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Editorial

OPPOSITIONS

OPPPOSITIONS WERE SLOW to materialize in the advanced economies after the crash of 2008; understandably so. Labour movements had long been neutered; erstwhile social-democratic parties had become cheerleaders for financial deregulation. Rump lefts had failed to grow in thirty years; late-90s alter-globo movements seemed to have been wrong-footed by the harsher international climate of the war on terror. It was not until 2010 that protesters took to the streets in any numbers, with Greece, the country worst hit by the crisis, leading the way. In 2011, hundreds of thousands more joined their ranks, from Madrid to Zuccotti Park and Oakland, in the movement of the squares. In the US, amid renewed feminist ferment on the campuses, the first protests began that would grow into Black Lives Matter.

But only in the last few years have left oppositions started to produce national political projects with an impact at state level—flanked, and sometimes outflanked, by the radical right. Again, Greece was in the lead: the Syriza coalition took 27 per cent in June 2012; it constituted itself as a political party the following summer. In France, Front de gauche candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon got 4 million votes in the first round of the 2012 presidential elections. A year later, Italy's Five Star Movement won 26 per cent of the vote, the highest score in the Chamber of Deputies. In 2014 Podemos was launched in Spain, overlapping with a mass independence movement in Catalonia, while Scotland's referendum saw an unprecedented mobilization around national autonomy. In 2015 Jeremy Corbyn was swept to the head of the British Labour Party by a groundswell of revolt against New Labour itself. Six months later,

Bernie Sanders's run for the 2016 Democratic nomination is chalking up some 7 million votes for a democratic-socialist 'political revolution' in the United States.

How long this constellation will last is another matter. Sanders's campaign as such will end with the Democratic convention in July. Tsipras's swift passage from leader of the Eurozone opposition to sulky factotum for the Troika is indication enough of how fragile and fast-changing their fortunes may be. Many on the Italian left would deny that Beppe Grillo deserves a place in their ranks; not without reason. Corbyn faces obsessive Blairite plotting for his overthrow. Mélenchon's Parti de gauche has suffered damaging losses. At the time of writing—four months after Spain's inconclusive elections—Podemos's future is subject to so many countervailing factors that it is impossible to say where the party will be a year from now. Bearing this in mind, any characterization of these forces can only be provisional—a snapshot of how things look in the spring of 2016. Nor can this handful of countries represent the whole advanced-capitalist region: a fuller picture would include both Canada and Germany, where there has been no renewal of the left, as well as the Scandinavian and Benelux countries, Ireland and Portugal. All the same, a comparative assessment of these new lefts' strengths and weaknesses may produce results whose relevance could be tested elsewhere. What contexts have shaped the emergence of these oppositions? What political forms have they taken? What positions do they champion? What stances have they taken towards the mainstream parties?

I. CONTEXTS

The common context for all the new lefts is anger at the political management of the Great Recession. The outcomes vary: after seven years of zero interest rates, and trillions of dollars in bailouts and quantitative easing, the US and UK are officially in recovery, while Greece and Spain are still far below pre-crisis levels; less severely affected by the crash, France and Italy were suffering from stagnant growth and high structural unemployment well before 2008. Across the board, the super-rich have done best out of the crisis—during Obama's first term, over 90 per cent of income growth in the US went to the top 1 per cent—while the young have borne the brunt of it. In each country, the ebbing tide

has exposed the hypocrisy and corruption at the top of the system: Tony Blair, Jean-Claude Juncker, the Clintons.

A second shared feature is the collapse of the centre-left parties, whose win-win 'Formula Two' of Third Way neoliberalism was the governing ideology of the boom-and-bubble years on both sides of the Atlantic.¹ Having abandoned their former social-democratic moorings and working-class constituencies, Europe's Third Way parties were now punished in turn, whether for deregulating finance and pumping credit bubbles, or for implementing the subsequent bailouts and cuts: Blair had already lost 3 million votes between 1997 and 2005, but Brown shed another million in 2010; PSOE's vote fell by nearly 6 million between 2008 and 2015; PASOK was virtually eliminated, dropping from over 3 million votes to under 300,000 between 2009 and 2015, while in France, Hollande has plunged from 52 to 15 per cent in the polls since 2012. This rightward shift by the ex-social democrats—often into 'grand coalitions' with the conservatives—opened up a representational vacuum on the left of the political spectrum; the centre-right parties have stayed closer to their original constituents. A different pattern holds in the US, where the Democrats' popular vote has remained steady—the lesser evil—and a fifty-fifty split has prevailed between them as both parties glided to the right.

Third, blowback from the worsening crisis of Western intervention and civil war in the Middle East and North Africa has begun to overlap with the economic debacle, in Europe if not America. France and Britain have been in the forefront of the wars, Greece and Italy the recipients of their victims. If Blair led the EU contingents in the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq, Hollande is now the EU's most hawkish leader. After Libya, French military intervention in Mali in 2013 became a bridgehead for Operation Barkhane, targeting supposed jihadists across Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad; Hollande then joined Obama in pounding Iraqi and Syrian lands. At first, only a tiny percentage of the tens of millions displaced by the fighting succeeded in crossing the Mediterranean to Italy, Greece or Spain. But in 2015, a million refugees reached Europe from the widening arc of war. Meanwhile France and Britain—not only the EU's main aggressors there, but with large, relatively deprived, Muslim populations

¹ See Perry Anderson, 'Testing Formula Two', *NLR* 8, March–April 2001.

of their own—have seen Islamist terror attacks against civilian targets. Blair responded with stepped-up surveillance and pre-emptive policing, Hollande imposed a state of emergency. Under these conditions, the civil-rights parameters in which opposition movements can function have been narrowed and their foreign policies thrown into relief.

Street and ballot box

Shaping the new oppositions from below, a further determinant has been the scale and militancy of popular protests. In France, Britain and Italy these have been low-key. By French standards, during the long gap between the 2010 battle against Sarkozy's pension law and the heartening eruption of the Nuit Debout occupations this spring, struggles remained small and isolated, though often fiercely fought at school or factory level. England, too, has been largely quiescent since the 2010–11 student protests and anti-police riots, with Tory cuts implemented without demur by Labour councils; only in Scotland did the 2014 independence referendum become a focus for frustrations about 'austerity Britain'. In Italy, local activism around municipal and environmental issues—polluting incinerators, high-speed trains, military bases—has not yet translated into national revolt.

In the US, on the other hand, successive protests—students in 2010, Occupy in 2011, state-level trade-union revolts, Black Lives Matter—have begun to generate a momentum far greater than the 1999 Seattle or 2003 anti-war demonstrations. Strengthened by cross-sectoral solidarities—public-sector unions coming out for Occupy, white and Latino allies for BLM—this wave has been buoyed up, not deterred, by right-wing expressions of working-class discontent; it has given the Sanders campaign a markedly more militant edge than Obama's. In Spain, too, 2011's 15-M movement was a breakthrough; its energies were channelled into neighbourhood and workplace assemblies, which helped sustain direct-action protests against home repossessions and public-sector cuts. In Barcelona, the 15-M rebellion intermeshed with the campaign for an independence referendum, in protest at the 2010 ruling by Spain's PP-run Constitutional Court against Catalonia's revised Statute of Autonomy. In Greece, Syriza's vault onto the national stage in June 2012 was a direct outcome of two years of mass mobilizations against the Troika, estimated at one point to involve nearly 20 per cent of the population.

Finally, the shape these oppositions have taken has been over-determined by the electoral systems within which they operate. All are rigged in one way or another, typically with the aim of preserving a two-party oligopoly against any new entrant; but the degree of closure varies significantly. The American system is the most exclusionary of all: a first-past-the-post process, further buttressed by high bars for ballot access, even at state level, and by the vast sums necessary to get in the game at all; in addition, the two governing parties—effectively, two factions of the same party—have proved highly effective in extending their hegemony over their respective sides of the political field, absorbing radical energies and transforming them into ballot fodder. Sanders has occupied an ambivalent position as Congress's solitary 'independent', caucusing with the Democrats. At Westminster, too, first-past-the post constituencies grossly misrepresent the popular will, though cracks are appearing at the edges, where a form of PR has allowed Greens and Socialists to be elected to the Scottish Assembly at Holyrood and Plaid Cymru to the Welsh Senedd. The French *double tour* offers nominal proportionality in the first round, only to stamp it out with winner-takes-all in the second.

Opposition forces naturally fare better under the proportional-representation systems of Italy, Greece and Spain, where left parties have long had a parliamentary presence; but here too the rules are skewed against outsiders. In Italy Renzi, himself unelected, used a confidence vote to ram through a 'jackpot' system, coming into effect this year, which automatically gives 340 seats to a winning party while the 'losers' divide the remaining 278 seats between them, on a party-list basis; promoted in the name of 'strong government', the new law has been bitterly opposed for shifting power from parliament to the executive. Greece, too, caps its PR system by handing a bonus of fifty unearned seats to whichever party wins a plurality. Spain's party-list d'Hondt system grossly over-represents small, de-populated rural constituencies; even more so in the Senate, which has a lock on constitutional change and has long been run by the PP.

2. STRUCTURES

Within these distinctive contexts, what forms have the new oppositions taken? A striking common feature is the importance of charismatic

leaders. Tsipras swiftly established himself as a more telegenic presence than the ageing Syriza politburo members who had picked him as leader in 2008. Sanders, Corbyn and Mélenchon emerged as presidential or prime-ministerial contenders; Grillo capitalized on his TV profile. But even Podemos broke with Spanish norms and the horizontalism of the *indignados* to use Pablo Iglesias's face as its symbol on ballot papers. So analysis should begin by looking at these figures—all men; four of them over 65—before turning to the parties themselves.

Figureheads

Five of the six have been on the left since their teenage years, with Corbyn and Sanders squarely in the social-democratic tradition. Sanders, born in Brooklyn in 1941, the son of an immigrant paint salesman, was involved in 'democratic socialist' politics from the late 1950s; at the University of Chicago, he was initially with a group that would go on to form the DSA, a US affiliate of the Socialist International.² Sanders has famously been giving the same speech for the past fifty years, first as Mayor of Burlington, then as an independent congressman and senator of Vermont. Corbyn, born in 1949, joined Labour's Young Socialists at the age of sixteen in The Wrekin, Shropshire, where his father was an experimental electrical engineer; both parents were active Party members. After VSO teaching in Jamaica, he became a stalwart of the London Labour left from the 1970s, elected to Parliament in 1983, and a tireless solidarity campaigner. Mélenchon, born in 1951, comes from a *pied-noir* family that relocated from Tangiers, where his father was a wireless operator, to northern France. Swept up in the school-student protests of 1968, he spent four years in a Trotskyist group, the Organisation communiste internationaliste, before joining the Mitterrandist wing of the French Socialist Party in 1974; but his political culture is not so much Marxist as a masonic-tinged republican socialism, with an avowed patriotic strain—*La France, la belle, la rebelle*—similar to Sanders's, though quite alien to Corbyn or Iglesias. A senator, then junior minister in Jospin's government, he created a faction of his own inside the PS, organized from 2004 around the journal *Pour la République sociale*.

Tsipras and Iglesias both grew up within the remnants of the Third International. Born in Athens in 1974, Tsipras joined the local

² DSA: Democratic Socialists of America.

Communist youth organization in his teens and was later its secretary, training as a civil engineer while operating as a party organizer; he presided at the Athens World Social Forum in 2006. Iglesias, born in Madrid in 1978, and likewise in the PCE youth organization, has the most sophisticated intellectual culture of the six, coloured first by Negri, then by Laclau's Gramscianism. The Bolivarian movement was a formative influence: Iglesias lectured in Caracas and, like Mélenchon and Corbyn, was friendly with Chávez, whom Sanders has anathematized. With a tight-knit group of comrades at Complutense University, Iglesias pioneered a radical TV talk show, closely identified with the 2011 protests, which won him national recognition.³

The odd man out is Grillo, described in his youth as 'frivolous, cynical, only interested in money'.⁴ Born in 1948 near Genoa, where his family owned a blowtorch factory, Grillo trained as an accountant, enrolling for a degree in economics and business studies; but most of his time was spent as a neighbourhood joker and wide-boy, a jeans salesman, then a stand-up comic in local bars, where he was talent-spotted by a television presenter. By the early 80s he was best known for his comic TV travelogues, satirizing national customs (*I'll Give You America, I'll Give You Brazil*) somewhat in the manner of Sacha Baron Cohen. Radicalization came late, in the mid 80s, as Italian political culture sank into a swamp of corruption, the Socialist Craxi, Berlusconi's patron, almost outdoing his DC rival Andreotti. Grillo lampooned Craxi on a visit to China ('If they're all Socialists here, whom do they steal from?') and was briefly banned from mainstream TV. He came into his own after the meltdown of the Italian political system in the Tangentopoli scandals of the 90s, excoriating multinational corporations and environmental damage, and became a mainstay of the post-PCI's annual Festa dell' *Unità* and ally of Italia dei Valori, the anti-corruption party founded by 'clean hands' prosecutor Antonio Di Pietro. Unlike Di Pietro, Grillo began to speak out for the rights of young workers, collecting their stories in *Schiavi Moderni* (2007)—'modern slaves'. A turning point was his meeting with Net theorist and entrepreneur Gianroberto Casaleggio, who persuaded him that online voting could provide a form of direct democracy that would

³ For a fuller picture, see Pablo Iglesias's text, 'Understanding Podemos', and the interview that follows in NLR 93, May–June 2015.

⁴ The words of an early patron, TV presenter Orlando Portento, quoted in Raffaele Niri, 'Grillo Segreto', *Dagospia*, 29 May 2012.

offer all citizens unmediated access to political power; Casaleggio's firm would manage Grillo's blog.⁵

In style, Sanders and Mélenchon are orators of the old school; Corbyn and Tsipras are more diffident, with a workmanlike delivery which, in Corbyn's case, owes something to the low-church tradition of Tony Benn. In different ways, both Iglesias and Grillo have honed their styles for TV, which favours one-liners and speedy, off-the-cuff responses. Iglesias's hallmark is a cool intelligence, while Grillo's is caustic wit and performative buffoonery. In knowledge of the world, Tsipras and Grillo are perhaps the most parochial; even Sanders, who comes from an avowedly anti-communist tradition, visited Nicaragua, Cuba and the Soviet Union in the 1980s, and took time out on a kibbutz after university. Mélenchon has visited China and knows Latin America well, as does Corbyn, who, as a roving UN election observer, may be the best travelled of them all. As icons, all prompt the question: where would their movement be without them? Sandernistas will have no obvious rallying point after July, though the DSA may get a new lease of life. Without Mélenchon, the Front de gauche would revert to its constituent parts. It remains to be seen whether the Labour left will sink back into its low-key role in the party if the Blairites evict Corbyn from the leadership. In Greece, Tsipras is surrounded by grizzled fixers of the old school, but as a party of government Syriza will no doubt be able to produce another presentable, young-ish candidate, along the lines of PSOE's Pedro Sánchez. In Spain, an impressive layer of articulate young militants has emerged since 15-M, among them Ada Colau and Teresa Rodríguez, though fragmentation could be an even bigger problem there without a unifying figurehead. Strangely enough, Grillo is the only one so far to have secured a successor: Luigi Di Maio, 29-year-old leader of the Five Stars in the Chamber of Deputies—warmly welcomed by the *Financial Times*.⁶

Formations

Though conventional wisdom has it that political parties have been atrophying over the past decades, left oppositions have produced no

⁵ In the Italian edition of *Wired* magazine, Casaleggio (1954–2016) likened himself to Julian Assange or David Graeber; his interlocutor, Bruce Sterling, thought him more like a suave *milanese* Richard Stallman or Jimmy Wales. See Bruce Sterling, 'La versione di Casaleggio', *Wired Italia*, 9 August 2013.

⁶ 'Italy's Five Star Movement wants to be taken seriously', FT, 29 December 2015.

fewer than four of them since 2008. How do they compare to the mainstream parties in democratic functioning and accountability? Syriza and the Parti de gauche come closest to conventional left models. Syriza was founded as a unified party in 2013, through the fusion of the half-dozen groups that had formed an electoral ‘coalition of the radical left’ in 2004; at that stage its dominant component was Synaspismos, itself a coalition around one of the Greek communist parties, then with some 12,000 members. The new Syriza established a traditional structure: an elected central committee, on which the different factions were represented, a secretariat and a parliamentary group, centred round Tsipras’s office and only nominally accountable to its base. In July 2015—loyal to a Stalinist notion of democratic centralism which Lenin would have scorned—all but two Syriza deputies followed Tsipras in rejecting the Greek referendum’s resounding ‘Oxi’ and surrendering to the Eurogroup; the Left Platform faction would quit the following month to found Popular Unity.⁷

In France, the Parti de gauche, launched in 2008 by Mélenchon’s former Socialist Party faction, looked at first to Germany’s Die Linke as a model: uniting a left split from social democracy (Mélenchon and the Parti de gauche, in the roles of Oskar Lafontaine and the WASG) with a rump CP, at first within an electoral Front de gauche; the dream was that, as with the PDS in Die Linke, the PCF would dissolve itself inside a larger formation of ‘The Left’, with a gravitational force strong enough to pull in all the asteroids of the far left and environmentalist movements. Privately, Parti de gauche militants would describe the mummified PCF as ‘a ball and chain—but a necessary one’. The PG had a membership of perhaps 12,000 at its peak in 2012; it has an elected 24-member secretariat and a larger National Council. But while Die Linke was operating within Germany’s proportional-representation system, the Front de gauche was blocked by France’s second-round ‘winner takes all’. The ten FG deputies elected in 2012, mostly PCF members, owed their seats to a cosy deal with the Socialist Party, mutually ‘desisting’ in favour of whichever party’s candidate was the stronger in a given constituency; in the local

⁷ For an unsparing analysis, see Stathis Kouvelakis, ‘Syriza’s Rise and Fall’, *NLR* 97, Jan–Feb 2016. Here and in what follows, the main sources are Sanders’s website, *Feel the Bern*; Corbyn’s speeches on *Labour List* and YouTube; Beppe Grillo’s blog; Podemos’s February 2016 joint programme, ‘Un País para la gente’ and Cortes speeches; Parti de Gauche website and Mélenchon’s blog, *L’ère du peuple*; Syriza’s Thessaloniki Programme and Greek negotiating documents from June 2015.

elections two years later, the PCF stood with the PS, leading to a crisis in the electoral front. In the National Assembly it regularly supports the Socialist government, against the positions of the Parti de gauche—backing Hollande’s post-Bataclan state of emergency legislation.

Podemos and the Five Stars both aimed from the start to be new types of political organization. Podemos sprang into existence in January 2014, the initiative of the nucleus around Iglesias, who put out a call for a new, anti-austerity platform for the Europarliament elections. Nearly a thousand local ‘circles’ began forming almost spontaneously, built by 15-M and far-left activists. Podemos was formally constituted at a Citizens’ Assembly in October 2014, with over 112,000 members signing up online to vote on its founding documents—‘a transparent democratic structure’, according to its website; activists charged that online voting replaced a democratic role for the local circles, holding the leadership to account. Successes at municipal and regional level in May 2015 brought new resources—jobs; administrative infrastructure—and set new ‘transversal’ dynamics in play: local Podemos leaders determined their own alliances in the Autonomous Communities, with differing outcomes in Andalusia, Valencia, Galicia, Catalonia and Madrid. Coalitions with regional left forces, sealed by support for a Catalan independence referendum, helped lift Podemos to 21 per cent of the vote in the December 2015 elections, with 69 deputies in the Cortes, nearly a quarter from Catalonia—opening up sharp divisions within the leadership over negotiations with PSOE.

In Italy, the Five Star Movement took online organizing a stage further. From 2005, Grillo’s blog offered the chance of local meetups for ‘friends of Beppe Grillo’, alongside commentary on the state of the nation. These assemblies began running weekly market stalls and organizing discussions. In 2007, Grillo urged them to stand in municipal elections, with a programme focused around the ‘five stars’ of safe public water and transport, sustainable development, environmentalism and connectivity. When the national M5S was launched in Milan in 2009, its ‘Non Statute’ cited Grillo’s website as the movement’s HQ: an instrument to identify election candidates who would support his campaign of ‘social, cultural and political awareness’. Would-be candidates, who had to live in the constituency where they were standing, posted cvs and YouTube clips onto a website; local M5S assemblies then interviewed them in person and chose the candidates—subject to final ‘certification’ by

Grillo. The leadership remained a two-man show: ‘Those who say that I want all the power and that Casaleggio takes all the money can just get out’, Grillo said. Though the local assemblies retained much of their autonomy, attempts to build horizontal links between them were nipped in the bud.

Strongest at first in Emilia-Romagna and Piedmont, in 2012 the Five Stars took town-hall seats across northern and central Italy and topped the regional poll in Sicily, where anti-mafia and environmental campaigners united under its banner—a springboard for its vault into parliament in 2013. The social profile of M5S’s 109 deputies and 54 senators was a marked departure from Italian norms (as with Podemos deputies in Spain): they were IT workers, students, housewives and the unemployed, mostly in their twenties and thirties—rather than lawyers, professors and party officials. The M5S deputies pointedly took only half their allotted salaries, donating the rest to local projects; they disdain the formalities of the Palazzo Montecitorio, addressing their fellow deputies as ‘Citizen’ rather than ‘Honourable’—unlike the Corbynistas or Podemos. Uniquely, Five Star parliamentarians were obliged to vote according to their mandates, determined by online plebiscites in which at most 30,000 took part. Ignoring the mandate brought immediate expulsion; around a quarter of the parliamentary caucus has been ejected to date.

Belly of the beast

Corbyn and Sanders, of course, operate as ‘oppositionists’ inside the parties that epitomized the Third Way. In European terms, the Democratic Party is not really a party at all, but simply a framework within which candidates can run for office; when there isn’t a Democrat in the White House, it doesn’t even have a national leader. There are no party members, only affiliated voters, who register as such with their states rather than with local party branches, and don’t pay dues, attend meetings or decide policy. States’ laws, not party rules, determine who can vote in party primaries; the actual delegates to the National Convention are overwhelmingly selected by elected officials—those who have already won public office—not by voters. Higher-level elected officials and ‘distinguished party leaders’ then allocate themselves extra votes at the Convention, as super-delegates. In a system run by dignitaries, *quid pro quos* prevail; Clinton’s campaign is a text-book example. In theory,

though heavily rigged, the process is not entirely fool-proof: a popular tsunami could overwhelm its defences and nominate an outsider; in practice, the obstacles to that are immense.

Labour's leadership election *was* supposed to be foolproof. Historically, selection of the leader was reserved for Members of Parliament, whose autonomy from the nominally sovereign annual party conference was buttressed by Labour's constitutive deference to the structures of the UK state: Monarchy, House of Lords, Mother of Parliaments. Like US Congressmen, MPs claim to represent their locality, not 'just' their party, or even their voters. Labour's loyal foot-soldiers, its dues-paying members in the constituencies, have always come a poor third in the party hierarchy, after its MPs and affiliated trade unions, which supply the bulk of its funds. In 1980, after the collapse of Callaghan's austerity government, a newly dynamized left in the constituency parties, for which Corbyn was a hard-working activist, won a say for trade unions and members, as well as MPs, in selecting the party leader; it also achieved the mandatory re-selection of parliamentary candidates, an important step towards holding MPs to account. Though Kinnock rolled back mandatory re-selection, while Blair shifted the balance of power towards paid national and regional officials, answerable directly to the leader's office, the three-way electoral college remained in place, its 'modernization' an unaccomplished task on the Blairite agenda.

Ironically, much of the Labour left opposed the one-member, one-vote system that would sweep Corbyn into the leadership, on the grounds that it 'broke the link' with the trade unions; it only passed in 2014 because Unite's Len McCluskey was on the ropes after a candidate-selection scandal in Falkirk. Miliband's team seized the chance to push through a reform which would make him look 'strong' in the run-up to the 2015 election, finally absolved of having defeated his brother with trade-union support in 2010. The new system proposed in the Collins Report, much of it drafted by Jon Trickett, abolished the MPs' and trade-union leaders' bloc votes and opened election of the party leader to new categories of supporters, as the French Socialists had done. Its safeguard was the limited choice of candidates: an MP had to be nominated by 35 of his or her peers, or 15 per cent of Labour MPs, ensuring the weak parliamentary left would be excluded. Recriminations would erupt among right-wing MPs for having failed to keep Corbyn off the ballot; but the real factor

behind his rise was the strength of the ‘had it with Blairism’ feeling among Labour supporters. As Miliband came under attack for being ‘anti-business’ after Labour’s defeat in May 2015, Andy Burnham, the leading candidate to replace him, launched his campaign at the headquarters of Ernst & Young, a multinational financial-services conglomerate, castigating Miliband’s mooted property tax as the ‘politics of envy’. That phrase was the final straw for the two 40-something, soft-left Labour women who launched the social-media campaign which helped assure Corbyn’s nomination: MPs were persuaded that a left candidate should be allowed to run, to legitimate the process and ‘ensure a wider debate’. Through July and August, Corbyn’s public meetings then generated a dynamic of their own, offering a structure for the active expression of discontent with both Blairism and austerity. He won the leadership with a 60 per cent landslide: over 250,000 votes. With his encouragement, activists established over a hundred local groups ‘to keep the momentum going’—capped, after his victory, by an embryonic national Momentum structure, run from Corbyn’s old campaign headquarters. Labourism’s electoralist logic soon imposed itself: Greens and others who had run against New Labour were excluded, as Momentum set itself the task of making Labour ‘the transformative governing party of the 21st century’, its regional and borough-based structures shadowing those of the larger party. At a stroke, a somewhat diluted version of the 1980s Labour left has been conjured back into existence, an organized adversary to oppose the ceaseless inner-party manoeuvring of the Blairite faction, Progress.

3. PROGRAMMES

Faced with rigged parliamentary systems, capitalist crisis and neo-imperial blowback, what do the new oppositions demand? Though they operate within the most exclusionary, first-past-the-post systems, neither Corbyn nor Sanders have made democratization a central issue. Corbyn declares himself open-minded about extending the Scottish system of limited PR to Westminster. Sanders has stuck to marginal reforms: introduction of the (unsatisfactory) alternative-vote system, an end to felon disenfranchisement, overturn of the Citizens United ruling; his ‘political revolution’ invokes not systemic change but encouraging more Americans to vote. Syriza has made itself comfortable with the Greek winner’s jackpot system. More ambitiously, Mélenchon calls for a

complete overhaul of the French political system: a constituent assembly to found a non-presidentialist, parliamentary Sixth Republic, based on proportional representation. Podemos's proposals centre on equalizing constituencies—replacing the present, province-based structures with new ones based on the Autonomous Communities, demographically weighted to give an equal vote to all—and calling a referendum on constitutional reform, to bypass the super-majorities required by the 1978 Constitution. As proponents of online direct democracy, the Five Stars take a position of radical iconoclasm towards Italy's existing system: they aim to 'open it up' to the public by livestreaming back-room negotiations; with the rest of the left and the Northern League, they have assailed Renzi's new constitution, but went farther in calling for PD President Napolitano's impeachment over his illegal manoeuvres to install Monti as prime minister in 2011.

On the economic front, all six are united in condemning austerity. 'Those who created the crisis should pay for it' is a common theme. Sanders attacks 'the billionaire class', Corbyn, more vaguely, the 'super-rich', Iglesias denounces a 'financial casino where the people pay the bills for the bankers' partying'. Grillo targets Renzi's grand-coalition government, rather than 'the rich', for 'destroying the welfare state, the rights of workers and the education system and selling off strategic Italian assets' to pay down the debt. The general position is that deficits should be lowered slowly, through 'sustainable growth', stimulated through national investment programmes in social and physical infrastructure, with a green and new-tech slant; Corbyn stresses funding for public housing, Grillo for high-end agriculture, all would boost renewable energy, transport and internet capacity. Sanders has introduced a 'Rebuild America Act' to invest \$1 trillion in infrastructure over the next five years. During his leadership campaign Corbyn called for a 'people's quantitative easing', though his Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell seems to have abandoned this, speaking more carefully of 'active monetary policy' in his 2015 Labour conference speech. Syriza, whose demands are the most modest of all, has gestured towards the desirability of an EU New Deal, funded by the European Investment Bank, also backed by the Parti de gauche and Podemos. (None so far has tried to grapple with the scale of the profitability problems facing the world economy—manufacturing overcapacity, labour surplus, debt limits—which would seem to render 'sustainable growth' unfeasible on capitalist terms.)

Both Podemos and the Five Stars would repeal the mandatory Eurozone labour laws pushed through by Rajoy and Renzi; the Front de gauche is currently fighting the El Khomri bill, alongside the Nuit Debout. Mélenchon would extend citizenship rights to the workplace, giving employees the chance to turn closing plants into workers' cooperatives. As well as raising the minimum wage, the Front de gauche would introduce a maximum, by taxing salaries over €360,000 a year at 100 per cent, and legally enforcing a top ratio of 1:30 between the highest and lowest wages at a workplace. Podemos has taken up the programme of Spain's radical movement against mortgage foreclosures, PAH, which demands no evictions without provision of alternative housing and an end to electricity, water and gas disconnections. All six are critical of 'free trade', with Sanders and Grillo the most outspoken.

The Syriza government's most radical move was the debt audit initiated by Speaker Zoe Konstantopoulou; Grillo and Mélenchon call for an audit, too, as did Podemos in 2014, though this seems to have dropped from their recent programmes. Sanders has urged an audit of Puerto Rico's debt, though not of America's; Corbyn and McDonnell seem not to have investigated the possibility. As for the financial sector, Sanders would break up the big banks and reintroduce Glass-Steagall; McDonnell would, more cautiously, 'look' at breaking them up, while supporting co-operatives. Sanders and Mélenchon would introduce a financial-transaction tax—a step too far for McDonnell, who, like Osborne, will only impose it when other countries have. Mélenchon's 2012 manifesto called for the separation of deposit and investment operations and, more generally, curtailing the powers of the banks and restoring government control over financial markets, but without saying how. Podemos's February 2016 'Government of Change' programme was silent on the subject. Greek banks are on a drip-feed from Frankfurt, with Draghi's hand on the tap. Of the six, Grillo is the only one who would straightforwardly take the banks into national ownership.

Brussels?

Though both the Five Star Movement and Syriza argue that Eurozone austerity is causing a humanitarian crisis, their tactics for dealing with it are polar opposites. By the time it entered office, the Syriza leadership was pledged to keep the euro and negotiate with the Eurogroup. Tsipras refused point-blank to explore Schäuble's offer of support for a

structured exit in May 2015, as some of his Cabinet were urging.⁸ Syriza was reduced to begging for a debt write-down, abandoning one ‘red line’ after another, scrabbling for funds from hospitals and town halls to pay the ECB and IMF, until Tsipras was finally confronted with the choice of radicalizing his position, with the overwhelming mandate of the July 5 referendum, or submitting to the will of ‘the institutions’ and signing the harshest Memorandum yet.

The responses of the other lefts were telling. Grillo, who had given full support to the Syriza referendum, derided the capitulation—‘It would have been hard to defend the interests of the Greek people worse than Tsipras did’—and went on to formulate a Plan B for monetary sovereignty within the EU. The single currency had been a disaster for Italy’s manufacturing base and had now become an anti-democratic strait-jacket, he argued; with a cheaper currency, Italy’s exports would recover and joblessness would fall. The Five Stars’ ‘Plan B’ called for a referendum on euro exit, nationalization of the banks—to defend them against the ECB’s manipulation of liquidity, so damaging for Syriza—and preparation of a parallel currency, in readiness for a ‘soft’ exit.⁹ In France, the Parti de gauche also called for a Plan B, organizing an international conference in January 2016 with heterodox economists, Die Linke representatives and the Greek Popular Unity. Podemos, by contrast, rushed to Syriza’s aid. ‘Tsipras is a lion who has defended his people’, declared Iglesias in September 2015. Corbyn, too, had not a word of criticism for Tsipras, whom he met at a European Council centre-left caucus meeting organized by Hollande’s party in Paris: ‘We both want to see an economic strategy around anti-austerity, and we’re both very concerned about the activities and power of the European Central Bank.’¹⁰

Corbyn himself inexplicably surrendered his right to formulate EU policy within hours of his election as Labour’s leader, bowing to pressure from the Remain campaign. British exit from the EU is a tactical, not a strategic question; the left takes different stances on it, and some

⁸ Kouvelakis, ‘Syriza’s Rise and Fall’.

⁹ ‘Il Piano B dell’Italia per uscire dall’euro’, Beppe Grillo Blog, July 2015. The passage on nationalizing the banks is omitted from the website’s English translation. See also ‘Get out of the euro to save the companies!’, Beppe Grillo Blog, 24 October 2014.

¹⁰ Iglesias: see *El Mundo*, 18 September 2015; Corbyn: see Rowena Mason, ‘Yanis Varoufakis advising Labour, Jeremy Corbyn reveals’, *Guardian*, 29 Feb 2016.

might want a campaign for contemptuous abstention or vote-spoiling. But at one level the politics of the Brexit referendum are clear: a vote to remain, whatever its motivation, will function in this context as a vote for a British establishment that has long channelled Washington's demands into the Brussels negotiating chambers, scotching hopes for a 'social Europe' since the Single European Act of 1986. A Leave vote would be a salutary shock to this trans-Atlantic oligopoly. It would not bring about a new golden age of national sovereignty, as Labour, Tory and UKIP Brexiters like to claim; decision-making would remain subordinate to Atlanticist structures. It would certainly involve a dip in GDP—around 3 per cent, on the most plausible estimates, so smaller than the contraction of 2009. But the knock-on effects of a leave vote could be largely positive: disarray, and probably a split, in the Conservative Party; preparations in Scotland for a new independence ballot. The mechanics of exit negotiations, involving a two-year countdown once the Lisbon Treaty's Article 50 has been invoked by, presumably, a new—Corbyn-led?—UK government, might themselves provide one of those unexpected frameworks for democratic awakening, as with the 2014 Scottish referendum and the Labour leadership campaign: the opportunity for a real debate on alternative futures for the country. Most of the Leave camp seem then to be arguing for a further referendum, to accept or reject the negotiations' outcomes.¹¹

Wars and migrants

The foreign-policy stances of the new oppositions cover a similar spectrum. The six countries are all NATO members, but occupy widely divergent places within its ranks. The US not only commands a historically unprecedented war machine—an estimated 900 military bases, including transit and refuelling stations; huge garrisons in Europe, East Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East; an armed presence in over 130 countries—but operates as a law unto itself, demonstrated by its international torture network and programme of deadly drone

¹¹ For the arguments of the 'Lexit'—left exit—campaign, see Tariq Ali's contribution to the *Guardian* debate, 'Europe, austerity and the threat to global stability', with Varoufakis and Caroline Lucas, 7 April 2016; Owen Jones, 'The left must put Britain's EU withdrawal on the agenda', *Guardian*, 14 July 2015 (Jones has since turned his coat). Corbyn's low-key 'remain and reform' speech (*Labour List*, 14 April 2016) had the merit of re-butting *Guardian* columnists' calls for a grand-coalition Remain campaign, with no attacks on the Tory government in the run-up to June 23; he spent most of it assailing Cameron's steel policy.

attacks, under Obama's personal command. Sanders has no truck with America's anti-imperial tradition and has never called for US bases to be shut down and all the troops brought home. He was on the centre-right of the movement against the Vietnam War, calling for an end to hostilities rather than support for the NLF, and has occupied roughly the same position ever since, tending to favour hostilities launched by Democratic presidents and oppose those of Republicans: against Reagan's Contra policy in Central America, for Clinton's war on Yugoslavia and 1998 bombings of Iraq; against Bush's invasion of it, though in favour of his attack on Afghanistan; for Israel's 2006 assault on Lebanon; cavilling only that Obama hadn't consulted Congress before launching his war on Libya; for the ouster of Assad and broadly supportive of Obama's undeclared war in Syria, with its CIA operations, air strikes and special missions; an admirer of the Jordanian, Saudi and Kuwaiti monarchs, whom he encourages to take up arms against ISIS.

Of the other states, while France and Britain have alternated in the role of Washington's most belligerent ally, as NATO members, all have been involved in the occupation of Afghanistan and assault on Libya, 'air policing' Russia's borders and patrolling the Med. Corbyn has been a staunch opponent of all of this: 'The aim of the war machine of the United States is to maintain a world order dominated by the banks and multinational companies of Europe and North America', he wrote in 1991.¹² In 2001, when Sanders gave his backing to Operation Rolling Thunder, Corbyn helped found Stop the War, probably the largest anti-war movement today in any NATO country. Like Grillo, he opposed Obama's war on Libya—both of them pointing to the double standards of 'humanitarian interventionists', who didn't call for a no-fly zone over Gaza in 2008 when Israeli phosphorus rained down on a largely defenceless civilian population.¹³ By contrast, the Parti de gauche and Izquierda Anticapitalista, the left group that would work with Iglesias's circle in founding Podemos, both rallied to the onslaught on Libya.

Labour's new defence policy is still under review, but Corbyn has backed down on leaving NATO since becoming leader—as has Podemos, which now claims that membership of the Atlantic alliance can help democratize

¹² Campaign Group Newsletter, cited in Rosa Prince, *Comrade Corbyn*, London 2016, p. 160.

¹³ Jeremy Corbyn, 'Libya and the suspicious rush to war', *Guardian*, 21 March 2011; 'Odyssey Sunset', Beppe Grillo's Blog, 20 March 2011.

the Spanish Army. Tsipras refused to play the NATO card in his negotiations with the Eurogroup, though the threat to close the base at Souda Bay might have been a trump; since July 2015, Syriza's Middle East policy has been to the right of AIPAC's, with Tsipras naming Israel's capital as Jerusalem. Sanders's only complaint about NATO is that its European members don't pay enough. Of the six, only the Five Star Movement and Parti de gauche have put quitting NATO on the table; Mélenchon calls for France to carve out its own sovereign, alter-globalist, multi-polar defence policy, based on a citizens' army. But this is conjoined to an extraordinary idealization of the United Nations—also shared by Corbyn, and even Grillo—which is invoked as the ultimate font of legitimacy; a pipe-dream in which the reality of American hegemony disappears in a puff of smoke. None of these oppositions seem to have looked too closely at the actually existing UN, in which countries' votes can be bought and sold, or at the process by which the US State Department converted the popular longing for world peace into a monopoly over policy-making for a handful of permanent member states on the Security Council. Sanders has no need for such illusions and barely mentions the UN.

On immigration, the new oppositions diverge again. Grillo insists on the link with EU foreign policy—'the flow of refugees is the result of our wars and our weapons'—and calls for an end to Western intervention in the Middle East and to the Mediterranean region's subordination to American interests. Immigration should be controlled—'we should work out a compromise'—and a 'Merkel Plan', modelled on the Marshall Plan, should invest in health and infrastructure in the countries from which the refugees are fleeing; a classic social-democratic position.¹⁴ Sanders, too, wants controlled immigration, with a 'path' to legal status but no automatic right to citizenship. Mélenchon has argued for the legalization of *sans papiers* status and the restoration of 10-year residence permits. By contrast, Podemos's 2014 programme called for full citizens' rights for all immigrants. Syriza switched from an avowed policy of anti-racism—closing down the previous government's notorious detention centres—to rounding up refugees for forcible deportation, in line with the EU's new policy. Labour's position, again, is under review, but Shadow Home Secretary Andy Burnham wants to take a tough line—Brown's Minister of Immigration Phil Woolas had called for 'war on illegal immigrants'—whereas Corbyn's first act as leader was to attend a

¹⁴ Beppe Grillo Blog, 28 August 2015; "'EU has already collapsed"—Beppe Grillo to RT', 2 April 2015.

‘Refugees Welcome’ demo, where his speech was very much in the spirit of a low-church tradition dating back to campaigns against the slave trade: ‘Open your hearts, your minds, your attitudes’ to those worse off than yourself. In fact, English grumbles about immigration now centre not on war-zone refugees but on fellow EU members: 3 million arrivals, nearly half of them since the financial crisis—one of the reasons, along with renewed household debt, for the UK’s superficially healthy post-crash GDP.¹⁵

4. ORIENTATIONS

What stances, finally, have these new oppositions taken towards the parties of the centre left? Campaigning for the Democratic nomination, Sanders makes no mention of Obama’s relations with ‘the billionaire class’ and largely supports his foreign policy. He has savaged Clinton’s multi-million-dollar tips from Wall Street, but so far has brushed aside the much more damaging—potentially indictable—matter of her State Department emails. In its early stages, Sanders’s run looked as though it would be a re-play of Dean’s in 2004: a moral crusade that would end, Pied Piper-like, at the DNC candidate’s door. His campaign, run by Tad Devine—previous clients include Mondale, Dukakis, Gore, Kerry, Bertie Ahern and Ehud Barak—has done little to prefigure any alternative. Yet the scale and character of his support differentiates him from previous insurgents: with 7 million primary votes he has already outpolled Jesse Jackson in 1988 and overtaken Obama among under-30s.¹⁶ As the primary season has unrolled, a new dynamic has developed: a third of Sanders’ voters are now declaring they won’t vote for Hillary, whatever deals are struck at the Convention—two million ‘Bernie or Bust’ supporters who could lay the basis for a combative left opposition to a second President Clinton. Cracks have appeared in the divisive hegemony of the two-party system: young women have refused the straitjacket of Formula Two identity politics; as Rosario Dawson put it in a speech at Sanders’s South Bronx rally, a high point of the campaign, ‘We reach out our hands to Trump supporters. We understand their anger.’

¹⁵ ‘Jeremy Corbyn addresses Parliament Square refugee rally’, BBC, 12 September 2015. For EU migration figures, see Carlos Vargas-Silva and Yvonne Markaki, ‘Briefing: EU Migration to and from the UK’, Migration Observatory, Oxford 2015.

¹⁶ Ronald Brownstein, ‘Bernie Sanders’s Successful Insurgency’, *The Atlantic*, 7 April 2016.

In France, the dynamic has run all too much in the other direction. Mélenchon's first move after his moral victory in the 2012 presidentials was to point his voters towards Hollande for the run-off; his second, to promote himself as the candidate to take down Marine Le Pen in the National Assembly elections—the opposite line to Dawson's. While Le Pen attacked the corrupt political establishment as a whole, Mélenchon has remained shackled to the PS, thanks to the corrupting deals between the Socialists and his PCF allies in the Front de gauche, for the sake of a few Communist mayors and municipal fiefdoms. The dream that the PCF would dissolve inside a larger left formation never materialized; the reality was a compromised relationship with the Hollande government. In the absence of a broader national protest movement, locked out of independent parliamentary representation by the FPP system, culturally hobbled by a *laïciste* horror of the headscarf that prevented it from making allies in the *banlieue*, the Parti de gauche went into free fall. In 2012, Mélenchon's 4 million votes compared respectably to Le Pen's 6.2 million; by the 2014 Euro-elections the Front National had soared to 25 per cent, while the Front de gauche had sunk below 7 per cent. Though Mélenchon half-grasped the problem and distanced himself from Hollande, criticizing the latest wars and the post-Bataclan state of emergency, by now he seemed a general without troops.¹⁷ With the PCF readying itself for joint primaries with the PS, the Front de gauche may not survive the 2017 elections.

From 2007, Grillo took the opposite tack—refusal of any compromise with the PD—and fared much better. The grand coalition of centre left and right, brokered by Napolitano in 2013, made the M5S the main opposition party in the Chamber. Three years on, the Five Stars are on 28 per cent, only a few points behind the PD, their candidate tipped to be Mayor of Rome—perhaps a poisoned chalice.¹⁸ As for Syriza: PASOK had been virtually extinguished by 2012, when Tsipras's party emerged as a national force. Comparing their trajectories—from radical challenger to Troika tool—what's striking is not just the speed of Syriza's fall, covering in six months the political distance that took PASOK twenty years, but the

¹⁷ See Clément Petitjean, 'What Happened to the French Left?', *Jacobin*, 6 Nov 2015.

¹⁸ The M5S record in local government has been mixed; as *Il Fatto Quotidiano* pointed out, when a Camorra associate was taped describing an M5S councillor in Quarto, near Naples, as 'one of ours', Grillo's blog took twenty days to respond: Marco Travaglio, 'Quarto, a che servono questi grillini', *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 14 January 2016.

fact that Syriza's starting point was so much farther to the right. PASOK had been responsible for real advances in health, education, national development and civil rights in the 1980s, establishing a social compact on the left of the European spectrum; Syriza's highest aim, soon abandoned, was to avoid further cuts.

Corbyn's embrace of the discredited Blair–Brown Labour right is the closest—and the most contradictory. His first instinct was to invite them into his Shadow Cabinet: warmonger Hilary Benn as foreign minister, Atlanticist Maria Eagle at defence, Andy Burnham—with a scandalous record as Health Secretary under Brown—for the Home Office; Rosie Winterton retained as Chief Whip. He was only saved from going further by right-wing Labour MPs themselves, who queued up to say they wouldn't work with him and would see him sacked within a year. The *Financial Times*, furious to have lost one of its parties, thundered against those foolish enough to sit around the same table as Corbyn. The hostility was liberating, though Corbyn's camp lacked the determination for a clean sweep; in January a Shadow Cabinet re-shuffle was halted mid-way, apparently at the urging of McDonnell. The reaction of this caste to Momentum members' emails, urging a vote against bombing Syria—a sortie whose real aim was to restore Cameron's face in diplomatic circles—spoke for itself. Though Corbyn coolly stated before his election that Blair should be tried for war crimes, the soft left's don't-rock-the-boat mentality suggests there will be no fuller accounting of the New Labour years under his leadership than there was under Miliband's. Momentum has said it will not fight for the restoration of the mandatory-reselection rule; but re-selection under the current system is another matter. At present, Corbyn can count on fewer than thirty of the 256-strong Parliamentary Labour Party; Momentum should aim to get him a majority by 2020. For years Labour has been one of the most rabid attack-dogs in the Socialist International; if the Corbynistas can muzzle it, that should count as an advance.

The relation of Podemos to PSOE is the most delicate of the six. Like the Five Stars, Iglesias and his comrades had built their base by attacking the corrupt 'Regime of 1978' as a whole; Felipe González and the PSOE barons had been its presiding spirits—mainstays, along with *El País* and the Prisa media empire, of *la casta*. Podemos's stated aim in the December 2015 election was to outpoll PSOE and divide the political field between itself and the PP. The results fell short of this: boosted

by its Catalan allies' strong performance, Podemos came third with 21 per cent of the vote and 69 deputies, beating PSOE in the big cities and most developed regions, but not in the south. Helped by the combined effects of an ageing electorate and the pro-rural 1978 electoral system, PSOE (22 per cent) and the PP (29 per cent) retained enough support to block further change, but not enough to restore 'normal' majority-party government, even with the ever-ready Ciudadanos (14 per cent) as coalition allies. The political and media establishment, including González himself, has thrown its weight behind a grand coalition, but PSOE leader Pedro Sánchez has resisted, fearing the collapse of his base, and sought to lead a government backed by both Ciudadanos and Podemos; meanwhile, the PP has been further sapped by corruption scandals.

Podemos has come under immense pressure, riven between deputy leader Íñigo Errejón and the party apparatus, favouring a coalition with PSOE and Ciudadanos 'to keep the PP out', and Iglesias, who demanded a 'government of change'—at a stretch, Podemos, PSOE and small left and regional parties could have added up to 164 deputies, against 163 for the PP and Ciudadanos—with fewer compromises to Podemos's (already modest) social and constitutional programme. In mid-April, 150,000 Podemos members voted by 90 per cent to back Iglesias. After four months of fruitless negotiations, Spain seems set for new elections, unless the approaching deadline, or eruption of a constitutional crisis over Catalonia, forces a last-minute realignment. At present it looks as though Podemos might be punished either way—deserted by its base if it props up a PSOE–Ciudadanos government, or shunned by Socialist voters for blocking one. A third possibility, abstention—allowing PSOE and Ciudadanos to form a government, while stating publicly that Podemos has no faith in its programme, but will give them a chance to demonstrate that it cannot work—has not yet been canvassed.

5. CHARACTERIZATION?

How should these forces be characterized? Respectful of NATO, anti-austerity, pro-public investment and (more guardedly) ownership, sceptical of 'free trade': as a first approximation, we might call them new, small, weak social democracies. The founding purpose of the original, late 19th-century social-democratic parties was to defend and advance the interests of labour, under the conditions of industrial manufacturing;

this was what differentiated them from the older parliamentary factions, which advanced the interests of landowners, rentiers and industrialists. In Europe the attempts to found these parties were largely successful; through the revolutionary crisis of WWI and after, they then redefined themselves as defending wage-earners' interests within the existing system. In the US, the attempt to found a labour party failed; from the 1930s, organized labour and a small social-democratic faction operated for electoral purposes within the framework of the Democratic Party. Originally a landowners' coalition of the old sort, this came to function in the 20th century as a modern 'centre left'—and the model for the European social democracies, when the accumulation crisis of the post-war economies brought about their conversion to Third Way social-liberal parties. Their platform of 'globalized neoliberalism with a social conscience' then proved a fair-weather formula, the second term evaporating after the financial crisis.

The founding purpose of the new left oppositions is to defend the interests of those hit by the reigning response to the crisis—bailouts for private finance matched by public-sector austerity and promotion of private-sector profit-gouging, at the expense of wage-workers. In the broadest sense, this is, again, a defence of labour against capital, within the existing system. But if they can be defined as new, small, weak social democracies, each term needs qualification. *New*: Corbynism can't really be described as such; Labour's soft left is familiar from the 1980s—though as an effective political force, arguably it died and has been reborn. *Small*: in comparison to the million-member parties of the golden age of social democracy, of course, but also in relation to their national contexts, where the mainstream parties can usually muster around two-thirds of the vote; nevertheless, as noted, some 150,000 Podemos members voted on its coalition policy, compared to only 96,000 PSOE members in Sánchez's consultation. *Weak*: in the modesty of their demands—or what they think it feasible to demand; the classic social-democratic parties, flourishing in periods of capitalist expansion (1890s, 1950s), aimed at a tangible redistribution of wealth. *Social democratic*: if so, this is not what many would have predicted ten or fifteen years ago. The ideologies of the alter-globo and 'social movements'—even of Occupy and 15-M—were closer to a soft anarchism, or left-liberal cosmopolitanism, more or less informed by intersectional identity consciousness, depending on national context. Those tendencies are still around, as are surviving far-left strains: the new oppositional structures

by no means exhaust the movements' aspirations; but where protest has crystallized into national political forms, they have not so far been anarchist or autonomist.

Social democracy is the avowed starting point of Sanders and Corbyn, as, in part, of Mélenchon, though his programme contains more heterodox elements, including sweeping constitutional change—not a social-democratic trait. Podemos and Syriza originated in more radical traditions, but re-shaped their projects in a calculus of the available electoral space. Podemos has also established itself as a fighter for those afflicted by foreclosures in the housing-bubble meltdown, a demand that exceeds—or post-dates—classical social democracy. The *fuite en avant* of Syriza Mark Two towards the social liberalism, or neoliberal austerity, of the other, formerly social-democratic, now tawdry centre-left parties, serves to confirm rather than contradict the general rule.

The exception, once again, is Italy's Five Star Movement, which can't properly be categorized as social-democratic—although the policy overlaps are remarkable: M5S shares Sanders's views on immigration, Mélenchon's on the euro, Corbyn's on Western military intervention. One difference is Grillo's stress on helping small and medium-sized manufacturers: although they all say this, he really seems to mean it—this is his own social background, after all, and an SME orientation also speaks to M5S's new, ex-Lega supporters. Another lies in the distinctive social demographics of the Five Stars' base: they do well among students, the unemployed, unskilled workers, retailers and craftsmen, but less well among white-collar workers and badly among teachers—sectors that are far more supportive of Sanders, Corbyn, the Front de gauche and Podemos.¹⁹ The reasons for that may lie in scepticism about the Five Stars' version of online direct democracy—which can seem whimsical and, indeed, undemocratic—or dislike of Grillo's coarseness: encouraging his audiences to shout 'Vaffanculo!' at images of politicians with criminal convictions, for example. But however poor Grillo's taste, or repellent his jokes, M5S should be judged, like any political

¹⁹ See Andrea Pedrazzani and Luca Pinto, 'The Electoral Base: The "Political Revolution" in Evolution', in Filippo Tronconi, ed., *Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement*, Burlington, VT 2015; Maggie Severns, 'Hillary Clinton's union problem', *Politico*, 6 April 2016; 'Analyse sur la dynamique électorale de Jean-Luc Mélenchon', IFOP, March 2012; Alberto Garzón, 'Clases sociales e Izquierda Unida: un análisis', *agarzon.net*, 7 February 2016.

movement, by its actions. Its voter base, despite an influx of Lega Nord and ex-Berlusconi supporters, is still predominantly on the left.²⁰

Most striking, though, is the scale of support for these oppositions among the youth. In all the discussion of the symmetries of left–right anti-establishment protest, this major asymmetry is often overlooked. Supporters of Trump, UKIP and Le Pen tend to be middle-aged or over; the young are breaking left. The discrepancy is dramatic in the US, where 70 per cent of under-30 Democratic primary voters are supporting Sanders, while Trump, like Clinton, does best among 50–64 year olds. Podemos and the Five Stars, too, get almost half their support from the young. The situation in England and France is more qualified: a substantial section of Corbyn’s backers are returning, middle-aged Labour Party members, alienated by Brown and Blair. But in Scotland, youthful support for the 2014 independence campaign transformed it into something like a radical social movement. The upshot is that fifteen-year-olds coming into political consciousness today find themselves in a very different habitat to the teenagers of 2006, with a flourishing undergrowth of radical argument and debate: in the US, *Jacobin*, *n+1*, *Triple Canopy*, *The New Inquiry*, *Lies*, *Lana Turner*; in France, *Mediapart*, *Pompe à Phynance* and the other *Le Monde diplomatique* blogs, *Paris-luttes*, *Rebellyon*, *Révolution Permanente* and the Amiens-based *Fakir*; in Spain, *Publico*, *El Diario*, *CTXT*, *Diagonal*, *Directa*, *El Estado Mental*, *infoLibre* and *Traficantes de Sueños*; in the UK, *Novara Media*, *Mute* and *Salvage*; in Italy, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, *Dynamo*, *Clash City Workers*, *Il Manifesto*, *MicroMega*—a world of ideas to criticize and dispute. Odds are that the left oppositions of Spring 2016 will not be the final word.

²⁰ In 2012, a clear majority of M5S voters described themselves as ‘left’ or ‘centre-left’; over 50 per cent of them had voted for the PD, Italia dei Valori or Sinistra Arcobaleno in the previous election. By 2013 this had shifted: 38 per cent of M5S voters described themselves as ‘left’, 22 per cent ‘right’ and 12 per cent ‘centre’, with 28 per cent giving no reply. See Pedrazzani and Pinto, ‘The Electoral Base’.