proved unsuccessful against MSzP's assertive, often aggressive, leader.

Several other factors, including many unforced errors,[14] also contributed to the second Fidesz defeat at the polls. The consequences of the failure to return to government and to unite the political right behind one major party threatened to destabilize Fidesz, and that would have left the victorious Socialist-Liberal coalition without any real opposition. This, however, proved to be a short-lived and only theoretical problem. The government announced austerity measures it had vehemently rejected during the campaign, and fol-

13 With a mere 0.04 percentage points above the five-percent legal threshold, MDF made it into parliament in 2006. Fidesz eventually won in none of the individual constituencies where MDF candidates, defying a strategy of non-cooperation with Fidesz, decided to withdraw from the second round to help the larger opposition party's candidate beat the local Socialist contender, showing that those who supported MDF in the first round no longer identified themselves as belonging to the center right. Also, MDF gained most support from urban, technocratic voters – especially in Budapest – where the "traditional" right has always underperformed.

14 A non-exhaustive list would surely include "Servergate," in which Fidesz could not convincingly argue that one of its party activists did not break into MSzP's servers. The unfortunate statements of the party's candidate for deputy prime minister, István Mikola, also did little good for the party's "softer" image, as the former health minister talked of "herds of single women" and, at the party's congress said that by granting dual citizenship to ethnic Hungarians in neighboring states, Fidesz could secure its governing position for "a good twenty years." Last but not least, Viktor Orbán's performance in the televised debate with Prime Minister Gyurcsány seemed unconvincing, even for the loyal voters on the right.

lowing the leaked "Őszöd" speech of Prime Minister Gyurcsány, Fidesz quickly regained its momentum, shown by its landslide victory in the municipal elections in October 2006.[15]

III. The Internal Reform and the "Opening Up" of the Party: From Defeat to Victory: 2006–2010

The failure to oust the Socialist-Liberal government in 2006 may be traced to several causes. In the following, this chapter will argue that between 2006 and 2010, Fidesz proved successful in correcting its attempt to reposition the party as a contender to the MSzP on welfare, materialistic and leftist issues, and positioned itself as the credible, pragmatic and reliable alternative to Gyurcsány's cabinet. With regard to strategy, Fidesz chose a two--pronged approach: the opposition party published first a pamphlet in 2007, entitled "Our Future," then a manifesto of values later that year entitled "A Stronger Hungary," which emphasized the need to recapture the intellectual and value-centered arena. On the other hand, by initiating a referendum against the government's austerity measures that won by a landslide in March 2008, the opposition party could rearticulate its image of the "compassionate" right. A near-constant mobilization helped Fidesz gain 56.36 percent of vote in the 2009 European Parliament elections.

Reconquering the Right

Following its landslide victory in the municipal elections in October 2006, the congress of Fidesz, upon the initiative of Parliamentary Group Leader Tibor Navracsics, decided to pursue a four-month debate on the state of Hungary. The issues identified as the debate's central points were social justice, the quality of life, public services and competitiveness, both economic and social. A thematic campaign was built around these topics with each "chapter" ending in a conference. The pamphlet entitled "Our Future" was adopted by the congress of Fidesz in May 2007. Serving as a summary of the vision of Fidesz concerning the above-listed topics, the pamphlet begins with a summary of the center right's assessment of contemporary Hungary and a recapitulation of values shared by the main opposition party. The paper argues that the party's core values have been and remained the following: liberty, anti-communism, the civic ethos, security and social justice, the national interest and a Western orientation. The following are excerpts from the pamphlet (Fidesz 2007a: 11–18):

15 On September 17, 2006, Hungarian public radio aired an excerpt of what quickly became known as Prime Minister Gyurcsány's "Őszöd" speech. A leaked recording of the prime minister speaking to Socialist MPs after winning the elections, included statements such as: "It's clear we've been lying throughout the past one and a half to two years. It was absolutely clear that what we said was untrue." "And during all this, we didn't accomplish anything. Nothing at all!" "Hundreds of financial tricks […] have helped us make it." The leaked speech provoked mass demonstrations throughout the country and contributed to the credibility crisis of the government. The full speech can be read at: http://hu.wikiquote.org/wiki/Gyurcs%C3%A1ny_Ferenc#A_teljes_balaton.C5.91sz.C3.B6di_besz.C3.A9d (accessed: August 17, 2010)

The party has, from the first moment, stood up for human rights and democratic equality before the law. Fidesz has remained loyal to all liberal political rights. […] Of all the significant political parties today, Fidesz is the only one to firmly stand by its position saying that it is insufficient to eliminate the politics of communism, whose moral and intellectual heritage must also be countered. […] Anti-communism means that it is morally unacceptable to have the previous regime's privileged ones enjoy the same advantages today. […] Living by the civic ethos is more difficult than being a laborer in communism because the former requires personal efforts and merits. […] It was not Fidesz that boasted of its good Russian business partners. It is not Fidesz that wants to lead Hungary closer to Russian hegemony. Liberty has always come from the West.

Upon publication of this pamphlet, Fidesz turned to completing the process of writing a long-term manifesto for the party. Based on the approach outlined in "Our Future," the new document carrying the title "A Stronger Hungary" was published in December 2007. Once again under the supervision of Navracsics, the paper produced an articulated return to right-of-center policies and values. In his introduction (Fidesz 2007b: 5–7) Navracsics wrote that:

[t]he new European *zeitgeist* is aware of the fact that the families, nations and European culture do not solely belong to those living today, but form a common and inseparable community with the deceased and the future generations. […] The new right is democratic, patriotic, market-oriented and socially compassionate.[16]

The manifesto covers all major policy areas and outlines the approach of Fidesz to each one. As pragmatism coupled with moderate center-right arguments prevailed, the references so often used in the years 2004–2006 gradually lost their weight in the party's rhetoric. After a decisive victory in the 2009 European Parliament elections, newly reelected Chairman Orbán outlined his "personal" twelve-point manifesto, which was dubbed "The Fundamentals." Among these one finds a commitment not to enter a coalition with either the post-Communist MSzP or the extreme right-wing Jobbik, an emphasis on law and order and respect for tradition, support for families, and the statement that Fidesz is a center-right party committed to Transatlantic cooperation.[17]

Reconquering the right in terms of rhetoric, policies and symbolic gestures, as well as communication, meant a cautious readjustment of the position taken by Fidesz in 2006. What made this possible *inter alia* was that the opposition party no longer had to convince undecided voters that the government led by MSzP Prime Minister Gyurcsány had lost the capacity to introduce public policies that would satisfy both the conditions set by the European Union to reduce the budget deficit *and* the party's traditional voter base of those age 60 and older. Fiscal conservatism, as was discovered by the cabinet, was hard to put in harmony with the social welfare demands coming from the electorate. Under these circumstances Fidesz "naturally" found itself in the position to be able to reach into the electoral market of disaffected leftist voters without being forced to make concessions similar

16 For the complete Hungarian version, go to: http://jovonk.hu/FideszPP2007_HU.pdf. For the abridged English-language version: http://static.fidesz.hu/download/_EN/FideszPP2007_EN.pdf (both accessed: July 1, 2010)

17 For the Hungarian version, go to: http://static.fidesz.hu/download/mok/fundamentumok.pdf. For a short account of the congress where Orbán's fundamentals were presented, go to: http://fidesz.hu/index.php?Cikk=135274 (both accessed: July 1, 2010).

to the ones made in 2004-2006. Hungary's domestic agenda during years 2006–2009 thus helped Fidesz regain its natural position on the right. In addition to the domestic arena, Fidesz also consistently worked on rearticulating its commitment to the Transatlantic alliance. Orbán's explicit preference for the EU-backed natural gas pipeline Nabucco vis-à-vis the Russian "South Stream" project, the open support of Fidesz for Georgia during its conflict with Russia in August 2008 and the welcoming of independent Kosovo were clear sings of unchanged dedication to the Transatlantic partnership.

Constant Mobilization

Besides a decisive shift in communication, Fidesz also maintained its capacity to mobilize supporters for all types of elections, be they municipal, parliamentary or at the EU level. The October 2006 municipal elections were only the first step. The major GOTV "test" came in the form of a referendum in March 2008. This plebiscite, which eventually resulted in the coalition split between MSzP and SzDSz, was initiated as early as October 2006. Originally intended to include seven questions, the final version approved by the Constitutional Court had three propositions: to abolish a mandatory a visit fee (or co-pay) for medical check-ups, a hospital treatment fee and university tuition fees, all introduced as parts of the austerity package passed by the Gyurcsány cabinet.[18]

Given the election failure only two years prior to the announcement of the new referendum, the initiative carried considerable risks. By the time the campaign for the referendum started, in February 2008, the incumbent coalition's popularity rating was already low. What also made it difficult for the government to survive the vote on its own austerity measures was that fact that many disaffected leftist supporters were ready to back the initiative of Fidesz, thus leaving the governing parties with the task of openly defending the very public policies that caused their loss of support. This was especially the case with MSzP. The Socialists would have had to argue in favor of measures which alienated even their hardcore pensioner voter base. The situation proved impossible to handle – with more than three million voters backing each question proposed by Fidesz, and on March 8, 2008 the government suffered a defeat heavier than was predicted by many pollsters and analysts.

For the success of its referendum, Fidesz managed to mobilize not only its supporters but many who had previously not shared a political platform with the center-right party. Fidesz proved capable of positioning itself as a "compassionate" center-right party which conquered parts of the electoral market that had previously been virtually monopolized by the left. In order not to alienate potential support from former leftist voters, the mobilization for the referendum was done without any large-scale campaign events featuring Viktor Orbán. The party chairman toured Hungary and spoke to local media but avoided much-publicized rallies, while behind the scenes a massive mobilization effort was carried

18 Contrary to many interpretations, this referendum was not directed against "market reforms." Firstly, this was the case because the introduction of visiting fees, hospital treatment co-financing and university tuition fees was not part of a broader public policy package to reconfigure the state's income and expenditures, but rather three elements in a series of austerity measures to avoid further deterioration of the budget deficit. Secondly, the referendum's political message was more important: the government introduced these measures despite denying any plans to do so during the 2006 election campaign, even when Fidesz raised the issue that the Socialists intended to pass such measures.

out, the success of which was proved by the results. There was literally no constituency in which the majority of voters supported the government's position. In order to assemble a "coalition" of supporters backing the abolition of measures affecting, on the one hand, mostly the elderly, such as visit and treatment fees in health care, and on the other hand, younger people, Fidesz relied heavily on direct-marketing tools and messages targeted at specific subgroups of voters. The strategy of channeling dissatisfaction with the government into the three questions of a referendum proved a success.

The referendum's long-term political consequences had hardly been settled by the eventual resignation of Gyurcsány from the position of prime minister on March 21, 2009, when the next test of the capacity of Fidesz to keep its supporters constantly mobilized was already in sight. This time it was that year's elections to the European Parliament. Only a month earlier, a mayoral election was held in the southwestern city of Pécs, where no center-right candidate had managed to win a majority since 1994. With this in mind, Fidesz conducted a specific campaign for its nominee, relying heavily on local activists, web-based campaign tools and massive GOTV efforts resulting in a decisive victory against the MSzP's most popular politician, former Parliament Speaker Katalin Szili. The European Parliament elections proved equally successful in terms of mobilization: with 56 percent of the votes cast, Fidesz comfortably held on to the majority of Hungarian seats.

The lesson learned for Fidesz from the four major victories between 2006 and 2010 was that in weighing how to balance among extensive outdoor advertisements, large-scale events and intensive voter mobilization in a campaign, the emphasis needs to fall on the last of these. This does not mean the end of "traditional" campaigning, but underlines the importance of direct voter contact and new campaign tools, including social media platforms and web-based technologies.

It's the Network: Media, Think Tanks and New Communities

When analyzing the causes of Fidesz defeat in 2002, it was commonplace to assume that the media was in large part responsible for the failure of the government to convey a more positive image of its performance. This belief was underpinned by numbers, as shown by Lánczi (Lánczi, 2005: 42). In a sharp contrast to this, by 2010, the center right in Hungary had succeeded in constructing a media network which guaranteed the presence of its interpretation of the domestic agenda in the public discourse. When campaigning in 2002, Fidesz could count on one daily (*Magyar Nemzet*) and two weeklies (*Heti Válasz* and *Magyar Demokrata*) and the state-owned, albeit less-watched, television station to have its message framed in the nationwide media in a non-negative environment. Eight years later this portfolio grew in size to a level where moderate and more popular right--of-center media could also be distinguished. In addition to the above-mentioned daily and weekly newspapers, a repositioned daily (the formerly liberal *Magyar Hírlap*) and two television channels (including Hungary's first news channel, HírTV, and its radical alter ego, EchoTV) were in the media mix, coupled with the moderate conservative news radio channel Inforadio and a more straightforward counterpart, Lánchíd FM.

Paradoxically, these papers and electronic media platforms grew in number and influence in parallel with Fidesz's eight years in opposition. The presence of right-of-center and conservative media helped the party, its intellectual supporters and voters to form a commu-

nity connected by dissatisfaction with the Socialist government and articulate the views of an eclectic coalition of right-of-center, socially conservative, moderately market-liberal and Christian opinion leaders, journalists, economists and intellectuals, both young and old. Throughout the years in opposition, most notably the period from 2006-2010, the presence of such radio and television channels, as well as daily and weekly newspapers, made the notion of a "left-liberal-leaning media" seem outdated. These papers and stations not only helped to frame the public discourse for sympathizers of the center right but also, through professionalization in fields such as investigative journalism, contributed in many ways to the success of Fidesz in shaping its anti-corruption communications. The strength of the presence of right-of-center media in the public discourse is aptly exemplified by the reactions from the left; it even prompted former Prime Minister Gyurcsány to express his concerns about the "rise of conservative fundamentalism:"

> This [conservative fundamentalism] threatens the liberty of citizens and the religious neutrality of the state by taking away rights and freedoms and imposing limits by way of a reference to tradition. It seems all the more clear that this is not a simple political debate but instead that a clash of world-views, more apparent than ever, can be observed. It is not simply traditionalism versus modernism, but rather a clash of conservative fundamentalism with secularism and liberalism.[19]

Although no value surveys were published during these years, it may be hypothesized that instead of what Gyurcsány and, after him, the mainstream left-liberal intelligentsia and media suggested, it was the more effective representation of ideas belonging to the right than their real appeal which made anti-liberalism and opposition to the government look like a coherent "movement." In fact, this rather eclectic coalition was never united on a number of political and cultural issues. Its internal differences were debated vehemently on questions such as the preferred attitude toward the United States or Russia, the necessity of a critique of capitalism or the role churches should play within society. These created real political cleavages within this community. What made it look so strong was that, in spite of the existence of such internal debates, these circles were all united in rejecting the policies of the Socialist cabinet.

The change in Hungary's media landscape can only be fully understood by taking into account the presence of "politics 2. 0. " In contrast to the growing strength of right-of--center radio and television channels and newspapers, where at times the active support of Fidesz was involved, the conservative blogosphere grew organically. The party noticed the strength of such new politics only by 2009 when center-right blogs, fora and websites were already heavily overrepresented within the online community. Whereas previously the party had followed a cautious, if not unfriendly, attitude towards this form of new politics, by 2009 Fidesz understood that using YouTube, Facebook and other tools of "web 2.0" was not only useful in becoming more attractive for younger voters, but also saved a significant sum of money for other campaign necessities. The party discovered how effectively its proposals could be spread by way of relying on the new social media. It also understood that it was not only party communiqués that could help bring the message home, but simply the presence of online communities, many of which were not in any way

19 "Gyurcsány Does Not Understand László Sólyom." Quoted in: Népszabadság, January 6, 2009. See: http://www.nol.hu/belfold/gyurcsany_nem_erti_solyom_laszlot (accessed: July 2, 2010)

linked to the party itself. By the 2010 elections, the right and Fidesz had won the online battle (for details and polling figures see Szabo, 2010: 14–15).

New communities, by definition, are born more-or-less spontaneously and tend to be less organized. To craft a more professional message, however, the center right needed think tanks that could help develop its interpretation of the public discourse with an analytical and scientific approach. Until 2006, Fidesz and the Hungarian center right underestimated the importance of such think tanks in formulating a moderate conservative world-view both for the domestic and the international arena. Whereas the left could reliably count on its intellectual supporters in the form of *inter alia* political think tanks and polling institutes, Fidesz only discovered the importance of this after losing the 2006 elections. By assisting in the establishment of a conservative-liberal polling, analysis and consultancy institute, former Parliamentary Group Leader Tibor Navracsics undertook to create an intellectual background for the center right similar to what has already been a successful model in the United States and Great Britain. Nézőpont Intézet (Perspective Institute) grew in the four years between 2006 and 2010 from a small institute to a defining actor in the field of public opinion polling, campaign consultancy and policy analysis. The model also proved successful in two further aspects: the institute helped recruit young professionals from the fields of political science, sociology, international relations and political communication, giving them the possibility of working for an organization that was constantly growing in media presence. Secondly, by articulating a moderate, modern and "Western-compatible" message towards major American press agencies, the Hungarian center right was given a more balanced portrait abroad. This was a major change compared to the party's attitude during its first term in government when winning the political battle at home was believed to be enough, irrespective of reactions from abroad.

Much of this, of course, is not directly linked to Fidesz; the party seemed more a catalyst of these processes that eventually culminated in a right-of-center network taking shape. Here, bloggers, political commentators, pollsters, editors and intellectuals started connecting to one another, organizing common events and articulating a newer form of center-right politics.

IV. Why and How Fidesz Won Again: a Summary

Taking 52 percent of votes cast and winning 173 out of a total of 176 single-member individual constituencies, Fidesz secured a two-thirds majority in parliament in the 2010 elections. This chapter has suggested that to be able to achieve such an unparalleled gain in support, the party had to undergo considerable changes in terms of structure and communication and in its approach to the media – domestic, foreign, offline and online. More effectiveness meant relying on GOTV techniques and direct-marketing tools: in short, a professionalization of campaign strategy. The following are points of recapitulation to have a structured understanding of how Fidesz won in 2010:

Uniting the right. By the start of the 2010 campaign, Fidesz has successfully occupied and firmly held onto the widest possible spectrum of the Hungarian right. This meant a coali-

tion that reached from disaffected Socialists to the hardcore right. In order to keep this heterogeneous camp together, the party avoided ideological questions and left the more divisive issues either to its junior partner, the Christian Democratic People's Party (*Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt,* KDNP), or, in most cases, completely off the agenda. Fidesz successfully positioned itself as the only moderate solution, distancing the center right from the extreme right-wing Jobbik party. In fact, polling data revealed that potential secondary preference for Jobbik among the Fidesz voters drastically fell when Fidesz decided to heavily criticize the radical party.

Managing expectations. One of the reasons for Fidesz's defeat in 2002 was that the center-right party and government were reluctant to follow the opposition MSZP in its uninhibited election promises, such as a fifty-percent increase in public-sector salaries. When, in 2006, Fidesz tried to outdo the Socialists on certain leftist issues, it failed again, because no matter how hard the campaign strategists tried, completely repositioning a party and reframing its communication seemed ideologically inconsistent. In 2010, Fidesz was already strong enough to be able to shape and frame the political context and could keep its message simple by saying that austerity policies were a failure and the next government would put emphasis on economic growth and job-creation. Big promises were avoided, and this time the strategy was congruent with the public mood.

Keeping the campaign short. Longer campaigns, especially the one in 2006, showed that the lead enjoyed by Fidesz could be turned around by MSzP's effective communication and mobilization. In 2010, Fidesz succeeded by limiting the hottest period of political campaign to less than a month, from March 15 to the first round on April 11.

Marginalizing other contenders. Fidesz capitalized on its massive lead in the polls and successfully kept the governing MSzP and other contenders marginalized. In certain cases this also meant neglecting demands from other parties to join election debates. The logic behind this was simple: any situation in which Fidesz or its leading politicians appear together with other candidates and contenders is free political advertisement for the other parties.

Strong campaign coordination. Having set up its GOTV strategy and having planned the campaign from A to Z also meant little room for individual maneuvering in the campaign. Billboards, outdoor advertisements and even campaign leaflets were designed to remind voters of what was perceived to be the strongest political brand: Fidesz. This implied a strategy of reducing the weight of local campaigns, allowing new candidates to simply "use" the label to win in constituencies where the right had never succeeded since the democratic transition.

"Man in the arena." As the polls started steadily reflecting higher support for Fidesz Chairman Viktor Orbán than for his party, billboards appeared portraying only the prime minister candidate and the main message "The Time is Now." This also meant abandoning the traditional orange color and even the party logo. This was perhaps the clearest sign that the left's long successful campaign built on the idea that the right in general, and Orbán, in particular, were "dividers" had eventually failed.

The promise of something "new." Throughout the campaign, Fidesz kept its message simple and emphasized that once in power, it would usher in an era of "new politics." Of course,

this promise was never fully elaborated, but after eight years in government, the Socialists were too weak to question the newness of a party which, after all, had been led by the same person for the past two decades.

Keeping the message simple. With practically no ideological elements explored, Fidesz opted for themes that were universally applicable throughout the country: fighting corruption, restoring public security, putting the economy back on track and providing stability. Though these themes were selected at the expense of more sophisticated and innovative initiatives, they helped in keeping a base of 2.7 million voters together.

Proactive use of social media tools. Web 2.0 tools in Hungary, albeit still in development, already make a difference for any political party, especially if it wants to keep its support among the less-active, younger population. Fidesz, beside relying on an unprecedentedly friendly online community, turned unexpectedly proactive in its usage of social media platforms. Leading party figures, most importantly Viktor Orbán, used Facebook intensively while former Parliamentary Group Leader Tibor Navracsics used his "community" blog to reach out to younger voters.

GOTV: Fidesz learned from the past years that no matter how successful its campaign had been, the last 24-72 hours mattered perhaps even more than everything else. Spending the last minutes of campaigning on direct voter contact, including door-to-door visits, phone calls, e-mails and SMS messages helped keep the party's supporters mobilized. Also, by putting less emphasis on big outdoor party rallies, Fidesz succeeded in not getting undecided leftist supporters out to vote for MSzP.

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The Conservative Comeback in Lithuania in 2008: A Pyrrhic victory?

Mantas Adomėnas

CONTENTS:

Not only does each victory contain in itself the seeds of future defeat, but the very nature of victory also determines the way this defeat will come about. Nothing could be truer when one speaks about the Conservative comeback in Lithuania in 2008, where a sure, though not absolute, victory in the parliamentary election (a four-party coalition had to be cobbled together to ensure a parliamentary majority) was achieved through crippling mobilization of all available resources. Moreover, its result was a government formed on the eve of the global economic crisis, which forced adoption of unpopular austerity measures and hindered a reform agenda that was at the core of the Conservatives' renewed center-right identity.

I. Prehistory

First things first, however. In analyzing victory, more attention needs to be given to external factors – to that which was happening and was done by others – than in the analysis of defeat, where study of the outcome ought to concentrate on the moves of the political actors themselves. Therefore let us recapitulate the principal events and processes that set the stage for the 2008 parliamentary election and its results.

The primary milestone in that sequence of events is the catastrophic defeat of the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Conservatives (*Tėvynės sąjunga – lietuvos konservatoriai,* TS-LK), as well as of the Lithuanian center right in general, in the 2000 parliamentary elections. Out of 70 seats held before the election, only nine seats remained. The erstwhile coalition partners, the Lithuanian Christian Democrats (*Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai*, LKD) contracted from 16 to two seats. The causes of the defeat (analyzed in greater detail in the previous IRI publication *Why We Lost*) were partly objective and unavoidable (such as unpopular austerity measures necessitated by the reverberations of the Russian economic crisis of 1998-1999, as well as the rise of anti-ideological, image-based "new politics" and its attractiveness to electorate) or partly objective, but avoidable (such as the lost propaganda battle over the geopolitically motivated sale of the Mažeikiai Oil Refinery to the American company Williams, for which the Russian company LUKoil was also a contender and copiously oiled the anti-Conservative media war). Other causes were subjective (for example, disastrous public relations and a failure to adjust to the changing political culture and expectations of the electorate) or even self-administered (such as amateurish and ruinous tinkering with the electoral law before the 2000 election).

In the case of the last of these, run-off elections were abolished in single-member constituencies in the hope of attracting hesitant voters to vote for the tried-and-tested Conservative party, rather than for its rivals among new upstarts, principally Artūras Paulauskas' New Union (*Naujoji sąjunga,* NS). The move was not based on sound electoral analysis and totally misfired. The Conservatives received only one seat in parliament through single-member constituencies. Had the party had the opportunity to compete in the second round, it could have hoped to win at least six to eight additional seats.

Two further events that were decisive in shaping the long-term political landscape were, of course, Lithuania's entry into NATO and the EU on March 29 and May 1, 2004, respectively. Given the temporal proximity of these two accessions it is perhaps legitimate

to treat them as a single event, and the outcomes of this epoch-marking event have been manifold and contradictory. On the one hand, it led to the increase of social and economic confidence among the Lithuanian population and accelerated the formation of the middle class, especially in rural areas where EU subsidies lifted a whole stratum of previously impoverished farmers into relative prosperity. This, in turn, beaconed the severe weakening of the power-base of at least two populist parties that used to capitalize on the vote of rural social-economic discontent: the Lithuanian Peasant Popular Union (*Lietuvos valstiečių liaudininkų sąjunga,* LVLS) of Kazimira Prunskienė and Paulauskas' New Union. These parties would be nearly wiped out in the 2008 election, leading to their eventual demise. Their "systemic" rivals, such as the Conservatives and Social Democrats, on the other hand, entrenched their positions in the countryside. On a more general scale, the formation of a middle class contributed to the growing stabilization of the political system and led to greater predictability within political permutations – even though the political field remained, and still continues to be, hugely volatile, as Lithuania has yet to see the same party to win a majority in two successive elections.

The second important impact was on geopolitical thinking. With entry into the EU and especially NATO – with three air-policing NATO fighters stationed at the military airport near the Lithuanian city of Šiauliai – the Lithuanian population suddenly felt protected from its Eastern neighbors and therefore increasingly able to question the Transatlantic consensus that previously prevailed. Public attitudes toward NATO and the United States started cooling gradually, encouraged to some extent, perhaps, by the growing anti-Americanism in the EU (with which the Lithuanians started to identify more and more) and fuelled to considerable degree by the targeted information campaign from Russia, as Vladimir Putin's regime grew increasingly comfortable and adept with the levers of "soft" (economic, energy, cultural and informational) power in its self-designated privileged sphere of interest in the "near abroad." This is a process that is still unfinished, and it would be far too premature to speculate about Lithuania's geopolitical realignment, but the firm pro-NATO consensus of the early years of the century certainly seems remote and inaccessible. The most disconcerting feature of this shift is the mismatch between the political elites that are by-and-large Atlanticist, and the population at large which – partly in defiance of the "establishment" political course – is increasingly critical of Atlanticist institutions and Lithuania's NATO commitments and is more amenable towards Russia.

Thirdly, accession to the EU spelled the end of the course of rapid and radical policy reforms that formed the prerequisite of accession. These reforms, covering areas of governance, the judicial system, agriculture and public finance, were especially vigorous from 1999-2004. By 2004, accession criteria had been fulfilled. Lithuania, whose foreign and domestic policy since the restoration of independence in 1990 had been dominated by the goal of integration into Western political and security structures, suddenly found itself at a loss for direction or a unifying political vision. This absence did not become immediately apparent, but its foundations had been laid amid the accession celebrations in 2004.

What did become almost immediately apparent, however, was that for many Lithuanians the newly opened Europe presented an irresistible attraction. The fourth outcome of ac-

cession was a radical increase in emigration. Emigration from Lithuania to Europe and North America had existed previously. Yet the large-scale population outflow that started with accession into the EU was something that caught policy-makers completely off guard. Emigration became a wide-spread phenomenon before it became a policy concern or a political issue, and successive governments struggled to come to terms with its sheer volume and impact. Between 1990 and 2010, some 400,000-550,000 Lithuanian citizens (from a general population of 3.6 million) are thought to have emigrated. Lithuania continues to have the largest population outflow *per capita* among the new EU member states. While the immediate impact of emigration seemed – and was considered by some politicians to be – benign, bringing a reduction of unemployment and crime and significant cash flows from abroad, its long-term consequences are anything but benign. They include demographic decline, brain drain that stunts scientific and technological progress, and hence economic development, as well as a loss of self-reliant and pro-active voters (those who emigrate tend, by definition, to fend for themselves, forgoing welfare subsidies), leading to an increase in the proportion of the resentful, insecure and welfare-reliant electorate which serves as fodder for populist political tendencies.

Finally, one should mention that entry into the EU created a much more complex internal political dynamic. In addition to "traditional" political institutions, such as the parliament, presidency and government, new variables entered into the domestic political equation: the European Parliament, European Commission, national Members of the European Parliament and European Commissioners, and a whole host of lesser institutions, to some extent complicating and re-balancing the existing mechanisms of politics.

II. Dramatis Personae

Such was the setting of the stage, the basic political rules of the game, for the four years between accession to the EU and NATO and the Conservatives' parliamentary victory in 2008. This stage was populated by a cast of political actors, most of which had survived from the previous period, sometimes acquiring new roles, rising to prominence or receding therefrom and changing political niches. Thus the principal actors in the years 2004-2008 are as follows. Of these, only a couple, Artūras Zuokas and Arūnas Valinskas, had not been in national politics before the turn of the millennium.

Conservatives

The Homeland Union (*Tėvynės Sąjunga*, TS), a.k.a. the Conservative Party, whose initial official title was the Homeland Union (Lithuanian Conservatives), underwent a series of political transformations during the period under discussion. First of all, it absorbed a small faction of the Modern Christian Democrats (*Modernieji krikščionys demokratai*) that splintered from the mainstream Christian Democratic Party on the eve of the electoral catastrophe in 2000 and disintegrated shortly afterward. This faction gave rise to the Christian-democratic wing within the Conservatives. In 2004 Homeland Union merged with its erstwhile ally, the venerable, numerous and vociferous, but aging and declining Lithuanian Union of Political Prisoners and Exiles (*Lietuvos politinių kalinių ir tremtinių*

sąjunga, PLKTS). The name of the party was modified to reflect these changes. Starting in 2004 the merged party was officially known as Homeland Union (Conservatives, Political Prisoners and Exiles, Christian Democrats). A further bout of expansion followed in 2008. At first the Conservatives swallowed the obsolescent Nationalist Union of Lithuania (*Lietuvių tautininkų sąjunga*, LTS) which had virtually no political representation, but continued the tenuous tradition of the pre-war nationalists and had some following among the older Lithuanian diaspora in the United States. Also in 2008, after prolonged and arduous negotiations, the Conservatives merged with the Lithuanian Christian Democrats, the last substantial center-right party that remained at large on the political scene. The name of the united party was changed once again. From 2008 onward it has been officially known as Homeland Union (Conservatives, Political Prisoners and Exiles, Nationalists)-Lithuanian Christian Democrats.

Andrius Kubilius (born 1956) – former physicist, reformist prime minister of Lithuania from 1999-2000 and from 2008-2012, chairman of the Homeland Union (Lithuanian Conservatives) from 2003-2008, and from 2008 of the united party Homeland Union--Lithuanian Christian Democrats. The breadth and audacity of his reform proposals were matched only by his reluctance to communicate his vision to allies and opponents alike, which made their implementation problematic. This reluctance, combined with a certain intellectual aloofness was aggravated by the tough decisions that needed to be adopted during the economic crises. His tenure seems always to coincide with an onset of a crisis, whether in 1998-1999 or in 2008-2009, a fact that earned him the title of one of the least popular Lithuanian politicians, even though he is highly respected by experts and observers abroad, as well as by more high-brow voters at home.

Professor Vytautas Landsbergis (born 1932) – musicologist and art historian by profession, he did not enter politics until the age of 55, becoming by common consensus the most important Lithuanian politician of the Twentieth Century. Both founder and the first leader of, among others, the Lithuanian popular movement Sąjūdis (1988), the independent Republic of Lithuania (1990) and the Conservative Party (1993), he alone among Lithuanian public figures has the right to the title of *Pater patriae*. He was the speaker of parliament from 1990-1992 and 1996-2000. Having handed over the chairmanship of the Conservative Party to Andrius Kubilius in 2003, he retained and, in a way, even increased his influence, exercising a sort of "soft power" which he wields as moral authority and political arbiter. Beginning in 2004 Landsbergis has represented Lithuania in the European Parliament.

Irena Degutienė (born 1949) – minister of social affairs and labor in the Conservative governments of 1996-2000 and speaker of parliament from 2009-2012. Having advocated Christian and pro-life positions throughout her political career, she presided over the Christian-Democrat-leaning wing within the Conservatives. Her political influence was further boosted through the merger of the Conservative and Christian Democratic parties. Almost unique among the top-echelon Conservatives (and Christian Democrats), she could forcefully address everyday concerns and emotions of ordinary voters and was the second most popular and trusted political figure in Lithuania after the President Dalia Grybauskaitė. She was seen as an heir presumptive to Andrius Kubilius in the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats.

Others (in the order of appearance)

Algirdas Brazauskas (1932–2010) – the last (but not least) first secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party (*Lietuvos komunistų partija,* LKP) and the first formally elected president of newly independent Lithuania (1993-1998). He was prime minister of Lithuania from 2001-2006. From 1990-2007 he was often the official, and always the *de facto* chairman of the ex-communist Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (*Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija*, LSDP) which until 2001 was known as the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party (*Lietuvos demokratinė darbo partija*, LDDP), not to be confused with the later Labor Party (*Darbo Partija*, DP) of Viktor Uspaskih. His monumental figure beaconed stability, which was also his political by-word. His distinctive down-to-earth idiom, partly a result of his peasant origins and partly from communist *nomenklatura* newspeak, was surprisingly effective among the part of the electorate that had neither intellectual aspirations nor ingrained antipathy towards the Soviet past. He favored back-room deals (which he called "pragmatism") over principled stances, presided over grand-scale public property theft through "privatization" in the early 1990s, was involved in a number of public sector scams, failed to get Lithuania into the Eurozone because of a decimal percentage-point irregularity, abandoned his wife to marry a former *nomenklatura*-hotel waitress, espoused the policy of shameless political favoritism and yet died as a respected elderly statesman mourned by friends and foes alike.

Valdas Adamkus (born 1926) – president of Lithuania from 1998-2003 and 2004-2009. Having entered public life from the Lithuanian diaspora in the United States, Adamkus exuded, especially during his first presidency, political stature and moral earnestness unmatched by home-grown politicians. A moderate liberal, he presided over a domestic policy course leading towards political stability, the strengthening of democratic institutions and modernization, while in foreign policy he favored resolute Transatlantic integration and an ambitious program of supporting pro-Western democratic movements and governments in the post-Soviet space.

Artūras Paulauskas (born 1953) – speaker of parliament (2000-2006). The first among the successive waves of populist politicians, he lost the presidential election to Valdas Adamkus in 1998 by barely half a percentage point. Undeterred, he created the New Union, a.k.a. the oxymoronically named Social Liberals (*Socialliberalai*), the first Lithuanian political force without a distinctive political ideology. It won 29 seats in parliament in the 2000 election and was part of various governing coalitions from 2000 to 2006, and again briefly in 2008. The New Union was nearly wiped out in the 2008 parliamentary election.

Rolandas Paksas (born 1956) – a populist politician, whose series of political misadventures culminated in his removal, through impeachment for perjury, from the position of the president of the Republic in 2004, thus making him the first successfully impeached president on the continent of Europe. He occupied, in turn, the positions of mayor of Vilnius (1997-1999), Conservative prime minister (June-November 1999), mayor of Vilnius (April-November 2000), Liberal prime minister (November 2000-July 2001) and president of Lithuania (2003-2004) – all positions as short-lived as they were lacking in achievement. Suspected to be in the pay of Russia (his chief presidential campaign sponsor is a former officer in the Russian Main Intelligence Directorate, GRU), he was dependent on psychic seers and rescued from deserved political obscurity only through the

immense capacity for sympathy on behalf of some segments of the Lithuanian public. In 2002 he created the (misleadingly named) Liberal Democratic Party (*Liberalų Demokratų Partija*, LDP), from 2006 known as the Order and Justice (*Tvarka ir teisingumas*, TT) party. Its main contribution to Lithuanian political life is the fomenting of the politics of resentment and attempts to rehabilitate Paksas who, after impeachment, cannot occupy any public positions in Lithuania which require taking an oath.

Viktor Uspaskih (born 1959 in Russia) – perhaps the most scandalous and flamboyant player in Lithuanian politics. A welder by profession, Uspaskih arrived in Lithuania only in 1985 and received citizenship in 1991, yet managed to become one of the richest people in Lithuania through being, at some point, the privileged sole importer of Russian gas. He was the chief sponsor of Paulauskas' populist campaigns and was elected to parliament in 2000 as a New Union candidate. In 2003 he created his own Labor Party, a brutally efficient political machine, which won 39 seats in the 2004 parliamentary election and a position as minister of economy for Uspaskih. He resigned as minister in 2005 over allegations of conflict of interest and financial scandals. In 2006 a new case against him surfaced, involving the use of approximately seven million Euros of illegal campaign funds. Uspaskih promptly fled to Russia, where he requested political asylum. He returned to Lithuania in 2007 after immunity was granted to him as a parliamentary candidate. He has been battling prosecution ever since, from 2009 using the European Parliament as a bolt-hole. He is seen by many as the principal purveyor of Russian influence in Lithuanian politics.

Artūras Zuokas (born 1968) – highly popular mayor of Vilnius (2000-2007) and the most prominent liberal politician in Lithuania. He is a charismatic, youthful and energetic political leader and was seen by many as a model new-generation European politician and a natural heir to President Adamkus' moderate liberal tradition. Damaged by many allegations of corruption, however, he gradually lost his grip on both liberal and municipal politics. He resigned from parliament in 2009, whereupon he sought re-entry into political life as an independent, non-party-political public figure.

Gediminas Kirkilas (born 1951) – atypically for a career communist, Kirkilas worked as a professional restorer of stucco moldings and gilt. Fiercely pro-NATO and pro-EU, among the Social Democrats he was the most consistent advocate of Lithuania's integration into both. He served as minister of defense from 2004-2006 and succeeded Algirdas Brazauskas as prime minister in 2006 and as chairman of the Social Democrats in 2007 – the first real handover of power since 1990. Kirkilas promised ambitious reforms and balanced, transparent, responsible, European-style social-democratic policies, and his minority government was supported by the Conservatives. The reforms failed to materialize, though, and Kirkilas became embroiled in the complicated affair over the building of a new nuclear power plant and squandered the state budget prodigiously just before the onset of the global economic downturn. His departure from office in 2008 was not mourned, and he was voted out as the leader of the Social Democrats in 2009.

Arūnas Valinskas (born 1966) – popular entertainer, latest in the line of populist – or rather, in this case, pop-culturalist – forays into democratic politics. In 2008 he established the National Revival (literally – Resurrection) Party (*Tautos prisikėlimo partija,* TPP), with the Ten Commandments published as its manifesto. Its principal electoral slogan was: "The parliament consists of fools anyway; and nobody fools around as well as we do!"

The TPP won 18 seats in parliament in 2008 and entered the governing coalition with the Conservatives. Valinskas was elected speaker of parliament and sought to distance himself from the frivolous image he had adopted in the election campaign. However, barely a year later his party splintered, and he was forced to resign as speaker in 2009.

Dalia Grybauskaitė (born 1956) – current president of Lithuania (from 2009), previously minister of finance (2001-2004) and European Commissioner for financial programming and the budget (2004-2009). A Leningrad- and Moscow-educated Soviet economist, she was sufficiently neutral in Lithuanian domestic politics to earn and retain the support of both right and left. Her presidency is characterized by strident strong-arm rhetoric, by thorough dismantling of President Adamkus' ambitious, if somewhat idealistic, Eastern policy, and by attempts to curry favor with both Russia and Belarus, while sending up Lithuania's Transatlantic links and commitments, much to the chagrin of professional diplomats. She is said thoroughly to enjoy her popular nickname "The Iron Lady." Ever since her election, she has enjoyed stratospheric personal approval ratings (in September 2010 her approval rating rose to 87.6 percent). The office of the presidency, according to polls, is the second most trusted public institution, yielding in popularity only to fire-fighters.

III. Elusive Quest for Unity

If one had to name one overarching theme or concern in the political life of Lithuania during the four years between accession into the EU and NATO and the 2008 parliamentary election, it would be the quest for unity among the traditional political forces. This was born out of concern for the stability of Lithuania's democratic institutions and made keener by the populist threats that seemed to come in more-or-less regular waves, rocking the fragile ship of state.

Some of these threats have already been noted. Artūras Paulauskas, whose campaign included calls to halt Lithuania's Western integration, nearly succeeded in winning the presidency in 1998. Three years later, however, the "new politics" paradigm he devised, which advocated non-ideological, pragmatic "governance by experts," managed to capture a sizeable proportion of seats in parliament. By then Paulauskas' New Union had been tamed and made to abandon its more outlandish and dangerous proposals.

A further populist wave with a widely suspected Russian background resulted in Rolandas Paksas' election as president in 2003. It was against him that the political elites representing traditional national parties closed their ranks in 2004. He was removed in April 2004 on charges of perjury amid allegations of corruption and betrayal of the national interest. Virtually all traditional political parties (Conservatives, Social Democrats and Liberals) cooperated in Paksas' impeachment. His removal was a landmark that seemed to pre-figure a period of political concord and security.

This debacle also brought to the fore the network of staunchly pro-Western civil servants who used their informal connections to facilitate the process of impeachment. Based at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the State Security Department, as well as in academia, the Constitutional Court and other institutions, a loosely allied network of civil servants

and intellectuals cooperated to remove what was, in their eyes, a threat to Lithuania's pro--Western orientation and a channel of dubious, very likely pro-Russian, influence. The network came to be known as *valstybininkai*, a Lithuanian word that roughly means "statesmen." For a while, it was a term of praise, and observers spoke in glowing terms about the new national unity and the hard lessons of democratic statehood that Lithuania could never afford to unlearn.

This idyll did not last, however. In the parliamentary elections in October 2004, Viktor Uspaskih's newly created Labor Party garnered the greatest number of votes (39) in the newly elected parliament. Vote buying, ruthless administrative bullying and unaccounted cash payments were all part of the Labor Party's campaign, combined with tremendous discipline and excellent public-relations campaign based on slick, if unrealistic, promises, indiscriminate condemnation of the existing political establishment and appeal to the public's thirst for novelty. The Conservatives appealed to the other more-or-less traditional parties – the Social Democrats, Liberals, and even the tamed New Union – with a proposal to form a broad coalition that would exclude the Labor Party from power (the project came to be known as the "Rainbow Coalition"). After drawn-out and recalcitrant maneuvering during coalition negotiations, the Social Democrats left the negotiations to form a coalition with the Labor Party and a few others. The Labor Party received fewer ministerial positions than its share of the vote would normally have postulated. In exchange the Labor Party received one of the key ministries – that of the economy, the control of which would allow it to wallow in kickbacks from EU structural funds that started to flow into Lithuania after accession. More importantly, this shamelessly populist and arriviste party was co-opted into mainstream politics. This was viewed by the Conservatives and most of the thinking public as a desertion of the post-Paksas consensus by the Social Democrats. The old political dichotomies of "traditional and responsible vs. populist" and "systemic vs. anti-systemic" were rendered void, and the debasement of standards in democratic politics entered a new phase.

The Labor Party was removed from government less than a year after the election in 2005, and Social-Democrat patriarch (and, some quipped, "godfather") Algirdas Brazauskas was forced to resign as prime minister in June 2006 in a deal to avoid prosecution on corruption allegations linked to his family. The fact that in May 2006 Lithuania shamefully failed to qualify for Eurozone membership on account of Brazauskas' crowd-pleasing spending policies was another forceful argument for his removal. As it turned out, with 2.63 percent inflation as of March 2006, Lithuania fell just afoul of the 2.60 percent benchmark applied by the European Commission and the European Central Bank.

In both of these removal acts, the *valstybininkai* network played an important, though perhaps not a front-stage, role. The resignation of Brazauskas gave rise to new hope for the unity of the traditional, reformist, pro-European forces, as Gediminas Kirkilas was sworn in as prime minister in July 2006. The new government, having shed its populist appendages, was short on votes in the parliament and the Conservatives stepped in to offer support for Kirkilas' minority government. In exchange, an agreement specifying necessary reforms in higher education, family policy and the anti-corruption sphere was signed. It seemed, for a while, that Lithuanian politics had finally entered a calm and civilized phase, in which constructive cooperation among erstwhile opponents was possible.

That was early July. On August 23, 2006 Colonel Vytautas Pociūnas, a Lithuanian intelligence officer on a diplomatic mission in Belarus, hurled to his death from the ninth floor of the Intourist Hotel in Brest. This looked like a political murder, and Pociūnas had family links to the influential Conservative establishment. Investigation into the circumstances of his transferal from the State Security Department to the diplomatic service (which was an indirect cause of his death) revealed unsavory institutional conflicts. The public and the political parties started taking sides. In a few months the scandal around Pociūnas' death would split the political field in new, unforeseen directions. The intelligence and diplomatic establishment – the *valstybininkai* – which sought to hush the scandal up, quoting considerations of political and institutional stability and *raisons d'etat*, was opposed by a wide and motley coalition of unlikely allies, including the populist parties, civic organizations and the hard-line wing within the Conservatives. Conspiracy theories proliferated, "disclosing" ever more ubiquitous networks of influence and the illicit seizure of power within state institutions. Speculation about who is and who isn't one of the *valstybininkai* provided unending fodder to the increasingly polarized media. Pro-Western *valstybininkai*, many of whom were members or sympathizers of the Conservatives, suddenly found themselves rejected and alienated by their erstwhile allies. Only President Valdas Adamkus and (cautiously) Social-Democratic Prime Minister Gediminas Kirkilas provided a modicum of support to the beleaguered group, who were by then rather desperately trying to exculpate themselves using their links to media and levers of political influence, thus further implicating themselves in the political fights.

This debacle superimposed itself on another, even murkier conflict that started during the early days of the Kirkilas government. The idea to replace the outdated Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant was not new (its closure was a clause in Lithuania's EU accession treaty). The need for a new plant which would ensure at least a certain degree of energy independence to Lithuania was universally acknowledged. Thus, when the Conservatives and Social Democrats proposed an agreement on the building of a new nuclear power plant in 2006, it looked like plain sailing. Along with Lithuanian state resources and the projected input of the three other countries that would benefit from the new plant (Poland, Latvia and Estonia), a private investor was invited to take part in the project. The private partner selected was the Maxima Group, the largest private financial player in Lithuania and also one free of links to Russia. Other financial agglomerates, such as the Achema or MG groups, were disqualified because of their Russian connections: either through import-export markets, initial capitalization or both. A national investor, a joint public-private enterprise to build the new nuclear power plant, was created, in which Maxima had 38.3 percent of the shares, and the state owned the rest. The enterprise would come to be known as Leo LT. The Social Democrats cast their political weight behind the project.

Two things followed almost simultaneously. First, Maxima overplayed its hand in the negotiations with an inadequately prepared government. At this time, the public was still smarting from a fraudulent privatization by Maxima of the West Lithuanian electricity networks under the previous Social-Democratic government. The share that Maxima was to receive in the new national investor was easily portrayed as another financial scam whereby, with the connivance of the Social Democrats, it would acquire an inordinately large share in the country's energy market. The fact that Maxima was reluctant to demon-

strate its readiness actually to commit funds to the building of the power plant consolidated the impression that corruption on a massive scale was taking place.

Secondly, the two financial groups that were excluded from this highly lucrative building project – Achema and MG – started a public-relations campaign that exploited and augmented suspicions of the public towards Leo LT. Unfortunately for Maxima, it had not invested in mass media and was not a generous supporter of political parties, whereas its opponents controlled principal television channels, dailies and internet media and had bought influence in the principal political parties. Maxima lost badly in the media war and was eventually pushed out – first from the nuclear power plant project and afterward from the Lithuanian energy market altogether.

Moreover, the Achema- and MG-controlled media machine conflated two scandals together: *valstybininkai*, who were active in promoting the idea of the new nuclear power plant, were presented as the masterminds behind the creation of Leo LT and thus as promoting Maxima's financial interests. Thus the *valstybininkai* found themselves the target of a double accusation: they were presented as agents in the conspiracy both to usurp power within the state and to divert taxpayer funds to a private company's pocket on a colossal scale.

The reason for narrating these episodes in greater detail is that otherwise it would be difficult to comprehend the causes of the realignment of Lithuanian politics in the crucial period of 2006-2007. At the end of this time, the political field was no longer divided along the familiar lines of "traditional vs. populist." Rather, the defining factor was the attitude towards the *valstybininkai* and Leo LT. The anti-*valstybininkai* coalition comprised the populist Order and Justice Party, hard-line Conservatives, a splinter fringe of the Labor Party, a host of civic organisztions, some prominent public figures and most major media outlets. Ranged on the other side were the Social Democrats, President Valdas Adamkus, the erstwhile populist (but now co-opted) New Union and a few other minor players. The v*alstybininkai*, traditionally pro-Western, anti-Communist, educated Europeans, many of them Conservative voters, supporters and even party members, found themselves in the uncongenial company of ex-communist Social Democrats and at the same time shunned by their former allies and colleagues.

The scandal around the Leo LT project crucially weakened the Social Democrat-led government in one respect: for the first time, charges of corruption seemed to stick. The Social Democrats, despite the rampant fraud and corruption cases endemic at all levels of their administration, previously tended to escape unscathed, thanks to the odd and cumbersome charisma of their leader, Algirdas Brazauskas. Charges of corruption had been levelled at the Social Democrats many times, but now for the first time they resonated. The Social Democrats ceased to be the "teflon" party.

This was to form, later, one of the pillars of the Conservative election campaign: calls for transparency and an end to corruption in the charged atmosphere of 2008 would imply, primarily, the dismantling of the Leo LT project and of the *valstybininkai* network. This would allow the Conservatives to plug into the resentment vote and compete for it along with Paksas' populist Order and Justice. On the other hand, an unscrupulous witch hunt after the (frequently fictitious) phantom of *valstybininkai* would alienate a number of erstwhile supporters among the intellectuals.

The corruption scandals in which the Kirkilas government became embroiled were accompanied by his utter inability to carry out the promised reforms and clean up the judicial system. In the course of a single year, Kirkilas transpired to be a feckless, vacillating prime minister, whose carefully constructed persona as a modern, somewhat avuncular European politician (he even smoked a pipe) crumbled away as a thin veneer, revealing a limited, grasping and not very talented apparatchik. Beginning with the summer of 2007, public confidence in him started crumbling inexorably, never to recover. His approval rating went from 52.8 percent in August 2007 to 23.9 percent in a matter of jus eight months. The Social-Democratic government was seen, by the start of the 2008 election campaign, as sleazy, wasteful and impotent.

A few words need to be said, at this stage, regarding the fate of the liberal political trend in Lithuania. Anyone looking at Lithuanian politics at the outset of the millennium would have been justified in thinking that the second decade of Lithuanian independence would usher in a liberal era. In the 2000-2004 parliament, the Liberals received 34 seats and briefly held the prime minister's job in 2000-2001, before being outmaneuvered into opposition by the Social Democrats. Two-time President Valdas Adamkus did not conceal his liberal sympathies and used his intellectual and moral authority to further liberal ideas in Lithuania. In 2000-2003 Vilnius was governed by a likeable, energetic, visionary Liberal mayor, Artūras Zuokas, who was also the leader of the Liberal Union of Lithuania (*Lietuvos liberalų sąjunga*, LLS). Liberals looked set to wrench the torch from the outdated, outmoded Conservatives as the principal center-right party. Yet now, a decade later, instead of one large, liberal political force there were two rather minor liberal parties, with neither of the two likely to pass the five-percent threshold according to polling data. What had happened?

First, the Liberals' relentless urge to leave electoral banishment and enter parliament led to a number of pragmatic moves that diluted liberal ideology and identity, including merger with the Center Party, adoption of Rolandas Paksas as a popular (if short-lived) leader figure and mopping up of various splinter groups without regard for their ideology. This showed the Liberal Union (later the Liberal and Centre Union, *Liberalų ir centro sąjunga*, LiCS) to be, at heart, a power-hungry party with little regard for principles, liberal or otherwise. Secondly, the liberal electorate is, predictably, more prone to emigrate, as it is younger, more cosmopolitan, enterprising and rootless than the adherents of other parties. High levels of emigration bled Lithuania of potential liberal voters – hence Liberal initiatives to introduce internet voting which might attract significant numbers of the Lithuanian diaspora to the voting booths, or rather, in this instance, to the keyboards. Thirdly, the Liberals had Artūras Zuokas, who was both their greatest asset and a nearly fatal liability. Zuokas' visionary dynamism earned him gratitude and love at equal pace as his endless corruption scandals alienated supporters and even his closest friends. Mixed up in illegal party contributions, fleeing to Warsaw in fear of arrest when anti-corruption police raided his party headquarters, imprisoning and bribing a party comrade who was going to oppose his candidacy as a mayor of Vilnius, being listed as a recipient of illegal kickbacks from a company that he entrusted with the provision of virtually all of city services and being accused of involvement in cases arson on wooden cottages sitting on priceless development land if their owners refused to sell – no amount of visionary dynamism, glass-and-steel skyscrapers, meticulously cultured persona and patronage of the

modern arts was going to wash away such charges in the eyes of the public and of more responsible political colleagues.

Thus in 2006 a group of Liberals unwilling to be tainted by the association with the corrupt Zuokas seceded from the Liberal and Centre Union to form the Liberal Movement (*Liberalų Sąjūdis*, LS). The Liberal Movement had a rather poor showing in the 2007 municipal election, yet it managed to win 11 seats in the 2008 parliamentary election, compared to eight seats for the Liberal and Centre Union, which scraped past the five-percent threshold by barely 0.34 percent. In 2009 Zuokas left the parliament and in 2010 the Liberal and Centre Union itself, seeking other return routes to Vilnius municipal politics. Both liberal parties were further weakened by association with the austerity policies of the coalition government of which they became a part.

One more development that needs to be mentioned in elucidating the political context which obtained before the 2008 election is the unexpected forms that the electorate's unstoppable pursuit of novelty assumed. As was already mentioned, virtually every major election so far had produced its own "dark horse" – a new political force that seemed to appear out of nowhere and appealed *inter alia* to the voters' thirst for novelty. This role was played, in turns, by Artūras Paulauskas in 1997-1998 and his New Union in 2000, by Paksas in 2003 and Viktor Uspaskih's Labor Party in 2004. In 2008 this role was assumed by the newly created National Revival Party of Arūnas Valinskas, television host and stand-up comic. Most of the party's candidates were also drawn from show-business circles; the campaign was witty and hard-hitting (the party's female candidates were presented in prostitute attire and attitude with an appropriate slogan: "We don't need to draw a salary from taxpayers; we can earn our upkeep ourselves!"). The party manifesto was vacuous to the point of non-existence. Predictably, Valinskas' party won a considerable wedge of seats: 18 out of 141 (thus making it the third largest parliamentary faction). The National Revival Party mostly appealed to undecided, wavering, passive voters, but it also attracted frivolous-minded voters who in the past tended to vote for populist parties. This time they voted for Valinskas as a sign of protest, as well as to express their generic contempt for politics. Thus Valinskas' campaign played a salutary role in diverting voters from the moribund populist parties such as Paulauskas' New Union and the Farmers' Party (which received one and three seats, respectively). The "Revivalists" (as they became half-fondly, half-sarcastically known) also contributed to diminishing the share of the vote for such major populist parties as Order and Justice and the Labor Party. Needless to say, after its initial electoral success, the National Revival Party crumbled, since there was nothing – neither ideological platform nor administrative machine – to hold it together. Its parliamentary faction eventually split in two, with the major part seceding from the governing coalition.

IV. Events Leading Directly to Victory and the Causes Thereof

Such was the context in which the Conservative campaign had to be played. The party was approaching eight years in opposition; the belief that it could once again become

a governing party was on the wane. The party was held together by the moral authority of Vytautas Landsbergis and the innovative, modernizing, trend-setting political ideas of Andrius Kubilius. It was unclear, however, how much longer it could continue to run in opposition without permanent damage to its morale, its membership structure and administrative capacities; victory in the 2008 election was a make-or-break necessity. The Homeland Union faced three fundamental challenges: party image, a stagnant voter base and voter confidence.

The image that the Homeland Union commanded was that of an old warrior, distinguished in the battles of establishing and cementing Lithuanian independence, as well as its later pro-Western integration, but still trapped within those old battles, more adept at issuing old war cries than at responding to new challenges. It had the image of an old party that had made mistakes in the past and had not changed since. It was not seen as an alternative to the existing political players. Moreover, it was seen as a highly critical, divisive party that generated the impression that nobody could be trusted in Lithuania and thus deepened the sense of hopelessness and the sense that nothing could be done.

With regard to the voter-base problem, for the last four years the Homeland Union had seemed to be trapped inside a magic circle of its stable electorate and unable to break out of it. Despite the party's efforts, the number of voters ready to support the Homeland Union was unchanging – it received 176,000 votes in the 2004 parliamentary election and 184,000 votes in the 2007 municipal election. This was nowhere near enough to form a coalition – let alone to form a government. And this was directly linked to the voter--confidence problem, forming a sort of vicious circle. The memory of the Conservatives being outflanked and left out of government in 2004 scared many hesitant voters from committing their votes to the Homeland Union, lest these votes be wasted because the party was seen as having lost its will and capacity to reach power.

This was the analysis arrived at by the Institute of Democratic Politics (DPI) – the Conservative-Christian-Democratic think tank that was summoned to help the party with preparing the electoral campaign. Deep and thorough research, using extensive polling and state-of-art analytical methods, was carried out into voter needs and preferences, social and psychological segmentation and the Homeland Union brand and image perception of its leaders. The analysis was brought to bear on a discussion already going on within the party, where the dilemma was formulated as a choice between two alternatives. The first was the proposal (favored by the hard-line flank) to seek to woo back the voters who had gone over to the "Dark Side," i.e. right-wing, populist parties such as Paksas' Order and Justice. This would have entailed appealing to the resentment vote through the use of negative campaigning, introduction of more polarizing issues into the campaign and an emphasis on the fight against corruption as the main election issue. It would also have meant ditching the reform agenda that had been Andrius Kubilius' *leitmotiv* since 1999-2000. The second alternative was to attract new voters by appealing to new social and demographic profiles.

Research answered this dilemma conclusively by demonstrating that even in the unlikely event of attracting *all* possible voters who would even remotely consider defecting from the right-leaning, populist parties to the Conservative cause, this would be far from enough to win the election. The DPI analysts' conclusion was that the three challenges –

party image, voter base and voter confidence – had to be resolved all at one stroke or not at all: an enhanced image, revamped policies and adoption of new political idiom would enable the Homeland Union to target new groups of voters, thus helping it to break out of the limited electorate in which it seemed to be trapped.

Yet the first step in this strategy would have to be a very tangible political act which would transmit the message that the Homeland Union was changing and growing in strength: namely, the unification of the center-right political field. In the summer of 2007 negotiations started between the Homeland Union and the Lithuanian Christian Democrats, an erstwhile coalition partner and important political force which at that point remained merely a municipality-level presence. Nonetheless, in the February 2007 municipal elections the Christian Democrats received 55,000 votes. As a matter of fact, the Christian Democrats suffered from an even more acute form of the syndrome that also beset the Homeland Union: many voters who would have wanted to support the Christian Democrats did not vote for them in the national elections since they were convinced their vote would be wasted. By the late autumn of 2007 negotiations were completed and the two parties announced their merger.

Merger negotiations almost simultaneously concluded with another right-of-center party – the *Tautininkai*, or Nationalists. The Nationalists were heirs to the pre-war governing party who retained their forerunners' early-Twentieth-Century-style nationalism and instinctive hatred of all things Polish, but none of the pre-war party's popularity and solid intellectual potential (the leader of pre-war *Tautininkai*, President Antanas Smetona, was renowned for his translations of Plato). The Nationalists were virtually negligible in terms of membership or electoral gain, but they commanded some symbolic capital through historical associations, as well as boasting a few wealthy donors among the Lithuanian diaspora in North America. As a result of these two mergers, the Homeland Union assumed the mantle of "unifying leadership." It broadcast the image of a party growing from strength to strength and bringing together the previously divided forces of the (broadly conservative) center right.

In what follows I shall introduce, in no particular order, the key elements in the Conservatives' electoral success.

Modernized Image

Brand analysis of the Homeland Union revealed that while the party had a reputation for competence, idealism and integrity among the voters, its image was also contaminated by a number of negative features. It was perceived as aging, intransigent, strident and unnecessarily pugnacious, as the party of anti-communist witch hunts. Its perceived competence in economy and governance reforms cast a shadow of cold, insensitive technocratic expertise. Moreover, even the party's long-standing commitment to the traditional family was seen as a divisive issue, since the prevailing Conservative rhetoric tended toward reprimanding single mothers and encouraging reproduction as a means of compensating for demographic decline and a labor-force shortage.

What the party needed was to integrate its perceived competence and moral integrity into a new, reassuring and optimistic whole, enriching it with emotional warmth, sensitivity

and caring – to create, in fact, the Lithuanian brand of "compassionate conservatism" that would allow the party to tap into the values-reservoir of traditional Lithuanian society while simultaneously appealing to upwardly mobile, aspiring young professionals and families. Irena Degutienė, deputy chair of the party (and the speaker of parliament-to--be), became the natural spokeswoman for this sensitive and compassionate aspect of the party. The merger with the Christian Democrats, who had reputation of being "close to the people," was also highly significant in enhancing the sensitive and humane side of the united party's image. Unified guidelines for the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats brand that integrated these strands into a coherent whole were produced and used throughout the campaign.

Election Topics

Policies and campaign topics were readjusted to reflect the revamped image of the party, as well as the needs and expectations of the electorate. Traditional and overfamiliar Conservative topics such as safeguarding Lithuania's sovereignty, concern over the country's defense and containment of Russia were pushed to the background, but retained as a motif to reassure core voters that the party had not ditched these issues from its agenda.

Seven key election topics were proposed and were divided into three groups. The first group, used at the early stage of the campaign, comprised the topics designed to "unblock" the new target group of voters and persuade them to consider the Conservatives as contenders for their vote. It included such topics as unity, faith in the future and an emphasis on the changed, progressive nature of the Homeland Union. The second group consisted of the basic, underlying topics to which all political parties were inevitably going to refer in the course of the election campaign: transparency and fighting corruption, as well as crisis, economic stability and inflation. In these areas the Homeland Union had merely to build on its existing reputation for competence and integrity in order to outbid the competition. The third group comprised the topics specific to the Homeland Union, topics which its track record and ideology made uniquely suitable for asserting its distinctive character and message: family, education and community.

Existing policy proposals were refashioned and different emphases were developed to suit the overall character of the campaign. Thus, for example, the higher-education reform for which the Homeland Union had been campaigning for a few years was cleansed from its technocratic, abstruse connotations through an emphasis on empowering young people and improving academic quality through student choice (state funding to be granted to the best graduates as a voucher to take to whichever university they chose). Governance reforms emphasized the devolution of power to community and civil society structures.

The election slogan that was chosen reflected this new mood of political discourse: "Pradėkime!" ("Let's Begin!"). Both the overall slogan of the Conservative campaign and the recurrent motif in other policy statements, speeches and posters had the virtues of combining, in Spartan brevity, idealism, pragmatism and change, of focusing on the future and on positive ideas, of giving encouragement to others, as well as to "ourselves" ("Let Us Begin!" the motif of unity), as well as of sounding resolute and encouraging.

Innovative Methods

The progressive character of the party was demonstrated through adoption of innovative methods of campaigning and communication. With broadband penetration among the highest in Europe, Lithuania was ripe for internet marketing and web-based campaigns. The Conservatives got there first, and it was far from perfunctory dipping into this or that social network to demonstrate to the assembled journalists that the political leaders know that the Internet exists. Social networks and web-based marketing became an integral part of the Conservatives' election campaign, modifying the message even as it was disseminating it. The whole duration of the campaign was punctuated with high-visibility, original and sometimes daring web-based initiatives, with everyday activity in social networks and marketing running in parallel. The extent to which campaigning on the Internet was central to the Conservatives' electoral effort can be seen from the admission, after the election, by Social-Democrat leader Gediminas Kirkilas that "we did not get votes from our young people because we did not appreciate the Internet enough."

Perhaps the best example is the Homeland Union initiative entitled "Baltic Way 2.0," with which the election campaign kicked off on June 9, 2008. The original Baltic Way was the 600 kilometer, two- million-strong human chain that on August 23, 1989 joined the capitals of the three Baltic States, peacefully demanding restoration of their independence. The Baltic Way 2.0, with its very title indicating a move into virtual space, was an initiative whereby all Lithuanians throughout the world were encouraged to plant the national flag on the spot of the map where they lived and thus visibly to declare national unity. In a couple of days the map of the world bristled with thousands of flags, indicating patriotic Lithuanians' houses from New South Wales to Alaska. A click on the individual flag then revealed the uploaded portrait of the particular person behind the planted flag and a brief statement of why he or she was proud to be Lithuanian.

Thus the Baltic Way 2.0 initiative not only broadcast, through novel means, the message of national unity and modern patriotism, but it also put a gloss on the Homeland Union's thoughtful policies vis-à-vis emigration and the diaspora – an agonizing topic for Lithuanians. It also provided a tangible outline of its "Global Lithuania" policy, an initiative to include the diaspora in the political, social, cultural and economic processes in Lithuania and to forge "Global Lithuania" as a sort of transnational, virtual globalized reality. Other Internet initiatives continued to punctuate the campaign with similar modernizations of different aspects of Conservative policies, presenting them in unexpected perspective and giving them a youthful, innovative and sometimes ironic edge.

Building on Reputation for Competence

The Homeland Union had a long-standing reputation for formulating strategies and proposing innovative ideas. In the run-up to the election, however, it announced a totally new type of exercise, known as the New Agenda for Lithuania. The manifesto would be formulated in broad consultation with civil society groups, experts and stakeholders in society. A number of "shadow ministers" were designated, each responsible for a particular sphere of policy. Assisted by the DPI coordinators, they would embark on a process of extensive consultation whereby principal challenges, problems and potential solutions would be identified by interest groups, civil society organizations, communities and other

stakeholders. The material thus accumulated would be systematized, refined and conceptually reworked in brain-storming sessions with academic experts. Results were then fed into civil-society and stakeholder fora, thus generating further feedback.

The result of this exercise was an unprecedentedly detailed and concrete election manifesto – over 280 pages in length, whereas most Lithuanian political party manifestos run only to tens of pages. It comprehensively analyzed, and proposed well-considered solutions to, the principal challenges perceived by the voters in all policy areas. The New Agenda for Lithuania proposed an ambitious reform package: tax, governance and judicial reforms, family and community-oriented social services, higher- and secondary-level education reforms designed to create stimuli for excellence and a drive for student-oriented services, a breakthrough towards a knowledge-based economy and a complete restructuring – conceptual and administrative – of cultural policy. The decentralized process of building the manifesto also gave the opportunity for a number of new political figures to enter the national stage. They were either authorities in particular areas, or young politicians who made some policy areas their own and acquired cachet through being, in a way, "shadow ministers" in their elected field.

Not all of the reform proposals were previously unheard of, since a number of them built on ideas previously floated by the Conservatives. Unprecedentedly, however, policy proposals were generated through a bottom-up process, and the language of the proposals was that used by the primary stakeholders – ordinary people who faced the problems and challenges dissected in the manifesto. This ensured a much better acceptance of the manifesto by the public, whereas the opinion of experts – carefully sought out and then amplified by the public relations machine – adjudicated the Conservative-Christian--Democratic manifesto to be *hors de competition*. The Homeland Union was once again confirmed as *the* party with ideas and a clear strategy for their implementation.

Assurance at a Time of Insecurity

This was especially reassuring in the autumn of 2008 in the context of the approaching global economic crisis and the spectacular inability of the Social-Democratic minority government to address the threats that the global economic downturn presented to Lithuania's economy and to react in a forceful, convincing and timely manner. A Homeland Union web commercial likened the incumbent government's efforts at tackling the crisis to futile attempts to put out ever-expanding forest fires. "We, on the contrary, are going to ensure that such fires cannot happen again," boasted Andrius Kubilius' voice behind the moving images, presenting the fiscal and economic measures that would ensure sustained and secure economic growth. Furthermore, Kubilius' irreproachable track-record in handling the 1998-1999 economic crisis in a resolute manner, which used systematic and farsighted reforms to create the prerequisites for post-2001 prodigious growth (of which the Social Democrats reaped the fruit), acted as a further factor inspiring confidence that all could still be well.

Professional Campaign

For the first time in living memory the Homeland Union election campaign not only relied on state-of-art analytical tools, but also employed consummate professionals at all stages

of its planning and execution. Detailed geographical electoral analyses enabled the central and local headquarters to target their efforts, both in terms of advertising and door-to--door campaigning, at the highest potential yield areas and to bypass the opponents, minimizing the danger of inadvertently mobilizing the opponents. Socio-psychological "slicing" of the electorate helped to identify new social and demographic pockets of potential supporters and effectively address them through targeted campaigning. In terms of inventiveness and originality of visual idiom the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats was also a few lengths ahead of its principal opponents, the Social Democrats and the populist Labor Party and Order and Justice, which relied on exhausted, overworked and often simply grating images. Also, it was an extremely well integrated campaign, with different aspects – the internet campaign, poster campaign, televised debates, guerrilla marketing and public events – supporting each other and multiplying each others' effects. The Conservatives-Christian Democrats retained the initiative throughout the campaign, without any obvious missteps, always retaining the initiative through constant innovation – from constantly changing the tone of the campaign to introducing new genres and formats (such as live public town-hall debates with principal opponents).

Diversified Appeal

Another factor that contributed to overall success, albeit somewhat unexpectedly, was the fact that despite the general campaign concept and image guidelines, some hard-line issues still remained on the table. Old-style ranting against the corrupt practices of the compromised, leftist minority government, campaigning against the Leo LT project and *valstybininkai*-bashing remained an important niche market. Apart from reassuring some loyal hard-liners within party ranks, this rhetoric also appealed to (and probably attracted) segments of radically-minded, populist-voting electorate. Thus it could be argued that this slight inconsistency within the electoral message diversified the appeal and extended the spectrum of issues on which the party campaigned, making it a sort of "umbrella party" for many different, and often disparate, political and ideological strands. Thanks to well--calibrated targeting, however, such contradictions created complementarity rather than dissonance. The eventual outcome of that was, of course, an unlikely, disparate and varied alliance of supporters who voted for the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats. This pre-programmed the latent conflict regarding party's identity, goals and values.

The Results

So what were the results of this electoral effort, unprecedented both in the extent of preparation and in the quality of its execution? The Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats received 243,823 votes or 19.23 percent of the votes cast (the optimistic objective was 300,000 votes). It won 27 seats in single-member constituencies (the objective was 32 seats) and 45 seats total (the objective was 50 seats). It formed a coalition government with the Liberal Movement (11 seats), the Liberal and Centre Union of Artūras Zuokas (nine seats), and the National Revival Party of Arūnas Valinskas (18 seats). In the coalition government, the Conservatives-Christian Democrats took up the position of prime minister (with Andrius Kubilius) and took control of half of the ministries, including defense, foreign affairs, economy, finance, agriculture, social affairs and labor, as well as energy. The

first major act of the newly sworn-in government was the revision, in the face of the economic crisis, of the budget bequeathed by the outgoing Social-Democratic government of Gediminas Kirkilas.

V. The lessons of victory

What We Have Done…

With its novel comprehensive approach to the elections, the Conservatives-Christian Democrats came close to transforming the electoral landscape, as well as to remaking the party brand in a way comparable to the "detoxification of the brand" performed on the British Conservatives by David Cameron. Certainly electoral gains and achievements were made in areas – both metaphorically and geographically speaking – that previously had been deemed unwinnable. Where expected gains were not achieved it was almost always either because political considerations (due to party merger, political in-fighting or the need to gratify donors) overrode analytical advice, or because local party organizations proved unable to implement electoral strategy efficiently.

The ambitious reform program envisaged in the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats' election manifesto was transferred into the newly formed government's program – with some inevitable modifications and adjustments owing to the coalition negotiations. Some reforms were launched almost immediately – especially in areas where significant preparatory work had been before the elections. One could single out higher--education reform (where reform legislation was passed in May 2009), the overhaul of agriculture and civil-service reform among these. Resolute steps were also taken in the direction of strengthening Lithuania's energy independence, though a lot of time and energy was spent on dismantling the Leo LT project and establishing a replacement for it.

Other reforms ran into opposition from entrenched ministerial bureaucracies and a lack of necessary funding. Sometimes the perception of priorities simply changed under the severe strain of the economic downturn. Areas where one could call the reforms less-than--satisfactory included the economy, the welfare system and judicial and administrative reforms. Some government actions and reforms were remarkable not because of what they did, but because of what did not happen: resolute cutting of the budget and comprehensive tax reform managed to slow down Lithuania's slide into recession and bring speedier recovery. Unlike neighboring Latvia, Lithuania did not need to apply for a bailout from the International Monetary Fund, and as early as 2010 registered modest economic growth.

…and What We Have Failed To Do

An area in which the new Conservative-led coalition government failed prodigiously and spectacularly was cultural policy. The ambitious reform program outlined in the election manifesto was mangled at the hands of representatives of the National Revival Party, which received control of the ministry of culture in the coalition's sharing of the spoils, and a comic actor of severely challenged competence was put in charge.

On the party level, the failures of the victorious Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats included:

- the failure to offer a genuine vision of the country's and Lithuanian society's future, of the direction and goals for its development, a vision which would integrate Conservative values with a program for change; The lack of such a vision had been increasingly acutely felt since 2004;
- the failure to break down the threshold of the party's attractiveness for young people – despite an increased intake of young members, it remains a party of old people; and
- the failure to effect permanent change of the "character" of the party, to translate election-period mobilization into long-term change of practices within the party.

The last of these is especially keenly felt in three areas. First, the high quality of public--relations and communications efforts reached during the election campaign period was lost, and the loss caused incalculable harm. Sound, beneficial and necessary reforms failed to "sell," and Prime Minister Kubilius remained one of the least popular public figures. Secondly, the administrative structure of the party was considerably weakened, and victory in the election paradoxically proved to be the party's undoing, as all politically active members became members of parliament or ministers or occupied other prominent public positions. Thirdly, once the party had won the elections, it totally lost interest in the advanced analytical tools it used during the election campaign. Thus even the causes of victory were left unanalyzed. It was as though during the election campaign a whole host of very expensive and advanced ordnance had been fired somewhere beyond the horizon, to use an artillery simile, but no aiming-control and inflicted-damage assessment was performed after the battle. In other words, we do not know, precisely, why and how we won, which precise groups and strata of voters we succeeded in attracting or which elements of the campaign worked and which did not.

On yet another level, party mergers left the party heterogeneous, an agglomerate of groupings with different agendas and ideologies. The united party was not allowed the time to coalesce and to grow an organic structure from within, as it were, before facing the trials and tribulations of governance, and not just any governance, but governance in a time of crisis. Moreover, the crisis and growing public resentment, the stagnant political life of the united party and the lack of efficient internal democracy procedures created productive breeding ground for the rise of radicalism. The addition of a few hundred members of the Nationalists acted as a catalyst to the half-suppressed propensity to radicalism and shrill populist rhetoric among existing Conservative party members. New alignments were created within party structures. Two years after the election, the party remained a fragile balance of equipollent tensions pulling in opposing directions: the modernizing, market--liberal wing of Andrius Kubilius, a socially conservative Christian-democratic wing headed by Irena Degutienė, and the radical Nationalist wing whose putative figurehead was former leader of the Nationalist Party Gintaras Songaila.

To conclude – never in the course of post-independence Lithuanian history was such intellectual potential and analytical expertise applied to winning an election, and never so much emphasis placed on a reform agenda. However, the mismatch between the huge cost

and the merely satisfactory outcomes of the election, as well as the failure to implement the promised radical modernization, may prompt one to recall the famous words spoken by King Pyrrhus after the Battle of Asculum: "If we win one more victory like this, we are finished."

Four Victories: The Macedonian Case

JOVAN ANANIEV

CONTENTS:

I. Introduction

Political parties have been the most powerful policy-making actors – both on the national and local levels of Macedonian society – from the moment of inception of the multiparty system until today. Citizens are aware that a party agenda is the only agenda that it would be possible to implement. Therefore, the ability to influence the agenda of parties indirectly would also mean an opportunity to influence politics.

Results from survey research[20] show that the majority of citizens in Macedonia shares what would be conventionally called "leftist values." As much as 70 percent of respondents favor diminishing social differences among people and retaining or increasing the state provision of public services (even if this requires higher taxes), believe that the social security of the citizens should be under the exclusive jurisdiction of the state (and that citizens should not take even partial responsibility for it), support the idea that state-provided health and educational services should be of better quality than private ones and think that socialism as a system took care of all people and was not repressive. By the same token, they disapprove of the freedom of owners of enterprises to make exclusive decisions about the development of their companies; they practically call for a co-decision-making system. And with regard to the distribution of these opinions among the voters of parties on the left and right, there is hardly any difference. Only in relation to two questions – out of 11 – do respondents show positions closer to the right: agreeing that private companies are more successful and that bankrupt companies should not be by rehabilitated by the state but by themselves.

These facts look like a remarkable paradox given the fact that from its inception, Macedonian party politics has been shaped by intense conflict between the two major "left" and "right" parties – the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (*Socijaldemokratski Sojuz na Makedonija,* SDSM) and the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (*Vnatrešna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija-Demokratska Partija za Makedonsko Nacionalno Edinstvo,*VMRO-DPMNE). What then accounts for the difference between these parties and their constituencies?

To start with, such opinions among the citizens are the result of several factors, namely their deteriorating socio-economic positions during the last two decades; hence the preference for state-run policies of a social nature. There is also a certain "ideological recidivism" from the previous socialist system, when Macedonia was part of Yugoslavia. In that period, the state took full responsibility and conducted a more interventionist and social policy that allowed most people to have a required minimum standard of living and completely free health and educational services.

In Macedonia the main ideological difference when it comes to the old socialist system does not concern its socio-economic aspects, but whether or not the system was repressive, and whether it allowed for affirmation of the national identity of all peoples in former Yugoslavia. Thus, today's supporters of VMRO-DPMNE might have been then discerned as people believing that the former one-party system limited the freedom of the human personality, marginalized the role of the church and nationality and repressed the possibil-

20 Scientific research project "Political Identities in the Republic of Macedonia" undertaken by the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, University Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje. Research report in 2010

ity of private initiative in the economy. The same difference between the left and the right is present today in a modern context.

Socio-economic factors are also not a determining factor in the selection of a particular political party. In Macedonia the principle that the ideological orientation of the citizens would be predetermined by their socio-economic background has not applied for some time, with the exception of questions of ethnic and religious background. Other factors pertain more, including especially the voters' model of rational choice with regard to which party offers the best solutions for them and their families.

II. The Fall of the Right in 2002

In the September 15, 2002 elections, the SDSM and its coalition partners won the largest share of parliamentary seats, and along with the new, ethnic Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (*Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim*, BDI), formed the new government. In these elections, the then ruling VMRO-DPMNE won 299,177 votes, failing to win the majority in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia.

The VMRO-DPMNE election manifesto put an emphasis on the activities it had undertaken as a ruling party, in particular the resolution of the civil conflict a year before the elections, the preservation of security and the reforms undertaken in the field of economics, education, social policy and youth issues. During VMRO-DPMNE rule, the opposition, as well as a number of media, economic interest groups and civil society organizations criticized policies and measures undertaken by the government in certain sectors. In its manifesto, the party addressed these criticisms, while once again stressing its pro-reform orientation: "Certainly at times, over a short time interval, the reforms caused doubts regarding the necessity of their introduction. However, the citizen needs to rest assured that the reforms made will result in success in the future and are introduced for the good of all citizens."[21] In order to better explain its prior activities, the party published a "White Paper of VMRO-DPMNE." The program was dominated by right-of-center concepts, the most prominent of which was the party's commitment to the idea of an autonomous and independent Macedonia, especially due to the then-present danger of jeopardizing independence and territorial integrity during the civil conflict. The main slogan of the program and of the campaign was "(Keep your) Chin Up," as a call upon the pride which each citizen could now have, given that the 2001 conflict had been overcome and that one could expect a peaceful period ahead that would bring much greater success for everyone.

III. Foundations of Future Victory

After VMRO-DPMNE became an opposition party, major internal changes were launched. At the party congress in 2003, a change of the party leader and entire leadership took place. The president of the party thus far, Prime Minister Ljubčo Georgievski, left on his own initiative, and in a secret ballot of the delegates at the party congress, former Minister

21 Manifesto of the VMRO-DPMNE for the General (Parliamentary) Election 2002, see: www.vmro_dpmne.org.mk

of Trade and Minister of Finance Nikola Gruevski was elected party president. Gruevski had been a close associate of Georgievski before and during the congress, and Georgievski publicly supported his ally for the post. Within the party and in public, Gruevski was considered a reform-oriented politician, moderate in his public appearance and in the actions he undertook. He was viewed as one who introduced a managerial approach in public policy-making during his time as minister. The change of the party leader led to changes in most of the members of the party leadership, and a process of reforms and revival of VMRO-DPMNE gradually started. Several structural changes followed:

Change in the approach towards election of party officials. The "bottom-up" approach was introduced as a practice, providing opportunities to party members to be actively involved in the process of proposing the party leadership on the municipal and central level. "An opportunity was presented for everyone, depending on their abilities, to advance in the party. Party functions were no longer reserved only for certain people, but were made available to everyone who had the capacity to do them. This created a new democratic climate within the party."[22]

Change in the way the party program was created. The party opened itself to new ideas, both to the membership and to all citizens who had interest in submitting proposals on issues to which the party should pay more attention to and on how to overcome pending problems. "A professional approach was practiced in policy development and a scientific approach was introduced in offering solutions to problems."[23]

Organizational strengthening. The process of consolidation of the party at the local level was started through enhanced activities of municipal chapters and strengthening their position in the process of decision-making within the party. A communications center of the party was established, which, as the first of its kind within any party in the country, had the task of professionalizing the approach of the party towards the media and the public. This meant continuous monitoring of the political processes in the country and effective reaction by the party.

Ideological re-profiling and positioning on the political market. The party started a process of distancing itself from the stigma ascribed to it by its opponents that it advocated hard--core nationalism, patriotism based only on national folklore and glorification of Macedonian history; that a part of the leadership had a "bulgarophilic" orientation;[24] and that, during its four-year mandate, it had initiated a practice of political alienation from the people. VMRO-DPMNE started to position itself among the political parties as a modern party that respects and practices the positive values of the "old" VMRO-DPMNE (i.e., tradition, patriotism and Christian Democracy), while adding a new identity as a reformed center-right party with greater internal democracy. It started to move from the "tradi-

22 From an interview with Ilija Dimovski, MP from VMRO-DPMNE (June 2010, Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia)

23 From an interview with Aleksandar Spasenovski, MP from VMRO-DPMNE (June 2010, Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia)

24 This is shorthand for the position that the Macedonian language, culture and history have Bulgarian origins and dates back to late Nineteenth-Century divergences within the emancipation movement of the Macedonian Slavs within the Ottoman Empire, of which was VMRO a main political vehicle. In modern times, many considered Georgievski to be the leader of "bulgarophilic" wing within the party, as he kept both Macedonian and Bulgarian citizenship and as an adult changed the spelling of his first name from the Macedonian "Ljupčo" to the Bulgarian "Ljubčo."

tional right" towards the center right. Retaining the "old," right-wing proclamations, it launched a drive for a new concept of governance with responsibility and transparency, faith in God, conservation of tradition and history, respect for the family and advocacy for a number of conservative values. It also started to develop a party doctrine based on the real problems of real citizens.

Extracts of Some Right-of-Center Positions from VMRO-DPMNE Doctrine

We don't talk about universal human nature in the context of interpretation of the former socialist regime, but we talk about the real person. That's why we focus on values related to the real person: personal and national freedom, religion as a framework in which faith and belief are embedded, the family as a foundation of society and tradition, which gives points of orientation for the real person facing the challenges of transition and globalization. [25]

About the nation

In times of globalization, the question of the nature and the future of the nation are equally important. The relationship of the citizen to the nation is a lively topic. All questions concerning the nation are questions concerning the lives of the ordinary people. The contemporary relationship between the state and nation and the individual defines the nation as a space for action by the individual.[26]

About the market

VMRO-DPMNE advocates for more markets, the reduction of the influence of the state on the market and for restricted public administration. The state has primarily a regulatory and supervisory function in economics and in the public sector. It sets the framework in which citizens, public institutions and the business sector respect procedures. It sets out, along with the other relevant political actors, the rules of action in politics, economics and public life.[27]

About private ownership

For VMRO-DPMNE it is imperative to complete the processes of privatization and denationalization and establish a comprehensive system of keeping records of ownership. VMRO-DPMNE's conservatism is based on the values of public responsibility of the private owner.

About the family

For VMRO-DPMNE, the family, as a community of one man and one woman who take care of their children, is a natural form of community. There is no real alternative to the family. The family turns a child into a decent person. There needs to be harmonization between work and the family. Even though it is difficult, it is possible to find a balance between work and family life. The protection of the mother and the children needs to come first.[28]

25 Doctrine of VMRO-DPMNE p.7
26 Ibid., p.8
27 Ibid., p.10
28 Ibid., p.16

About tradition

Historical memory enables the renaissance of tradition. It is necessary to find the old traditional values of the typical Macedonian way of life through the centuries.[29]

About religion

As a conservative party, VMRO-DPMNE sees the church as a crucial support of the state. Tolerance stems from faith in God. We consider religious tolerance essential to multicultural life in Macedonia. God is one, but we celebrate Him differently. Our churches, our mosques and our synagogues are our spiritual temples.[30]

Elections between Election Cycles

In 2004 an early presidential election was called due to the tragic death of President Boris Trajkovski. In this election, the VMRO-DPMNE candidate was Saško Kedev, a renowned cardiac surgeon from the University Clinic Center in Skopje. The party slogan was "Kedev - The New Face of Macedonia," meaning to show voters that the party offered a candidate who had no political past, and thus gave hope for a new way of doing politics. VMRO-DMPNE argued that the SDSM's Branko Crvenkovski was inappropriate as a candidate "due to his dark past as a prime minister" and could not lead the country. For its part, the SDSM focused on Kedev's lack of political experience as a weakness rather than a strength, claiming that Macedonia needed a statesman. With the eponymous slogan "Crvenkovski-Statesman," the SDSM won the election. VMRO-DPMNE, however, did not concede defeat, and – claiming a great number of election irregularities – did not recognize Crvenkovski as the legitimate president.

With Crvenkovski now in the presidency, however, the SDSM began to suffer leadership issues, and the process of consolidation of VMRO-DPMNE and the strengthening of its rating in the public ran in parallel with the process of weakening of the SDSM. The following year, 2005, saw municipal elections. Traditionally, such elections in Macedonia are the best test of party popularity in the middle of the parliamentary election cycle. Through municipal elections, citizens can begin to identify potential winners for the next round of parliamentary elections. In 2005 VMRO-DPMNE, together with several smaller parties, formed a coalition called "For a Better Macedonia" and ran with the slogan "Results Now!" In the campaign, the opposition coalition emphasized what it argued were unfulfilled SDSM promises, as well as its own commitment to visible and quick results if it were to win mayoral seats or municipal council positions.

The Republic of Macedonia has a one-tier system of local self-government consisting of municipalities and the city of Skopje as a separate unit including several municipalities. Based upon the type of area where the seat of the municipality is located, these can be categorized as "rural" and "urban," and, for the sake of better illustration, into small, medium and large municipalities. Altogether there are 83 municipalities in the country, and the "For a Better Macedonia" coalition won in the large, urban municipalities of Bitola and Prilep, in the smaller urban municipalities of Radoviš, Valandovo Pehčevo, Sveti Nikole and Kratovo, and in the eight rural municipalities. But it won almost all municipalities in

29 Ibid.' p.19
30 Ibid., p.20

the city of Skopje and its independent candidate, businessman Trifun Kostovski, managed to take the mayor's seat of the capital city as a whole. Both major parties declared victory: VMRO-DPMNE because it had won in Skopje and the large, urban municipalities, and SDSM because it succeeded in a higher number of municipalities overall. Nevertheless, these elections were a sign of the gradual return of VMRO-DPMNE to positions of power and restoration of confidence in the party among the party supporters.

IV. Return of the Right in 2006

In the period between the two national election cycles, from 2002 to 2006, many changes occurred on both the political and economic planes. Many changes occurred on the party scene, as well as within the political parties. All this led to changes in political priorities and orientations among the voters. Several factors – both internal and external – contributed to the strengthening of VMRO-DPMNE's position. Below we will discuss the key reasons why the party won its victory in 2006.

The Poor Economic and Political Situation in the Country

Traditionally, from the moment of its independence, the Republic of Macedonia has struggled with high unemployment, a large number of bankrupt companies (and thus a large number of redundant workers), low wages, a large percentage of the poor and people living on the edge of poverty and a low level of public services. These socio-economic factors have varied over time, but they have largely persisted through all governments of various compositions, and there has been little continuity or strong momentum in overcoming them. Most citizens are so-called rational voters; they make their decision based on their socio--economic position. They vote for the party which they believe offers greater opportunity for maintaining or improving their socio-economic position. And, of course, the motivation of many voters is not to choose a better political offer, but to punish the incumbent party for its poor performance. The SDSM government that ruled Macedonia from 2002-2006 was blamed by the opposition for the growing economic crisis in the country, rising unemployment, partisan employment in the state administration, a lack of sufficient democratic procedures in decision making, and an increase in corruption and crime.

Weakening and Rupture of the Competition

At the same time, the SDSM was facing a process of splintering that resulted in the creation of the New Social Democratic Party (*Nova socijaldemokratska partija*, NSDP), whose leader was Tito Petkovski, a senior SDSM party official, former president of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia and a respected leader of the party's moderate wing. He drew party officials and members of SDSM and undecided voters into NSDP and positioned the party in on the center-left of the ideological map of the country. The SDSM faced increasing problems with consolidation of the party, trying to establish a viable management mechanism and identifying a leader who would replace Crvenkovski. Almost all political parties in Macedonia are so called "leader-based parties," in which the leader has a dominant position and makes the largest number of important decisions

alone. With Crvenkovski in the presidency, the SDSM needed to come up with a leader who would lead it to victory but could also restore failing party discipline. The unsteady competitive position of SDSM only worked in favor of VMRO-DPMNE.

The Process of Schism and Strengthening of VMRO-DPMNE

In the period between the election cycles, VMRO-DPMNE also saw its own schisms, as the hard-core right wing of the party, led by former party Chairman Ljubčo Georgievski, established the VMRO–People's Party (*Vnatrešna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija–Narodna Partija*, VMRO-NP) in 2004. The main reasons for establishment of the new party were, according to its leaders, the departure of VMRO-DPMNE from the "fundamental values" of the party and the marginalization of long-serving party members at the expense of newly recruited ones. The split meant a loss of the part of the membership and supporters to the new party, on the one hand, but also contributed to the establishment of a clearer profile for the reformed VMRO-DPMNE, both ideologically and in terms of personnel. In practice, the departure of Georgievski and his followers facilitated the Gruevski leadership's official distancing of the party from what it viewed as ideological views and political and personnel decisions that had cost VMRO-DPMNE significant public support.

Once factional activities that divide a party and lead to the creation of a new party settle down, it is often possible for a more stable process of consolidation to begin. This was true for VMRO-DPMNE, whose leadership managed to contain the antagonisms within the party and create a full-fledged infrastructure capable of carrying out all the activities necessary in the pre-election period. And these pre-election-period actions came to differ from all previously known activities in Macedonia, as VMRO-DPMNE started to work with a new model of political marketing.

A New Model of Political Marketing and Concept of Election Strategy

Going into 2006, VMRO-DPMNE applied an electoral strategy that had not yet been applied by any party. Based on a sophisticated survey of the political market and voter behavior, the party obtained solid knowledge of the needs of the various strata of citizens in different regions of the country, as well as knowledge of the undecided voters and their expectations and needs. Based on this body of knowledge, the party doctrine and the competence of the expert team, VMRO-DPMNE created an electoral strategy and an election program. The strategy can be divided into general and population-segment-focused components. The general strategy included an appeal to the entire constituency, whereas the segmented parts addressed particular groups of voters such as pensioners, youth, the unemployed and women. This kind of appeal to specific segments was evident in the election program, but also in public appearances and meetings with specific target groups. In this way, VMRO-DPMNE's campaign adapted its traditional right-of-center approach and moved closer to its own motto, as proclaimed in the party doctrine: to come closer to and take care of real people and to offer real solutions to real human problems, in practice to develop VMRO-DPMNE as a real "people's party." In practice, the emerging VMRO-DPMNE would be a people's party "in that it tries to be closer to the people, to the people's problems and offer solutions to their problems."[31]

31 Interview with Mr Ilija Dimovski, MP and director of the Center for Communication of VMRO-DPMNE.

A New Concept of the Electoral Program

VMRO-DPMNE also for the first time offered a lengthy electoral manifesto with a complex structure to the public. The manifesto contained 110 pages, which is approximately five times more than the previous program document had. It was divided into areas such as economic growth, agricultural development, industry, energy, social security and justice, good governance and combating corruption, education, sports, science, information technology and e-society, reliable, efficient and equitable health care, the political system, culture, population and demographic policy, tourism, and protection of the environment. The manifesto was titled "Rebirth in 100 Steps," with the steps themselves symbolizing the specific activities that the party planned to take to achieve the objective – an economic and social renaissance. The program was specific in that it proposed concrete measures and specified the objective and activity that should take place, and then provided an accounting of cost, as exemplified blow:

Light at the End of the Tunnel

Objective: to temporarily address unemployment in the 20 poorest municipalities, the objective over four years is to create approximately 2,000 temporary jobs.

Method: budget support for unemployed people for various projects: growing plants, mushrooms, horticultural products, poultry, community activities, environmental projects, repairs of schools and clinics, etc.

Means: 2 million Euros, budget of the Republic of Macedonia

The program was characterized as a concept for the economic development of the country. Measures and projects proposed in the area of industry, energy, agriculture and small and medium enterprises prevail in the program. The most frequently used terms and words, besides the name of the party and the country were: "EU," "Europe," "European," words related to European integration and words that illustrated the party's economic program, such as "economic investment," "development," "construction," "foreign investment" (48 times), "projects" (84 times), the party slogan, and so on. Most-often-used words also included the terms "citizens,| "government" (99 times), and the "state" (53 times), which was referred to in the program most often in the context of reducing its influence in the sphere of economic activities.[32]

The process of drafting the electoral program was based on prior consultations with experts in specific areas, an approach which they party emphasized as an important feature. "Many renowned local experts from Macedonian universities participated in the drafting of the electoral program, as well as the Macedonian Arts and Science Academy (MANU), non-governmental organizations, businessmen and foreign economic experts. In addition, the chambers of commerce, the trade unions and most of the local self-government units were consulted."[33]

From the party's formation until the elections in 2006, the party's trademark was the color red and a lion with two tails. During the elections in 2006, however, the party partially

32 A. Cekikj, Political Identities in the Republic of Macedonia, Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, p.134

33 Manifesto of the VMRO-DPMNE for the General (Parliamentary) Election 2006, part: Introduction.

rebranded itself by changing its color to orange. According to some, this was a sign of establishing a certain distance from all previous unsuccessful, failed and controversial acts and activities while VMRO-DPMNE was in power. It was meant to be a symbol of a new way – with new ideas, people and modes of operation. According to others, the party wanted to offer an association for the public with the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and to symbolize a true political rebirth.

In the 2006 elections VMRO-DPMNE won the possibility to form a government, which it formed together with the NSDP, the Socialist Party of Macedonia (*Socijalistička Partija na Makedonija,* SPM), the Democratic Renewal of Macedonia (*Demokratska obnova na Makedonija,* DOM), the Party for a European Future (*Partija za Evropska Idnina,* PEI) and the Democratic Party of Albanians (*Partia Demokratike Shqiptare,* PDS). The coalition government program included many of the plans, projects and measures envisioned by the VMRO-DPMNE manifesto. The new government was also largely consistent in implementing these activities. It also monitored the results of implementation in terms of their congruence with the program, the degree to which objectives were met and whether implementation incurred additional costs compared to the government program. By Macedonian standards it was unprecedentedly easy for citizens to keep the government accountable for the implementation of its promises. This facilitated a process of a gradual building of trust towards political parties and electoral programs in general among the people. Accordingly, it supported the idea that parties ought to implement what they promise, and that the electoral manifesto is not a simple propaganda tool, but a record of all obligations of the parties made to the population.

V. Second Big Victory

But this government also proved the old wisdom of politics that all election programs are doomed to being compromised in coalition settings. In the process of implementation of some projects, VMRO-DPMNE did not receive complete support from its coalition partners. It was not possible to pass several laws that required a two-thirds majority or the "double majority."[34] These disagreements appeared within the coalition in spite of the fact that the contentious issues were part of the mutually agreed government program.

From the results of the public opinion surveys done by several agencies and institutes, it was obvious that VMRO-DPMNE's ratings were consistently growing, and that the ratings of Prime Minister (and party leader) Nikola Gruevski were growing, as well. This was the first time in the multiparty era in Macedonia in which such high ratings were recorded for any political party and politician. What was even more remarkable was that that rating did not decrease over a long period, but rather kept increasing. For the sake of an opportunity to secure another four-year term and to ensure implementation of the program promised to the voters, VMRO-DPMNE opted for early dissolution of the Assembly and thus, for the first time, for the calling of early parliamentary elections in June 2008.

The new election manifesto justified this decision as follows:

34 In the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, some laws that touch upon the interests of the ethnic communities are, in addition to the standard parliamentary majority, required to obtain a majority of those MPs which have declared they belong to an ethnic community that is not a majority in the Republic of Macedonia.

Early elections are a strong democratic tool, a benefit of democracy and a basic way to face responsibility and a test whether the citizens are in favor of the ruling party's activities, whether it works and acts for the good of citizens, whether it fulfills what it promised or if it has betrayed the citizens and behaved contrary to the interests of citizens and of the state. Early elections are just that: taking responsibility, looking in the eyes of the citizens, testing whether politicians have worked responsibly, honestly, and with dedication, whether they have worked for the good of the citizens, in accordance with their programs, which provided them a mandate in the previous elections.[35]

In the elections of June 2008, VMRO-DPMNE won an absolute majority together with its pre-election coalition partners and the BDI entered the government as a partner from the Albanian block, replacing PDS in this role. The majority was conceived as a guarantee of easier implementation of the promises made to citizens by – among other things – eliminating the practice of ultimata from coalition partners threatening to leave the government when their demands remained unfulfilled.

In these elections, the party ran with the slogan "Macedonia Knows, the Rebirth Continues." In fact, the 2006 "Rebirth in 100 Steps" manifesto was upgraded and extended, retaining the identical degree of structuring and specificity regarding the planned objectives: "This program is a program that will continue the rebirth of the Republic of Macedonia! This program is an upgraded and extended version of the Rebirth in 100 Steps, with many more projects, achievable measures and new steps that will bring about rebirth – reebirth of the spirit, rebirth of feeling for the state, economic rebirth, rebirth in all spheres of the society!"[36] What was particularly interesting about this manifesto was a review that gave a detailed report on the objectives accomplished and activities concluded during in the previous two-year period.

The reasons that caused the party's victory in 2006 apply to the 2008 elections, as well, but the following should be added: consistency in the implementation of the projects promised during the election campaign in 2006 and the palpable consolidation of the party. The main commitments of the party in 2008 included the following five strategic priorities of the VMRO-DPMNE government for the period 2008–2012:

- Increasing economic growth and competitiveness on a permanent basis, a higher employment rate, an increased living standard and quality of life;
- Integrating the Republic of Macedonia into the EU and NATO;
- Continuing the fight against crime and corruption and efficient enforcement of the law;
- Maintaining good inter-ethnic relations and coexistence on the principles of mutual tolerance and respect and equal law enforcement, as well as completion of the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement; and
- Investing in education as the safest way for creating strong individuals and a strong state.
- The ten key objectives for 2008–2012 included:
- Increasing domestic and foreign investment on the basis of an improved business climate;

35 Manifesto of the VMRO-DPMNE for the General (Parliamentary) Election 2008, part: Introduction
36 Ibid

- Developing agriculture and a better standard of living for farmers;
- Developing economic infrastructure, including roads, railroads, airports, energy facilities, information and communication technologies, irrigation and environment in order to increase competitiveness and support economic growth;
- Improving prospects for youth and greater safety for adults and pensioners;
- Improving education for better prospects in life, with greater investments including information technology, sports and ethics;
- Promoting the Macedonian language, culture and identity in the world;
- Delivering a high degree of safety and security and a determined fight against corruption and crime;
- Creating an efficient and independent judiciary and efficient and non-selective enforcement of the law;
- Improving the health of the nation that respects the traditional Christian values, including family values and children; and
- Providing efficient and transparent government on both the central and local level, as well as public institutions with greater quality.

VI. Simultaneous Third and Fourth Victories

In April 2009 the presidential elections were held simultaneously with the municipal elections. These elections were conducted in a period when VMRO-DPMNE was on the ascent and enjoyed high popularity. Several candidates ran in the presidential election, but Gjorge Ivanov, the candidate of the coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE, and Ljubomir Danailov Frčkoski, the candidate of the coalition led by SDSM, went to the second round. Both candidates were professors at the Faculty of Law, doctors of political science and intellectuals respected within the academic community. VMRO-DPMNE's candidate had never been active in politics and was never a member of a political party, while SDSM's candidate was cabinet member and adviser to late President Boris Trajkovski. Each considered his own political past an advantage and the opponent's past a disadvantage. Frčkoski observed that his rival candidate could not run the country without a single day of experience in politics, while the counter-argument was that Frčkoski experience proved only that he did not know how to provide leadership in politics and that it cannot be expected that he would change his way of working if he became president.[37]

During the campaign the candidates presented roughly similar views regarding the conduct of foreign policy in relation to Euro-Atlantic integration and security. However, even though neither had a concrete proposal for resolution of the dispute with Greece regarding the constitutional name of the Macedonian state, the SDSM candidate was more explicit in regard to the urgency for changing the name. In the second round of the elections Ivanov won 453,616 votes, while Frčkoski took 264,828. Voters thus awarded VMRO-

37 Arguments and counter-arguments were presented during the TV debate broadcast by the national television.

-DPMNE a third consecutive victory with a second president of the Republic coming from within its ranks. For the first time no one questioned the legitimacy of the election, and the opposing candidate conceded defeat. But because the Albanian population largely abstained from the second round of the elections and did not express a preference for any candidate, some analysts suggested that the president-elect did not have full legitimacy sanctioned by all ethnic communities. Other analysts interpreted this as a true victory because VMRO-DPMNE was not put in a position to have to negotiate with the Albanian parties for their support and in return to have to meet requirements which could clash with the party's policy line. Ivanov's image as a moderate, non-partisan individual who would not divide the citizens, coupled with the congruence of his electoral program with the general principles of the government's foreign policy, contributed to Ivanov's victory, but the high rating VMRO-DPMNE had when the election took place helped him the most.

In the municipal elections in 2009, VMRO-DPMNE, together with the remaining coalition partners, ran with the slogan "Together We Can Do More." But the word "together" was used ambiguously; on the one hand, it symbolized the togetherness of the political parties and, on the other hand, a partnership with the citizens in terms of action on the local level.

In these elections, the party ran in the exact same way as it had in the two previous parliamentary cycles, offering concrete programs that contained precise projects in all municipalities, plus the city of Skopje. Where VMRO-DPMNE mayors sought reelection, in their programs they gave an account of their achievements, followed by an outline of objectives and commitments for the future period in government. This style of running a campaign and devising an electoral strategy, which were described as characteristic for the parliamentary elections in 2006, largely applied to these municipal elections, as well. In 2009, VMRO-DPMNE and its coalition partners won 56 mayoral seats and, importantly, the mayoral seat of the capital city Skopje. This was the broadest victory in a municipal election ever won by any political party in Macedonia. However, in these elections, besides the profile of the candidates, the electoral programs and the campaign, a large contribution to the success of the winning party came from the trust the voters invested in the party and its leader.

VII. After the Victories: Continuity and Struggling with the Challenges

After four election victories, VMRO-DPMNE is firmly positioned as a party which has earned the citizens' trust for a longer period of time. All public opinion surveys continue to show high ratings for the party, but they also show a growing trend in support for the opposition party SDSM. After the election in 2009, SDSM had a party congress at which it reelected Branko Crvenkovski, former prime minister and former president of Macedonia, as its leader. A large portion of the membership felt that SDSM did not need reform that would include a change of the leader, as was the case with VMRO-DPMNE. They opted for partial reform and re-branding, but not for change of the party leader and

the leadership, believing that Crvenkovski was the only politician capable of restoring the strength of the party and accomplishing the necessary party consolidation.

As part of its attempt to come back, SDSM developed a very active campaign through which it accused the Gruevski government of passivity in resolution of the name dispute, uncontrolled budget spending, failure to resolve the status of the redundant work force, lack of foreign investment and inability to bring down the high unemployment rate. The ruling VMRO-DPMNE reciprocated by asking the opposition to provide its own solutions regarding the name dispute and blamed previous SDSM-led governments for causing laying the foundations of the country's long-term economic problems.

Why We Won – The Polish Case

Marek Matraszek

CONTENTS:

I. Introduction

The history of the Polish center right throughout the period after 1989 has been one of the most dramatic, unstable – and ultimately successful – political stories in Central Europe. Yet despite this success, as described below, the danger remains that it may yet be dissipated.

For much of the 1990s, Poland's center right was regarded by many observers as a case history in how not to organize center-right politics. That decade was marked by bitter conflict on the center right and the inability of the various factions and parties to work together in a single, coherent party. It could even be argued that after 1989, no self-defined center--right party was directly elected to power until 1997, since prior to the first free elections in the autumn of 1991, the Polish parliament remained dominated by post-communist parties (in accordance with the 1989 Round Table Agreements), while the government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki (1989-1990) was a curious mixture of reform communists and former anti-communist opposition figures whose own private political sympathies tended toward the social-democratic. It is true that the 1991 government of Jan Krzysztof Bielecki was center right in that its prime minister was an avowed free-market admirer of Margaret Thatcher, but he was not elected into that role. Perhaps the successive governments of Jan Olszewski (1992) and Hanna Suchocka (1992-1993) could be seen as center-right, but Poland's electoral system at that time meant that those governments were coalitions of a multitude of smaller parties, each of which represented only a the smallest slivers of center-right traditions taken on their own.

Against this background of intellectual confusion and organizational chaos of the Polish center right, the post-communist left, in the form of the Democratic Left Alliance (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej,* SLD), was able to recover from the initial fall of communism, and as early as 1993, to return to power. During the period from 1993-1997, the post-communist left further strengthened its political position throughout the election of the post-communist Aleksander Kwasniewski, who defeated Lech Walesa in the 1995 presidential elections. Parallel to this post-communist advance, the self-defined Polish center right degenerated into internecine warfare of recrimination over the loss of power to post-communists in free elections, leaving the opposition stage in parliament to the Democratic Union (*Unia Demokratyczna,* UD) party, which although led by former anti--communist dissidents, remained a party of broadly defined "moderation" as a mode of political action, sprinkled with a mix of social-democratic and Christian-democratic instincts, without any real ideological belief in the central canons of right-of-center ideology.

II. Defining the Center Right

It might at this point be prudent to pause before going further and define exactly what we mean by "center right" in Polish politics. This point has been contentious in the past due to the variety of shades of center-right politicians and parties, as well as the confusion brought about by the fact that almost all parties in post-communist Poland – even some center-left ones – might credibly be defined as "reformist," which some have conflated

with the essence of being "center right," especially in economic terms. The classic synthesis of center-right politics, essentially involving an alliance within one political party of free-market beliefs with a conservative approach to social and cultural issues and a robust Transatlantic posture in foreign policy has been rarely achieved in Polish political parties. Some attempts to create such a political synthesis have succeeded, but the parties concerned (the Conservative People's Party, *Stronnictwo Konserwatywno-Ludowe,* SKL, and the Right Alliance, *Przymierze Prawicy,* PP) never actually ran independently for parliament and existed only as part of a broader center-right alliance. The bare minimum for defining a party or movement in Polish conditions as "center right" or "right-wing" would probably be cultural, understood as a positive affirmation of conservative moral and social values, buttressed by an acceptance and understanding of the special role played by the Catholic Church in Polish cultural and social life. Although even post-communist parties dared not engage in Zapatero-like attempts to assault the special role of the Church, especially while Pope John Paul II was alive, only in center-right parties were these values an intrinsic part of their political ideological identity. From that base, further shades of "center-rightness" might be defined, encompassing both policy – for example, a positive and ideological commitment to liberal, free-market economics – and a conservative approach to politics understood in terms of mode of political activity. The above may seem vague, but to attempt a more rigorous definition of what being "center right" means would condemn us to perverse conclusions, such as questioning whether the late President Lech Kaczynski was a center-right politician. Undoubtedly he was, but not in terms of his economic views, which remained resolutely Christian-socialist and were combined with an emotional attachment to the Polish trade-union movement.

III. Organizing the Center Right

The first concerted attempt to give the Polish center right organizational (albeit not ideological, which turned out to be a critical error) coherence was the creation of Solidarity Election Action (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność*, AWS). But although AWS leader Marian Krzaklewski was known for his strong – if not to say authoritarian – leadership tendencies, AWS itself had been born as a hastily-brought-together political movement made up of a set of factions, rather than as a united political party. The Polish right, as indicated, had been in disarray since 1993, following the defeat and elimination from the Polish parliament of several right-wing parties, including the Christian National Union (*Zjednoczenie Chrzescijansko-Narodowe*, ZChN). Following the defeat of Lech Walesa in the presidential election of 1995, a candidate who proved unable either before or after his defeat to act as a lodestar for the Polish right, it became clear that a return to active parliamentary politics could only occur on the condition of the disparate forces of the Polish right uniting under a common banner. This banner proved to be the Solidarity trade union, which held out a simple deal to the weakened Polish right: the trade union would provide the financial resources and organizational capabilities for a political campaign, while the divided center-right parties would accept the tutelage of the union in the form of the leadership of the putative alliance by Krzaklewski, as well as commit to accepting that in government AWS would govern so as to implement the key policies of the Solidarity Trade Union.

The humiliating terms of this proposal – essentially emasculating the center right from both its policies and its sovereignty – were nonetheless accepted in early 1997, and AWS was created. Although a broad coalition of forces, AWS was seen as resting on essentially three political pillars. One was the AWS Social Movement (*Ruch Spoleczny AWS*, RS AWS), a collection of activists and unionists close to the Solidarity leadership espousing – as the name suggested – a clear social agenda in tune with the priorities of the union. The second was the Christian National Union, at that time one of the strongest political entities on the Polish right, espousing Catholic social teaching and conservative moral principles, and regarding itself as close to the hierarchy of the Polish Catholic Church. The third pillar of AWS was the Conservative People's Party, itself a coalition of several factions, but broadly espousing a more open form of center-right politics, combining support for traditional and conservative values with an acceptance of the importance of free-market economics in building a prosperous state.

Although 1997 saw a seeming recovery in the fortunes of the center right through the victory of AWS in the parliamentary elections of that year, it did not presage a permanent recovery in those fortunes. AWS suffered from continued internal divisions, being more akin to a broad alliance of political groups allied only by their anti-communism, rather than a single, coherent ideology. AWS was only barely held together by its leader, Marian Krzaklewski, who was simultaneously the leader of the Solidarity Trade Union, while the prime minister of the AWS government of the time, Jerzy Buzek, was incapable of exerting his authority within the AWS movement, being himself dependent on the support of Krzaklewski for his position as prime minister.

Parallel to this, in the background, the Polish left – despite its defeat in the 1997 parliamentary election – continued to grow in strength. This recovery was driven in part by the clumsy way in which the Buzek government implemented its four strategic reforms – local government, health, education and pensions. All of these reforms in retrospect have come to be viewed as important milestones in the reform of Poland after 1989, but at the time they were controversial, and their implementation was marked by violent disagreements in the AWS camp itself. Local government reform, which introduced 16 new provinces, in particular caused major regional frictions within AWS. The SLD, under new leader Leszek Miller, took advantage of the confusion generated by the reforms to build up support for itself. In fact, it was Miller, a former secretary of the Central Committee of the old Communist Polish United Workers Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR), who set about revamping the internal structure of the SLD to make it less of a left-wing movement and more of a centralized electoral machine designed to achieve and keep power. While the AWS movement degenerated into the traditional infighting of the Polish right, the SLD effectively used its organizational coherence and the single-minded determination of its leadership to gain and maintain political power.

As the decade drew to a close, however, several developments emerged which in the long run would have a dramatic effect in changing the fortunes of the center right.

The Decomposition of AWS

AWS was successful in winning the 1997 parliamentary elections against the background of an increasingly unpopular SLD government, which itself had been weakened by the

departure of its junior coalition partner, the Polish People's Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe,* PSL) in 1996, and also by the mistakes of the SLD Prime Minister Wlodzimierz Cimoszewicz during the 1997 flood disaster that befell Poland. Nonetheless, its time in office was not a happy one, with increasing tension developing among the constituent parts of AWS over issues such as the government's reform program and the decision by Solidarity Trade Union leader Marian Krzaklewski to run for the presidency in 2000. Although Krzaklewski, both as Solidarity leader and also as leader of AWS itself, was the natural candidate for president, many other AWS politicians doubted his ability to win the contest against the still-popular Kwasniewski.

AWS suffered a series of heavy blows in 2000-2001, starting with the defeat of Krzaklewski in the presidential election, in which he lost heavily to Kwasniewski, with Kwasniewski securing victory in the first round of the two-stage ballot. The defeat of Krzaklewski marked the demise of the role of the Solidarity Trade Union as the locus of organization for the Polish right, both in strict, narrow policy terms, but also practically. Now that it was clear that the trade union was not able to deliver political success, the political allies of RS AWS – those politicians in both ZChN and also the SKL – felt that their political future in building a modern center right had to be secured elsewhere. Above all it cemented the determination that in the future there was little point in agreeing to be the junior partners in a broader political movement; instead, a coherent center right could only be built openly, basing itself on policies that had to be publicly articulated without major compromise.

The Crisis of Liberal Politics

While one part of the Polish center right began its slow but determined metamorphosis into a more intellectually and organizationally coherent force, there were equal tectonic shifts underway in other sections of the non-communist political scene that, in due course, would have equally important consequences in sweeping away post-communism as a serious political force in Poland for at least three electoral cycles.

From 1993–1997, the Democratic Union was the only serious non-communist political force in parliament. In 1994, the party merged with the Liberal-Democratic Congress (*Kongres Liberalno-Demokratyczny***,** KLD), a smaller free-market party that had been influential in the 1991 Bielecki government, but which had failed to enter parliament in 1993. The resulting new party, the Freedom Union (*Unia Wolności,* UW), also found a new leader in the more free-market Leszek Balcerowicz, who had been the father of Poland's economic reform in the early 1990s. Despite public appearances of unity, under the surface an intense struggle for influence between the former UD and KLD politicians continued.

In fact, the new party's creation also sowed the seeds of its own later downfall. The first sign of crisis came in 1997, when several key UW politicians – including future President Bronislaw Komorowski – left the party to create the aforementioned Conservative People's Party, which became an integral part of AWS. Although the party entered government in 1997 as the junior coalition partner of AWS, the experience was not a happy one, and the party left the government in 2000, one year before parliamentary elections. At the end of 2000, the conflict between the two main constituent parts of the UW came to a head with the election of veteran Social Democrat Bronislaw Geremek as its chair-

man, who immediately began a purge of politicians linked to the liberal and free-market Donald Tusk, former KLD leader.

The response from Tusk was to leave the UW at the beginning of 2001, and together with Maciej Plazynski (the former speaker of the 1997-2001 parliament linked to AWS) and Andrzej Olechowski (former finance minister and foreign minister in the non-communist governments of the early 1990s, despite being an admitted former collaborator with the communist external intelligence services) create the Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska,* PO). The new party, under the initial leadership of Plazynski, was strengthened by a cohort of politicians who left the disintegrating AWS, including Komorowski and Jan Rokita. At this early point in its political history, the Civic Platform could legitimately be called center-right, as it did incorporate intellectually committed conservatives and free--market liberals in a genuinely successful political party for the first time. In addition, the PO at this stage presented a strong anti-establishment message, calling for a reform of the political and electoral system and a genuine democratization of political parties.

In parallel to the split in the UW and the creation of the Civic Platform, a second political initiative was developing which would also bring – over the next five years – a dramatic change in the fortunes of the Polish center right. To understand the genesis of the Law and Justice *(Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS)* party, it is necessary – as with PO – to go back to the 1990s. Despite the dominance on the right of AWS in the second half of the 1990s, an important player on the center-right spectrum held the key to the future – the Center Alliance (Porozumienie Centrum, PC). The PC had been created in 1991 by Jaroslaw Kaczynski and range of other political colleagues as an alternative to the perceived domination of Polish politics by what they saw as a left-liberal intelligentsia linked to the Democratic Union and the Gazeta Wyborcza daily newspaper. Although initially allied with Lech Walesa, Kaczynski and the PC became disillusioned with his presidency after he was elected in 1990 and rapidly distanced themselves from Walesa. Ideologically, Kaczynski and the PC were difficult to define, although Kaczynski himself saw the party as a Christian--democratic political force along the lines of the German Christian-Democratic Union. More important than narrow ideological labels, however, was the broader thrust of Kaczynski's message, namely that of Poland being held back by an unholy alliance of post--communist social forces which had managed to transpose their political and business networks into the new social reality of nascent capitalism. This uklad, or network, of former intelligence officers, party apparatchiks, home-grown businessmen and the criminal underworld was to Kaczynski a real social construct that at some point would require political power to effect its unravelling and elimination from political life. In the short term, Kaczynski remained highly skeptical of the ability of AWS, and especially of the Solidarity Trade Union, to effect such a rupture in Polish politics, and for this reason he personally remained outside the AWS movement.

At the end of the 1990s, it seemed that Kaczynski's political analysis and his PC were doomed to permanent marginalization. However, just as the creation of the Civic Platform was provoked by the single political decision of Bronislaw Geremek to purge the UW of supporters of Donald Tusk, so in retrospect it was a stroke of fate that Buzek, in the last year of his weakening government, decided to appoint Lech Kaczynski as minister of justice in place of Hanna Suchocka, who resigned as a result of the withdrawal of the UW

from Buzek's cabinet. Kaczynski made an immediate impact as minister, essentially pursuing a determined tough line on crime and corruption. Although previously less active in party politics than his brother Jaroslaw, the latter immediately recognized the opportunity that his brother's high profile presented. In early 2001, Jaroslaw Kaczynski announced the creation of the Law and Justice party, with Lech Kaczynski as its leader. In parallel to its creation, another group of politicians formerly connected with AWS (largely those from the SKL faction that had not joined PO and several leading figures of the Christian National Union) created the Right Alliance, which immediately signed an agreement to run a joint ticket with PiS in the forthcoming 2001 parliamentary elections. Lech Kaczynski resigned in the summer of 2001 as minister, leaving the path clear for him to run for parliament.

Thus, by the summer of 2001, the Polish political scene looked dramatically different than it had even one year before, let alone four. While the post-communist SLD seemed set for a landslide victory, the non-communist opposition had rebranded and repositioned itself completely. AWS had effectively collapsed, while the UW under the leadership of Geremek was sinking rapidly in the polls, its credibility significantly damaged by its failure to have run a candidate in the 2000 presidential election that had been won in the first round by Kwasniewski. In their place, two new political forces had emerged, both with a legitimate claim to be the standard bearers of center-right politics: PO and PiS. Both could be seen as mutated continuations of the UW and AWS respectively, but in reality both new parties contained politicians that had worked closely with each other in previous political incarnations, and the criss-crossing of loyalties and political histories meant that at this point relations between the two parties were harmonious. In the 2001 elections PO polled approximately 13 percent of the vote and PiS about 10 percent. In the face of the landslide vote for the SLD of 41 percent, these seemed relatively modest results, but the truly significant result was the failure of both AWS and UW – which had together created the 1997 government – to enter parliament.

Now the future of non-communist center-right politics was to be championed by PO and PiS, and in just four years in the parliamentary elections of 2005, they would have secured the political result that few felt possible: the victory of the committed center right in parliamentary elections. How was this possible, when just four years earlier Leszek Miller had obtained for the SLD its greatest victory?

IV. Phoenix from the Ashes

The first phase of the center right's rise in the new parliament was internal. In 2002, the Right Alliance that had initially just partnered on the electoral lists of PiS in the 2001 election formally became part of Law and Justice at a unity congress in the late spring of 2002. At this point, Law and Justice – although continuing to be robust ideologically – had its broadest-ever internal spectrum of personalities and nuanced political viewpoints. One long-standing criticism of the old Center Alliance party under Kaczynski was that it was too narrow in its core leadership and ideological identity. In contrast, PiS following the merger with PP contained not only the old, hard-core PC political leadership, but also a generous contingent of politicians from the ZChN and SKL, as well as some indepen-

dent pressure groups and the anti-Communist Republican League. Not only were these politicians diverse intellectually within the same center-right family, but many of them were also renowned intellectuals and writers in their own regard, much respected by the mainstream media despite their conservative views.

The consolidation of PiS was also mirrored by closer cooperation with PO, culminating in a formal electoral alliance in the 2002 municipal elections, as a result of which the joint PO-PiS list obtained over 16 percent of the vote. The first sign that the new center right was truly electable came, however, in the mayoral election in Warsaw, where Lech Kaczynski was able to gain an absolute majority in the second round of voting, beating official SLD candidate Marek Balicki with a 70-30 percent split of the vote. This remarkable result showed that the center right was becoming once again electable in large urban areas. During this time internal politics were also on the ascendancy in the PO, and after a brief power struggle, Maciej Plazynski, one of the PO's founders, resigned his chairmanship of the party, enabling Donald Tusk to take over as leader in early 2003.

Initially, the 2001 parliament seemed to bode an unexciting four years for the Polish center right. The new government was a familiar coalition, similar to the one that had governed in the 1993-1997 period, a coalition of the SLD and PSL. The scale of the SLD victory was unprecedented, however, as it was only by a narrow margin that the party failed to secure an outright majority in parliament, long an accomplishment thought to be near-impossible due to the vagaries of the Polish proportional-representation electoral system. As a result, the SLD was seen as exerting total dominance over the political scene and also over its junior coalition partner. In contrast to the 1993-1997 period, moreover, the SLD leadership found little reason to exercise any scruples in its ambition to cement its power systemically in the media and other institutions such as the intelligence services. Whereas in 1993 the SLD seemed somehow guilty and reticent at its unexpected return to power, this time it was clear that power would be exercised fully.

Much of this had to do with the personality of Prime Minister Leszek Miller, who had cleverly steered the party to victory by running a "broad-church" campaign, but then rapidly centralized power to himself and his closest governmental allies, earning the nickname of the "Iron Chancellor." Miller's own background was "old-school" post-communism: he had been a lifelong activist in the Polish United Workers Party, and in the 1980s had advanced to being a secretary of the party's Central Committee, and also a member of the PZPR Politburo. During this time he was perceived as a pro-Russian hardliner, an image which was cemented in the early 1990s when he was accused of taking a $1.2 million cash "loan" from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to fund the activities of reviving the Polish post-communist movement. By the time of the 2001 election victory, these sins of the past had largely been overtaken by events. But they are important markers in understanding Miller's instincts and his tendencies to hubris, which ultimately lay at the source of his downfall.

To round off the dominance of the left, the new government was able to rely on the support of President Kwasniewski, just one year after his second electoral victory in the 2000 presidential elections. The Kwasniewski presidency, the premiership of Leszek Miller and the dominance of the SLD in parliament all resulted in the emergence of a "we are the masters now" instinct among the SLD party leadership, compounded by its distaste for the

Polish right, which they had seen during the period of AWS government as being driven by anti-communism. It is true that over time, relations between Miller and Kwasniewski would become strained, but initially all seemed well.

The Left Government: Conflict and Scandal

The increasing consolidation of the center right, filling rapidly the vacuum left by the collapsed AWS, was mirrored by a surprising decomposition in the camp of the post--communists. The growing tension between Miller and Kwasniewski has already been mentioned. Although both had a political background in the PZPR focusing on youth issues, in reality the two were very different. Miller's background was orthodox, and although he had developed into a pragmatist over the 1990s, his institutional support in the SLD was very much in the traditional apparatus part of the party. In contrast, Kwasniewski had long sought to present himself as a true moderate who saw the long-term success of the SLD as best guaranteed by an evolution to the centrist, social-democratic left. At a personal level, Kwasniewski had developed over the years a close friendship with the former anti-communist dissident Adam Michnik, now editor of the center-left *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Both men felt that a +pro-European, pro-reform and domestically progressive alliance between a moderate SLD and those politicians who had been leaders of the Freedom Union was the way forward. The fundamental problem for both men was that there were no real partners for this alliance: the SLD was under the control of the orthodox Miller, and the UW had failed even to get into parliament in the 2001 elections.

Relations between Kwasniewski and Miller began deteriorating rapidly. The first symptom that all was not well was the surprising resignation in July 2002 of the minister of finance in Miller's government, Marek Belka, who had long been seen as a protégé of Kwasniewski. At the same time, Minister of Culture Andrzej Celinski resigned, as did Minister of Justice Barbara Piwnik. Celinski's resignation was a blow to Miller, as Celinski was the only member of the cabinet who had been a dissident and who had a credible position as a center-left politician coming from a non-communist background. The three named replacements – Grzegorz Kolodko, Grzegorz Kurczuk and Waldemar Dabrowski – were much closer to Miller. In particular, Kolodko and Kurczuk were more aligned with Miller politically than either Belka or Celinski had been.

The sense of instability in the Miller government was compounded over the years by a series of resignations, usually for obscure reasons, but which revolved around deep factional struggles both within the government and between the governing camp and politicians loyal to Kwasniewski. Key ministers to come and go during this period included those of finance, the state treasury, health and labor, as well as a swathe of junior ministers in the government.

The real damage, however, to the Miller government came from a series of scandals, which, when taken together, fatally undermined the electability of the SLD and left voters convinced that the party was a hotbed of corruption. The most famous of these was the so-called Rywin Affair, which in its after-effects can rightly be judged as the key reason for the collapse of the SLD's popular support. Lew Rywin was at the beginning of the 2000s a well-known film producer and media mogul, well connected both in the upper echelons of the post-communist Warsaw establishment, as well as the media and entertainment sa-

lons of Polish publishing houses and broadcasting stations. During this initial period the Miller government decided to pass a new media law which would have been, in its initial version, disadvantageous to the interests of the publisher of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the Agora publishing house, as well as those of other media players. The details of the scandal are highly complex and nuanced, and there is no room in this short chapter to discuss them fully, but suffice it to say that the scandal broke at the end of 2002, when *Gazeta Wyborzca* published details of a meeting between Rywin and Michnik – backed up by tape recordings made by Michnik – during which the mogul, claiming he was acting on behalf of the "group in power," demanded $17.5 million in return for the law being amended to the satisfaction of private media groups in Poland, and in addition ensuring that the Agora publishing house would also be able to buy a national television network.

For reasons which to this day remain obscure, *Gazeta Wyborzca* did not publish details of the corrupt proposal until the end of December 2002, but when it did, it sent a seismic shockwave through the political system. On the motion of the Law and Justice parliamentary opposition, a special parliamentary investigative committee was formed, whose members included key representatives of both PO (Jan Rokita) and PiS (Zbigniew Ziobro). Over the subsequent year, the proceedings of the committee, broadcast live on Polish national television, exposed the details of the corrupt proposal, with evidence pointing to a group of SLD politicians and media figures close to Prime Minister Miller.

The parliamentary investigation did not have any judicial power, so its importance lay not in its legal findings but rather in the platform it afforded to both Rokita and Ziobro as representatives of Poland's reborn right. Rokita especially rose to political stardom during the hearings, having previously been regarded as a worthy, if aloof, political figure outside the mainstream of PO politics. However Rokita's ability to ask probing questions during the hearings and expose the full scale of the corruption scandal made him into a star of both the committee and the Civic Platform party, as well.

The year 2004 marked perhaps the high point of the clear public alliance between PO and PiS. The Rywin Committee hearings highlighted those areas that brought the two parties together into a common analysis of the crisis slowly overcoming Poland. Their conclusion was that despite successes abroad – best symbolized by Poland's accession to the European Union in May 2004 – Poland was riven domestically by crisis brought on by corruption, and what's more, the increasingly ossified nature of the Polish ruling class, where business, political, criminal and security interests criss-crossed each other, creating a seemingly immovable barrier to truth and justice. These feelings were strengthened at key points of the Miller administration by further scandals, which simply added to support for the above perception. These included the so-called Starachowice Scandal, in which organized crime elements in the small city of Starachowice, Central Poland, had been tipped off about a police investigation by SLD party activists, obtaining their information from Zbigniew Sobotka, a high-ranking SLD functionary and deputy minister of interior. A further scandal, the so-called Orlen scandal, was triggered by former SLD Minister of the State Treasury Wieslaw Kaczmarek who revealed – again, in an interview in *Gazeta Wyborcza* – that Prime Minister Miller had ordered the arrest of the CEO of Poland's leading oil company, Orlen, in order to ensure a lucrative oil supply contract being signed with a supplier that had links to the prime minister. Further scandals emerged during the last years of the

SLD government, including accusations that Poland's richest businessman, Jan Kulczyk, sought to broker the sale of Poland's main oil refinery to Russian interests with the support of President Kwasniewski. A separate set of scandals was related to lobbyist Marek Dochnal, who used his influence within the SLD (apparently bought through illicitly hiring members of parliament) to try to push through lucrative energy and arms deals.

Throughout 2003 and into 2004, Miller had been coming under increasing pressure from both public opinion and President Kwasniewski himself, who saw in the scandal-ridden government scant hope of victory in the 2005 parliamentary elections. Kwasniewski's pessimism was compounded by the increasing fragmentation of the SLD and also by its coalition with the PSL. The latter alliance collapsed in mid-2003, when Miller dismissed PSL government members (including PSL leader Jaroslaw Kalinowski, who was serving as minister of agriculture) following continued PSL disloyalty on key legislation proposed by the Miller government. Now in a minority administration, Miller was further weakened in March 2004, when SLD-nominated Speaker of Parliament Marek Borowski departed the SLD parliamentary club with about 30 SLD MPs to create a more moderate, left-wing party called Social Democracy of Poland (*Socjaldemokracja Polska*, SDPL). Although the party failed to enter parliament in the 2005 elections, Borowski's actions were a further step in the destruction of the credibility of the SLD as a governing force.

To a large extent Miller's political life had been extended by the need for Poland to negotiate membership in the European Union, seen by Kwasniewski as a national priority. However, once membership was secure, Kwasniewski was able to use his formal and informal powers over Miller to effect the latter's resignation on May 2, 2004, just a day after Poland officially joined the EU. In Miller's place, after some parliamentary maneuvering, Marek Belka (who had resigned as minister of finance in Miller's government in 2002) became prime minister of a government staffed by some SLD figures, but also by a substantial number of non-party technocrats. Although Miller disappeared from the political scene, there was little question that the new Belka administration was a stop-gap technical government, marking time before the next elections. The shambles that was left of the once--mighty SLD was illustrated fully when Belka announced his intention to join the newly created Democratic Party (*Partia Demokratyczna,* PD), an opposition party formed by leading politicians of the former Freedom Union. In fact, Belka did join the party a month before the end of his term of office, forcing the formal withdrawal of support by the SLD for its own government.

PiS and PO Pick Up the Pieces

In these conditions of political and moral collapse, it was hardly surprising that the opinion poll ratings of the SLD collapsed. From 43 percent of the vote in 2001, by 2005 its opinion poll ratings oscillated between five and 10 percent of the popular vote, and it was clear that the Polish electorate was ready for not only electoral change, but also election of parties that promised a root-and-branch change of the Polish political environment.

PO and PiS, each in its own way, fed into this need. Both parties, in different ways, were anti-establishment. In the case of PO, the party had been founded four years earlier on an explicit rejection not only of the model of politics to be found in the Freedom Union, but also on the principle of grass-roots politics. PO initially was reluctant even to classify itself

as a formal political party, preferring to call itself a movement or "platform" of concerned citizens. It also embraced the principles of internal democracy in terms of nominating candidates for elections or for leadership positions inside the party. This positioning of the party played well in increasing popular frustration with the ossification and "oligarchization" of traditional politics in Poland. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, at the time of the 2005 elections Jan Rokita, who had shone so brightly during the Rywin Investigation, was regarded as one of the party's leading figures – and indeed it was fully expected that he would become prime minister after the 2005 elections (to the extent that Rokita's campaign for parliament in his local Krakow district was run under the slogan "Jan Rokita: Prime Minister from Krakow"). This was crucial in that Rokita, known for his tough anti-corruption stance, legitimated the PO as a true party of law and order.

In this way PO and PiS seemed during 2005 to be natural bedfellows in government. For its part, PiS could claim to be equally as anti-establishment as PO, if not more so, since its leaders, the Kaczynski twins, had been outsiders in Polish mainstream politics since the early 1990s.

The 2005 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections

Despite expectations that the life of the Belka government would be curtailed in 2005 – indeed Belka had resigned as prime minister in May 2005, only for his resignation not to be accepted by the president – Poland went to the polls at the end of a full, four-year parliamentary term in September 2005. Because the end of the presidential term of office came at the same time as parliamentary elections, Poland voted in the presidential race just two weeks after it voted for parliament. In both elections Law and Justice placed first in the rivalry with PO, with PiS winning 27 percent of the vote and PO 24 percent in the parliamentary elections. The SLD obtained 11 percent. The populist Self Defense (*Samoobrona Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej,* SRP) party obtained 11 percent of the vote, while the League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*, LPR) obtained seven percent. The LPR, although it did not initially join the future Law and Justice government, can credibly be called a right-wing party, because of its identification with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, a focus on traditional family values and a Euro-sceptic stance in foreign policy. Taken together, therefore, Polish parties on the right of the political spectrum of one hue or another garnered 60 percent of the vote, with this vote divided among at least four parties.

In the presidential election, the result was more clear-cut. In a two-round contest, the final round was contested on October 23, 2005 between PO leader Donald Tusk and PiS leader Lech Kaczynski, with the latter winning 54 percent of the vote. In the campaign, most are agreed that the final swing to Kaczynski came as the result of the campaign tactics pursued by Kaczynski's advisers, the young Michal Kaminski and Adam Bielan, who decided to polarize the electorate by labelling Tusk as a "liberal," determined to privatize and hike taxes, while portraying Kaczynski as the candidate of a "solidarity" Poland, favoring welfare protection and union rights. This polarization drove into the Kaczynski camp many of the former voters of the populist Self Defense leader Andrzej Lepper, who feared the effects of continued reforms. A further factor was Kaczynski's deliberate appeal to the need to defend the "Polish national interest" in foreign policy, especially in relation

to Moscow and Brussels, as well as a play on historical sentiment and the need to defend Polish historical memory. In this way Kaczynski appealed to those voters disheartened by the seeming weakness of the Miller government toward Russian interests and its failure to acknowledge the importance of patriotism as an element of domestic politics.

Thus Poland, in the late autumn of 2005, was a country quite different from the one it was just four years before. In 2001, it appeared that the Polish post-communist left was completely dominant and would be so for years to come. Just four years later, the left had completely collapsed. Moreover, the two leading parties of the new post-post-communist Poland were both parties that legitimately could be called center-right, albeit from two different perspectives. The hopes of many voters that the two parties would form a natural coalition in government, however, turned out to be false. This expectation had been so commonplace that it came as a genuine shock when the coalition negotiations between PO and PiS collapsed a few weeks after the elections. It is now commonly accepted that this collapse was the goal covertly sought by the PO, which made a strategic decision to go into opposition to PiS, in conditions where PiS could only form either a minority government or a coalition with the more radical LPR and Self Defense parties. This was, indeed, what eventually happened, with the initial government of Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz being replaced by that of Jaroslaw Kaczynski, now together with LPR and Self Defense, in 2006.

There were those who were not unduly worried by this turn of events, as it encouraged the prospect of a party system dominated by PO and PiS alternately in power and opposition, with the SLD being pushed into permanent opposition. Since 2005, this seems to be the model of elections – PO defeated PiS in the parliamentary elections of 2007, while PO candidate Bronislaw Komorowski won the presidential elections in 2010 only narrowly against Jaroslaw Kaczynski. It is unclear, however, how permanent this trend will be, especially as the SLD is showing signs of strengthening under its new leadership, while PiS is increasingly wrought by internal factionalism. There is also a question that is driven by the changing nature of the PO, which seems to be evolving from an ideologically driven political force expressing a right-of-center identity to a party of pragmatic political management increasingly difficult to characterize as center-right in any meaningful way. With PO losing its right-leaning policy edge, and PiS in danger of internal conflict, the future may yet hold a bleak scenario where future opposition – and successful opposition – to PO may come from the SLD and not from PiS.

V. Conclusion

As one considers why the Polish right won the elections of 2005, it becomes clear with the perspective of time that this victory may have been unique, and that its fruits are in danger of being frittered away. The victory would not have happened had it not been for the complete political and moral collapse of the post-communist SLD, a process that formed a natural power vacuum for the opposition to fill. The policy motors which drove forward both PO and PiS – anti-establishment revolt and revulsion at political corruption – were also a function of the particular political circumstances of the time. The fact that the 2005 result was not consummated in a joint government of PO and PiS has since resulted in increasing bitterness and political rivalry between the two parties, to the extent that each is

moving away from the broad ideological terrain that together they initially occupied: PO is evolving into pragmatism, while PiS – in particular after the 2010 Smolensk air disaster – is entrenching itself in radical political positions. As this process occurs, the Polish left is slowly reviving, both with the SLD and among factions that originally found a home within PO. Failing internal or external crisis, it is possible this process of slow evolution will continue for some time, but in the future there is no guarantee that the victory of the center right in Poland in 2005 will result in anything more than political divisions and eventual loss of power.

The Center Right in Romania: Between Coalition Conflicts and Reform Responsibilities

Dragoş Paul Aligică and Vlad Tarko

CONTENTS:

I. Introduction

The evolution of the Romanian center right during the last several electoral cycles offers a mixed picture: many successes and encouraging developments and, at the same time, many failures and worrisome trends. Any discussion of the success of the center-right parties in Romania needs to have as a focal point the very close victory in the 2004 presidential election of Traian Băsescu, the candidate supported by his own Democratic Party (*Partidul Democrat,* PD) and the National Liberal Party (*Partidul Naţional Liberal,* PNL), against Social Democratic Party (*Partidul Social Democrat*, PSD) candidate Adrian Năstase. This is also a story of unity and cooperation followed by tensions and break-ups and finally by a much needed and overdue process of ideological clarification.

In 2003, PD and PNL had formed a pre-electoral coalition called the Justice and Truth Alliance (*Alianţa Dreptate şi Adevăr*, DA, meaning "yes" in Romanian) and supported a single candidate. This was meant to avoid any possibility that the 2000 presidential election fiasco would be repeated. In 2000, the two center-right presidential candidates undermined each other, and an extremist candidate, Corneliu Vadim Tudor from the Greater Romania Party (*Partidul România Mare*, PRM), managed to take second place to PSD candidate Ion Iliescu. Despite Băsescu's 2004 victory, the center-left coalition won the most votes in the parliamentary elections held at the same time and had even managed to set up a potential governing coalition. This coalition, however, could not form a government because, according to the Romanian constitution, the prime minister is named by the president, and Băsescu emphatically refused to name a social-democrat prime minister. The president's move marked a historic first in post-communist Romania. Consequently, the fledging center-left coalition disintegrated and, eventually, a center-right coalition came to govern instead, including the PNL (which offered the prime minister, Călin Popescu Tăriceanu), the PD, the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (*Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség*, RMDSz, or UDMR in the Romanian acronym) and the Romanian Humanist Party (*Partidul Umanist Român*, PUR), a small party that managed to get into parliament only due to a pre-election coalition with the Social Democrats.

Tensions between the two partners in the Justice and Truth Alliance emerged almost immediately. Băsescu and the PD, as well as a faction within PNL, wanted to organize new parliamentary elections in order to obtain a clearer mandate. Tăriceanu initially agreed to organize early elections but, for reasons still unclear, changed his mind. This was the first major sign of a rift forming within PNL, as many Liberals disagreed with Tăriceanu's decision. This rift eventually led to a split in the party and the emergence of a truly center-right force, the Democrat-Liberal Party (*Partidul Democrat-Liberal,* PDL). Thus one could see that the post-2004 center-right government was marred by conflict from the very beginning, but that conflict had as an externality at least some positive developments.

In the following sections, we describe the background conditions that led to a rather spectacular and unexpected return to power of the Romanian center right, which only four years earlier, in 2000, was in complete disarray (section II); we discuss the 2004-2008 center-right government, marked by an almost constant conflict between PNL and PD (section III); and we outline some of the developments following the 2008 and 2009 elec-

tions, won again by the center right. We conclude with a general overview addressing the question: "Have the center-right forces in Romania manage to return to power and maintain power by a continued promotion of center-right principles or by abandoning them?" As we shall see, this question has a somewhat mixed answer which offers a glimpse of the trends shaping future developments.

II. The foibles of the center-left government, the unification of center--right forces, and the rise of a popular leader

How did the center right manage to regain power after 2004? One can say that, to a significant extent, the success was due to three factors: (1) a bold center-right unification strategy – a systematic effort to end the traditional fragmentation of the right, (2) the failure of the center-left forces and their structural weakness despite their apparent strengths, and (3) the emergence of a popular leader in the person of Traian Băsescu, a former ship captain during communism, minister of transportation during the 1990s (both in social--democratic and center-right governments) and later twice-elected mayor of Bucharest.

Any discussion of the Romanian center right during the last decade should take as a reference point the fact that in the early 2000s, the center right in Romania was in complete disarray, with the previously most important center-right party, the Christian Democrats (*Partidul Național Țărănesc Creștin Democrat*, PNȚ-CD), failing to enter parliament and the PNL and PD totaling less than 15 percent of the vote, less than the extremists which obtained almost 20 percent. Interestingly, neither PNL nor PD (at that time) was a member of the European People's Party (EPP) political family. PD was affiliated (it is true, in an increasingly uneasy way) with the Party of European Socialists (PES), while PNL was linked to the Alliance of Liberal Democrats for Europe (ALDE) group. That is to say, the center right thus managed to rebound in merely four years from a situation of confusion, disorganization and complete defeat and to basically redefine itself. The present section will describe how the center right managed such a spectacular rebound, while the following section will try to discuss how it managed to maintain its position.

Structural Weakness: the Social Democrats and Their 2000-2004 Government

In 2000 the PSD found itself in a position of almost complete political dominance. Although it did not have enough seats in parliament to govern alone, it succeeded in forming a highly functional coalition with UDMR (which theoretically is a center-right political organization, but which has functioned as an ally at one point or another to almost all other parties in the Romanian political system) and other minorities' representatives. This coalition proved solid also because PNL collaborated with PSD in a limited fashion in order to marginalize the far right, which had won an unusually large share of the votes.

Adrian Năstase, the Social-Democrat prime minister, had discovered that in the Romania of 2000 it was simply no longer possible to govern the country in the centrally

planned manner of Nicolae Văcăroiu, the last Social-Democrat prime minister prior to 1996, whose government is widely considered, at least in center-right circles if not more widely, to have been economically disastrous. The center-right government of 1996-2000 had simply eliminated many of the "levers" with which a government could control the economy. To the dismay of President Iliescu, who continued to maintain a socialist hard line, Năstase quickly adapted to the new situation and, rather than trying to turn the clock back, continued the economic reforms and the pro-EU stance. As a result, PSD was finally accepted to the Party of European Socialists in 2002 after years of being rejected due to its connections to the communist past.

During Năstase's government, the constitution was modified to better fit EU standards of democracy, and the regulatory quality increased due to the pressure to adopt EU--friendly laws. Privatizations were continued (accompanied by a cut in government spending during 2000-2001 and again during 2002-2004), taxes were reduced [Heritage (2000-2004): Government Spending, Fiscal Freedom], and inflation, a major problem for post-communist Romania, was also reduced to more manageable levels. Nonetheless, the business environment actually suffered during Năstase's government due to restrictions on trade and investment [Heritage (2000-2004): Trade Freedom, Investment Freedom], as well as ongoing corruption problems.

The privatizations were not done in a sufficiently transparent fashion, and press accusations of widespread corruption abounded. Moreover, Năstase was utterly incapable of creating a "people's man" image for himself, being widely perceived as an elitist and arrogant rich man, who probably did not earn his money honestly. This image, true or not (Kaufmann, Kraay & Mastruzzi, 2009: Control of Corruption), stuck to him and hampered his chances of winning elections (both within his party and the 2004 presidential election). One of the most damaging aspects of Năstase's government, which backfired on him during the presidential election campaign, was a serious decline in the freedom of the press. To this day the Romanian left and its allies have at the core of their political strategy an obsession with controlling the mass media and using it as a political weapon. According to the Freedom House's 2003 report on Romania:

Press freedom declined slightly in 2002 as a result of new legislation on access to information and continued political influence over state media… In 2002, media and human rights organizations expressed concern over the passage of the Law on Classified Information. The law exempts several government agencies from public oversight and undermines sections of the 2001 Freedom of Information Act. The 2002 Audiovisual Law, intended to reform the broadcast sector, maintains the government's strict control over the distribution of television and radio licenses. Many media outlets are financially dependent on the government and reluctant to voice criticism. In one example, the largest private television station, Pro TV, owes the state nearly $50 million in unpaid taxes and relies heavily upon the good graces of the government for survival.

The situation got even worse the following year (Freedom House, 2004):

During 2003, Romanian media faced increased pressure and intimidation by authorities. Lawsuits against journalists and media outlets were quite frequent. More than 400 criminal cases were brought against the media during the year, the vast majority con-

cerning defamation, which remains a criminal offense. Although prison terms for insult were abolished, they have been retained for libel or for "spreading false information". Most prosecutions resulted in excessive financial penalties or suspended prison sentences. The number of physical attacks on journalists who investigate corruption or other sensitive topics increased, especially in the provinces. In March, police found the body of Iosif Costinas, a journalist for the newspaper Timisoara, who disappeared in June 2002. Costinas had published articles on organized crime and was writing a book about illegal business activities in the area. Csondy Szoltan, a journalist for Hargita Nepe, was seriously injured by an unknown assailant, while Ino Ardelean, who works for the daily Evenimentul Zilei in Timisoara and frequently reported on illegal activities in the city, was beaten unconscious in December. He was the 14th journalist to be physically attacked in Romania in 2003. Media ties to government, business, or other powerful interest groups are still strong. The owners of private media are usually close to the ruling party, and public television is openly pro-government. Many privately owned media outlets suffer from a lack of editorial independence, usually serving the personal, political, and business interests of owners rather than advancing journalistic standards.

Despite these worrying developments, press reports of governmental abuses of power and corruption continued. Freedom of the press in Romania has since improved and libel has been decriminalized (Freedom House, 2009), although problems still persist (Kaufmann, Kraay & Mastruzzi, 2009: Voice and Accountability). As we'll see later in this chapter, some of these problems are due not to the government, but to the local oligarchies that control mass media channels.

To summarize, Năstase's defeat in the November 2004 presidential election (which had made possible the center-right government, despite PNLand PD having won fewer seats in parliament than PSD and PUR) was in large measure facilitated by a message of reform, while Năstase had a reputation damaged by corruption scandals and privatizations with limited transparency. To that one may add his serious attacks against the freedom of the press which backfired. As we shall see, the center-right leaders who rose to power after 2004 at different levels in the administration did not entirely manage to avoid making some of the same mistakes.

The Almost Successful Unification of the Center Right

The goal of unifying the center-right political forces in order to mount a viable opposition to the Social Democrats dates back to the 1990s (Stoica & Aligică, 2003; Stoica, 2008). Up until 2004 this unification process involved only the numerous and ineffective liberal parties and lead, via a gradual process, to the modern PNL (winning about 15-20 percent of the vote).

Within PNL two camps had always existed. One – represented by Valeriu Stoica, a former president of PNL and the main architect of these unifications – wanted as a final goal a large center-right party incorporating not just liberals but also conservatives and Christian-democrats, a party that would move from ALDE to the EPP in the European Parliament). Another – represented by Călin Popescu Tăriceanu and businessman Dinu Patriciu – wanted a more "pure" liberal party which, despite having a smaller size, could gain political power and influence by conditioning its collaboration with other major par-

ties, either on the left or on right. During Adrian Năstase's government, this second camp developed strong ties with the PSD. When it was discovered that during the 2004 legislative elections Dinu Patriciu's oil firm had sponsored not just the Justice and Truth Alliance, but also the PSD, a major scandal ensued within PNL and within the Alliance. Due to the existence of these two camps within PNL, the Justice and Truth Alliance had always had an uncertain future.

Stoica, as leader of the PNL pro-unification camp, pushed for a more integrated alliance, arguing for a merger of the PNL and the PD. At least for a while, prior to the 2004 victory, Traian Băsescu and the PD seemed to agree more with the Tăriceanu-Patriciu view of the alliance. It is important to note that Stoica's reasoning about the merger was based not only on ideological grounds, but also on his prior experience with the Democratic Convention of Romania (*Convenţia Democrată Română,* CDR), the center-right alliance in which PNL was involved from 1991 to 2000 and which disintegrated with a bang following the 1996-2000 government. Stoica has argued (2008) that two parties in an alliance have concurring interests only while in opposition and during the electoral campaign (as they both want to win the election and can only do it together), but have diverging interests once in government, as each desires that the reputational burden brought by the act of governing be placed mainly on the other's shoulders. Thus, while governing, partners often use various opportunities to subvert each other for the goal of gaining future votes. Partners in a coalition also usually occupy neighboring electoral niches, and thus are natural competitors for the same limited amount of votes, which enhances the potential for conflict. Hence, Stoica argued for a merger of the two parties in order to avoid this governing-coalition effect. He was not successful in persuading others in this regard. Nonetheless, the formation of the Justice and Truth Alliance, as a partial step towards unification, was a key element in setting the stage for the 2004 victory. The alliance presented the public with a unified opposition to the Social-Democratic option.

That change was in the air became clear after the municipal elections in May 2004. With the exception of major cities, where PNL and PD proposed common candidates on behalf of the Justice and Truth Alliance, the two parties still competed separately. Despite this reluctance to fully join forces, gains were visible. Table 1 shows the comparative results in the local elections from 2000 to 2004 for the major parties.

Table 1. County Council Members
(Source of Data: Romania's Central Electoral Bureau)

Party	2000 local elections	2004 local elections
PSD	28%	32%
PNL+PD	21%	32%
PNL	9%	18%
PD	12%	14%
UDMR	9%	8%
PRM	8%	8%

One of the major events during these municipal elections was the Bucharest mayoral election, which was won by Băsescu, the incumbent mayor, with PSD's Mircea Geoană be-

ing the most important contender. Geoană would later become the leader of the Social Democrats and would face Băsescu again during the 2009 presidential elections, in which he would lose once again.

During the municipal elections, Băsescu claimed not to have any presidential aspirations. The Justice and Truth Alliance's presidential candidate was supposed to be Liberal leader Theodor Stolojan. However, for a reason that is not entirely clear, at a critical moment in the presidential campaign, Stolojan quit the race. At that point Băsescu stepped in and the center-right forces managed to re-launch their presidential bid.

Once Băsescu had won the presidential election, he and the PD reassessed the merger proposal and made manifest their willingness to make steps in that direction. With this goal in view, PD had decided to abandon its prior social-democratic European allegiance, and applied to the membership in the EPP, which it obtained. The PD invited PNL to make a similar step. Nonetheless, the PNL-PD merger did not happen. When Stolojan stepped down from his presidential bid, he also stepped down as leader of PNL, supporting Tăriceanu as the next party leader. As mentioned above, Tăriceanu was against the merger and also against leaving the Liberal group in the European Parliament, as he had been a vice president of the European Liberal Democrat and Reform (ELDR) party since 2004. As we detail below, Stoica's warning about coalition government conflict was just about to become a reality.

III. The center-right government and the disintegration of the Justice and Truth Alliance

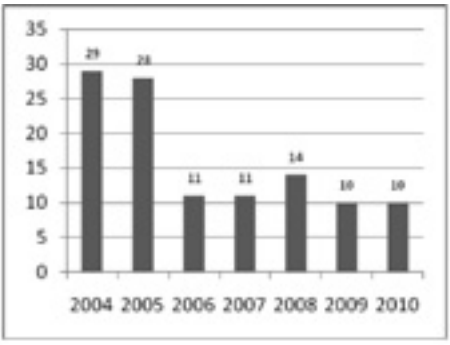
The PNL-PD-UDMR-PUR alliance was marred by conflict from the beginning. The presence in the coalition government of the Humanist Party (which entered parliament on the PSD list) was famously deemed by Băsescu as the "immoral solution, a characterization not entirely appreciated by media tycoon and PUR President Dan Voiculescu. As mentioned earlier, Tăriceanu's change of mind about organizing early legislative elections for the purpose of obtaining a clearer majority had marked the beginning of an increasingly vicious conflict between the prime minister and the president, and also between the PNL and PD. Thus, after the 2008 legislative election, PNL refused to enter the governing coalition with PD, despite the fact that this would have been an unprecedentedly clear center-right government, as the 2008 legislative election marked the first time in Romania's post-communist history that the center right obtained a clear parliamentary majority. The degree to which PNL today is a center-right party other than in name only is an issue to be discussed later.

Flat tax, Reduced Bureaucracy and Private Pensions

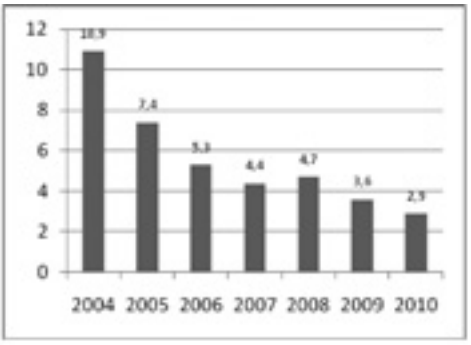
Despite a perpetual state of conflict between the president and prime minister, certain important center-right reforms were made. One of the major campaign promises was the introduction of a flat tax, which happened very early on. Moreover, trade barri-

ers were reduced and the business environment became friendlier, especially after 2005 (Heritage (2004–2008): Investment Freedom, Business Freedom; Figure 1), although not as friendly as that of neighboring countries, Bulgaria and Hungary (Doing Business Report, 2010).

Figure 1. Starting a Business (Source of Data: Doing Business Report, 2004–2010)



Days



Cost (% of income per capita)

Since the late 1990s, starting with Hungary in 1998, countries throughout Central and Eastern Europe started to switch to a system of private pensions as a solution to an increasingly higher ratio of pensioners to the active population. At the turn of the century, the problem became impossible to ignore in Romania as well (Figures 2 & 3).

Figure 2. The Ratio of Pensioners to Economically Active Persons in Romania (Source: *Asociatia pentru Pensiile Administrate Privat din Romania*)

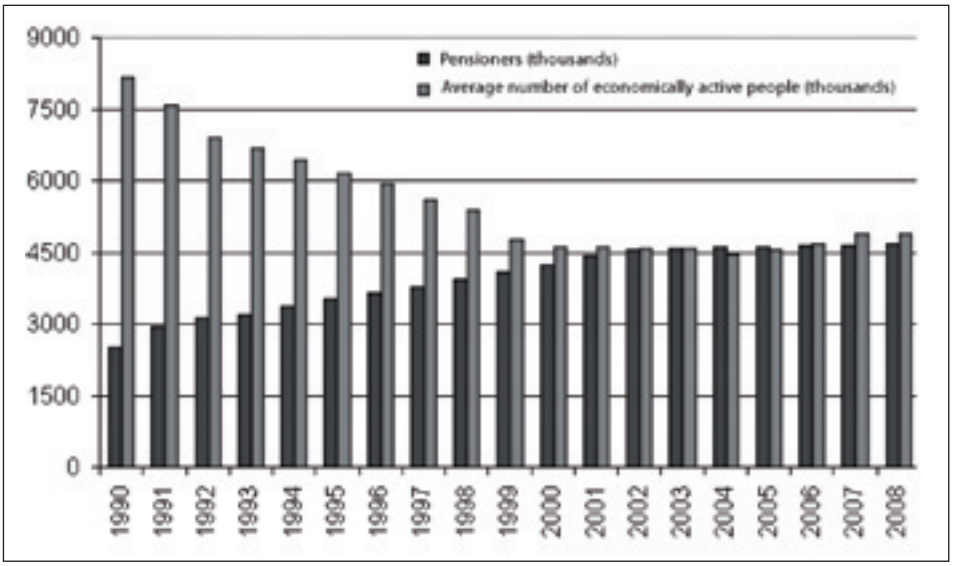
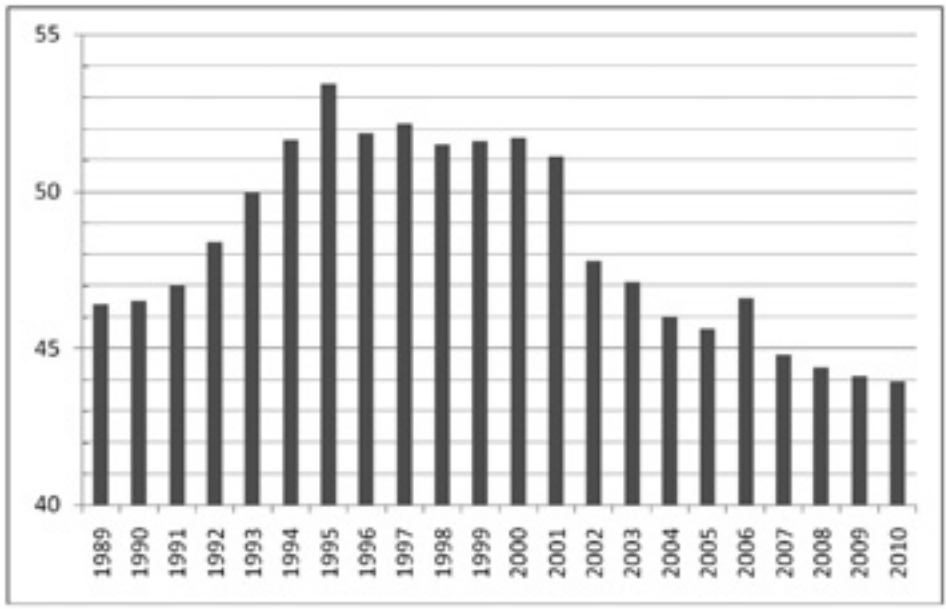


Figure 3. Percentage of the Economically Active Population Relative to the Total Population in Romania (Source of Data: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)



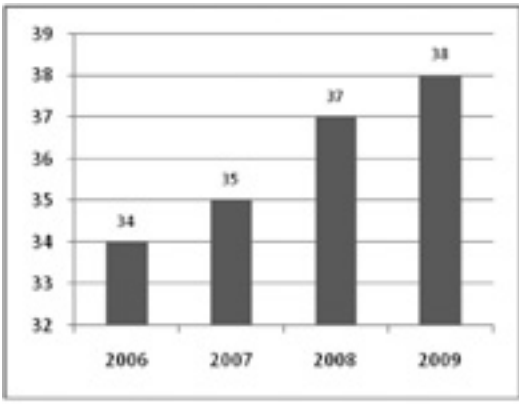
A system of private pensions was adopted by Tăriceanu's government in 2007. People were given a large number of options with regard to choice of retirement plans, although each plan was tied to a specific bank; those undecided were randomly assigned to one of the banks participating in the system. The system further assumed a gradual transition, involving a yearly increase of each person's contribution to his or her private pension fund. However, this gradual increase was stopped by Prime Minister Emil Boc's government after the 2008 elections as a reaction to the economic crisis. Boc's government proposed a decrease in the contributions to the private pension funds to near zero. This highlights the political unreliability, even under a center-right prime minister and president, of transition-based solutions to pension privatization. Many have suggested that perhaps a complete one-step privatization, creating private funds not just for the currently active population but also for the existing pensioners (either with borrowed money or with money resulting from the privatization of other state sectors), is a better solution, due to its irreversibility. But irrespective of various interpretations and further exclusions, the fact is that the path of reforms is far from being a linear process and represents a real challenge for any center-right government.

A Government Growing in Size, Corruption Allegations, the Escalation of PNL--PD Conflict, and the Suspension of the President

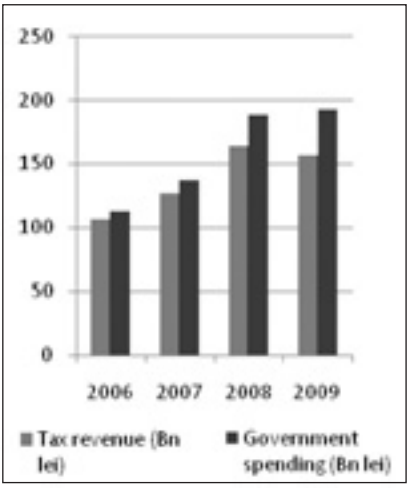
Despite these reforms, Tăriceanu government's record was at best mixed. The increasing tensions within the coalition and within PNL ended the Justice and Truth Alliance in early

2007. At that point, the political basis of government shifted to the left, PNL engaged in a *de facto* coalition with PSD (which made any radical reform moves virtually impossible) and generated backsliding in many areas. Moreover, it complicated the situation on the center-right side of the Romanian political system. This *de facto* coalition did not much help the Social Democrats in the coming elections, while it benefited PNL, which was able to stay in total control of the executive branch with only a roughly 20-percent parliamentary representation. At the same time, it further undermined PNL's claims of being a real center-right political force, while putting it in the position of becoming fully responsible for the outcomes of the 2004-2008 electoral cycle.

Figure 4. Government Spending Increase (Source of Data: Romanian Ministry of Finance)



National budget as a percentage of GDP



Government revenue and spending

The last straw in the PNL-PD conflict seems to have been Tăriceanu's decision to remove Justice Minister Monica Macovei from office. Originally a member of civil society, Macovei is widely respected, and this move by Tăriceanu was interpreted by many – both inside and outside Romania – as a sign that the prime minister was opposed to true reform of the justice system. This interpretation was also reinforced by Băsescu, who revealed in January 2007 a note received from Tăriceanu almost two years earlier asking him to "talk with the prosecutor's office" if "he had the chance" in regard to an investigation of Dinu Patriciu's oil firm. In April 2007 all PD ministers were removed from office, with Tăriceanu deciding to have a minority government with UDMR supported in parliament by PSD. As we have mentioned, these developments changed radically the political landscape. The informal coalition built by PNL undermined the very notion of a center-right government.

Things further deteriorated in directions unthinkable only months earlier. In April 2007, the parliament voted for the impeachment and suspension of President Băsescu on the

grounds that he had overstepped his constitutional prerogatives. However, prior to this vote, the Constitutional Court had analyzed the allegations and decided they did not hold up. The suspension procedure was initiated by PSD with the tacit endorsement of PNL, which is why it passed the parliament by a large margin. In a referendum held in May, the population voted 74-26 percent against it. This was one more unfortunate step made by PSD, hurting its chances in the upcoming local and legislative elections in 2008. PNL, by allowing itself to become an ally of some of the most anti-reformist forces in Romanian society, tarnished even further its center-right and reformist credentials. Moreover, this led to an all-time low rating for the credibility of parliament. According to a Gallup poll in 2007, 88 percent of Romanians did not trust the parliament.

Following the disintegration of the Justice and Truth Alliance, and restored to power by the referendum, President Băsescu consistently attempted, and failed, if not to bring down Tăriceanu's government, then at least to undermine its slide to the left. While the president cannot sack the prime minister, he can suspend a minister on corruption allegations. Băsescu then suspended three of Tăriceanu's ministers in less than two years, the last one just before the 2008 legislative elections.

This constant conflict with the president took its toll on Tăriceanu, as he developed a persisting negative public image as a corrupt and corruption-supporting politician quite similar to that of Adrian Năstase. This negative image was not entirely without merit. We already mentioned the "note" in which he asked the president, on behalf of a major Romanian oligarch, to interfere with the justice process. This was not the only such scandal. Another major issue was the introduction of a tax on importing second--hand cars, which broke EU free-trade rules, but nonetheless the government tried by virtually all means to keep the tax in place, framing the matter in environmental terms. The reason behind this tax was quite transparent: Tăriceanu himself is a partner to the official Citroen importer to Romania and a founding member and former president of the Association of Car Producers and Importers. Such scandals involving the administration at all levels (see below) abounded, and it can be said that the kleptocratic nature of the Romanian state increased. Even so, the picture is not entirely bleak, as corruption control apparently continued to get better with an increasingly better functioning justice system (Kaufmann, Kraay & Mastruzzi, 2009). A high level of corruption, however, remains until today.

This public image problem was not limited just to PNL and Tăriceanu. It also affected a number of PD leaders, especially at the local level. PD Mayor of Bucharest Adrian Videanu was one such target of criticism. Videanu's public image deteriorated so much that his bid to run for office again was compromised. The image problems spilled over to PD candidate Vasile Blaga, and in June 2008, for the first time in the post-communist period, Bucharest elected a left-wing mayor.

We also have to underline the increase in government spending (Heritage, 2004-2008); Figure 4) that led to larger deficits and to an increasing public sector. It is worth mentioning that this increase had two main causes and one major consequence: setting the stage for the serious economic difficulties of Romania in the larger context of the global economic crisis. The first cause of this increased spending and deficits is what we can call "populist irresponsibility." The second cause is related to EU structural funds.

As we have already seen, Tăriceanu's government, and PNL more generally, had gradually moved toward the left, successfully "stealing" part of the PSD electorate. As part of this strategy, the government increased both benefits for state employees and pensions, i.e. benefits for a traditional part of the Socialist electorate. This may have happened as a result of PNL's informal alliance with PSD in parliament, but, if so, PSD won no electoral points by failing to make the conditions of this informal alliance public (which predictably would have hurt PNL's electoral chances). This shift toward the traditionally leftist electorate was the "populist" part of these measures. The "irresponsibility" part had to do with the fact that wages in the public sector were raised considerably higher than were those in the private sector. This, predictably, led to a significant decrease of the private sector (Figure 4), especially as the administration was not shy about hiring new people, especially at the local level.

The second cause of this increase in government spending involved the absorption of EU structural funds. One of the major flaws, at least from a center-right perspective, in the entire EU structural-funds program is that the eligible recipients of most of these funds are governmental agencies. There are relatively few funds that can be accessed by private firms or NGOs and, even in those cases, they may require a state agency as partner. Consequently, EU structural funds often act largely as a giant EU subsidy for the increase of the public sector in recipient countries. Not surprisingly, the number of state agencies in Romania has increased, and the number of employees in the public sector at all levels, but especially at local level, has increased dramatically. Moreover, in order to obtain EU funds, agencies have to contribute a certain, comparatively small sum. Even these small sums, however, often prove prohibitive for the Romanian budget (ISP, 2010) and thus contribute to the increasing deficit. Thus, the economic record of Tăriceanu's government is mixed and, at least with the benefit of hindsight, we can say that it created serious structural problems within the Romanian economy (a public sector out of control and increasing deficits) that have not been offset by the positive reforms (lower taxation, inflation and bureaucracy).

The Condemnation of Communism

Arguably, the high point of Băsescu's first mandate as a center-right president was the condemnation of communism in December 2006. This was preceded by a Presidential Committee for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship, lead by noted scholar Vladimir Tismăneanu, which produced a 600-page report on the communist period in Romania. In his speech before parliament, the president declared that communism

was an illegitimate regime, founded on a fanatical ideology. It promoted hatred in a systematic fashion, taking "class warfare" and the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as essential symbols of historic progress. The communist ideology was imported from the USSR and was used to justify attacks against civil society, against political and economic pluralism, the destruction of democratic parties, the destruction of the free market, and the extermination of hundreds of thousands of people by assassination, deportation, forced labor and jail. Behind the mask of "socialist humanism" lay the most profound disregard for the individual human being.

Based on the analytical literature and on the existing testimonies, which prove the antipatriotic nature of Communist totalitarianism, we can state that the communist regime in

Romania (1945-1989) was illegitimate and criminal. I don't deny that periods of relative calm existed or that many people believed in the system. However, the great majority of the population had an arrested existence, living under direct or indirect terror; for them, the concept of freedom had lost any meaning.

This event proved highly controversial, with PSD and PRM bitterly opposed to it. The main legal effect of the official condemnation of communism was that the conditions were created for the victims of communism to sue the state and receive compensation, given that the regime itself has been declared illegitimate and criminal. Now opened, this legal possibility has not been taken on. With regard to the "recommendations" of the Tismaneanu Commission, such as the lustration of the communist *nomenklatura* still present in Romanian public life, they were simply neglected by the PNL-PSD coalition. The lustration law was approved by the new PDL majority in 2010, but it was successfully contested by the same left-wing forces at the Constitutional Court.

The Split of PNL and the Formation of a Large Center-Right Party

The conflict between Prime Minister Tăriceanu and President Băsescu caused a split within PNL. The development is important because it had consequences for the nature and political performance of the current Romanian center right. As mentioned earlier, there had always been two different camps within the PNL, which claimed large similarities at ideological level – both claiming to be classically liberal – but differed at the level of preferred political strategy.

Table 2. European Parliament Elections 2007 (Source of data: Romania's Central Electoral Bureau)

Party/Candidate	Percentage	Seats won
PD (EPP)	29	13
PSD (PES)	23	10
PNL (ELDR)	13	6
PLD (EPP)	8	3
UDMR (EPP)	6	2
PRM (none)	4	0
László Tőkés (EFA)	3	1

One camp, favoring a grand center-right party, was outraged by Patriciu's influence on the party, as well as by his financial support for PSD in the previous election. Moreover, the condemnation of communism convinced them of Băsescu's dedication to center-right ideals – despite his and his party's prior connections to the center-left. Thus, when Tăriceanu decided to have a minority government in a *de facto* coalition with PSD, many PNL members were highly critical of the move and publicly stated their displeasure. A series of exclusions from the party followed, including some very high-profile cases, such as that of Stoica and Stolojan, both former presidents of the party.

As a result of these exclusions, Stoica and Stolojan formed a new party, the Liberal Democrat Party (*Partidul Liberal Democrat*, PLD). Despite barely being formed, PLD won

a surprising number of seats in the November 2007 election for the European Parliament (Table 2), obtaining almost eight percent of the vote. Following this confirmation of the potential of the new party, Băsescu proposed that PLD and PD merge in accordance with the goal of creating a single entity on the center right. The merger occurred in January 2008, making the newly formed Democratic-Liberal Party (PDL) the largest political force in Romania at the time.

IV. Unlikely Alliances

Following its loss in the European Parliament election, the PSD rebounded to some extent in the municipal elections of June 2008. Another development was the appearance of another far-right party, the New Generation Christian Democrats (*Partidul Noua Generație - Creștin Democrat*, PNGCD), which took many voters from the traditional far-right PRM. While PRM had many connections with the former communist regime, the PNGCD took a nationalist and Christian-Orthodox fundamentalist stance. This divide within the far-right explains why PRM failed to obtain any seats in the European Parliament in 2007 or in the Romanian legislative elections in 2008.

Of special note is the fact that much of the support for the PNGCD came from its colorful leader, Gigi Becali, a businessman and owner of Steaua București (one of the largest Romanian football clubs), and from Becali's generous financial support to the Orthodox Church. Becali's popularity, however, came to a rather abrupt end due in part to his mismanagement of Steaua and to his panicked reaction to the financial crisis. Becali's business was severely hit by the crisis and, as a result of being short on cash, he apparently asked the Orthodox Church to return a very large sum of money he had previously donated for the construction of a planned cathedral. In the face of falling public support, he allied himself with PRM, despite previous mutual insults. This allowed PRM to pass the electoral threshold once again in the 2009 European Parliament elections.

In the 2008 elections the center right, broadly defined as PDL plus PNL, won an unprecedented number of seats. But PDL did not win enough seats to be able to form a majority only with UDMR and the minorities group. Consequently, PDL invited PNL to join it to govern together, but PNL refused. There is a lot of room for speculation about the reason for this decision, but fact is that PNL conditioned its participation in government on having the prime minister's position for itself, perhaps even for Tăriceanu again, which did not seem like a reasonable proposal to the PD.

Table 3. Legislative Election 2008 (Source of Data: Romania's Central Electoral Bureau)

Party/Group	Chamber of Deputies	Senate
PDL	34%	37%
PSD+PC	34%	36%
PNL	19%	20%
UDMR	7%	7%
Minorities	5%	0%

It is worth noting what explained this center-right victory, be it broadly defined (as PD and PNL) or narrowly defined (PDL). There were several factors. On the one hand, PSD was simply unable to provide any credible alternative. Its actions in the past years, such as the attempted removal of the president, its positions on anti-corruption measures and its opposition to the condemnation of communism reinforced the public perception that it was a backward-looking party. On the other hand, the actions of PNL in government, especially between 2007 and 2008, helped the party it part of the Social-Democratic electorate. For example, PSD had been promising for a long time to increase pensions, but they simply did not have the money to do it; PNL's willingness to have increasing deficits allowed it to increase pensions, as well as the number of state employees. Some of these traditionally PSD voters thus saw that the Liberals could actually deliver what the Social Democrats could only promise. This, together with a twisted electoral system cooked up in agreement with PSD, allowed PNL to win more seats in parliament than it ever had. Furthermore, the PNL slide to the left allowed PDL to portrait itself as the true and only center-right force in Romania and to distance itself from Tăriceanu's government. PDL probably also won some voters from the far right, as it accepted to the party some formally prominent far-right politicians, and as the PRM and PNGCD suffered electorally due to their infighting. Thus, this "division of labor" among PNL and PDL, one expanding to the left and the other to the right, led to their success. The parties on the "traditional" center right (i.e. the former Justice and Truth Alliance) won a victory. However, it has also made their collaboration virtually impossible. Table 5 shows the evolution of the political forces in Romania, highlighting the decline of the left in the past decade and the rise of the center right (in the measure in which PNL is still considered a center-right party).

Table 4. European Parliament Election 2009 (Source of Data: Romania's Central Electoral Bureau)

Party/Candidate	Percentage	Seats won
PSD+PC	31	11
PDL	30	10
PNL	15	6
UDMR	9	3
PRM	9	3
Elena Băsescu	4	1

Table 5. Percentages Obtained by Political Families in the Parliamentary Elections (Source of Data: Preda, 2009)

Year	Far right	Center-right	Center-left	Far-left
1990	2	9	68	5
1992	12	20	41	6
1996	9	31	34	8
2000	21	18	44	2
2004	16	34	38	2
2008	5	51	33	0

Due to the high level of distrust between PNL and PDL and of the conditions posed by PNL, PDL eventually decided to form government with PSD. Despite having a huge majority – more than 70 percent of seats in parliament – this was a highly dysfunctional coalition, mainly due to the coming presidential election of 2009. The coalition ended when the PSD minister of administration and interior was sacked by Prime Minister Boc in October 2009, and all PSD ministers resigned in protest. The Boc cabinet fell as a result of a no-confidence vote initiated by PNL and UDMR.

As always, the presidential elections were of key importance, determining whether there would be a left- or right-wing government. The two main contenders in 2009 were incumbent President Băsescu, and Social-Democratic candidate Mircea Geoană. In the first round, the Liberals hoped their candidate, newly elected PNL Chairman Crin Antonescu, would succeed in winning more votes than Geoană, as opinion polls showed that Geoană would stand little chance in a second-round completion with Băsescu. These hopes proved, however, to be illusory. Antonescu and the PNL supported Geoană against Băsescu in the second round, under the condition that Geoană would name as prime minister Sibiu Mayor Klaus Johannis, a centrist figure and an ethnic German. Thus, what used to be merely a *de facto* PNL-PSD coalition during Tăriceanu's government was now formalized.

In the 2008–2009 elections, one of the major problems of both PDL and Băsescu was their very poor relations with the press. In Romania almost all major media outlets are associated with the left and are ongoing sources of anti-reform rhetoric. While in 2004 the media conglomerate of Sorin Ovidiu Vântu, including an all-news television station and several newspapers, supported Băsescu and the Justice and Truth Alliance against the Social Democrats, since about 2007 it had adopted an increasingly anti-PDL and anti-Băsescu stance. The other major media conglomerate was owned Dan Voiculescu, the president of the Conservative Party (*Partidul Conservator*, PC, formerly PUR). It is precisely his strong position on the media market that moved PSD to take PUR as a coalition partner. Thus, in 2009, PDL and Băsescu found themselves in a very hostile media environment (Toma, 2009).

Remarkably, though, Geoană was spotted by paparazzi entering Vântu's house only a few days prior to the election. This meeting hurt Geoană's credibility in the eyes of many just prior to the election and played into Băsescu's anti-corruption message. Despite the vast media superiority of the anti-Băsescu forces, Geoană failed to win the 2009 election, al-

Table 6. Presidential Elections 2009 (Source of Data: Romania's Central Electoral Bureau)

Candidate	First round	Second round
Traian Băsescu (PDL)	32.44	50.33
Mircea Geoană (PSD)	31.15	49.66
Crin Antonescu (PNL)	20.02	-
Corneliu Vadim Tudor (PRM)	5.56	-
Hunor Helemen (UDMR)	3.83	-
Sorin Oprescu (Mayor of Bucharest)	3.18	-
Gigi Becali (NG)	1.81	-

though only by a very small margin. PDL's unfriendly relations with most of the press continue to this day. But the real problem of the party is not its inability to cut deals with the oligarchs and their media, but its inability to encourage and support the emergence of new and more professional media outlets and of a less corrupt media environment.

As a result of the lost elections and repeated failures, Geoană lost the leadership of PSD and was succeeded by Victor Ponta, one of the youngest figures in the party. During the internal elections that led to Ponta's victory, tensions arose among various factions within PSD, and several prominent PSD members left the party as a result. These former PSD members (along with splinters from the PNL) formed another center-left party, the National Union for the Progress of Romania (*Uniunea Națională pentru Progresul României*, UNPR), which joined PDL and UDMR in the ruling coalition. Băsescu once again named Boc as prime minister. The new government advanced a radical austerity package with a clearly center-right approach.

V. Evaluation

In the 2000s, the center right in Romania was definitely more successful than it had ever been and succeeded in rebounding very quickly from a situation of almost complete defeat. Nonetheless, grave tensions among the parties, and among the personalities in those parties, prevented them from achieving an enduring alliance to promote clear-cut, center--right reforms. Moreover, an interesting evolution has taken place. At the beginning of the period discussed, it was clear that PNL had the attributes of a center-right party. That was not the case with PD. At the end of the period the situation had shifted by180 degrees. PDL, the new party emerging from the conjunction of PD and the PNL faction that created PLD, is clearly a center-right force on the basis of its doctrine, international affiliation and the economic policies it advanced as a response to the economic crisis. This is no longer the case with PNL.

If we focus our definition of the center right only on PDL, the center-right success in Romania was based to a large extent on what we could call a "reinvigoration through replacement" strategy. The former major center-right party (the Christian Democrats) has virtually disappeared from the political arena, and PDL, which has incorporated the classical liberalism of PNL, has lately recovered Christian democracy as an integral part of its "fusionist" approach.

The Institute for Popular Studies (ISP) think tank was formed by the PDL with the purpose of gradually forging a clear ideology for the party. The think tank so far has had a very active program, addressing issues ranging from constitutional reform to immigration/emigration policies, to health-care reform, and reuniting academics and politicians of various center-right sensibilities (from classical liberal to conservative). The PDL project is clearly moving along the lines of the mainstream center right in Europe and the USA.

If we adopt a broader and more flexible definition of the right that incorporates PNL as well, the success of the center right was also due in part to PNL's shift toward the left, appealing to what used to be the traditional Social-Democrat electorate. The PNL continues to define itself as a classical liberal party, although nothing is its recent behavior could

justify that label. Assuming that one still accepts PNL as a member of the center-right family, its strategy was one of "reinvention" and "triangulation" in the sense of trying to be everything to everybody. Appropriating themes and approaches from the left has been the source of its relative success.

Have center-right parties become effective power seekers? And, in their quest for power, have they abandoned the desire to implement right-of-center reforms? The answer to those questions is nuanced. On the one hand, with regard to ideology, PDL adopted a more fusionist approach. The party's ideology is being systematically developed in close contact with Western think tanks and foundations such as the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. Yet although it produces documents about its doctrine, it is unclear to what extent its members actually take these documents seriously. Important efforts need to be made in this respect. Regarding the desire for reforms, one could make a very interesting observation: PDL politicians at all levels in the administration often seem willing to abandon principle for the benefit of specific material gains. However, the PDL is the party that in June 2010 assumed political responsibility for a radical reform and anti-crisis approach. Prompted by President Băsescu, it embraced a very radical austerity program that was sure to cost it a large part of the electorate. Perhaps the only lesson PDL hasn't yet learned about how to be successful as a power seeker is the one about the importance of mass media and the need to make real efforts to assist in its professionalization.

On the other hand, PNL tries to maintain a liberal identity, but the party has failed to produce any ideological document in years. Its think tank was practically suspended in 2002. So it is difficult to assess the state of the party in this respect. This is even more difficult because, as we have seen, many of the policies adopted by Tăriceanu's government dramatically increased the public sector, the number of governmental agencies and the budget deficit, and created the conditions for the current economic crisis. Some economists have argued that even without the global crisis, Romania would have entered a recession (ISP, 2010). It is difficult to estimate the success of PNL as a power seeker. This is due to the fact that it presided over the reform of the electoral system, and it is difficult to assess whether success is due to gerrymandering or to a genuine increase in popularity.

All in all, the Romanian center right (irrespective of how one decides to define it – broadly or narrowly) offers a mixed picture. There are many important and encouraging developments and at the same time many failures and worrisome trends. But if there is one lesson to be drawn from the Romanian case, it is about the power of unity and cooperation and about the difficulties of achieving it. Each time the forces of the Romanian center right try to work in unity and coordination – be that as the Justice and Truth Alliance or as the fusionist democrat-liberal experiment – things tend to move in a promising direction. Each time the forces of division get the upper hand, the center right loses ground. There is a simple lesson involved in this, but it is surprising how many times politicians of the center right forget its basic truths.

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From Culture Struggle to Developmental Reforms: The Case of Slovenia's Center Right

Matej Makarovič

CONTENTS:

I. Introduction

In 2004, the Slovenian Democratic Party (*Slovenska demokratska stranka,* SDS) won the elections to the Slovenian national parliament for the first time ever. It lost them narrowly four years later, but it has been able to maintain rather wide popular support and the general impression that it is able to govern.

The SDS on the center right and the Social Democrats (*Socialni demokrati*, SD) on the center-left are today the largest parties in Slovenia. From 1992 until 2004 Slovenia was – with less than a year of interruption – ruled by the center-left Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (*Liberalna demokracija Slovenije,* LDS). After losing the national elections for the first time in 2004, a significant fraction split from the LDS to form a new center-left party called Zares (which can be translated as "for real" or "really"). Leading to the parliamentary elections of 2011, both LDS and Zares were relatively marginal when compared to the leading center-left party SD, and the SD, LDS and Zares – together with the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (*Demokratična stranka upokojencev Slovenije,* DeSUS) – represented the Slovenian center-left in parliament. On the center right the leading SDS was able to find partners in the Slovenian People's Party (*Slovenska ljudska stranka,* SLS) and the New Slovenia-Christian People's Party (*Nova Slovenija-Krščansko-ljudska stranka,* NSi). One should also mention the Slovenian National Party (*Slovenska nacionalna stranka,* SNS), which may be generally considered as a xenophobic, nationalist, rightist party, but has often turned to be rather pragmatic in its actual policies when dealing with both the center right and the center left.

It can only be understood why SDS won the elections in 2004 by first asking why neither the SDS nor any other non-leftist party had ever won parliamentary elections in Slovenia before. And that question can only be answered by first looking into the profile, identity and background of what usually has been called "center right" in Slovenia. Even the question of who and what in fact constitutes the Slovenian center right seems quite relevant in this respect and requires at least a brief insight into modern Slovenian political history.

Consequently, this chapter will begin with a brief historical overview concerning the origins of the political parties in Slovenia. Then the political profiles of the major Slovenian political parties will be considered in order to understand some conceptual relations between the left and right in the political and historical context of the country. Moreover, in order to understand the causes of SDS success in the 2004 parliamentary elections, some major factors that kept the center right in opposition for almost twelve years will be analyzed. We will then proceed with describing the learning process of the Slovenian center right that made it comparatively well fit to govern. Finally, the potential of the Slovenian center right to implement further free-market, development-oriented reforms and its future perspectives will be discussed.

II. The Historical Background of the Center Right

Before World War II, as part of the Austro-Hungarian and, after that, the Yugoslav monarchy, Slovenian political and social life was almost totally dominated by the conservative

Slovenian People's Party, which was closely related to the Roman Catholic Church. For most of the time, the role of liberal and social-democratic political forces was rather limited or even marginal. The Second World War, however, brought about a major turning point. After the occupation of Slovenian territory by Nazi Germany and Italy during the war, the small, but well-organized Communist Party of Slovenia (*Komunistična partija Slovenije)* took advantage of the indecisiveness of the mainstream "bourgeois" parties and organized – together with some leftist allies – an Anti-Imperialist Front (*Protiimperialistična fronta*, later called the Liberation Front, *Osvobodilna fronta*). After the German attack on the Soviet Union, it also built an anti-Fascist resistance, which was from its beginnings closely linked to the communist-led revolution.

Being confronted by a communist-led resistance movement combined with the communist revolution, the mainstream conservative political leaders in Slovenia committed their fatal error: they sided with the fascists against the communists. The other non-communist political actors who tried to resist the fascist occupation had rather marginal political influence; for most of them the only choice was either to accept communist leadership without question or to be eliminated.

After the Second World War, the conservative political leaders and intellectuals and their followers either escaped or were executed, most of them without a trial. The non--communist (so-called "bourgeois"), anti-fascist intellectuals later became victims of political trials, and some were executed, as well. Non-communist political parties were banned. Postwar events, in fact, changed the entire social structure of society. Non--leftist leaders and intellectuals were either dead or in exile (especially in Argentina and Australia), far away from their country and with very limited contact with and even understanding of political and social life in Slovenia. The Second World War and its epilogue had profound effects of the attitudes and the mentality of the Slovenian population that are still in place today. The picture of the brave (leftist) anti-fascist partisans led by Josip Broz Tito pitched against the image of the dark (rightist) Catholic conservative traitors, is still very much alive today in Slovenian public discourse. This simplified perception has not changed even after the findings of the mass graves of the tens of thousands of victims executed without a trial by the communist authorities after the Second World War.

Since the social fabric of the prewar political class was completely destroyed, it was obvious that when political parties were reestablished in Slovenia in 1989, there were no factual connections between the new and the prewar parties. Most of the new non-communist political leaders were far from inspired by the Slovenian prewar past – instead they looked for their examples in the modern western democracies.

In 1990, two types of political parties entered the parliament. The first group consisted of the Party of Democratic Renewal (*Stranka demokratične prenove,* SDP), the Socialist Party of Slovenia (*Socialistična stranka Slovenije,* SSS) and the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia-Liberal Party (*Zveza socialistične mladine Slovenije-Liberalna stranka*, ZSMS-LS, later called LDS), which were respectively reincarnations of the former League of Communists of Slovenia (*Zveza Komunistov Slovenije,* ZKS), the former Socialist League of Working People (*Socialistična zveza delovnega ljudstva* – SZDL, the party's transmission belt) and the former League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia (*Zveza socialistične mladine*

Slovenije, ZSMS). The second group was called the Democratic Opposition of Slovenia (*Demokratična **o**pozicija **S**lovenije*) or later just "Demos." It consisted of almost all the new parties with a variety of different orientations: the Christian-conservative Slovenian Christian Democrats (*Slovenski krščanski demokrati,* SKD) and Slovenian Peasant Union (*Slovenska kmečka zveza,* SKZ), a liberal-conservative Slovenian Democratic Union (*Slovenska demokratična zveza*, SDZ), the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia (*Socialdemokratska stranka Slovenije*, SDSS), the Greens of Slovenia (*Zeleni Slovenije*, ZS) and the liberals. Beside the fancy names, however, most of these parties lacked a clear political profile. Initially, the Demos coalition was almost entirely focused on its major aims of political democratization and independence for Slovenia.

When the Demos coalition won the elections in 1990, it could hardly be interpreted as a victory of the (center-) right. However, most of the major political actors in Demos were also the leaders of the political parties that have mostly come to be defined in Slovenian public discourse as (center-) right. In this respect, Demos can be considered the original source of all of the contemporary Slovenian center-right parties, or at least of all the relevant parties that do not draw their origins from the former communist regime.

Almost immediately when Slovenian independence seemed to have been fully secured at the end of 1991, political conflicts began within Demos. Its constituent parties attempted to develop clearer political profiles, and several personal and technical contradictions became more apparent. Many political leaders were not satisfied with Christian Democrat Prime Minister Alojz Peterle, and the conflict soon included ideological dimensions as well: the coalition was split between a group loyal to Prime Minister Peterle and the Christian Democrats, on the one hand, and a more secular-liberal group, on the other. The latter opted to ally with the ex-communist opposition, and Peterle was replaced by Janez Drnovšek, the leader of the Liberal Party (later to become the LDS in 1992). Twelve years of the center-left rule had thus begun.

What is Left and What is Right in Slovenia?

Speaking of the success or failure of center-right parties in Slovenia requires a clear definition of who in fact belongs to the right and who to the left, and why. Several contemporary trends such as individualization and risk society (Beck 1992), post-materialism (Inglehart 1997), the failure of great ideological systems (Bell 1966) and the shift from class-based to catch-all parties have made left-right divisions significantly less obvious. Moreover, in post-communist societies like Slovenia, the situation is even more complicated, since political parties have lacked any kind of longer tradition. The fact that today's leading center--right SDS was initially called the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia and defined itself as center-left clearly illustrates this confusion.

In 1990, during the first democratic elections in Slovenia, it only seemed obvious for the political parties that developed from the Communist Party (the SDP, later the United List of Social Democrats or *Združena lista socialnih demokratov,* ZLSD, today's Social Democrats) or its transmission belts (the Liberals, today's LDS, and the Socialist Party of Slovenia, which later merged with LDS) to position themselves at the left side of the political spectrum. And if they were on the left, the rest were supposed to be on the right. Initially, the parties of the Demos coalition were not particularly concerned about these labels; they

were too much preoccupied with establishing the national unity that enabled Slovenian independence.

After independence was won, the situation seemed to be rather straightforward for the Christian Democrats and the Slovenian People's Party. They clearly saw themselves on the center right side of the spectrum – just as did most of the other Central European parties with similar names and values. However, they lacked a strong basis of intellectuals and experts, consistent polices and a wider appeal for the rather secularized and urbanized segments of the Slovenian population. This opened a space for a new political force on the center-right.

On the other hand, most of the rest the Demos leaders started to feel increasingly uncomfortable being squeezed between the ex-communist parties on the left and the Christian--conservative Demos parties (especially the SKD and SLS) on the right. These sentiments were especially typical for the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia (today's SDS), the Slovenian Democratic Union and the Greens, with the last two even splitting due to these issues and later ceasing to exist as independent or relevant political forces.

In the case of Social Democratic Party of Slovenia, the situation was particularly complex. From 1989 until 1993, the party was led by Jože Pučnik, a highly reputable former dissident, chairman of Demos coalition and one of the leading figures of the Slovenian struggle for independence. His ambition was to develop a European type of social democracy in Slovenia, but at the same time to remain clearly distanced from the ex-communists and their versions of "socialism" or "social democracy." However, while he was successful as the leader of Demos, his plans to establish a strong non-communist social democracy failed. In the 1992 national elections, his SDSS barely entered the parliament, gaining only four seats out of 90. His successor, Janez Janša, attempted to reestablish the traditions of Demos by calling for a partnership of the parties of the "Slovenian Spring" while opposing the parties that symbolically represented continuity with the former communist regime. Because of the special context of Slovenia's emergence from communism and the social--democratic origins of his party (SDSS/SDS), he used the concept of "Slovenian Spring" parties instead of "center-right" parties and called the parties on the other side of the political spectrum the "transitional left," implying that political divisions in Slovenia were unique and that the terms "left" and "right" may have different meanings in Slovenia than they do in the older European democracies.

It may be argued that the left-right distinction was far from obvious in Slovenia. Especially in the economic field, one may speak about a kind of leftism of the right and the rightist positions of the left. When privatization issues were discussed in the beginning of the 1990s, the leftist (i.e. ex-communist) parties favored managerial buyouts in order to strengthen the managerial class that mostly derived from the old socialist "directors." Center-right parties, on the other hand, advocated a significantly more egalitarian system of certificates distributed freely among the citizens and exchangeable for shares in state companies. Moreover, the policies of the center-left governments lead by Drnovšek included zero taxation for capital profits, which again clearly benefited, among others, those who earned great profits in the young Slovenian stock market of that time. It was no coincidence that most of the Slovenian managers and owners of privatized companies tended to consider themselves to be of "leftist" political orientation.

On the other hand, as demonstrated by the research of local political leaders, the politicians of the center right ("Slovenian Spring") parties tend to be more egalitarian in their attitudes than the politicians of the center-left parties (Makarovič 1993). Instead, perhaps the clearest distinction between the left and the right lies in their respective attitudes toward the former communist system. To put it simply: for those on the (center-) left, communism was a very good system with only a few deficiencies, while for those on the (center-) right, it was a very bad system with only a few good points.

In the light of this analysis and for the purposes of this chapter, the Slovenian Democratic Party, Slovenian People's Party and New Slovenia will be considered as center-right, while the Social Democrats, Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, Zares and the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia will be considered center-left. This conclusion is based on the following facts:

SDS, SLS and NSi may not be typical center-right parties in the field of economy, but they seem to be closer to center-right positions when some symbolic-cultural issues are concerned (including, for instance, a somewhat more patriotic emphasis, somewhat more sympathetic attitudes towards the Roman Catholic Church, opposition to proposed gay marriage legislation that includes the right to adopt children, etc.).

When SDS came to power in 2004, it began implementing a package of free-market economic reforms. It placed less emphasis on state regulation in some fields and opened up more space for private initiative and free-market competition. Although not all of the planned measures – especially in the field of labor market reform – were implemented, and not all of the policies were implemented consistently, the economic policies of the SDS-led government from 2004 until 2008 also can be considered – with some reservations – as center-right in terms of economics.

This labeling of the center right and center left of Slovenian political parties is commonly used as being self-evident by the public and the mass media (Makarovič and Tomšič, 2009).

The same parties are also recognized by these labels in European and global politics. SDS, NSi and SLS thus belong to the European People's Party, the International Democrat Union (IDU) and the Centrist Democratic International (CDI), while SD belongs to the Party of European Socialists and the Socialist International.

III. Why Not Before 2004?

One can only understand the factors leading to the SDS electoral success in 2004 after examining why a similar victory had not happened before. In fact, SDS was the first center-right party after the Second World War that won the relative majority in the parliament. Even if one considers the Demos coalition from 1990-1992 as a primarily center-right coalition, it should be noted that Demos was only able to create a government in 1990 because it formed a pre-electoral coalition. The largest constituent party of Demos at that time, the Slovenian Christian Democrats, was only the third-largest party in the first democratic parliament – after the former communists (SDP) and former socialist youth (later the LDS). Moreover, it can be argued that the first democratic elections were not a choice

between left and right, but simply a choice for a new democratic system, which was at that time represented by Demos.

On the other hand, the center-left LDS won consecutive parliamentary elections in 1992, 1996 and 2000. It also led all governments in this period. The only exception was a few months in 2000 just before the parliamentary elections, when the center-right parties formed a short-lived government led by Andrej Bajuk. From the first democratic elections in 1990, the ratio between the number of years in power (even when the Demos coalition is considered as center-right) has been approximately 2:1 in favor of the left; from 1990-2004 until it was almost 6:1 (with the center right being in power for two and a half years during this 14-year period).

What were the causes of this comparative weakness of the center right during the first fourteen years of democracy in Slovenia?

It may be assumed that first of the factors was structural in nature. Most of the mass media, opinion makers, academics, associations, trade unions, clubs and other groups tended to favor center-left parties and leaders. To better understand this, one may apply the concept of hegemony developed by the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci (1992) and sophisticated as the concept of hegemonic discourse by Michel Foucault (1980). Hegemony implies the "soft" aspects of dominating society, even when one does not control all the formal positions of power. It was not too hard for the Slovenian communists "to step down from power" as they called their move in 1989-1990, if they were aware at the same time that they continued to hold onto their cultural hegemony within society – the hegemony that implied that belonging to the mainstream simply meant being close to the center-left.[38]

The hegemony of the center-left in the media has been quite clear and demonstrated by several studies (e.g. Adam et al. 2006; Aplenc and Jerovšek 2007; Makarovič et al. 2008). It is especially explicit in case of the dailies that deal with political issues. Two attempts during the 1990s to establish a non-leftist daily failed – the first one after a few years of existence, the second one after only a month.

The same hegemony can be found in the economic sphere. Slovenian corporate managers tend to position themselves on the left, in part because of their backgrounds, in part for quite pragmatic reasons – since center-left parties have been in power for most of the time, it seems more beneficial to be on the ruling side. This has been mostly the case for the managers of (formerly) state-owned companies (with some of them having been able to take ownership of these companies via privatization) and companies strongly dependent on public procurement.

The situation was no different on the employees' side. The old socialist trade unions that served as transmission belts for the party during the communist times have been able to transform and remain the country's most significant trade unions. This has created a peculiar situation, in which similar political forces have been able to control both employers' associations, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as the leading trade unions.

38 The ability to maintain cultural hegemony may also be related to the pragmatism and flexibility of the Slovenian communists who were able to adapt to a new situation, seek broad alliances and comparatively quickly reform the party and its orientations (see also Grzymała-Busse 2003).

The hegemony of the ex-communist center-left within civil society was closely related to the relatively low level of elite circulation in Slovenia from the 1980s to the 1990s. Cross-national comparative research on elites has thus demonstrated that Slovenia had one of the highest levels of elite reproduction among the European new democracies (Kramberger 2000). This may be understood partially as a cause and partially as an effect of the hegemony of the center-left.

Lacking a strong base of support within the mass media and a wide variety of organized interests, the center-right and the non-ex-communist parties in general have had significant difficulties in gaining popular support. Moreover, the left has been able to use its hegemony to provoke a new variety of so-called culture struggle (or *Kulturkampf* in the original German). The concept of culture struggle in Slovenia originates from the end of the Nineteenth Century and the strong ideological division between the Catholic conservatives and the liberals. While the social structure in Slovenia mostly functioned in favor of the conservatives before the Second World War, these relationships were completely opposite to those of highly secularized and urbanized post-communist Slovenia.

Reviving the culture struggle thus became a useful strategy for the ex-communist left during the 1990s. It began in 1990 by expressing worries about the first democratically elected prime minister, Alojz Peterle, as a Christian Democrat. As such, he was quickly portrayed by his opponents as a direct exponent of the Catholic Church in Slovenian politics and as a threat to the secular values of Slovenian society. In 1992, warnings about a supposedly dangerous political right that had seemingly become too strong became even more pronounced and contributed to the split in Demos coalition. There were allegations that the center-right parties intended to strengthen the societal and political role of the Roman Catholic Church, introduce religious education into public schools, ban abortion, revise history and rehabilitate pro-fascist collaborators (the so-called Home Guard) from the Second World War. Although the actual statements and policies of center-right politicians mostly provided no evidence for such claims, media-generated rumors about the danger coming from the right remained quite influential. These attempts to revive old conservative-versus-liberal divisions and bring back divisions from the Second World War even led to an absurd situation, in which center-right Prime Minister Andrej Bajuk, whose parents emigrated to Argentina after the Second World War, was portrayed by the leftist media as a World War II pro-fascist Home Guard member. The fact that Bajuk was only two years old at the end of the Second World War was completely ignored.

Clearly, Slovenian center-right parties were not only passive victims of circumstance in this respect. Although they never expressed any sympathies toward the conservative, pro-fascist collaboration during the Second World War, never proposed Roman-Catholic religious education and never demanded an abortion ban, they did believe they could turn some aspects of the Slovenian past to their own political advantage. While there was, in point of fact, no connection between the Slovenian center-right parties of the 1990s and the old pre-war political parties, there certainly was a formal connection between the ex-communist parties and the old League of Communists of Slovenia – a group that held power after the Second World War when mass killings not only of pro-fascists collaborators and direct opponents of the communist regime, but also of thousands of others, took place. However, all attempts to blame the ex-communists or even the top communist

leaders of the past – such as Josip Broz Tito, Edvard Kardelj or Boris Kidrič (the prime minister of the first Slovenian communist government during the time of the mass executions just after the War) – for crimes during the communist regime backfired. They mostly resulted in nostalgic, pro-socialist reactions and claims about the "magnificent" aspects of the former communist regime and about right-wing "vengefulness" and attempts to "revise history." Therefore, the belief on the part of the center-right parties that they could in some way "win" the culture struggle was a clear illusion. In fact, they were only able win by avoiding precisely this kind of "combat."

An even more significant problem of the center-right parties in Slovenia was to be found in the relationships between the parties and the leadership. These problems already began in 1990, when the Demos coalition formed the first democratic government. The Slovenian Christian Democrats and the Slovenian Peasant Union won the most votes in 1990, while the Slovenian Democratic Union and the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia included the intellectual core of Demos and the most famous opponents of the former Communist regime, such as Jože Pučnik, France Bučar, Dimitrij Rupel, Igor Bavčar and Janez Janša. Most were rather secularly oriented and, even more significantly, most of them had strong ambitions of their own. Consequently, they were able to accept SKD leader Alojz Peterle as their prime minister for a while, but they were never really able to accept him as the leader of the center right, as such. Mistrust of his leadership qualities was quite common and eventually led to the end of the Demos coalition and its government.

Similar problems continued until the end of the 990s. In 1992, Peterle's SKD remained the leading center-right party in terms of electoral support, while in 1996 this position was taken by the SLS. Although being the second-largest party clearly did not provide either the ability or the legitimacy to form and lead the government, it should have provided a significant role to be played in the political life of the country and the ability to lead the center-right block. However, neither SKD nor SLS was ever able to play this role in a sufficient way. Their leaders lacked political vision, as well as human capital in the form of expertise and intellectual abilities. Moreover, their leaders lacked the ability to cooperate with each other. After the end of Demos coalition, both parties were unable to cooperate with each other. They did attempt to unite to form a single party – the united SLS – and even established a short-lived governmental coalition led Bajuk in 2000, but the united party split again in the same year into SLS and New Slovenia.

Since most of the other (i.e. non-SKD and non-SLS leaders) political actors in Demos either joined the ruling LDS or withdrew from politics soon after 1992, the SDS – first led by Pučnik, then by Janša – remained the only alternative to SKD and SLS on the center--right. It, though, also had problems of its own. Withdrawing from the second Drnovšek government in 1994, the SDS found itself in quite a contradictory position. While Janša as a personality enjoyed wide support among the former voters of Demos, his own party was rather small (gaining only four out of 90 members of the parliament in 1992) and remained behind the LDS and SLS between 1996 and 2000. He persistently attempted to use his personal charisma to unite "the parties of the Slovenian Spring," namely SKD, SLS and SDS, as an alternative to the ex-communist parties. However, the leaders of SKD and SLS were very reluctant to accept his initiatives and had several persuasive reasons for their reluctance. Both SLS and SKD enjoyed higher popular support during the 1990s

than Janša's SDS; they feared for their own political positions; and they were reluctant to accept SDS as part or as leader of their own political block, since SDS self-identified as a social-democratic party at the time.

Clearly, because of its anti-communist position and its role in the democratization and struggle for Slovenian independence, the SDS was a party of the "Slovenian Spring," but it was far from being a typical center-right party. Its economic views have always included sympathies for the "losers of the post-communist transition" and strong attacks against questionable privatization processes (later called "tycoonization"). For a few years it also held observer status in the Socialist International. Attempting to be both the leader of the Slovenian Spring and a social-democratic party was a challenge for SDS during the 1990s – a challenge that obviously proved too hard to handle.

Moreover, during the 1990s, the center-left LDS under Janez Drnovšek successfully applied a strategy of grand coalitions. Drnovšek's first government in 1992 thus included three parties from the former Demos coalition (SDZ, SDS and the Greens). His second government included the SKD, the strongest center-right party at the time, and his third government was formed together with SLS, again the strongest center-right party after the 1996 elections. While there is nothing problematic in coalition practices as such – they have been quite common in several European countries and even described as a theoretical model (Lijphart 1977) – these strategies had disastrous effects on the center-right parties in the Slovenian case. Since one – usually the strongest – "Slovenian Spring" party was always in government and the rest in the opposition, possibilities for cooperation among them was severely limited. They were unable to form a united alternative to the center-left governments of the day, since one of them was always a part of these governments.

While in opposition, the center-right parties tended to mobilize their voters by criticizing the existing LDS government and the other "Slovenian Spring" party for being part of it. However, after the elections the strongest center-party always become a part of precisely what it had heavily attacked before the elections. Thus Peterle's SKD attacked SDS for being in the first Drnovšek government; SLS criticized SKD for being in the second Drnovšek government; and, finally, SLS joined the third Drnovšek government. It is hard to calculate just how much disillusionment, distrust, political cynicism and apathy these practices generated among former Demos and center-right voters.

The power relationships in Drnovšek's grand coalitions were always highly asymmetrical. During the 1990s, LDS was much richer in human, social and cultural capital than any of the center-right parties. It took over most of the important ministries and controlled most of the state apparatus. Moreover, because of the asymmetries in human and cultural capital it was easy to portray LDS ministers in public as holding their position because of their personal expertise and SKD/SLS ministers as incompetent individuals having positions purely because of their party affiliation; and indeed, this is exactly what the LDS did. Consequently, it was quite common that LDS was praised for the beneficial aspects of the coalition governments, while its center-right partner at the time was blamed for the errors.

The results were hardly surprising. All "Slovenian Spring" parties lost electoral support during their terms in coalition governments led by Drnovšek. The SDS barely entered the parliament after its participation in the first LDS-led government in 1992. The SKD was the strongest center-right party when it entered Drnovšek's second coalition, but in the

elections that followed in 1996 gained significantly fewer votes than either SLS or SDS. After the end of Drnovšek's third coalition in 2000, the SLS turned from being the leading party of the Slovenian center right to being a relatively marginal political force.

Janša's SDS was the first center-right party that was able to realize the destructive logic of grand coalitions. Therefore, it proposed an institutional measure that would force the "Slovenian Spring" parties to form a firm pre-electoral coalition that would be able to become a ruling coalition. The solution was seen in the replacement of the proportional--representation voting system with a two-round, majority-district system that would motivate parties to form pre-electoral coalitions and thus establish a more manifest division between the ex-communists on the one side and the "Slovenian Spring" parties on the other. This solution was actually adopted by means of referendum in 1996, but the parliament never adopted the legislation based on the referendum results, even though the referendum was confirmed as binding by the Constitutional Court. In the end, a pragmatic coalition of the center-left parties and the majority of the Slovenian People's Party changed the constitution in 2000 to preserve the proportional-representation system and to find a legal way to avoid the obligation to implement the referendum results and the ruling of the Constitutional Court. The plan to introduce the majority system thus failed and contributed to even greater disagreement among the "Slovenian Spring" parties, to the failure of the short-lived Bajuk government in 2000 and to the crushing electoral defeat of the "Slovenian Spring" parties in the same year.

IV. Learning to Win, Learning to Govern

In 2000, the LDS won its greatest electoral victory ever, taking 34 seats out of 90 in parliament, more than all three "Slovenian Spring" parties combined (the SDS, SLS and NSi that had split from the "united" SLS) and more than twice as much as second-place SDS, which took 14 seats. Together with its allies, LDS thus gained a comfortable majority. One leftist commentator argued at this occasion that the victory was so persuasive that it practically guaranteed victory in the next parliamentary elections four years later. He could not have been more wrong. The overwhelming confidence of the center-left after its electoral success in 2000 was the first seed of its failure in 2004.

After winning the 2000 elections, Drnovšek saw no need to form a grand coalition for the fourth time. Breaking his previous pattern, he did not invite the SDS – as the strongest "Slovenian Spring" party – to join his coalition. Technically, he did not need it; perhaps he also believed that Janša could not be as easily manipulated as the SKD and SLS leaders had been. However, even if there had been such an invitation, Janša would most probably have declined such a partnership based on the experiences of the 1990s. The lessons of the 1990s, however, still had not been learned by everyone: the SLS joined Drnovšek's government for the second time, although this did not lead to a grand coalition since SLS was a rather small and marginal party after the elections of 2000. The result was clear: for the first time after 1992 the second-largest parliamentary party and the strongest party of the "Slovenian Spring" group remained in the opposition. This was the first key to establishing a sizeable and persuasive political alternative on the part of the center right.

Moreover, the leading commentators on the election results in 2000 were so fascinated by the LDS achievement that they failed to notice the significance of the shift among the defeated "Slovenian Spring" parties. With the clear electoral failure of the "united" SLS and the marginalization of the newly formed NSi – gaining nine and eight seats, respectively – the leading position of SDS Chairman Janez Janša within the "Spring" grouping finally became undisputed. Identification of a self-evident "shadow prime minister" (though this concept does not exist in Slovenian politics in explicit terms) now became possible. Because of the high level of personalization of Slovenian political parties that is partly due to the lack of longer party traditions, this was quite a significant aspect in generating a viable political alternative to the ruling center-left.

While the leadership situation became clearer among the "Slovenian Spring" parties, problems simultaneously began to emerge on the center-left, although was not made manifest before 2004. During the 1990s, the ex-communist political block was personified by two charismatic leaders: Milan Kučan, the president of the republic, and Janez Drnovšek, the prime minister. While the former held most of the informal power in the country and somehow personified – distancing himself from any single party – the center-left as a whole, the latter had the image of a pragmatic and competent politician. However, in 2002 Kučan could not, after his second term in office, run again for the presidency. He retired, thereby acquiring the formal position of "former president," while Drnovšek moved from the prime minister's job to the presidency.

Paradoxically, it turned out that the center-left thus lost both of its most significant leaders in 2002. Kučan's informal network began to dissolve gradually after his last presidential term ended. He then even attempted to formalize his informal network of supporters, consisting mostly of the managers and owners of large Slovenian companies, when he established "Forum 21." However, appearing in such an obvious way together with the economic elite harmed his image as a sympathetic leader who was supposed to understand the troubles of "the small people." Slovenians have strong egalitarian and anti-elitist value orientations (see Makarovič 2000 and Hafner-Fink 2006) and thus tend to feel very little sympathy for such associations of the rich and powerful. Kučan's informal power and influence among the Slovenian public began to decrease.

Moreover, Drnovšek's presidential style was much different than Kučan's. He clearly distanced himself from the LDS and acquired a clearly non-partisan stance. As such, he offered no moral or other public support for either LDS or the center-left as such, and the distance between him and his party only increased. Paradoxically, many of his former LDS colleagues in fact preferred this situation. Many of them disliked his pragmatism and willingness to cooperate with the center-right parties (including the strategy of building grand coalitions). Many believed the LDS should establish a clearer leftist profile. And, of course, some of them saw great opportunities for themselves after his departure. Because of the fascinating victory of LDS in 2000 there was a widespread belief that almost anyone could be a good candidate for office, since belonging to the LDS "trademark" was thought to be a guarantee of success in itself.

Consequently, most members of the LDS leadership did not worry at all when Drnovšek was replaced as prime minister and party president by Anton Rop, though the latter clearly lacked his predecessor's qualities and general popularity. Drnovšek's pragmatism

was replaced by increasing leftist bigotry. One result was a conflict with Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, who then decided to leave LDS and join SDS just before the 2004 elections. Furthermore, the ideological purification of the LDS made it less attractive for voters of the political center who preferred the abilities of former Prime Minister Drnovšek to overcome certain right-left divisions.

At the opposite side of the political spectrum, clearer profiles were built, as well. The SDS had completed its gradual transformation with a symbolic change of name from the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia to the Slovenian Democratic Party. Since this was only part of a longer process, the change generated no conflicts within the party. In any case, most of its members and voters in fact supported the party as the "Slovenian Spring" alternative to the ex-communist, left-of-center parties, rather than for its social-democratic orientation. Moreover, many of them were former supporters of the Slovenian Christian Democrats and Slovenian People's Party who were disappointed by the policies of their former parties during the 1990s. For these voters, the SDS decision to abandon all aspects of social--democratic orientation was not only acceptable, but even desirable.

Although the change of the party name and declared profile of SDS was obviously beneficial to the former League of Communists of Slovenia, which finally – after changing its name several times during the nineties – now became nominally the only social--democratic party in Slovenia – the SD. There were benefits, however, for the center right, as well. The confusion of having an ex-communist social-democratic party and a "Slovenian Spring" social-democratic party at the opposing sides of the political spectrum was finally ended. With its name, leader, size and program orientation, the SDS had finally become the unquestionable central party of the "Slovenian Spring."

On the center right, the SDS also achieved international recognition – something it was never really able to do on the center-left – by becoming a part of the European People's Party and the International Democrat Union. Although national elections are not won by international support, such recognitions were important for SDS, since ex--communist parties generally had much better international contacts and were even able to work systematically in the international level on attempts to discredit the SDS. Janša, in particular, was often portrayed by the ex-communist left as a dangerous, authoritarian extremist. This was part of the strategy of the center-left during the 1990s to legitimize long-term rule by the LDS as the only possible option based on the claim that the opposition was unfit to govern. Being finally recognized as a perfectly normal, center-right party in Europe, the SDS thus also strengthened its legitimacy both within Slovenia and in the international environment.

Although many SDS members after 2000 were former supporters of SKD and SLS, the party was able to maintain a clearly secular political orientation. Its leaders mostly learned to avoid falling into the culture struggle trap. As such they provided no "ammunition" for the political mobilization of the center-left against a presumed "re-Catholicization" of Slovenia. In the cultural field, SDS leaders after 2000 mostly avoided problematic topics such as the Second World War, the communist system or the position of the Roman Catholic Church. For the first time, the leading party of the "Slovenian Spring" political block was a party that could not be too directly associated with the Roman Catholic Church. In the strongly secularized political environment of Slovenia this was clearly beneficial.

In this respect SDS also benefited from some circumstances that were beyond its control. In February 2004, Franc Rode was replaced as the Archbishop of Ljubljana and the head of the Slovenian Roman Catholic Church. While Rode's sharp demands for the improved position of the Church, direct political statements and aggressive rhetoric in fact contributed to the culture struggle and the mobilization of secular voters in favor of the center--left parties, his moderate successor Alojz Uran was able to withdraw the Church from party politics and from the culture struggle. Unlike the prominent role it played at the end of the 1990s, the culture struggle was virtually non-existent in Slovenia in the 2004 elections, largely due to the wisdom of both the Roman Catholic Church and the leaders of the center-right parties.

The first years of the new millennium were also characterized by more open and more dynamic public debates about past and future economic policies in Slovenia. As president of the republic, Drnovšek organized a series of public debates about the future of Slovenia. Anton Rop's government initiated a debate about the "Strategy of the Development of the Republic of Slovenia." A group of so-called "young" economists, on the other hand, launched heavy criticisms of Slovenian economic policies. They stood up against the "gradualist," protectionist and overly regulated policies of LDS governments and argued for radical, free market-oriented reforms. Although SDS neither initiated nor participated in a very active way in these debates, they contributed to an increasing skepticism toward the patterns of economic development under the LDS, which has until then mostly been termed only as "the success story" of the 1990s.

Despite being rather cautious in taking sides and being aware that supporting radical "neoliberalism" may be rather risky in a Slovenian society characterized by egalitarian and statist values, the SDS made it clear that the ideas of the young economists were closer to its own political orientation than were the policies of the LDS-led government. SDS was thus also able to place greater emphasis on economic and developmental issues – a topic that had been often ignored in past political debates in Slovenia. This also contributed to its broader appeal to the voters. SDS leader Janša – as minister of defense in three governments led by Peterle, Drnovšek and Bajuk – had been previously associated mostly with military or at least nation-building topics and, as such, did not seem a likely candidate for prime minister to a typical Slovenian voter. Before the elections of 2004, however, Janša was finally able to present a broader, and thus more generally acceptable, image of himself.

Finally, the "Slovenian Spring" parties, their supporters within civil society and even some unsatisfied figures from the center-left were able to demonstrate a surprising level of unity during the last months before the elections in 2004. Together, they formed an informal civil movement called the Assembly for the Republic (*Zbor za republiko*) and held a series of public gatherings to demonstrate the common will to replace the center-left parties in power. The message of the Assembly for the Republic was, in fact, twofold: it demonstrated the unity and the breadth of the "Spring" parties and the support for them within civil society.

There have also been popular interpretations of the SDS electoral victory in 2004 as a simple result of the population becoming frustrated with twelve years of LDS rule. This was perhaps a factor, as well, but far from the only one, since it does not explain the fact that the LDS actually achieved its best result ever in 2000, when it had already been in power

for eight years. Thus while it may be argued that the factors described above are clearly not the only ones that contributed to the victory of SDS in 2004, they are clearly quite significant and should be taken into account.

V. The Ability to Govern and Implement Developmental Reforms

From 2004 to 2008 Janša's government made reforms focusing on the greater global competitiveness of Slovenia its priority. Some of unfinished work was taken from the previous LDS-led government, as Janša's government gave final form to the draft of the Strategy of the Development of Slovenia inherited from the Rop. However, it added some more clearly free-market elements suggested by the "young economists" and attempted to implement policy at a more concrete level through an extensive package of developmental reforms. This resulted in the document called "The Frame of the Economic and Social Reforms."

The key areas of the proposed reforms included the taxation system, the system of social transfers and the labor market, the pension system, the health system, the university system, initiating a second wave of privatization, reduction of government spending, establishing a more efficient and cost-efficient state, stimulating public-private partnerships and introducing competitiveness and liberalization in the field of public utilities (Government Communication Office 2008).

Žiga Turk, the minister of reforms in Janša's government, estimated that about 75 percent of the economic and social reforms were ultimately implemented (ibid.). Although the impartiality of such a statement may be disputed, the claim might be quite close to the truth. By examining public debate, one might get the impression that most of the proposed measures were never adopted. This imprecise impression, however, is based on the fact that most of the more hotly debated reforms were never adopted, as Janša's government was rather reluctant or simply unable to adopt the measures that generated the greatest public controversy and/or lacked firm support even within the ruling coalition. The clearest examples of what Janša's government failed to implement were a profound reform of the pension system, the introduction of a flat tax, greater flexibility in the labor market and a more friendly environment for foreign direct investment.

Janša's SDS can be blamed to some extent for the lack of will and courage to implement the more controversial measures. Being disappointed by such lack of will for more radical reforms, two of the core "young economists" resigned from their appointed positions – Mišo Mrkaić in 2005 as the chair of the government's Strategic Council for Economic Development and Jože P. Damjan in 2006 only three months after his appointment as the minister of development. However, there were also structural and cultural factors that clearly limited the Janša government's ability to implement the more controversial reforms

First, there was lack of agreement within the coalition. The country's proportional--representation electoral system requires parties to pass only a relatively low threshold to enter parliament, and this results in parliaments with many small parties and coalition governments. Janša's coalition thus consisted of the SDS, the other two "Slovenian Spring" parties (NSi and SLS) and the center-left Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia. Each

of these parties was needed to hold the majority within the parliament together. Different parties became obstacles to different reforms. A significant pension reform was never even discussed seriously because it would have been unacceptable for DeSUS, while the more traditionally oriented SLS and NSi, for example, disliked further support for foreign direct investment, especially when it was related to the further rise of "morally questionable" activities such as gambling.

There was also a lack of public support for the market-oriented reforms. Just after the announcement of the reforms planned by Janša's government, its public support – very high during the first year in office – began to decline. The concept of market-oriented reforms was, in effect, a very hard sell to a general Slovenian population characterized by a culture of egalitarianism and the widespread paternalist belief that the state, rather than the individual, is responsible for the individual's well-being. More market-oriented reforms have thus generally meant less popularity and smaller chances of being reelected.

However, even if the governing parties were fully ready to put their public support at risk, they could be blocked by public referendum. The Slovenian constitution provides a relatively accessible right to demand a referendum on almost any kind of proposed legislation. When a referendum is demanded by a certain number of members of parliament or by a certain number of voters, the parliament is obliged to organize such a referendum and is bound by its results. While this has been a good instrument to prevent excessive arbitrariness by ruling coalitions, it may also be a significant obstacle to developmental reforms that may be unpopular in the short run, but very much needed in the long run.

Slovenia is traditionally attached to the traditions of (neo-) corporatism – today mostly described as the "social partnership." The roots of this tradition can be found in both Christian concepts of harmonious social order and the Yugoslav version of self-management socialism. Consequently, both left and right tend to follow these traditions and every government is expected– regardless of its given mandate – to seek support for its moves in the economic field among the social partners, that is among the trade unions and the employers' associations. Seeking consensus on every measure within this framework has turned out to be quite difficult or sometimes even impossible. Nevertheless, Janša's government mostly followed these traditions and tried to build support for its policies among the social partners – perhaps also in order to avoid being isolated in its policies and to avoid serious confrontations.

Moreover, because of the structural and cultural characteristics of Slovenian society Janša's government also decided to build a broader political coalition committed to the developmental reforms. Thus a "Partnership for Development" among the parliamentary parties was established that included not only the parties of the coalition, but also two parties of the opposition, namely the Social Democrats and the Slovenian National Party (the LDS, on the other hand, declined to join the Partnership). Seeking wider support actually strengthened the legitimacy of the government to implement most of the reforms. However, there was also a price to pay – the need to gain support for most of the measures both within the neo-corporatist arrangement of social partnership and within the consensus-seeking Partnership for Reforms caused some of the more controversial reformist measures (such as the flat tax and flexibility in the labor market) to be sacrificed for the sake of broader political consensus. Although this compromise-seeking approach

may be criticized for sacrificing some of its original goals, it may also be argued that this sacrifice in fact led to the successful implementation of many other policies that have drawn less public attention but were no less relevant.

After this period of reforms from 2004-2008, however, the SDS was not returned to office, and the center-left parties took power once again. Since SDS received practically the same proportion of votes that it had in 2004 (29.08 percent in 2004 and 29.26 per cent in 2008), one could hardly call this a crushing defeat. The fact was that the votes of the center-left were concentrated in support for the Social Democrats, who were thus able to best SDS by a margin of 1.19 percent.

The causes for this narrow defeat of SDS are beyond the scope of this chapter. More importantly, however, the SDS term in government from 2004 to 2008 demonstrated its ability and fitness to govern and to implement relevant reforms, at least to some extent. For the first time after 1992, the center-right political "team" demonstrated a level of competence that can hardly be questioned. During the 1990s, it had been claimed several times that Slovenia was too small to have two political elites – implying that only the center-left had a competent political elite that was able to govern. After 2004 such beliefs clearly disappeared and, with the benefit of hindsight, it now seems that the competence of the politicians of the center-left to lead the Slovenian state in an efficient way were also open to legitimate question. This was demonstrated both by opinion polls and media comments – even by those generally closer to the center-left. The lack of consistent policies, internal conflicts and the lack of leadership competences that characterized Borut Pahor's center--left government after 2008 provided the opportunity for a return to power by the center--right in 2011.

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Comparative Victories: How Center-Right Parties Learned to be Popular, Relevant and Prepared to Govern… This Time

Peter Učeň

This publication presents eight cases of the rise of the center right to government after a period out of power. There are six cases of a return to power following a period spent in opposition, and two cases (Croatia and Slovenia) of a rise to power for the first time (or at least for the first time as a proper center-right force). Among the cases of return, three – Bulgaria, Poland and Romania – are best described as the result of an "overcoming" of the traditional center right by new parties (the "replacement" scenario). These are the accounts of an organizational replacement of older parties by a new incarnation of right-of-center politics, as well as explanations as to why and how the "old right" fell out of touch with the electorate's interests.

The remaining cases – Lithuania, Macedonia and Hungary – witnessed the process of a bolstering of the traditional center-right party, its message, and the capacity to convey it efficiently (the "reinvigoration" scenario). These accounts are typified by the explanation of the changes – be they ideological or organizational – that the traditional parties of the moderate right had to undergo in order to become more attractive to their constituencies and renew the trust of electorate in them. Center–right political activists can certainly learn from each of these cases.

The main interest of this chapter is to inquire into the reasons for the electoral success of center-right parties in a given context and period of time. For this reason, it will be useful to examine the main findings of the analyses by both going through the categories of cases (rise, reinvigoration and replacement), as well as the types of factors contributing to their success. The factors related to the incumbent opponent, as well as those pertaining to the center-right parties themselves, including the changes and reforms through which they went, will be reviewed. Among the latter, the evolution of a party message, its content and a party's capacity to convey it, as well as issues of party organization to do so will be addressed.

Rise

The essence of the Slovenian and Croatian cases is that their major center-right parties *learned to be center-right* in the proper meaning of the term – especially in the case of the Croatian HDZ – and to aspire for popular support and to govern from a mainstream, center-right stance.

The story of the Croatian Democratic Union is that of a largely illiberal (nationalist) political force interpreting democracy not in terms of liberal individual freedoms, but rather in terms of collective rights of (national) emancipation. The essence of the success in making the transition to a center-right party depended on the suppression of illiberal tones of nationalism and the employment of the topic of belonging to a greater European identity as an effective substitute for "individual-rights" liberalism. This enabled the party under the leadership of Ivo Sanader to be in the center of the Croatian party system while at the same time being on the right, and therefore to attract a centrist electorate longing for a European future for the country. All this happened in the post-Tudjman era in a situation in which the HDZ's left-of-center counterpart often resorted to stances that were openly anti-Western and not convincingly pro-EU. Thus the HDZ was capable of assuming the role of the pioneer of pro-Western modernization. Davor Stier describes the travails of this process, also under the leadership of Jadranka Kosor, who had to face the destructive impact of corruption charges caused by her predecessors in the leadership of the party and country. Overall, Stier characterizes the HDZ as a "Christian-democratic party with a strong national standing." Even though there are certainly opinions that would prefer reversing the order of these characteristics to read a "nationalist party with a strong Christian-cemocratic standing," the HDZ was certainly a central part of the success story in which both major competing Croatian political parties, the HDZ and the Social Democrats, became more pro-European and pro-liberal-democratic in the short period of two parliamentary terms.

While the HDZ had its nationalist past as a baseline, in Slovenia the party that originated in an attempt to establish modern post-communist social democracy, the Slovene Democratic Party (SDS), came to dominate the center-right pole of the political spectrum. Matej Makarovič provides a convincing account of how and why this happened. The story includes an analysis of the dominance of the center-left Liberal Democrats in post-communist Slovenia, which was characterized by an unusual degree of personnel continuity with the communist era and a preference for neo-corporatist arrangements regarding the country's economy. In Slovenia the entire right-of-center opposition, including the SDS, the People's Party and the Christian Democrats, went through a period in which they collaborated with the dominant center-left LDS in coalition governments. It took a decade-long lesson of parties nearly collapsing after each such turn in power to learn how to become a true and effective opposition. The SDS learned this lesson best and fastest, as it managed to overcome the consequences of its left-of-center origins and went through a process of ideological clarification in which it adopted a self-definition as a center-right party, rather than a "Slovenian Spring" party or some other possible identity. Also, in terms of policies, SDS – at least verbally – managed to criticize the country's neo-corporatist politico-economic system from a pluralist and market-economy position. The party also learned to manage the *Kulturkampf* waged by the hegemonic left

– largely by ignoring it – and to prevent it from undermining its political position. In the situation in which the decapitated Liberal Democrats resorted to "leftist bigotry," the SDS was capable of moving to the center to attract the centrist vote for the sake of electoral victory. Thus, by learning to be the opposition in the normal meaning of the word, the SDS became also the center-right alternative in government. The party's most important legacy may well be that it brought to bear a non-leftist elite capable of running the state – the alleged absence of such an elite was one of the pillars of the effective LDS propaganda in the 1990s – a legacy that cannot be undone.

Reinvigoration

A mixture of organizational streamlining with the refreshment of the message was the essence of the reinvigoration strategy in Lithuania, Macedonia and Hungary. The cases in this category are typified by explaining the organizational and ideological reforms the moderate right adopted – namely the reconstruction of the party message and the organizational capacity to deliver it – to become electable again. If we were to look for differences in emphasis or the balance of the two elements, Hungary emerges as a combination of the extremes. The Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Union was a case of the maximal organizational mobilization for the sake of the most effective delivery of a new message that remarkably differed from the old one.

Márk Szabó provides a detailed explanation of how Fidesz adjusted its organizational structure to single-mandate electoral districts, thus making it completely campaign--oriented. The party also learned to use the instruments of direct democracy, such as the popular initiative and the referendum, for the sake of amplification of its own message. Fidesz also adapted its message of opposition to the modernizing "neo-liberal" Hungarian Socialist Party in a paternalistic direction. At the end, as the 2010 election results suggest, the socially protective "bread-and-butter" message addressed to the members of the allegedly embattled Magyar national community resonated well among the electorate, even though it provoked serious doubts about the redefinition of a traditional understanding of left and right in the Fidesz version of politics. It also awakened fears as to whether, politely said, liberal democracy as normally understood in the EU would soon become an obstacle for implementation of the political program of Fidesz. In any case, Fidesz proved to be a very successful political organization. "Security, social justice and state aid, a strong criticism of unconstrained economic liberalism, hand-in-hand with privatization, and the left's austerity policies have become central elements of the party's communication," Szabó concludes, adding that "in terms of campaign techniques and party organization, more emphasis was put on mobilization, direct contact with voters and GOTV techniques."

In Macedonia, the VMRO-Democratic Party of Macedonian National Unity (VMRO--DPMNE) was another successful example of the reinvigoration strategy. Compared to Fidesz, VMRO did not mobilize its organization as intensively, but it also adopted a new message that has been conveyed in a very consistent way. Against the backdrop of criticism of Social-Democratic rule, which was marred by mismanagement, corruption and growing disunity within the party, VMRO-DPMNE – itself burdened by a very problematic legacy – managed quite convincingly to establish distance from its previous period in government. Importantly, the party promptly changed its leadership following the elector-

al defeat in 2002. In terms of ideology, VMRO-DPMNE under new leader Nikola Grujevski took decisive steps away from old-fashioned nationalism toward what we could term "government-related conservatism." It softened and modernized nationalism as a pillar of party identity, learned to be government-oriented and introduced Christian-democratic ideological elements. To paraphrase chapter author Jovan Ananiev, VMRO-DPMNE moved from the traditionalist right to the center right. The party also streamlined its organization, modernized its political marketing methods – for the first time applying targeting and research-based message development – and replaced traditional emotional appeals with more substantive policy proposals. Therefore, VMRO-DPMNE's election manifesto was for the first time detailed and focused on concrete, socio-economic policy measures. As a consequence of moderation and modernization, the party was capable of winning the elections in 2006 and retaining – even increasing – popular support during its term in government, and defending victories in 2008 and 2011.

The Lithuanian case, namely that of the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD), seems to be the most balanced example of reinvigoration in which equilibrium was kept between an emphasis on party message reform and boosting the party's capacity to successfully convey it. The case study by Mantas Adomenas provides a detailed list of factors that had to be changed and improved in order for the troubled party to achieve a clear electoral success, while not shying away from pointing out their problematic aspects. What is very important for IRI is that the process of mobilizing the internal capacities of the party received decisive help from a party-affiliated institute. This whole process rested on a courageous decision by the party leadership to "outsource" both analysis and formulation of recommendations for reforms to an "outside" actor – a foundation manned by party members or friendly fellow travelers. The core of the TS-LKD reforms was a deep self-analysis backed by strong sociological research. It included an examination of the party's "troubled image" that prevented many voters from considering it as a viable alternative for government. This enabled the development of realistic strategies for "unlocking" segments of electorate which were discouraged by such an image. In short, the process resulted in a strategy that quite successfully managed to improve the party image, to modernize it and make it accessible for younger and less conservative demographic groups, and, finally, to endow it with the notion of competence in terms of both interest in people's real problems and proficiency in policy making. Lastly, extending party organization via mergers with similar small parties turned out to be a double-edged sword in the long term, but it helped the party to build an image instrumental in the 2008 campaign

Replacement

The final group of case studies in this booklet deals with the substitution of the traditional center-right agenda and actors in the respective countries with new parties bringing to bear new topics that reflected and addressed the widespread disillusionment of electorates with mainstream politics, i.e. corruption, integrity in public office and respect for the public interest in governing. In practical terms this often meant a complete institutional overhaul of the way the center right was organized that was justified by the need for delivering a different, more relevant message to electorates in Bulgaria, Romania and Poland. Inevitably, such an anti-establishment drive implied that the new parties were created in

opposition to their predecessors on the traditional right and not only to their leftist or populist rivals. The method of combining such distancing from the "old right" with criticism of the ruling left, while asserting a center-right identity, remains the most interesting aspect of this analysis.

In the case of the Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB), the anti-establishment appeal was a reflection of the population's resentment toward a decade and a half of the failure of "Bulgaria as a political project," to paraphrase Roumen Iontchev. These failures, perpetrated by the authoritarian post-communists and the first generation of the center right in the 1990s and the centrist populists and socialist-led coalition in 2000s, created fertile soil for a mass impression of having been abandoned and left behind by the political class. Therefore, according to Iontchev, GERB's appeal was not primarily about the economy, but about values and political conduct. Nor was it about a particularly outstanding or smart campaign, as much as it was about the evocation of trust. GERB leader Boyko Borisov became the embodiment of the possibility of such trust in the country's political system. In a way, the GERB project was an attempt to realize the National Movement of Simeon II (NDSV) promise of "restoring decency and justice in society and the dignity of the Bulgarian people." But, as Iontchev adds, a decent job of party building took place in the case of GERB, which took the task of becoming a nation-wide party in the opposition very seriously.

A popular leader as a means of generating trust serving as a point of reconnection to a frustrated electorate was an element shared by both the Bulgarian and Romanian cases. (This was less true in the Polish case where we should speak of "leaders," rather than of a single personality in leadership.) Both Boyko Borisov and Traian Băsescu were outsiders to the old political class – in impression, if not fully in reality. They were mavericks of a sort – personalities with the capacity to feel the moods and concerns of the people on the street. While we want to avoid the over- and chronically mis-used term "populism," these leaders were natural popular reflections of the political instincts of the people. Even though Băsescu was not the presidential candidate the newly created center-right DA alliance was supposed to back in 2003, once he entered the scene he became absolutely fundamental to the further development of the center right's fragmentation and subsequent unification. Aligică and Tarko provide a fascinating account of these processes, namely the deliberate and hard-fought creation of a new center-right party out of democratic (PD) and liberal (PNL) components. They describe the dilemmas of center-right politicians, especially within the PNL, in the dismantling of their own party for the sake of creating a new vehicle for conveying a new message and possibly bringing about new policies. The Democrat-Liberal Party (PDL) became the new incarnation of center-right politics in Romania, riding the wave of general discontent on the part of the population, its disenchantment with the political class and Băsescu's smart anti-corruption campaign. The party was successful in mobilizing popular support in the 2008 elections, but its term in office was equally troubled and suffered from the very same deficiencies all ruling configurations in the modern history of Romania have suffered. The party had little opportunity to push through true reform legislation. It was overwhelmed by the management of its political survival, and, increasingly, the management of its disunity. It also always remained over-dependent on the person of the active – and activist – President Băsescu, who brought with him an uneasy relationship between the office of the president and other elements

of political system, as well as on the vicissitudes of Băsescu's anti-corruption campaign and anti-establishment drive. "But," as the authors summarize, "if there is one lesson to be drawn from the Romanian case, it is about the power of unity and cooperation and about the difficulties of achieving it. Each time the forces of the Romanian center right try to work in unity and coordination – be that as the Justice and Truth Alliance or as the fusionist democrat-liberal experiment – things tend to move in a promising direction. Each time the forces of division get the upper hand, the center right loses ground. There is a simple lesson involved in this, but it is surprising how many times politicians of the center right forget its basic truths."

The Polish right is a peculiar case of the replacement of the "old" center-right parties with new actors. Indeed, unlike in Bulgaria and Romania, there were two parties on the Polish right that picked up the pieces of what remained from the previously failed unification project of the Solidarity Elections Action and its government. The Civic Platform and Law and Justice parties embody the story of the breakdown of AWS unity and gradual emancipation of the recombined right-wing personalities and forces from such unity and financial and organizational dependence on the trade union movement implied by AWS. In 2001 PO and PiS established themselves as normal parties, which may be their major – and largely underestimated – merit. Marek Matraszek does an excellent job in explaining this extrication of the new center right from the old political logic in an accessible way, as keeping track of the seemingly ceaseless recombination of personalities, names and parties on the Polish right is chronically difficult for almost any outsider. He points out the developments that triggered the emergence of PO and PiS, which, as surprising as it may sound, originated in the fractious liberal Freedom Union. Internal tumults within UW in 2001 gave rise to a left-leaning party chairman who aggressively squeezed out right-wing personalities, who consequently established the PO. This conflict also caused UW ministers to resign from government and opened a space for the nomination of Lech Kaczynski as minister of justice. The positive reverberations of Kaczynski's anti-corruption drive among the public swiftly encouraged another groups of post-AWS politicians to establish PiS around the Kaczynski brothers. Compared to Bulgaria and Romania, the emergence of an anti-establishment right in Poland seems to be less dependent on a single leader.

While in 2001 PO and PiS established themselves as relevant parties, it took four years of the disastrous rule by the Social Democrats – marred by authoritarian tendencies, corruption and disunity – for them to become dominant parties in the political system. While the leftist SDL ended up completely destroyed, "PO and PiS picked up the pieces" remaining after the "political and moral collapse" of the left in the 2005 elections. In a different way than GERB in Bulgaria and PDL in Romania, both PO and PiS owe a great part of their success to their anti-establishment tenor. In 2001 and 2005 they produced two versions of anti-establishment sentiment that reflected a deep popular longing for a reform of the way the politics was done in Poland. In Matraszek's words, Polish politics was ripe for an "anti--establishment revolt and revulsion at political corruption." This atmosphere produced popular support for not only PO and PiS, but also for radicals from Self Defense and the League of Polish Families in 2005.

The most important lesson of the Polish case is probably to be found in the failure of PO and PiS to secure any meaningful cooperation following the 2005 elections. The adventure

of PiS with Self Defense and LPR from 2005-2007, as well as the intense enmity between PO and PiS ever since the former took power in 2007, evoke many critical thoughts about the price the Polish center right may have paid for the spectacular victory in 2005. Matraszek's thoughts about PiS being sometimes too radical to be considered the mainstream center right and a PO that "seems to be evolving from an ideologically driven political force expressing a right-wing self-identity to a party of pragmatic political management increasingly difficult to characterize as center right in any meaningful way" may warrant fears that one or both incarnations of the center right in Poland may just prove be more transitory than it now seems.

Factors of Success

It is crucial to summarize the factors that contributed to the return of the center right to power and to look for patterns and dissimilarities among and between the three groups of parties mentioned (rise, reinvigoration and replacement). Overall, one would find fewer similarities than expected.

In the two "rise" cases, the parties had in common a necessity to learn to be center-right at all (HDZ) or a viable center-right governing alternative (SDS). It was a question of learning, maturing and realizing the realities of domestic and European politics.

Within the group of "replacement" cases, the execution of such replacement and the institutional overhaul of the old right was, naturally, different in each country. The essence was the construction of a new party for the sake of delivery of a new message. In Bulgaria a brand new party was created as a result of an intense party-building effort, while in Romania the buildup of PDL was more a process of recombination of the existing party-political resources. Poland was an intermediate case. The message used was anti-establishment in its nature, thus criticizing the failures of the previous elites, explaining why they should be kept politically and electorally accountable and promising new ways of doing politics for the country and its people. Corruption was identified as the source of the pressing economic, social, and moral malaise and offered as justification for proposed substantial political changes.

What the cases also shared was that, in addition to the rival left, the remnants of the traditional right were also considered opponents to be taken on – certainly in Bulgaria and Romania, but less in Poland where AWS collapsed completely. Iontchev, for example, mentions that the traditional right in Bulgaria at a certain point "stopped doing politics" and focused entirely on its internal issues, thus producing the quite obvious precondition for its replacement by an alternative that was connected to popular concerns, in other words, by GERB. The role of a leader figure who could evoke trust was also crucial in all three countries, even though in Poland this took the form of a new political class, while in Bulgaria and Romania it was more about individuals as an embodiment of the promise of the new politics.

In the "reinvigoration" group, we can find different degrees of organizational streamlining, with Fidesz manifesting a qualitatively different level of mobilization compared to VMRO-DPMNE and TS-LKD. It was not possible to find much likeness in terms of the contents of the reformed message either: in Hungary Fidesz secured success with a pa-

ternalistic message which was antagonistic in nature. In the case of VMRO-DPMNE, the message was much less intense and more reassuring. The appeal of TS-LKD was largely free of antagonism. TS-LKD and VMRO-DPMNE produced two versions of a message meant to evoke the impression of governing competence, "unlocking" voters and helping them to get rid of the fear of voting for their respective parties. VMRO-DPMNE learned to address its constituency with conciliatory and policy-oriented messages, while with TS-LKD the emphasis was on the process of message development – on its inclusiveness and consensual character – as well as on the sincerity of the basic analysis. In Hungary, in contrast, the Fidesz message was more about the inevitability of Fidesz coming to power as a prerequisite for warding off a series of political, social and economic catastrophes.

Regarding the organization of communication capacity, the lack of consistency in the three cases is manifest. While VMRO-DPMNE had to familiarize itself with modern forms of communications with its constituency and to democratize its internal party life, TS-LKD just needed a certain streamlining and update. Fidesz, again, maximized its capacities and introduced a constant mobilization by means of party organization, as well as by the instruments of direct democracy, making use of the mobilizing potential of social issues. This suggests that the unity within the "reinvigoration" group may just be a residual phenomenon – the cases look similar because they all starkly differ from the "replacement" category, but otherwise they bear a little resemblance among themselves.

Overall, this review seems to suggest that there are few universal recommendations for a party to re-gain governing potential after a period in oppositions. In representative democracy such potential may only be realized through popular support, and only a very general set of recommendations for achieving the latter can be formulated based on the cases presented. It certainly helps to regain popular support if the opponents defending incumbency under-perform or fail on moral, political and economic grounds. But since one cannot hope for this always to be the rule, other factors should enter the analysis and political strategy.

The important question – why in some countries center-right parties were able to reform and reinvigorate themselves to return to power, while in others it took the total overhaul of the old and the emergence of the new party to achieve the same – remains too complex and therefore unanswered in this publication. It has, however, to remain on the mind of every center-right activist when thinking about possible scenarios of development of his or her own parties. Our observations suggest that while replacement seems to be more effective in bringing about visible change, both strategies relied less than expected on socio--economic policies and focused more on political conduct, "the way of doing politics," and general – and often vague – questions of competence to rule rather than on competition over concrete policy proposals. While the economic situation in general continues to be the most prominent concern of population, concrete policy measures have much less mobilizing potential than "new politics." This is perhaps to be ascribed to the fact that growing numbers of voters have come to realize that party-related corruption and the draining of state resources may be as responsible for their lagging standards of living as "bad governance" in strictly technical terms, if not more.

Obviously, an adequate mixture of the reform of the party message combined with a boost in a party's capacity to reach out to the constituency with such refreshed appeal has been

confirmed in this study to be the most viable path to electoral recovery. Such a mixture is in theory the essence of the success of the "reinvigoration" cases, but in our review we could not find a clear pattern – individual models seemed to work in each of the three cases. Apparently, there is no single way to figure out the content of the message that is going to resonate among the people. Both a consensual and participative process in Lithuania and a substantially more directive approach in Hungary proved to work – the final decision will always remain the responsibility of an individual party's leadership.

More space for recommendations can be found in the area of improving the capacity of parties to deliver and target messages, as there are the methods that are – at least in theory – of a purely technical character and therefore independent form the political factors playing a role within the parties. Márk Szabó points out that "the lessons learned for Fidesz… were that the emphasis among extensive outdoor advertisements, large-scale campaign events and intensive voter mobilization needs to be balanced in favor of the last of these. This does not mean the end of "traditional" campaigning in the region, but underlines the importance of direct voter contact and new campaign tools, including social media platforms and web-based technologies."

The Lithuanian case perhaps illustrates optimally that what is crucial is the balance between a reform of techniques and a change of political notions and perceptions both on the side of the public and the political parties. Its long list of areas of partisan activities that had to be reformed and changed is required reading for everyone interested in the topic. It is also a good lesson in strategy in planning the change of one's own party. Such a strategy should preferably include 1) an honest admission of problems for the sake of planning realistic strategies for change, 2) the establishment of numerical goals (the target number of votes and seats, and 3) the realistic identification of challenges that may prevent their achievement (a troubled party image, limited access to voter resources and low confidence of voters in the TS-LKD as a good choice in the Lithuanian case).

Last, but not least, each electoral victory should necessarily be analyzed for the potential for future troubles that may have been planted while achieving it. Each strategy and method employed should be judged on its merits, as exemplified by Adomenas' assessment of the price TS-LKD has to pay for its success: "… we do not know, precisely, why and how we won, which precise groups and strata of voters we succeeded in attracting, which elements of the campaign worked and which did not. On yet another level, the party mergers left the party heterogeneous, an agglomerate of groupings with different agendas and ideologies. The united party was not allowed time to coalesce and to grow an organic structure from within, as it were, before facing the trials and tribulations of governance, and not just any governance, but governance in a time of crisis. Moreover, moods of crisis and growing resentment, the stagnant political life of the united party, and lack of efficient procedures for internal democracy created a productive breeding ground for the rise of radicalism." Matraszek's thoughts on prospects for the Polish right belong to the same class of concerns that must become a part of any responsible analysis of how parties change for the sake of electoral victory.

Thus although the successes analyzed in this book were achieved with rather different messages – namely in the "rise" and "reinvigoration" groups – and the choice of methods employed goes only somewhat beyond what any decent manual for effective campaigning

would suggest, how should we approach the reasons for the victories of the center-right parties in the region in this time period? Except for the effect of the pendulum and the "contribution" of their opponents, center-right parties perhaps succeeded in attaining an adequate congruence among relevance of the party message, capacity to present it to the public and the felicity of being in tune with the public disposition. As for details, each case speaks for itself and this review hopefully helps to establish the applicability of such details in practice.

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