

CHRISTIAN
DEMOCRATIC
PARTIES IN
WESTERN EUROPE

STATUS AND PROSPECTS

Karsten Grabow (Ed.)

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With a foreword
by Dr. Günter Krings MP

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FOREWORD

A few weeks before the conference that preceded this volume, Pope Benedict XVI, then on a visit to Germany, gave a speech before the German Bundestag that was the equivalent of a historical and philosophical lecture. He began with a beautiful tale from the Old Testament about young King Solomon who, when he ascended the throne, was granted a request by God. Far from asking for wealth, a long life, or the destruction of his enemies, Solomon prayed for an attentive heart so that he might understand his people and lead them justly.

It may be that this tale expresses some fundamental ideas that may also serve to guide Christian democratic politics in the 21st century. One of these ideas is surely that of humbly accepting that we do not yet know everything that is good for the people, of rejecting any and all ideologies with a rigid world view to which they aim to subject reality. On the other hand, the tale reflects a rather pragmatic basic attitude which always was and still is a characteristic of Christian democratic politics. If politics is to be guided by people's problems and worries, politics must be able to change. Instead of clinging to answers found long ago, it must respond to new problems and find new solutions. A highly topical case in point is the crisis of the Euro, with people looking for orientation and expecting answers to their legitimate questions. And, finally and most importantly, Christian democratic politics is firmly founded on the Christian image of man, a fact that is more important than ever before in an age in which it appears that there is hardly any aspect of life that is able to resist pervasive economisation. I am convinced that Christian democratic politics has important answers to this threat of economisation. After all, there are values that are beyond the reach of economics. To name but a few areas, this holds true for bioethical questions, human-rights questions, educational policy, the protection of public holidays, and family policy.

Encounters with friends – whether within the European People’s Party, with colleagues from the EPP group in the European Parliament, in national parliaments, or with representatives of Christian democratic parties from neighbouring countries – are of eminent importance to us all. I am always positively surprised by the number of fundamental points we Christian democrats can agree on. The manner in which we as Christian democrats approach new challenges is often very similar at the core, a fact that we should not take for granted, for there are also divisive elements within the large family of the European People’s Party. But then, Europe’s Christian democratic parties are held together by one element: a policy which, responsible towards society as a whole, conciliatory, and occasionally highly pragmatic, is founded on the Christian image of man and ultimately on the Christian faith and its powerful historic influence on our continent.

At present, the Christian democratic parties are confronted by great challenges which, in a certain way, parallel those confronting the European Union as a whole. In this situation, it is more important than ever to exchange experiences and learn from one another so as to secure a stable future for Europe and the Christian democratic parties. I should be very happy if this volume were to contribute towards strengthening the common foundation of Christian democratic politics within and for Europe as well as, in the heart of Europe, the Christian democratic parties themselves. In my opinion, it is very important – particularly in the highly difficult times which the European Union is passing through at the moment – for the Christian democratic parties to leave their stamp on Europe’s future development, thus providing guidance for our task of shaping the future – beyond the realm of economics.

Dr. Günter Krings MP

Deputy Chairman of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group in the German Bundestag

PREFACE BY THE EDITOR

Where are the West European Christian democrats located presently? What challenges are confronting them? How can they meet those challenges so that they can retain or recover the leading part they have been playing for many years? Is there a realistic prospect of achieving this in the face of on-going secularisation, the pluralisation of interests and lifestyles, and growing competition from smaller parties on the one hand and the dwindling confidence in the ability of the established parties to identify and solve societal problems on the other? These and other questions were addressed at a conference held by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Mönchengladbach in the autumn of 2011 at which representatives of political science and practice discussed the future perspectives of the West European Christian democracy.

This volume contains revised versions of papers presented by the representatives of science. Following an introduction comprising a paper on the philosophical and ethical foundations of Christian democracy presented by the director of the Catholic Social Science Centre in Mönchengladbach, *Peter Schallenberg*, and an overview of the current position of Christian democratic parties in Western Europe by the editor, four experts present their views on the Christian democratic parties of Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria.

Steven van Hecke analyses the decline of the Belgian Christian democrats who have lost their former dominant position in the country’s party system by now. However, he also argues that their many years of experience in government, their personnel, and their local networks might assist the Belgian Christian democrats in regeneration. After an assessment of its merits as a people’s party, *Tilman Mayer* metaphorically describes the present-day CDU as a jumbo jet flying through turbulences. Some things get mixed up here and the passengers get queasy feelings. Still, he does

see potentials for making a successful stopover and setting out from there afresh for the old heights. *Paul Lucardie* believes that the future of the currently reeling Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) in the Netherlands lies in “re-centring” its political programme. In his opinion, the CDA might recover its former importance if it laid more stress on merging socio-political positions into its value-conservative social agenda. In the opinion of Lucardie, there is indeed an electoral base for such a programme. *Dietmar Halper’s* contribution on the Austrian People’s Party is very much practice-oriented. In his view, the strengths of the ÖVP include the values of Christian democracy, especially those derived from the principles of Catholic social doctrine, the party’s claim to represent all occupations and social strata, which includes success in reaching out towards and integrating what he calls “neo-Austrians”, its extensive networks on the local level, and its (renewed) emphasis in economic policy.

All contributions recognise that it is noticeably harder than it used to be for the Christian democratic parties to mobilise electoral support in the former dimensions. To get back on track for success or to defend their traditional position of leadership, they will need to use their core values, their still powerful networks in local politics, and both their integration and management performance as people’s parties as a basis for exploiting their competence in economic policy in order to, among other things, provide the citizens with the requisite measure of social security and perspective. Further questions of crucial importance for the future of the Christian democratic parties in Europe include the future shape of the European Union and its common currency, the assurance of internal and external security, greater civic participation in political decisions and generally increasing the receptiveness of party structures. All these questions will be addressed in this volume, together with other considerations on the perspectives of European Christian democracy.

Berlin, in February 2012

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THE MEANING OF THE CHRISTIAN IN A CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY

Peter Schallenberg

“How do we recognize what is right? In history, systems of law have almost always been based on religion: decisions regarding what was to be lawful among men were taken with reference to the divinity. Unlike other great religions, Christianity has never proposed a revealed law to the State and to society, that is to say a juridical order derived from revelation. Instead, it has pointed to nature and reason as the true sources of law – and to the harmony of objective and subjective reason, which naturally presupposes that both spheres are rooted in the creative reason of God” (Benedict XVI, 2011).

When Pope Benedict XVI spoke these programmatic words in his address to the German federal parliament on September 22, 2011, he was establishing the moral and legal claims of a state constituted as a democracy under the rule of law. Ultimately, the values on which such a state is based are beyond the reach of democratic majorities. Rather, they owe their existence to an insight into what is good and evil, an insight which is anterior to the state and forms part of the nature of human reasoning about man and the human community (cf. also Söding 2011). In other words: how do we need to think about man and the political community if we want to do justice to man as a person? Or, to put it

differently: what is the primal image of man, his ideal, metaphorically speaking, on which the design of a just constitution and a good state is based?

The crucial clue was given by Pope Benedict XVI in the quotation set out above, where he talks of God's creative reason. Wolfgang Waldstein, to whom he refers a few lines further along, emphasises that

"Der erste und wohl wesentlichste Grundzug des seit der vorchristlichen Antike entwickelten Menschenbildes ist das Bewusstsein der Geschöpflichkeit des Menschen. Damit hängen die weiteren Grundzüge zusammen, dass der Mensch in seinem Handeln an objektive Normen gebunden ist, die für ihn erkennbar sind, und dass der Sinn seines Lebens sich nicht in diesem Leben erschöpft" (Waldstein 2010: 31)¹.

Although the view that the Christian image of man and the body of natural law that can be derived from it form the basis of human society and the state is by no means uncontroversial in the ecumenical dialogue (cf. Kreß 2003) – and thus must be discussed and honed again and again in a cross-denominational party like the CDU – we may still follow Charles Taylor, who said about natural law as part of the creation:

"[T]he break point which was particularly fateful for our development in the West was the rupture, as it were, at the top, the Jewish idea of (what we now call) creation *ex nihilo*, which took God quite out of the cosmos, and placed him above it" (Taylor 2007: 152).

If we follow Francis Oakley, we may regard this idea of divine creation as nothing less than the origin of the equitable and just democracy and the rule of law as opposed to archaic monarchy (cf. also Grossi 2010):

"Kingship [...] emerged from an 'archaic' mentality that appears to have been thoroughly monistic, to have perceived no impermeable barrier between the human and divine [...]" (Oakley 2006, quoted from Taylor 2007: 151).

Regarding the ethic that results from this distinction – not separation! – between the human and the divine world, between the state and God, Charles Taylor adds:

"That meant that potentially God can become the source of demands that we break with 'the way of the world'; [...] The 'wisdom of the world no longer constrains us'" (ibid.: 152).

To sum up briefly, employing the two fundamental Abrahamic concepts of creation and redemption: "Our world is in disarray and must be created afresh" (ibid.: 150). Or, to go into greater detail: with the aid of his reason, i. e. his nature, man is capable of conceiving the best – the divine – as superior and anterior to this real world so that it becomes a guiding norm for his behaviour within this world. In the thinking of reason, God confronts the world as a corrective or, in other words, man corrects himself and the world which surrounds him through ethics and thought – just like the ethic that evolved in the Greek pivotal period between the 7th and 5th century as a reflexion aiming at the superior and the good as such, an ultimate idea of man, an ideal worthy of man or, in brief, an image of man that acts as a leit-motif (cf. Jaspers 1949).

The Christian image of man keeps cropping up in the age of modernity and its critical discourse with Christianity. But there is a question which unfortunately is not asked at all in many cases: what for do we need an image of man or even a "Christian image of man" in the first place?

A little tale might help us here: It is said that when the Russian writer Dostoyevsky visited Dresden, he used to spend hours before Raphael's painting of the famous and divinely beautiful Sixtine Madonna that is shown in the *Zwinger*. When an astonished museum keeper asked him one day why he kept standing before the painting of the Madonna for such a long time, the famous artist is said to have answered: so that I do not despair of mankind! If it is not true, this is a good invention. This is precisely the reason why man has been creating images throughout his existence. Man needs and creates images so as to obtain a picture of his wishes and desires, of his dreams and hopes or, in short, to hopefully obtain an answer to two big questions, the only important ones in life: "Where do I come from?" and "Where am I going?"

The answer which Jewish-Christian theology gives to these two big questions employs the aforementioned concepts of creation and redemption which establish God's image in man and permit nature to be spiritually guided by God's mercy (cf. Koslowski 2000). In other words: faith in God who exists before all time and outside of both space and time, who creates man and offers him the option of a life that permits him to live eternally with God and his eternal love, and be happy. To put it somewhat differently: Jewish-Christian theology is firmly convinced that the analysis and technical control of ephemeral matter, i. e. the natural sciences, cannot produce an answer to the two essential questions in human life, the question about "where from" and "where to", useful though science may be in everyday life. No, it is not matter but only man's mind that can answer these two questions about the meaning of life, or, in other words, man's intellectual capability to think about and long for more than the mere satisfaction of his needs. Or, yet more clearly: thinking of, longing for, and creating a valid image of God.

But is God, then, nothing but human wishful thinking, something that the human mind longs for, nothing more than a mere idea, or is "pagan self-assertion" really far superior to "Christian self-denial", as John Stuart Mill, the father of utilitarian liberalism, put it more acidly and malevolently (Mill 1975, 2011)? Or, as Friedrich Nietzsche pointedly commented, the resentment of those who have been short-changed, the crutch of those who are unfit for life? Or, following Lenin, the opium of people brooding to themselves in their dull painful life who only need to be liberated from material misery to make them relinquish their mental cloud-cuckoo lands all the more readily, faithful to what the great satirist, Heinrich Heine, said: let us leave heaven to the sparrows ...

But what if man, this apparently naked ape, were only apparently a more highly developed or, according to a spiteful remark by Nietzsche, an unidentified animal being in reality a hermaphrodite of mortal matter and immortal spirit, the latter now commonly designated by the term "soul" in the occident? If this were the case or even approximately cogitable – and is it not cogitable in view of the astonishing achievements of the human spirit in the field of Mozart symphonies and Schiller ballads? – and if all this could be thought of as and believed to be a kind of invisible reality, to be recorded by our inner eye as a mental image, the whole point would be to think right and live spiritually before living and surviving in the material world, to have good thoughts about ethics

before having correct thoughts about technology (cf. Schallenberg 2011). Or, to put it differently and in sharp contradistinction to Bert Brecht: morality comes first, food comes next.

However, this would also imply that the human image comes first, and questions about the details of the strategies of survival in the realm of technology and mathematics come second. This, however, is the very essence of a policy that is inspired by and beholden to Christianity: it is obligatory to ask first after what is ethically good (and to avoid or at least tame what is evil), and only then may and should we ask after what is technically right, avoiding or restricting what is technically wrong.

According to the Christian conviction, man is metaphysical rather more than physical, striving more for a good and successful life in the ethical realm rather than concerned about surviving as long and healthfully as possible in the realm of technology. To be sure, living a long and healthy life is everyone's concern, but there is always the proviso of an ultimate meaning, a goal, an answer to the question "Why do I exist in this world in the first place?" The answer given to this by the Christian faith is the belief in God and his revelation in Jesus Christ: God is like this, loveable and humane. And this is what man should and may be like, loveable and humane. And any technology must respect and provide for this inner quality of man, of every individual, without, however, being allowed to judge his quality as an image of God endowed with human dignity. Technology is right, but only if it is good. For good and evil form a fundamental distinction on the high ethical plane, and here is the crux of the matter: good is undeceivable and unchallengeable, it is, like the concept of dignity, beyond further reasoning and beyond any last challenge about the ultimate why (cf. Härle 2010, Schaber 2010, Bielefeldt 2011). What is good is not made good by good and useful properties, and man is not endowed with dignity because he proves himself good and useful.

The distinction between right and wrong, on the other hand, is fundamental to the technical lowlands, always judged by the standard of an ultimate objective or purpose, by properties serving a specific objective that must be attained. In this metaphysical-ethical view, the ultimate objective is an individual's good character and good conscience – and this individual evades any ultimate purpose, living entirely without it. Simply because it is allowed to and God wants it to: that is the meaning of the phrase God's creation. I myself and everyone else live neither by their

own grace nor by anyone else's, but by the grace of an invisible God who has never been experienced empirically by any man, whom we only conceive to optimise our coexistence. To be sure, Christianity thinks further: thinking beyond empirical knowledge, it thinks of God as a revelation, an entity who speaks and reveals himself through prophets and laws, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and the church he founded, and also in the conscience of every human individual. All that is implied in the Christian image of man. Resisting even in the first approximation any attempt to breed it artificially or manufacture it, this image is available only to education and training and upbringing (cf. Schallenberg 1999).

This gives us a clue that plays a big part in the theological and political thinking of Christianity, man's training and education – by God in the course of the history of salvation and by ethics in the course of the history of his life. Seen in this way, education and training are always derivative and secondary; something available that must conform to an unavailable original image or original idea to be authentic. The idea is that reality must be prefixed by an ideality whose intellectual recognition permits coping with and shaping reality, ultimately leading to a moral life design.

The idea of the good is anterior to all insights and all actions. Exactly that was one of the convictions of Platonic philosophy:

“Das Gute ist also ein umfassendes Prinzip des Seins, der Erkenntnis und des Wertes, der letzte Ursprung von allem in ontologischer, gnoseologischer und axiologischer Hinsicht. Das Prinzip wird von allem, was es hervor bringt, klar geschieden: Das Gute ist selbst weder Wahrheit noch Erkenntnis, sondern macht diese möglich und überragt sie noch an Schönheit, und ebenso gibt es den Ideen ihr Sein und ihr Wesen, ist selbst aber nicht mehr Sein, sondern ragt an Würde und Macht noch jenseits des Seins über dieses hinaus” (Szlezák 2010: 242)².

If, and inasmuch as, God as creator is identified with this primary existence as the good per se, the biblical tradition about the creation of man and the world may be understood more exactly and comprehensively. This, after all, is precisely what the Old Testament means when it speaks of the mythical garden of Eden, the lost paradise of ideality, and of man

being originally created in God's own image in the Book of Genesis (Steck 1981): man's innermost core, his original nature, is thought of as an ideal. It is good, because it partakes of God's perfect goodness – this is the meaning of the Christian-Jewish concept of the creation of the world – and thus it essentially aims at the good – or at God in Christian terms. Or, to put it differently: the good is existence and thus real, the evil is essentially “unreal”, *privatio boni*, the absence of the good – which does nothing to mitigate its cruelty but consoles us because it can be overcome.

In the theological thinking of the scholastic period, man realises his quality of being God's image through his intellectual activities or, in the language of Greek philosophy, through the difference between doing (*praxis*) and making (*poiesis*):

“Machen besitzt nur eine indirekte moralische Qualität, weil es seine Wertigkeit vom hergestellten Gegenstand her bezieht. Dem Handeln kommt dagegen per se moralische Bedeutung zu, weswegen Aristoteles auch eine hierarchische Ordnung annimmt, der zufolge Praxis höher zu bewerten ist als Poiesis. Bisweilen läuft diese Ordnung darauf hinaus, dass die Ergebnisse von Poiesistätigkeiten dazu verwendet werden, um wertvolle Handlungen zu verrichten. Am deutlichsten zeigt sich die Dominanz der Praxis, wenn Aristoteles behauptet, das Leben als Ganzes habe den Charakter einer Praxis, denn schließlich liege der Zweck des menschlichen Lebens darin, gut zu leben” (Becker 2006: 303)³.

In this case, the meaning of good coincides rather exactly with that of our modern term happiness, meaning a comprehensively and completely happy life in coexistence with other people. This is precisely the last meaningful point of Aristotelian ethics which in the High Middle Ages was translated by Thomas Aquinas into the concept of beatitude and placed within the horizon of revelation and, consequently, theology (cf. Pesch 2005):

“Dass jeder Mensch glücklich werden möchte, bedarf keiner Begründung, Eudaimonie ist das für alle evidente letzte Ziel. Zu erreichen ist es nur durch ein Leben, das den Tugenden entspricht. Unter einer Tugend versteht Aristoteles eine feste

Grundhaltung (héxis, lateinisch habitus) der Seele, die die Extreme vermeidet und die richtige Mitte verwirklicht [...] Diese Struktur der richtigen Mitte zwischen gegensätzlichen Formen des Fehlverhaltens findet Aristoteles in allen Tugenden. Ein Leben gemäß den Tugenden führt, wenn äußeres Unglück fernbleibt, zu der dem Menschen erreichbaren Glückseligkeit“ (Szlezák 2010: 250)⁴.

In the ethical tradition of Christianity, such happiness bears the name of love, and the same name is given to the path of virtue that leads towards that goal. The revelations of the New Testament develop it in great detail, and it has been made into an ethical system ever since the time of the church fathers. Delighted by others and rejoicing in the happiness of your own life: this is exactly the meaning of the concept of creation as the gift of one's own life (cf. Pieper 1992)⁵. Nature and its randomness are interpreted as creation and divine necessity; a highly impressive intellectual achievement of mankind is breaking through. It is exactly because of this essential relationship with spiritual happiness (cf. Demmer 1991) – and not merely because of the option of satisfying his needs that can be empirically comprehended – that man is the only living being that stands taller than empirical nature.

Thus, man occupies a special place in the cosmos because of his option (or refusal) to take advantage of his moral freedom to attain perfect happiness. As a political being, man is the essence of freedom: he is able to strive for his goal of perfect happiness actively and in cooperation with all his fellow men; thus, a state evolves, and thus evolves – from the actions in the Greek city states – politics as well. Yet man also experiences himself as a deficient being, restricted from the beginning in his freedom to be good and perfectly happy by his defects and “original sin”. God's creation as the innermost nature of man is restricted by another part of man's factual nature, his ability to lapse from morality, to do evil, and to sin. Sinning means living as if God did not exist, banning him from one's own daily life, doubting the God-given necessity to think of oneself and others as dispensable grains of dust in the universe. To counteract this inner spiritual despair and desolation which is deeply rooted in man, his inherent but fragmented freedom to do good must be promoted and motivated. In other words: what is needed is a system of incentives to induce man to think of the concrete good in his daily life as attractive and implement it in his everyday deeds. This fundamental decision of man's

conscience in favour of doing good will not succeed, life itself will not succeed, if man does not show a steady will to dispense with things and weigh his assets under the protection of God (Schallenberg 2002). Once again, this characterises the aforementioned Christian interpretation of education: fleshing out the original image of God by resolutely educating the conscience and the heart so that the image of the good may take concrete shape in thought and action. However, the task of education is by no means confined to persons but extends to political institutions, meaning the state and the economy: man's good aspirations should be encouraged by incentives, while the temptations of evil should be repelled by sanctions. For man lacks an instinctive and infallible inclination to do good; vulnerable to destruction by internal and external influences, he confuses what appears good with what is good, getting tangled up in the penultimate, in sin, in evil in his quasi-addictive quest for the good. According to the Christian faith, this forms part of man's heritage, apart from personal and individual guilt. This is why the Christian faith talks of man's original sin and the hereditary sin of lovelessness that is rooted in him, hampering any human aspiration to happiness in a manner that is occasionally most successful. As Albert Görres (1991:18) put it forcefully and precisely: “Urges become narcissist and egotistical and inclined to assert themselves by force.”

According to the European tradition, man's human nature materialises in the realm of societal and constitutional order and civilisation, forming ethical traditions that give rise to hopes for finding a way to a successful and happy life. To that extent, culture and politics support human nature in its endeavours to attain perfection, a nature whose instincts provide nothing more than faint guidance towards this goal. Any higher form of culture evolves from a law of reason which manifests itself as a kind of critical natural law: what does every man think of as good and perfect on the basis of his nature and his reason?

This is where the normative ethical concept of human dignity comes in, sharply defining the purpose and universalisation of personality which is the starting point of every man on his way towards a successful human existence (Schockenhoff 1996). It is the most eminent task of ethics in general and social ethics in particular to define the mutual relationship between nature and culture and examine again and again the borderline between developing and destroying original nature. In this view, culture appears as the soil on which a humane society and a humane economy

may thrive, complementing and overarching internally fragmented nature. While human nature still harbours a faint memory of the best (the original paradise of a successful life), it is incapable of reaching such happiness by its own efforts. This aspect of Christian theology makes it necessary to resolutely contradict Rousseau, whom Jacques Maritain once called the "*père du monde moderne*" in a famous dictum (Maritain 1984: 529), and his belief in his ability to restore original nature with his appeal to go "back to nature" on the basis of a radically subjectivist morality and a naturalist rationalism (von Hayek 1996). "Rousseau set a new consistently subjective standard that was to become epoch-making. This standard is: agreement – not with an objective norm but with oneself" (Spaemann 1992: 23)⁶.

Paradise cannot be constructed on Earth, as was erroneously assumed by the neo-Marxist movement after the Second World War, as well as by the German educational reform movement that was inspired by Rousseau. On the other hand, Thomas Hobbes' famous-infamous phrase "*homo homini lupus est* – man is a wolf to man" must also be refuted from the Christian point of view because it characterises man's nature simply as evil and rotten, to be controlled only by the Leviathan of the state: paradise can be discerned fragmentarily on Earth, in man's spirit and in his good thoughts, and it can be created at least in outline with the aid of incentives. As Kant would have said, every man's aspiration to beatitude leads us to that variant of the categorical imperative which says that man should do whatever makes him worthy of being happy: to live in conformance with his nature as a being of morality.

Culture stores such humane means of attaining happiness. One case in point is the concept of inalienable human dignity, which the state is obliged to guarantee: every individual is inalienably entitled to strive for happiness in a manner that is dignified and in harmony with his reason and his inclinations. This is why Otfried Höffe (2004: 294) emphasises that "inclinations, by the way, are not unworthy of happiness; rather, they are innocent taken by themselves. Only ways and means can be worthy (e. g. honesty) or unworthy of happiness (e. g. fraud)."

In Christian theology, this implies the following for the image of man in the state, the economy, and a democracy founded on Christianity: the individual and his fragmented freedom to do good must always take precedence over the collective, the individual must take priority over

society. This is why Catholic social doctrine and any form of Catholic political ethic emphasises the pivotal value of personality and subsidiarity and maintains that marriage and the family form the nucleus of the state. It is not the state that is originally endowed with rights; every individual has inalienable fundamental rights, and the rights of the state, including the monopoly on force, extend only insofar as it must protect individual rights under threat. Any attempt, whether unconcealed or concealed, to subjugate the individual to liberalist or economic utilitarianism or to a totalising societal system must be resolutely opposed and resisted. The reverse is also true, however: both the state and society must resolutely encourage the sanctification and perfection of man with a view to a successful image of happiness. Education and role models must provide inducements to heal and do good. If everything is equally significant in the view of the state, if the state sees itself as indifferent towards all values and therefore non-judgemental in this ultimately absurd sense, if every decision about and every form of life is regarded as equally valid before the law and before society, then everything will be insignificant, man will become indifferent towards the really good in the long run, and nothing will be at stake but the different options of highly different individuals who have nothing more in common than their resolute will to survive at any price. Such relativistic treatment of values and the related denial of a natural law that is binding to man's conscience – with "nature" representing the residue of biological randomness as a substrate of human nature that is not subject to manipulation – would mark the end of humanity and the abolition of man, against which a clairvoyant Clive S. Lewis warned as early as 1947:

"The final stage is come when Man by eugenics, by pre-natal conditioning, and by an education and propaganda based on a perfect applied psychology, has obtained full control over himself. *Human* nature will be the last part of Nature to surrender to Man" (Lewis 1947: 37).

It is certainly no coincidence that, in our post-modern age, this dispute rages with particular violence in the sensitive field of bioethics, for this is where biological-empirical and philosophical-theological paradigms rub against one another, the fundamental ethical concept of self-fulfilment and autonomy not least among them (cf. Düwell 2003, Mieth 2010, Schallenberg 2010, Thiele 2011). Let us recall once again the concepts of personality and freedom that are crucial to any discussion of the

Christian and European-occidental image of man (for a closer account, see Droit 2010) and Christian democracy. Freedom and personality belong together. This is why the German bishops laid such stress on a humane democracy in their last statement on the subject:

*"Das Prinzip der Personalität nimmt den Menschen umfassend in den Blick. Es begreift den Menschen einerseits als Individuum mit unveräußerlichem Eigenwert und unaustauschbarer Einmaligkeit und andererseits als soziales Wesen in Beziehung zum anderen, zur Gemeinschaft und als religiöses Wesen in seiner Beziehung auf Gott hin. Die Spannung zwischen Individualität und Sozialität ist kennzeichnend für die Person. Der Freiheit des Individuums steht das Recht der anderen auf Freiheit gegenüber. Freiheit korrespondiert daher von Anfang an mit Verantwortung für das eigene Handeln und seine Auswirkungen auf die anderen und die Gesellschaft, d. h. Freiheit ist notwendig verbunden mit dem Streben nach Gerechtigkeit" (German Bishops' Conference 2011: 18)*⁷.

A democracy based on the rule of law must be conscious of its responsibility for the equitable welfare of every individual unless it plans to transform itself secretly and stealthily into a well-organised gang of robbers.

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- 1| *"The first and probably most essential fundamental feature in the image of man that has been evolving ever since pre-Christian antiquity is an awareness of the createdness of man. This, in turn, is related to other fundamental features – that man in all his doings is bound by objective norms which he can discern, and that the meaning of his life does not exhaust itself in this life".*
- 2| *"The good, therefore, is a universal principle of existence, cognition, and value, the ultimate origin of everything, particularly in the ontological, gnoseological, and axiological respect. This principle is segregated clearly from everything it produces: the good itself is neither a truth nor an insight but facilitates both and is even superior to them in beauty. Similarly, it endows ideas with existence and essence, while itself it is no longer existence but is superior to it in dignity and power."*
- 3| *"Making is only indirectly of moral quality because it derives its value from the object manufactured. Conversely, doing is morally significant per se, which is why Aristotle assumed a hierarchical order in which praxis ranks higher than poiesis. Under this order, it happens occasionally that the results of poiesis activities are used to perform valuable actions. The supremacy of praxis is reflected most clearly in Aristotle's proposition that life as a whole has the character of praxis, for after all the purpose of man's existence is to live a good life."*
- 4| *"The wish for happiness in every human being does not require substantiation, eudaimonia being the ultimate goal that is evident to all. It can be reached only by living a life in conformance with the virtues. To Aristotle, a virtue is a firm basic attitude (hexis, in Latin: habitus) of the soul which avoids extremes and follows the correct middle course (...) Aristotle discovers in all virtues this configuration of following the right middle course between conflicting forms of erroneous behaviour. Provided that external misfortunes remain absent, living a life in conformance with the virtues will lead man to the level of beatitude that is attainable to him."*
- 5| *Pieper (1992:13) says: "Was naturhaft geschieht, das geschieht von Schöpfungs wegen, auf Grund der Erschaffung ... das heißt, es geschieht einerseits aus dem innersten und eigensten Impuls der Kreatur, andererseits stammt der allererste Anstoß dieses Impulses nicht aus dem Herzen dieses gleichen geschaffenen Wesens, sondern aus dem alle Dynamik in der Welt in Gang bringenden Akt der creatio." ("Whatever happens naturally happens because of and on account of creation (...) Meaning that, on the one hand, it is motivated by the innermost and most personal impulses of a creature, while on the other hand, the very first initiation of such an impulse does not develop in the heart of the same created being but from the act of creatio which sets all the dynamics of this world in motion").*
- 6| *Von Hayek sharply comments that "having suggested that the animal instinct is a better guide to orderly cooperation among mankind than either tradition or reason, Rousseau invented the "volonté générale", the fictitious will of the people, which gives the people "an all-encompassing spiritual body, its unity, its common identity". This is probably the main cause of the fateful arrogance of modern intellectual rationalism which promises to lead us back to a paradise where our natural instincts, not the fetters with which we have learned to tame them, will enable us to subdue the Earth, as man was ordered to do in the biblical account of the creation" (von Hayek 1966: 51).*
- 7| *"The principle of personality takes a comprehensive view of man. On the one hand, it regards man as an individual of inalienable intrinsic value and irreplaceable uniqueness and, on the other hand, as a social being in his relations with others and the community, and as a religious being in his relations with*

God. Tension between individuality and sociality is a characteristic of every individual. The freedom of the individual is confronted by the freedom rights of others. From the beginning, therefore, freedom corresponds with responsibility for one's own actions and their effects on others and the society, meaning that freedom is necessarily related to striving for justice."

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES IN WESTERN EUROPE: AN OVERVIEW

Karsten Grabow

At least after the end of the Second World War Christian democratic parties developed into political heavyweights in Europe, which some of them still are. In the more than 66 years that have passed since 1945, Christian democratic parties headed the governments of 12 West European countries, remaining in power for a very long time in some of them. These include Belgium, where Christian democrats led the government in 45 out of almost 67 post-war years, and the Federal Republic of Germany, which also was ruled by CDU/CSU-led governments for almost two thirds of its history.

Similarly, the governments of Italy and the Netherlands were headed by Christian democratic parties for about two thirds of their post-war history. In Austria, the ÖVP led the government for about half the time after 1945. In Luxembourg, the Christian Social People's Party (CSV) even remained permanently in government, with a brief intermission in the mid-1970s. In Switzerland, the Christian Democratic People's Party and/or its predecessors have been represented continuously in the Federal Council ever since 1891.¹ This is an impressive record.

Most Christian democratic parties belonged to the political centre from the beginning of post-war developments (see Liedhegener and Oppelland, forthcoming). Unlike the social democratic parties, for example, they were better than any other party in the first ten to fifteen years after the war at fulfilling the so-called party functions, aggregating and representing the interests of wide societal segments, reconciling interests, and generating mass legitimation. In the first post-war decades, they served as enduring and undisputed government parties in the Federal Republic of Germany (1949-1969), in Austria (1945-1970), in Italy (1945-1981), and in Luxembourg (1945-1974).

In denominationally mixed countries like Germany and, later on, in the Netherlands (see also Lucardie in this volume), Christian democracy as an inter-denominational union succeeded in politically integrating Christians of both denominations. The Austrian People's Party, too, saw itself as a people's party from its foundation in 1945 (Pelinka 2001: 539f.), which is why numerous Christian democratic parties came to be regarded as nothing less than "prototypes" of people's parties bridging the gap between classes and denominations (see e.g. Pütz 1971, Mintzel 1984, Haungs 1992). This, together with their orientation in economic and social policy, i. e. social market economy and/or basically similar concepts under another name ("social capitalism"), their success in rebuilding society after the war, their guarantee of prosperity and security, their policy of reconciliation in domestic and foreign policy, their endorsement of the Western community of values and the Western alliance, their anti-communism, their disinclination to support ideologically charged utopian ideas, and not least their unique talent for pragmatism won massive support among the population for the Christian democratic parties (see e.g. Gehler, Kaiser and Wohnout 2001: 12ff.). Christian democratic parties have always been (and still are) characterised by a policy that aims at reconciling and mediating societal tensions and conflicts, the so-called mediation policy (van Kersbergen 1999). In (West) Germany, Austria, Italy, Belgium, and Luxembourg, and later on in the Netherlands, they became parties which for a long time remained firmly "booked into" the government. In a manner of speaking, participating in government is/was part of the self-perception of the Christian democrats (Frey 2008: Ch. 2, Walter et al. 2011: 20ff.).

Since the mid-1980s, however, we have been witnessing a trend reversal all over Europe – not only, but also among the Christian democratic parties. In the social sciences, numerous studies and publications addressed the causes of this phenomenon. Persistent secularisation, changing values, shrinking milieus of former traditional voters, weakening ties to the church, increasing societal fragmentation, changing concepts of participation on the part of the citizens, people's dwindling inclination to form long-term ties with a specific political group, growing competition for attention in an increasingly pluralist society – all these are seen as reasons why even former Christian democratic heavyweights were unable to keep their memberships and particularly voters at former level (see e. g. Lucardie 2006, Best 2011, Liedhegener and Oppelland forthcoming).

In addition, there are current questions in day-to-day politics which massively affect the Christian democratic parties in their capacity as government and, more importantly, as pro-European parties. Thus, for example, there are the problems that result from the migration into West European countries, where the integration of the migrants is not always successful, or from the future of the European Union and its common currency (see also Halper in this volume). The uncertainty caused by the Euro and debt crisis and the growing Euro-scepticism pandered to and instrumentalised by populists (e. g. Decker 2006, Bauer 20010, Reuter 2011, BBC News 2011) rattle Christian democratic parties in the Netherlands, in Belgium, in Austria, and elsewhere, and none of them has been able to present convincing answers so far.

Thus, the Christian democratic parties are confronted by great challenges at the moment. Not only do they need to solve concrete political problems that are mainly concerned with the Euro question but also with numerous other political fields, such as energy, educational, social, foreign, and security policy. Very likely, one of the greatest challenges is the need to present political proposals that are attractive to both an increasingly fragmented and individualised young, bourgeois, and urban centre and the community of traditional voters which, though admittedly shrinking, is indispensable for success in the future (see Grabow 2011). What we are looking at, therefore, is the permanent balancing act that is needed to unite under the party's umbrella the centre and the periphery, modernisers and traditionalists, Christians and an increasing number of non-Christians, and to formulate policies that are good for the country and, increasingly, for Europe.

Christian democratic parties are experienced in this kind of integration. What is more, their organisations as well as their programmes have always remained flexible enough not only to integrate and balance highly divergent interests but also to provide political solutions which promote the common good. There is (as yet) no occasion for sounding a funeral dirge on people's parties in general (e. g. Lösche 2009, Walter et al. 2011: 219f.) or on Christian democratic (people's) parties in particular (van Kersbergen 1999: 370, Conway 2003: 43, quoted from Frey 2008: 17-18.). However, there is no occasion for exaggerated optimism, either. Just like other traditional parties, the Christian democratic parties of Western Europe are undergoing a phase of transformation in which they may lose some of their membership or their organisational strength but not necessarily their former political importance. At all events, there is a wealth of issues which they can use to sharpen their profile and raise the numbers of their followers to the former level (see below; see also Veen 2011.)

THE PRESENT SITUATION OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES IN WESTERN EUROPE

Looking at the current situation of Christian democracy in Western Europe, we note that success rates fluctuate widely, although participation in the executive power still plays a dominant role: at present: the governments of Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, and Malta are headed by a Christian democratic party. In Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, and Sweden, they serve as junior partners in coalition governments (see Table 1). In Switzerland, the CVP holds a seat in the seven-member federal government. Whereas the Norwegian and – until Mario Monti formed his “government of experts” in November 2011 – the Italian Christian democrats form or formed part of the opposition (with, in some cases, election results somewhat superior to those of some junior partners in government), the Danish Christian democrats have meanwhile sunk into insignificance.

Another view shows more clearly that the election returns of the Christian democratic parties differ widely, with some of them gaining and others losing votes, in some cases to a dramatic extent.

Table 1: Christian democratic parties in Western Europe

Country	Party/ parties	Current position and latest election results	Δ votes since 1990 (+/- 2 years, depending on the election date)
Austria	ÖVP	J (26.0)	-6.1
Belgium	CD&V ¹ ; CDH ²	J (10.9); J (5.7)	-5.9; -2
Denmark	KD ³	/ (0.8)	-1.5
Finland	KD ⁴	J (4.0)	+0.9
Germany	CDU/CSU	S (33.8)	-10
Ireland	Fine Gael	S (36.1)	+11.6
Italy	UDC	O ⁵ (5.6)	-0.2
Luxembourg	CSV	S (38.0)	+6.3
Malta	PN	A (49.3)	-2.5
Netherlands	CDA	J (13.7)	-21.6
Norway	KRF	O (5.5)	-3.0
Portugal	CDS-PP	J (11.7)	+7.3
Sweden	KD	J (5.6)	-1.5
Switzerland	CVP	J (12.3)	-6

Legend:

A = one-party government

S = senior partner in a coalition government/party of the prime minister/
federal chancellor

J = junior partner in a coalition government

O = opposition

/ = not in parliament

¹ until 2001: *Christelijke Volkspartij* (CVP)

² until 2002: *Parti social-chrétien* (PSC)

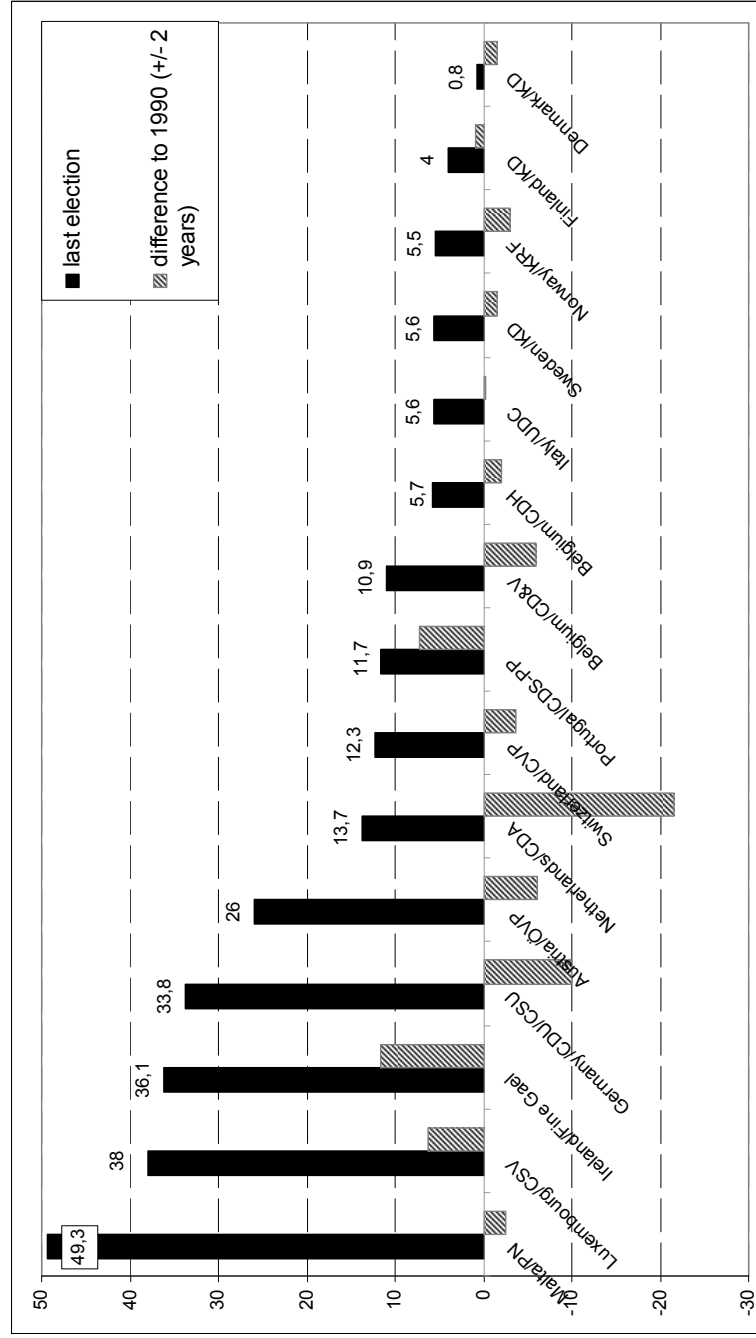
³ since 2003: *Kristendemokraterne* (KD), before that: Christian People's Party (KRF)

⁴ *Suomen Kristillisdemokratia* (KD)

⁵ until November 2011; since then, the UDC, too, has been supporting Mario Monti's emergency government.

Source: Own table based on Frey (2008: 50) and Nordsieck (2011).

Figure 1: Recent electoral results, gains and losses of the Christian democratic parties



Source: Own figure based on Nordieck (2011).

One party – the *Partit Nazzjonalista* (PN) of Malta – may be said to play in a league of its own. With returns close to the absolute majority of votes, its losses during the last 20 years have been insignificant. Under Malta’s two-party first-past-the-post system, it rules alone. Next to it, there are three parties which clearly exceed the 30% mark which is often described as the “people’s party limit” in the literature (see e. g. Schönbohm 1985: 17, Lösche 2009: 7, Oberreuter 2009: 45): the Christian Social People’s Party of Luxembourg, which was able to improve its performance compared to 1989/90, the Irish Fine Gael (family of Irishmen) which was able to improve its position in the country’s party system markedly compared to the early 1990s (although we must add that it owes its good result of 2011 to the fact that the elections were dominated by the imminent bankruptcy of the Irish state, and that the FG, being in opposition, profited from this crisis), and, finally, the German union parties which, however, lost 10 percentage points in the course of the last 20 years.

There are debates going on about whether the *Fine Gael* and the Nationalist Party of Malta – two of the most successful parties in the Christian democratic family – can really be categorised as Christian democratic. According to some authors, they are liberal-conservative rather than Christian democratic, or they operate, like the Maltese Nationalist Party, in a unique “laboratory” or isolated island environment (small country, small population, a relatively homogeneous religious structure, a relatively small party of patrons and/or notables), which is why relatively little attention was paid to it in comparative studies. I am not going to pursue this debate further at this juncture (see e. g. Frey 2008: 48ff., Liedhegener and Oppelland, forthcoming).² Both are members of the world union of Christian democratic parties (IDC-CDI) as well as the European People’s Party. Moreover, both the self-interpretation and the programmes of the Irish Fine Gael and, at least since the mid-1970s, the Maltese Nationalist Party are those of Christian democratic parties, with claims to integration, representation, and leadership that do resemble those of a people’s party (cf. Bestler and Waschkuhn 2003: 746).

The Austrian People’s Party is in a class by itself. Having won 26% of the vote in the 2008 elections to the National Council, it is the only present-day West European Christian democratic party that is located between 20 and 30%. Although the ÖVP’s losses in the last two decades have

been moderate, and although it can still be regarded as one of the more powerful Christian democratic parties, it is currently struggling to retain its status as a people's party (see also Hapler in this volume).

All the other Christian democratic parties in Western Europe now range below the 20% limit. What takes the eye is the fall of the Dutch Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) to a mere 13.7%, having lost almost 22 percentage points since 1990; the decline of the traditional Belgian and the weakness of the Scandinavian Christian democrats; and the fact that after the collapse of the *Democrazia Cristiana*, there is no Christian democratic party left in Italy that is even approximately powerful.

Generally it must be stated that most of the Christian democratic parties of Western Europe have been following a negative trend in the last 20 to 30 years (see appendix). With a few exceptions (the Finnish and the Swedish KD, the Portuguese CDS-PP, but all at a relatively low level), the majority of Christian democratic parties have been losing votes, traditional voters, and members, some of them quite massively, like the CDA and the German union parties (van Biezen, Mair and Poguntke 2011, Best 2011: 281f, detailed for Germany: Niedermayer 2010). On the other hand, some are still doing comparatively well. Next to the somewhat controversial cases of Malta and Ireland, these are the Christian Social People's Party of Luxembourg and the German union parties. Despite all the present discussions on their status as a people's party together CDU and CSU still form the strongest Christian democratic people's party in the industrialised countries of Western Europe, past losses notwithstanding.

OUTLOOK

Most Christian democratic parties in (Western) Europe are currently searching for issues with which to mobilise voters and debating about their brand and core values. As their traditional voter groups are shrinking and, consequently, losing their "electoral relevance", one challenge will probably be the need to reach out to new classes of voters and find issues with a majority appeal without allowing their traditional voters – which do still exist, after all – to drift any farther away from them.

There is no cut-and-dried method for restoring the parties to their former strength. Some, particularly Germany's union parties, follow an extremely pragmatic approach, keeping hold of the strategically important centre and basing their management of the current Eurozone crisis on sound principles and strong leadership. Others, like the ÖVP – particularly in a different constellation – incline towards emphasising more liberal economic positions. Yet others, such as the CDA, endeavour to strengthen their Christian social profile and advance the democratisation of their internal structures at the same time (Wientzek 2011: 13). All that does not point necessarily to a contradiction. True people's parties, not only the Christian democratic ones, have broad wings under which to integrate and balance greatly divergent and even apparently conflicting interests. Their future success will greatly depend on their capacity to bring all these divergent currents, interests, and conflicts together again and to keep them together under the stable and waterproof roofs of the parties.

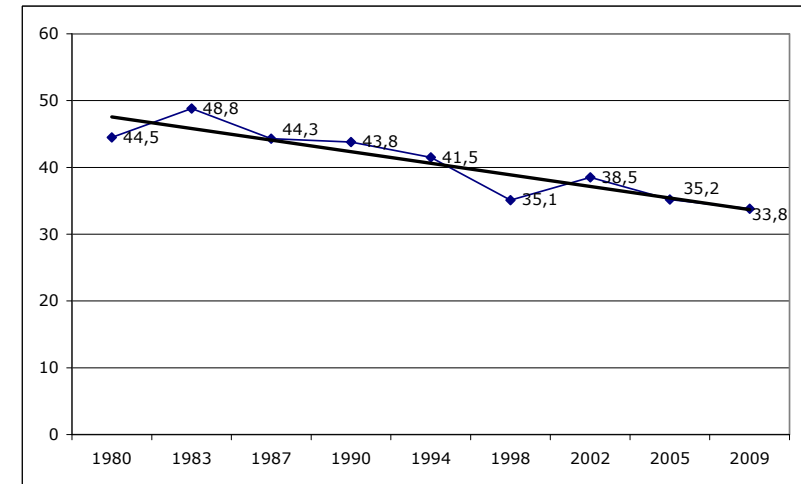
The subjects to be addressed by the Christian democratic parties in the future might probably include (see also Filzmaier 2007: 363ff.):

- guiding the further development of the EU as a union of stability and rule-compliance;
- working on the sustainability of countries and/or societies, particularly in the face of high public debts (implying more restrictive financial policies in the future) and the foreseeable demographic change;
- shaping the internal coherence of societies against the background of growing societal, cultural, and religious fragmentation, including the question of immigration (regulation) and integration;
- strengthening/maintaining internal and external security;
- environmental, climate, and energy policy with particular emphasis on sustainability, affordability, and responsibility towards nature and the environment;
- family, welfare and educational policy, the latter emphasising the promotion of talents, promotion of the idea of performance, and quality criteria;
- alternative models of political participation which correspond to the citizens' altered demands of political participation more than at present, which also means
- emphasising and promoting an active civil society and opening the party's own organisations further.

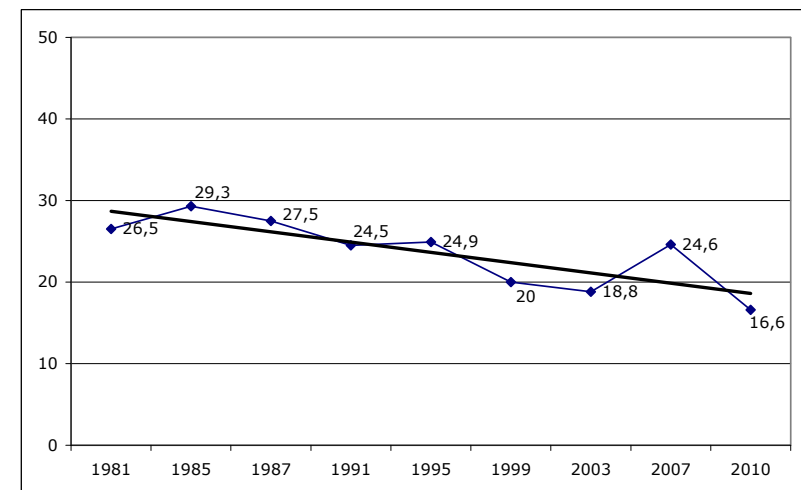
It is probably a fact that the Christian democratic people's parties of Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria will never regain their former levels of membership and organisational strength. Even safe election returns of 35% plus X can no longer be relied on. The "golden age" of Christian democracy in Western Europe was based on specific causes, some of which do no longer exist (see above). If, however, the Christian democratic parties should use their core values and their basic orientation towards social market economy as a basis for leadership that aims at the common good, if they should submit political proposals which will sensibly benefit the vast majority of the population and/or inspire a (new) public spirit, if they should identify problems and solve them to the benefit of the majority of the population, if the Christian democratic parties should become or remain "benefit-all/many" parties rather than professionalised catch-all parties, if the Christian democratic parties should concern themselves with the local problems of voters on the spot and search for solutions together with them, if they should give citizens more of a chance to engage in shaping (local) politics, if they should offer their (potential) followers in all their social and cultural diversity a – possibly new – bracket for integration (joint responsibility for shaping the future, civic values), thus bridging the emerging gap between the periphery and the centre, between approaches that incline towards market economy and etatism, and between the conservative and liberal values and positions of their (potential) followers – if they do that, they will have a future and remain what they used to be and sometimes still are in many West European countries: political heavy-weights that play a leading part in shaping the future of their countries and, increasingly, of Europe.

APPENDIX: ELECTORAL RESULTS AND LINEAR TREND OF THE WEST EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY SINCE 1980³

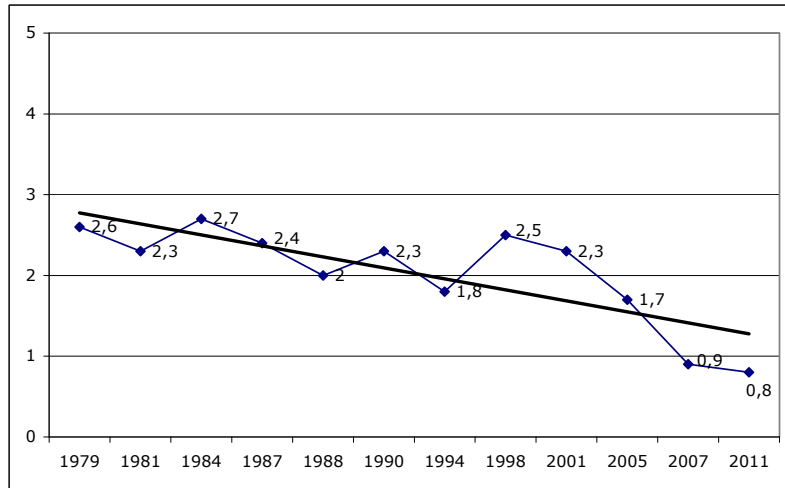
Germany (CDU/CSU)



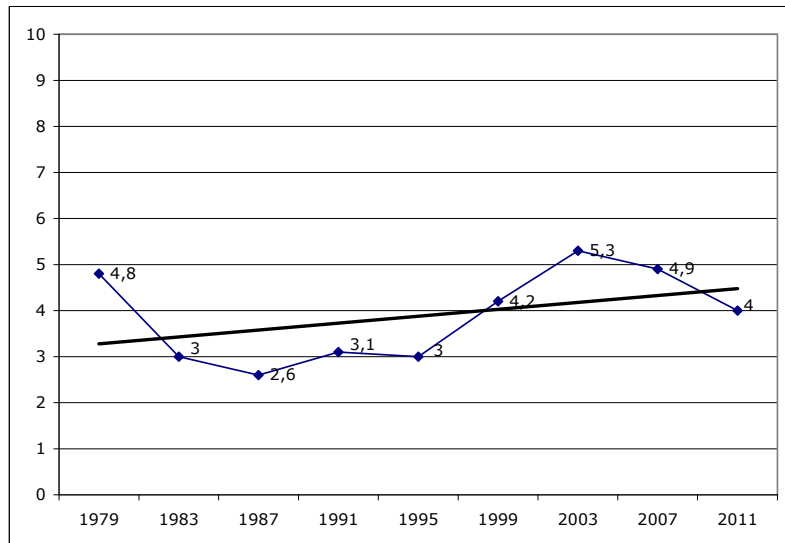
Belgium (Flemish Christian democrats: CD&V, until 1999 CVP; Walloon Christian democrats: CDH, until 2002 PSC; the figure shows the sum for both parties in each election year)



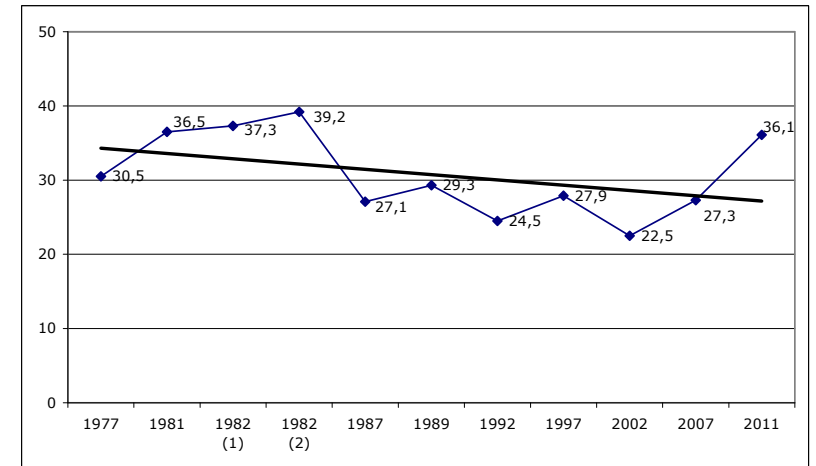
Denmark (until 2003 KrF, Kristeligt Folkeparti, since then KD, Kristendemokraterne)



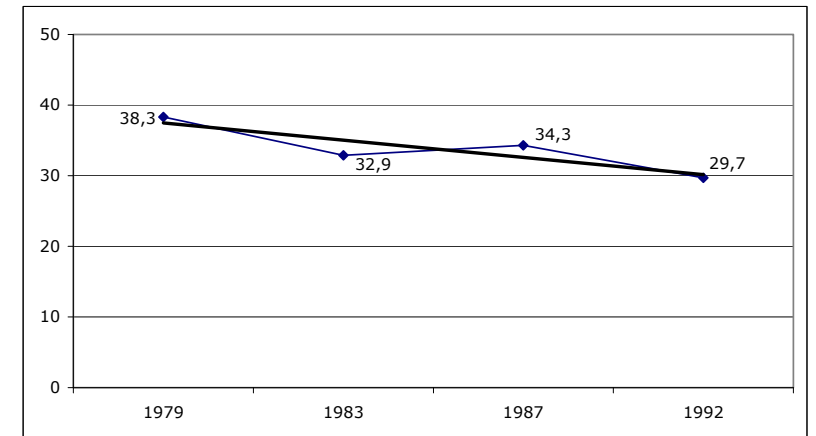
Finland (Suomen Kristillisdemokraatit, KD)



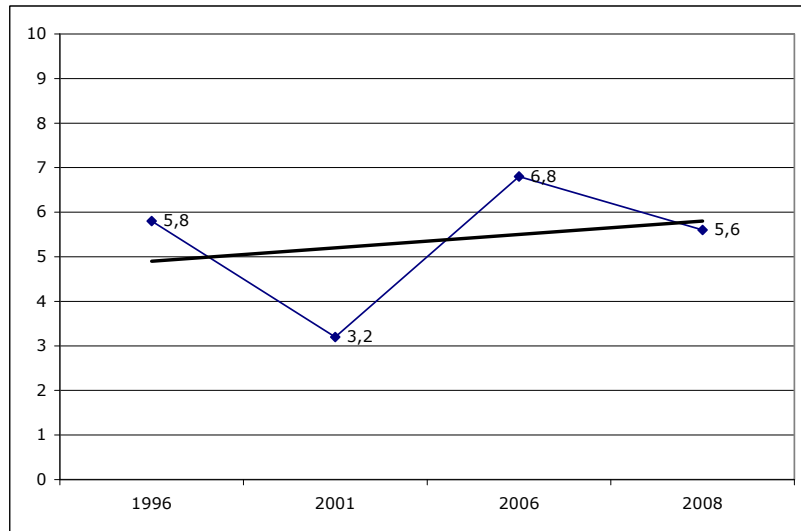
Ireland (Fine Gael)



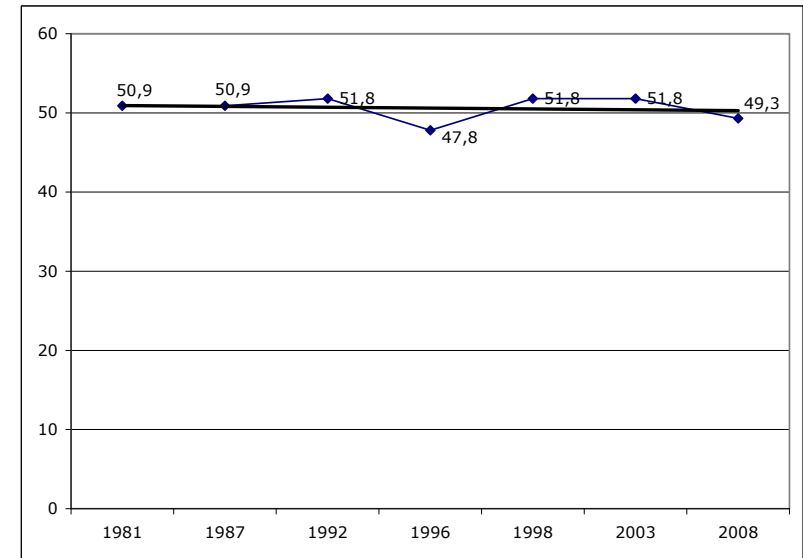
Italy (until 1992 Democrazia Cristiana)



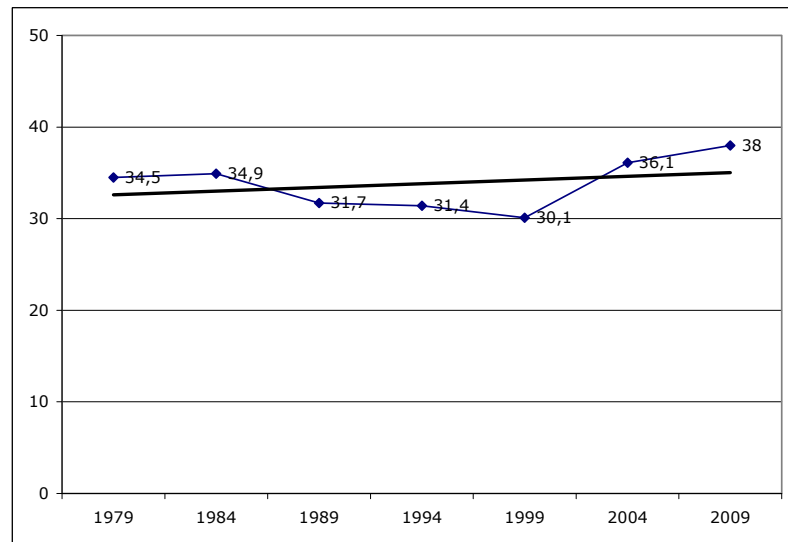
Italy 1996-2006: UDC/BF/CCD; since 2008 Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e Democratici di Centro (UDC)



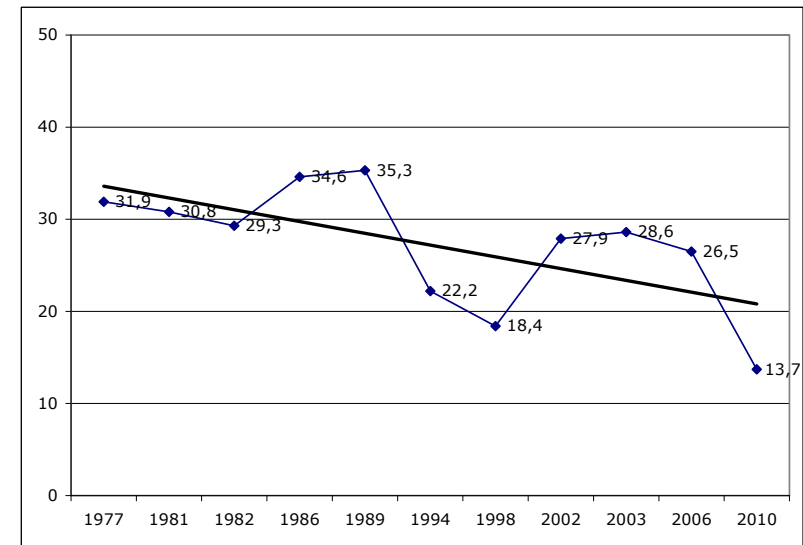
Malta (PN)



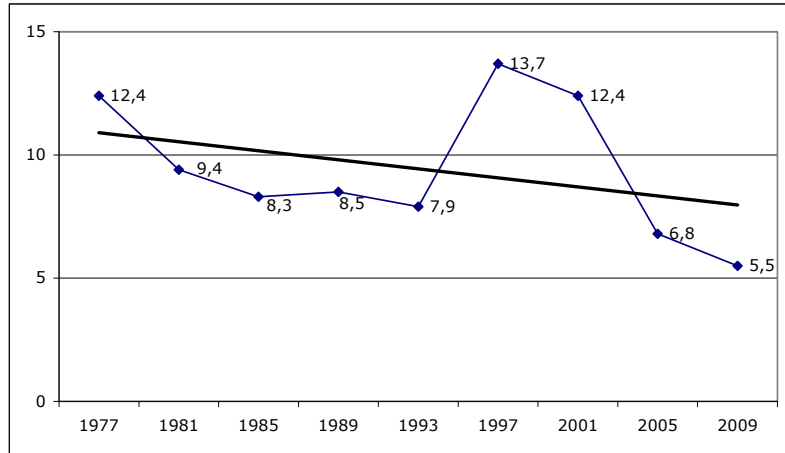
Luxembourg (CSV)



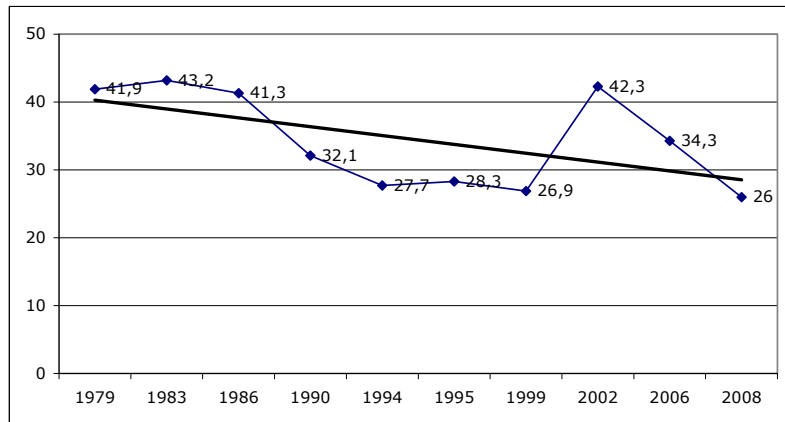
Netherlands (CDA)



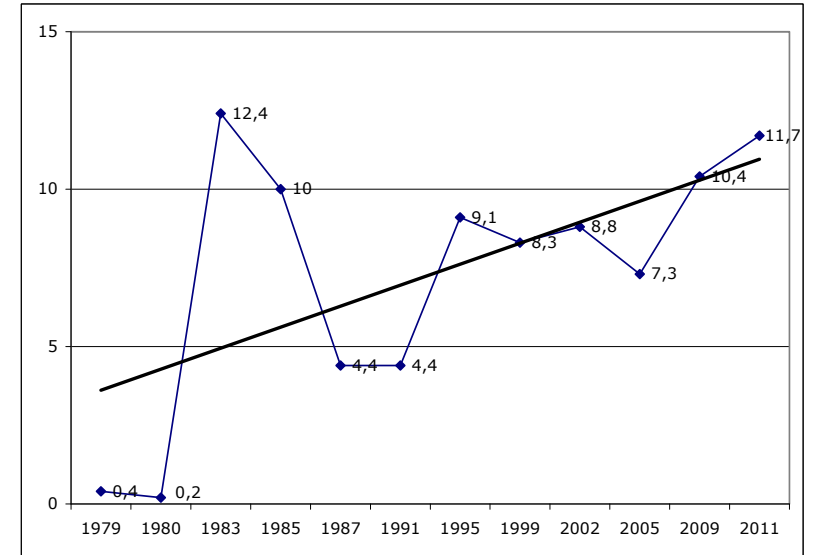
Norway (Kristelig Folkeparti, KRF)



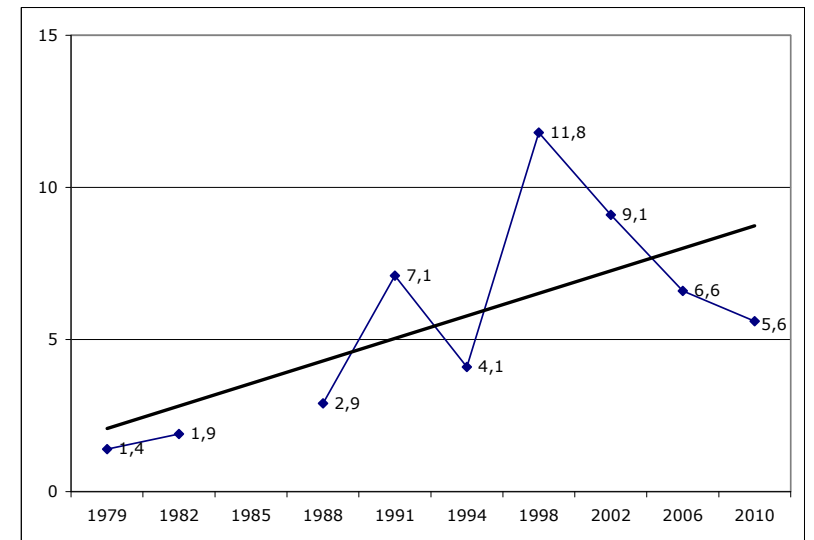
Austria (ÖVP)



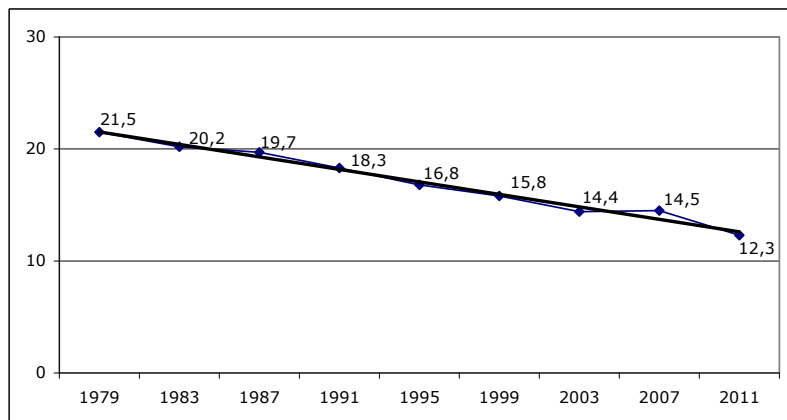
Portugal (CDS-PP, Partido Popular)



Sweden (Kristdemokraterna, KD)



Switzerland (CVP)



Sources: own calculations based on Nordsieck (2011) and <http://www.dst.dk/valg/Valg1204271/valgopg/valgopg.htm> (last visit on 27. January 2012).

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- 1| *Own figures based on the chapters on the various countries in Ismayr (2003) and Nordsieck (2011).*
- 2| *For a detailed discourse on the definition and categorisation of Christian democratic parties in typologies and/or families and the distinction between Christian democratic and religious as well as between Christian democratic and conservative parties, see e.g. Lane and Ersson (1999), Frey (2008: 47ff.), Liedhegener and Oppeland (forthcoming).*
- 3| *I should like to thank Marian Bracht, student of political science at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, who assisted me in developing the Appendix when working as an intern on the domestic policy team of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in the autumn of 2011.*

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY IN BELGIUM

Steven Van Hecke

INTRODUCTION

As such Belgian Christian democracy does not exist. Given the different party systems within the country, three parties are considered to be part of the Christian democratic family in Belgium: *Christendemocratisch & Vlaams* (CD&V) in Flanders, *centre démocrate Humaniste* (cdH) in French-speaking Belgium (Brussels and Wallonia) and the *Christlich-Soziale Partei* (CSP) in the German-speaking part of the country. These three parties differ considerably in a number of ways: political ideology, electoral performance, position in the party system etc. In fact it is only at the European level that they cooperate on a permanent basis. The three parties are full members of the European People's Party (EPP) and their MEPs compose one Belgian delegation in the EPP Group in the European Parliament.

Unlike the CSP (that was founded in 1972 following the establishment of the German-speaking community), CD&V and cdH are relatively new party names. With regard to CD&V, in 2001 it was decided to replace the *Christelijke Volkspartij* (CVP) by a new name, emphasising its Christian democratic and Flemish character but dropping the reference to people's party. One year later, the *Parti Social Chrétien* (PSC) choose to go one step further and not to mention its Christian democratic affiliation in its party name. Instead a

new ideology and name was created: democratic humanism. This particular period of party renewal followed the huge electoral losses both parties faced in 1999. For the first time since the 1950s the Christian democrats did not take part in the national government, neither in one of the regional governments (see Van Hecke 2002; 2006).

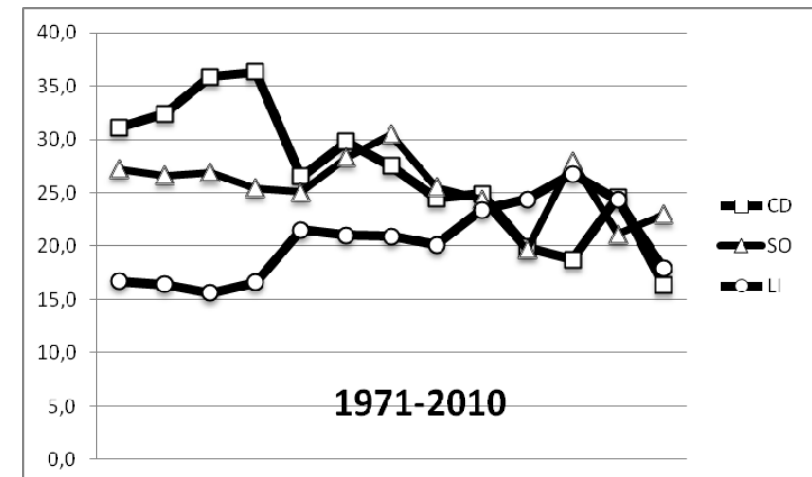
Originally CVP and PSC were one party, founded after the Second World War, composed of two wings: one for the Dutch-speaking side and one for the French-speaking. Continuing internal and external language problems led to the split in the late 1960s. Since then the two parties operate completely independent from each other, legally as well as politically, even within the capital of Brussels.

In this chapter I take a look at the recent electoral performances of both CD&V and cdH. I pay less attention to the CSP since it plays no significant role at the national level. This chapter also highlights the different positions CD&V and cdH occupy in the respective party systems of Flanders and Brussels/Wallonia. Special attention is paid to the cartel (common list, see below) between CD&V and the Flemish nationalist party *Nieuw Vlaams Alliantie* (N-VA). Furthermore, structural and conjunctural causes of the electoral decline are listed as well the strengths and challenges of both parties. The article finishes with the question: What is to be expected from Belgian Christian democracy?

ELECTORAL EVOLUTION

Compared to the two other traditional party families in Belgium, the socialists and the liberals, the overall trend of the Christian democratic vote is one of decline (see Figure 1). In the 1970s the Christian democrats performed very well, thanks to the popularity of Prime Minister Leo Tindemans. Since 1981, the first time the parties received less than 30% of the votes, electoral results went up and down but more down than up. After each electoral defeat there is some kind of stabilisation – in other words: there is no sharp decline – but original high scores are out of reach. In the meantime the Christian democratic family lost its first place to both the socialists and the liberals. It is clear that all traditional political families lost votes over the years – the gain of the liberals does not fully compensate the losses of the Christian democrats and the socialists – but the Christian democrats lost most.

Figure 1: Electoral performance of Christian democrats, socialists and liberals (in the chamber of representatives/number of votes at national level)



Looking at the figures in detail, this pattern of decline and instability is also shown in the results of the Christian democratic parties in their respective party systems. Since a fairly long time the Flemish party system is very competitive (indicated by a relatively high number of parties that increasingly tend to be of the same size) and scores have become more volatile with especially high fluctuation rates recently (see Figure 2). The Flemish Christian democrats have not been able to keep their first position like in the 1990s, except in 2004-2008 when they were leading a common list (to that I refer as a cartel) with the Flemish nationalist party *Nieuw Vlaams Alliantie* (N-VA). At the federal elections of 2010 CD&V lost dramatically to its former electoral partner.

In Brussels and Wallonia, the electoral results have been more stable – with the French-speaking Socialist party still in a dominant position (see Figure 3). After a period of decline, the electoral score of the Christian democrats has stabilised around 15 percent of the votes. Instead of competing with the liberals for the second place, cdH is currently competing with the Greens for the third place in the political landscape. The German-speaking CSP also lost votes over time but decreased less than the Flemish Christian democrats, for instance. At the 2009 regional elections in the German-speaking Community the CSP received 27 percent (compared to almost 33 percent in 2004).

Figure 2: Electoral performance of Flemish parties (in the chamber of representatives/number of votes at national level) between 1981 and 2010

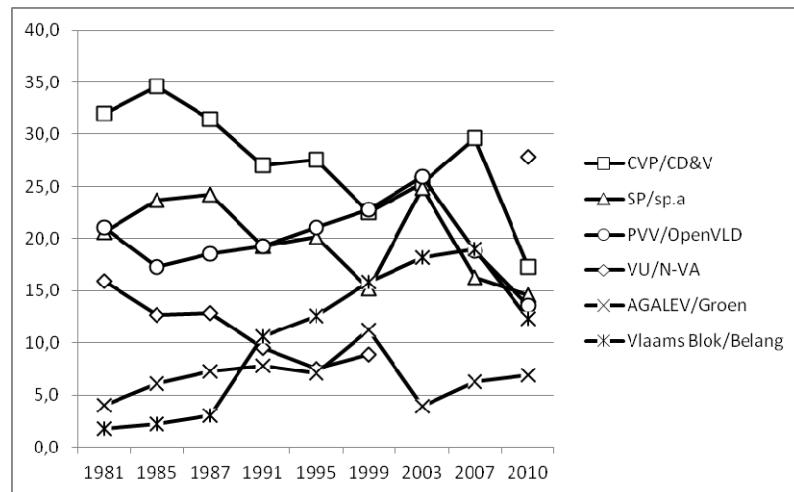
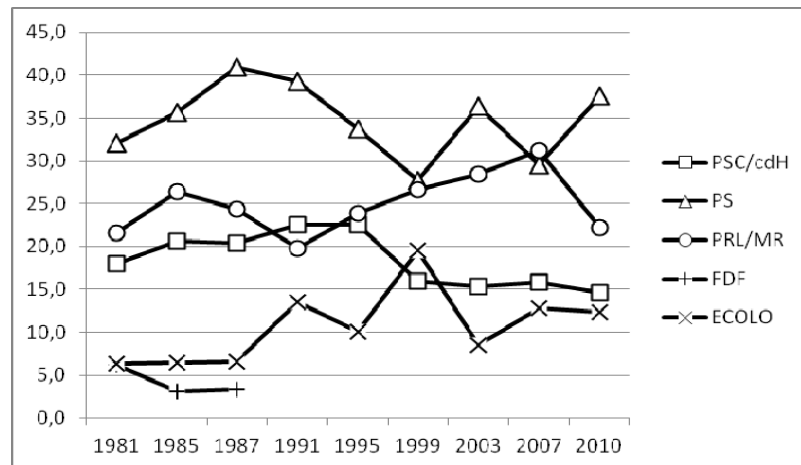


Figure 3: Electoral performance of French-speaking parties (in the chamber of representatives/number of votes at national level) between 1981 and 2010



A closer look at the performances of CVP/CD&V and PSC/cdH since the mid-1990s at all levels shows clearly the fluctuation and the stability, respectively (see Table 1). It also shows that both parties are more successful in local elections. However, it should be noted that the Flemish Christian democrats perform particularly well in rural and sub-urban areas, not in big cities like Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent. The French-speaking Christian democrats, by contrast, have become stronger in Brussels, and remain strong in large parts of the Walloon countryside.

Table 1: Electoral performance of CVP/CD&V and PSC/cdH between 1995 and 2010

Year	Elections	CVP/CD&V	PSC/cdH
1995	national/regional/European	27.6	22.5
1999	national/regional/European	22.5	15.9
2000	local*	26.8	17.6
2003	national	25.3	15.4
2004	regional/European**	26.1	15.2
2006	local*/**	30.1	18.4
2007	national**	29.6	15.8
2009	regional/European	22.9	13.3
2010	national	17.3	14.6

* measured at the level of the provinces, Brussels excepted.

** in cartel with N-VA.

POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Leaving aside the tiny German-speaking community, Belgium consists of two separate party systems with the Christian democrats occupying a specific position in each of them. This means that they have to deal with different competitors (and also different media players and a different public opinion) and also with different or sometimes opposing electoral results (even when elections are organised on the very same day). From the outset, Christian democracy has been much stronger in Flanders than in the French-speaking part of Belgium with the Flemish Christian democrats being more than two times the size of the French-speaking Christian democrats.

In Flanders the Christian democrats were for a very long time the dominant force but they lost their pivotal status in 1999. They have been able to regain that position in 2004, but only due to the support of the N-VA. Since the split of their cartel, things look much bleaker. In the 2010 general elections N-VA became by far the largest party in Flanders and continues to reach high scores in the opinion polls. Despite its electoral losses, CD&V is in office at the regional level with Kris Peeters as the Minister President of Flanders. Until the end of the 2010 the party was also in office at federal level with Yves Leterme as the Prime Minister of Belgium.

Compared with the Flemish Christian democrats, French-speaking Christian democrats have never reached the same level of dominance in their political landscape. Instead, they benefitted from the position of their Flemish sister party, especially in terms of government participation. Since Joëlle Milquet took over the party leadership (and changed the PSC into cdH) relations with the Flemish Christian democrats deteriorated. Instead, cdH became de facto part of a cartel with the dominant *Parti Socialiste* (PS). This alliance also meant the cdH became more left-wing in socio-economic terms.

While French-speaking parties generally tend to be more left-wing, Flemish parties are more right-wing. This also applies to the Christian democrats. Moreover, all Flemish parties, including CD&V have become more “regional”, a long time before the N-VA became the strongest party. cdH, by contrast, has adopted a more pronounced “Belgian” profile, deepening the divide between the two Christian Democratic parties in Belgium and making co-operation rather difficult.

CARTEL WITH N-VA

The cartel between CD&V and N-VA – the right wing of the defunct *Volksunie* (People’s Union) – between 2004 and 2008 cannot be understood without taking into account the liberal-socialist governments of Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt. Indeed, both parties found each in opposing this government and presenting a more conservative and value-oriented alternative to the Flemish electorate. A first attempt to join forces in late 2002 failed. But when the Christian democrats lost the elections of 2003 – the second time in a row – and N-VA failed to pass the 5 percent threshold (only its party president was elected), both

parties pooled their forces for the 2004 regional and European elections. In early 2004 they officially entered an electoral alliance, meaning, among other things, that they had common lists and a common programme for the elections (but the parties did not merge). In three consecutive elections – the EP elections of 2004, the local elections of 2006 and the national elections of 2007 – they managed to defeat the incumbent parties. Their share of the votes, however, was lower than the sum of the results both parties gained separately in previous elections.

The cartel composed the backbone of the Flemish government in 2004, led by Yves Leterme. In 2007 he succeeded to win the national elections with more than 800,000 preferential votes¹. A large part of its success was the emphasis the cartel laid on strengthening Flemish autonomy. For CD&V the final goal was a confederal state whereas for N-VA stood for the independence of Flanders. The idea was that despite this fundamental difference they could pool their sources, emphasising the means they both needed to reach their respective goals. When state reform was postponed after Leterme’s failure to make a government between Christian democrats and liberals in the summer of 2007, the cartel came under severe pressure. Not everyone was happy, to say the least, that the cartel entered a government led by Verhofstadt and supported by the PS without any guarantee with regard to the re-organisation of the state. CD&V entered the interim government but N-VA did not send ministers, they only tolerated it.

When Leterme took over as Prime Minister in the spring of 2008 things did not get much better. The government stumbled from crisis to crisis, without any real progress with regard to state reform. In the aftermath of the financial crisis that hit Belgian banks seriously, Leterme stepped down in December 2008 and was replaced by Herman Van Rompuy, a lukewarm supporter of the cartel.

In the meantime the cartel had broken down after disagreement about the way the state reform negotiations should be organised. Indeed, in September 2008 N-VA left the cartel after criticising the way Flemish Minister President Kris Peeters took over the negotiations with the French-speaking parties, according to N-VA without guarantee for success. Since then N-VA grew in the polls and performed very well at the 2009 regional and European elections. They gained 13 percent of the votes and entered a government coalition with CD&V and the Flemish

socialists, led by Peeters. In the meantime they continued to attack the federal government and its alleged standstill with regard to state reform. The breakdown of negotiations in April 2010 triggered early elections in June. After a campaign that was centred on the state of the Belgian federation, the core of N-VA's party programme, the party triumphed and gained around 30 percent. After one year of negotiations – a world record – N-VA left the table and refrained from taking part in a new government. Finally, in December 2011 a new government of socialists, liberals and Christian democrats, led by Elio Di Rupo, took off. As the largest party in parliament and the main opposition party, N-VA continues its fight against the PS-led government, presenting itself to the Flemish public opinion as the only credible alternative to the so-called power-addiction of the traditional parties.

STRUCTURAL AND CONJUNCTURAL DECLINE OF THE BELGIAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY

Clearly the Christian democrats suffer from a decline that is at least partially structural. Compared to previous decades the electoral performances are rather low. Membership is declining (from 125,000 at the beginning of the 1980s to around 75,000 30 years later) as well as the core electorate of Catholic voters. Due to the ongoing secularisation, the number of people attending church regularly has declined dramatically (Botterman and Hooghe 2012). Moreover the Christian democrats have lost issue-ownership in a number of cases because of increased party competition but also because some issues have become less salient, especially confessional or bioethical topics. Laws about abortion, euthanasia and gay marriage are no longer discussed. At the same time the Christian democrats have low credibility on new issues such as migration and globalisation. These problems, however, are not exclusive for the Christian democrats. All traditional political families suffer and continue to lose votes in Flanders. Particularly the fragmented and highly competitive political landscape makes it very difficult to reverse this trend. In this way the Flemish Christian democrats' position is comparable to the Dutch *Christiaan Democristisch Appèl* (CDA) but less to the *Christlich Demokratische Union* (CDU), for instance, because the CDU (together with its Bavarian sister party, the CSU) still dominates – if not the entire German political landscape – but for sure the centre-right part of it.

Part of the decline is conjunctural but in the long run conjunctural can become structural. This is for instance the case with the low attractiveness of the Christian democrats among young voters (Deschouwer et al. 2010). In the 2009 elections the CD&V electorate had the lowest number of young voters (16 percent, compared to 27 on average). Half of its voters were older than fifty five. cdH also suffers from an underrepresentation of young voters and overrepresentation of older votes, but figures are less outspoken. The profile of CD&V's activists has largely the same characteristics: predominantly male and old (van Haute 2011).

For the moment the vulnerability of CD&V vis-à-vis N-VA is very strong. In terms of questions related to state reform, the preservation and protection of the Dutch language in Belgium, especially in Brussels, the Flemish nationalists are much more trusted by the public than the Christian democrats. N-VA also challenges CD&V in its political position because it wants to replace the Christian democrats as the Flemish people's party. An attempt by the liberals to do the same in the 2000s clearly failed. CD&V has also suffered from a high turn-over in terms of leadership. During the last ten years the party was led by six different persons. However, one has also to admit that Christian democrat leaders have largely benefitted from the growing personalisation and mediatisation of party politics. Without taking into account this trend, the popularity of Leterme, Peeters and Van Rompuy cannot be fully explained.

STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Compared to other parties in Belgium Christian democracy can still rely on a number of assets. First, it has a strong government record at the local, regional and national level. For that reason the party has a lot of credibility based on what it has realised. It also has the political personnel to administrate. Secondly, at all these levels Christian democrats have an extensive network within the administration and civil society (e. g. in the education sector, the welfare sector and the labour movement). These strongholds of the so-called pillarisation have a lot of experience and expertise which to help them to administer successfully. Thirdly, especially the Flemish Christian democrats are very strong and widely locally embedded. The local level is the party's stronghold from which it can conquer its competitors and regain electoral ground. At the local level, for instance, more than half of the mayors are Christian

democrats. Last but not least, it has a stable ideology that links the party with its sisters in the neighbouring countries and within the EPP: Christian democracy.

The challenge for CD&V as well as for cdH is to translate the core Christian democratic principles – human mankind, subsidiarity and solidarity – into socio-economic and other policies, in other words strengthening (and reforming) the *Soziale Marktwirtschaft* and the European integration process. This obviously raises a number of questions: Should the Islam been seen as a threat or are Muslim people partners in securing certain norms and values, e. g. the public role of religion? What is the balance between solidarity and responsibility? How can the demands of the ageing population be reconciled with the specific needs of the younger generation? What kind of Europe do Christian democrats want?

So far, the answers have been rather limited, if not absent. Some answers are not difficult to find, however. CD&V clearly differs from the N-VA, for instance, when it comes to socio-economic policies. N-VA is much more liberal whereas CD&V sticks to the idea of reconciling employees and employers within one political family. Overall, yet, a lack of self-awareness (in the sense of the word) and belief in one's own principles and values and, in parallel, a gradual negligence of its study centre², hindered the Christian democrats to stand for their case. This becomes especially visible in the party's public communication. Christian democrats present themselves as good and successful administrators, emphasising their government record, rather than linking and explaining their political work with Christian democratic principles and values. The problem with such an administrative technocratic discourse is of course that is not a monopoly of the Christian democrats (in order words: it does not make clear to the electorate what makes Christian democracy different from other political families) and that it is highly depending on government participation. Without knowledge about its own ideology, without self-awareness, or without politicians that speak the language of Christian democracy it is hard to believe that these parties will be able to win back the hearts and the minds of the Belgians.

PROSPECTS

Belgian Christian democrats are currently facing a difficult time. Unlike the situation in the Netherlands there is not much talk of the end of Christian democracy yet. So far the good news. The bad news is that it seems unrealistic that in near future CD&V will be able to regain its previous position and levels of electoral support.

In the short run, its first challenge is the local elections of October 2012. The fact that local elections are the first appointment with the voters after the disastrous national elections of 2010 may be seen as an asset. The party is able to rely on its local entrenchment and strongholds, although weaknesses in big cities do not seem to be solved. On the contrary, in Flanders biggest city, Antwerp, the Christian democrats have made an alliance with the incumbent socialist mayor. This particular choice may be very good in tactical terms (securing participation in the administration of the city), in strategic terms it is questionable that a party like CD&V will not be on the ballot paper in the most important city of Flanders. The situation in Ghent does not look much better either. Without any prospect of change, the party is in opposition for more than 20 years and risks of becoming irrelevant for its domestic audience. Also in the Brussels Regions, the weak position of CD&V undermines its credibility. With scores below 2 percent in the capital, the party is being outnumbered by other Flemish parties like the liberals, socialists and the extreme-right. In any case, a loss of votes almost everywhere in Flanders seems to be unavoidable. Given the low scores in the opinions polls of the incumbent, CD&V, and the rising scores of the challenger, the N-VA, it seems rather likely that the N-VA is going to win the local elections. The only question is then: To what degree?

For cdH the situation seems less threatening. Unlike for CD&V there is no party that really challenges its position. Obviously, like any other middle-sized party it has to defend its place in the political landscape but at least the perception is that this is not an existential problem. More problematic for the party are its two faces: multicultural and left-wing in Brussels versus rural and right-wing in Wallonia, personified by Joëlle Milquet, who stepped down as party president in September 2011 after having lead the party for 12 years, and her successor Benoît Lutgen.

For CD&V the local elections are simply too early to be able to turn the tide. The elections that really matter for the party are therefore the ones of 2014 (with concurrent national, regional and European elections).

On the one hand, the party needs to secure a clear record of successful administration. In this respect, it has two important players on the field: Flemish Minister President Kris Peeters and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Steven Vanackere. For cdH, this job should first of all be done by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs Joëlle Milquet. On the other hand, both CD&V and cdH need to find a new and inspiring narrative that is loyal to the Christian democratic nature of their parties. Their respective party presidents, Wouter Beke and Benoît Lutgen, carry a very important responsibility but without a guarantee for success. In order to re-align their parties with the majority of the peoples in Belgium, perhaps they could start their long journey by looking how other EPP member parties perform and try to learn from their failures and successes.

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- 1| *Since 1995 the members of the second chamber, the Senate, are elected in three constituencies: Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde. In order to get as much votes as possible within a semi-open list system parties put their best known candidates at the top of the list, triggering a kind of semi-presidential election, especially in Flanders. The one who received the most preferential votes is expected to become prime minister.*
- 2| *For a long time CVP and PSC had a common political foundation called CEPES. In the aftermath of the 1999 elections it was split in two. With the change of CVP into CD&V the foundation received a new name: CEDER. While the public financing increased, the party granted less money and personnel to its foundation. As a consequence it gradually lost its central role in the party and the public sphere.*

THE GERMAN CDU: A PEOPLE'S PARTY IN HEAVY WEATHER

Tilman Mayer

“Man darf sie nicht zu früh abschreiben, die deutschen Christdemokraten. Denn da kann man unversehens falsch liegen.”¹ These are the opening sentences of the book on the CDU published late in 2011 by Franz Walter, a German party researcher of great eminence and rhetorical skill, together with two co-authors. At the same time, the volume concludes by saying “Die CDU wird Abschied vom Anspruch nehmen müssen, eine Volkspartei zu sein [...] Volksparteien haben ihre eigenen Lebensvoraussetzungen überlebt, sie werden nicht mehr wiedererstehen [...]”² (Walter, Werwath and D’Antonio 2011: 11; 219).

Here we have yet another diagnosis by political scientists who tell us that we have long since passed a turning point in the history of Germany’s political parties. The “big tankers” are said to have no future left. But: “You should never write them off too soon” – this sentence gives rise to certain doubts, not to say hopes. Yet it would sound out of the ordinary not to join in a kind of funeral dirge on the people’s parties. And it is the CDU which epitomises the prototype of a people’s party in the German political system (Haungs 1992). There can be no doubt that the SPD, too, has developed into a people’s party in the meantime. But this was not so from the beginning; after Godesberg 1959, it had to

develop from a workers' party into a people's party (cf. Lösche 2003, Seitz 2009). The CDU, on the other hand, is *the* successful people's party in the history of the Federal Republic. This history cannot be written without the Christian Democratic Union. Even its name was an innovation. It did not want to be a party in the meaning of the word, a mere part of society. Its goal was to unite Christians of both denominations, employees and employers, and Germans living in the west and in the east.

At present, however, the concept of a union and a people's party appears to be submerged by in the plurality of options, interests, and groupings. Both CDU and SPD are stagnating at a share in the vote of about 30% (+/-). Needless to say, this is far away from the weight one used to be able to throw about in the glorious period between Adenauer and Kohl. Nowadays, there are places where both parties together fail to reach the 60 per cent mark. Of course, there are certain symptoms of crisis involved in this. In addition, there is a phenomenon which the press highlights with glee and eloquence: the so-called small parties are growing bigger. Surveys keep supporting this apparent truth. One case in point is the election returns forecast for the Greens in Berlin in the summer of 2011, when it appeared as if they might reach roughly 30 per cent of the votes. In reality, Mrs Künast and the Greens had to be content with 17 per cent – a wide gap between hope and reality.

It is only natural that there should be more parties in the Federal Republic after the reunification. The party system has changed, which necessarily affects the way in which the cake is distributed. Moreover, since the elections of 2011 in Berlin, we have a kind of anti-establishment or fun party: the Pirates. While their web-policy concerns do deserve consideration, the party is lumbered by a lot of curious elements that give rise to doubts about its seriousness. It will have to be seen whether this party is able to set landmarks, and how it should be dealt with.

To any people's party, the ability to occupy the number one position represents the key mark of success – with the exception of the situation we have had in Baden-Württemberg after 2011. It was far-away Fukushima, no less, that was needed to bring about this turn of events, but that is another subject. Looking at Berlin, we see that – unlike Baden-Württemberg – no such turnaround has happened there; the Greens did gain, but not as markedly as they had hoped. But are they really

developing in the direction of a people's party? The rebuff which the Greens of Berlin brought upon themselves by dogmatically insisting on doctrinaire ecological positions in the brief coalition negotiations tends to reinforce scepticism towards this party which apparently prefers to remain a single-issue party rather than burdening itself and its rank and file with the need to confront the entire bandwidth of political concerns in a complex society. Prime Minister Winfried Kretschmann's talent of leadership, too, is open to question, especially if the extent to which certain departments of this Land government are controlled by the decimated people's party, SPD, should remain observable in the future (Seils 2011).

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PEOPLE'S PARTIES

Political parties – and particularly people's parties – are as crucially important as ever (Veen 2009: 535f.). We cannot dispense with political parties, not even in our media or internet democracy. They recruit personnel – good personnel, it is to be hoped. That is the crucial point, as we can see in the current Euro crisis. Moreover, a party must organise itself and maintain its own organisation. That is quite a feat, and developments in this respect have been particularly successful and comprehensive since the 1970s. Only the major parties can provide such an organisation; the smaller parties cannot. In Germany's numerous elections, the point is that party organisations should be able to provide the requisite personnel. In a functioning organisation, there will be intra-party personnel development and selection processes which no other form of recruitment can possibly replace. To that extent, the labours of political participation cannot be handled digitally, as the Pirates think. They demand physical presence. Any neglect of the interdependence between presence on the spot and representation in the media is bounded to backfire quickly.

Still, there are numerous political scientists and media workers who maintain that the age of the people's parties is over. The fact of the matter is, however, that both the SPD and the CDU (still) have nearly 500,000 members each. Of course they used to have more. As far as the CDU is concerned, the above-mentioned party researchers believe that "*Der Mitgliederschwund tendiert nicht gegen Null, sondern wird sich einpendeln. Ob bei 400.000 oder 200.000, sei dahingestellt*"³ (Walter, Werwath and D'Antonio 2011: 219).

These forecasts are tied to concrete expectations regarding the development of the party. For the time being, however, the CDU does have almost 500,000 members. Its membership may well go on shrinking, if only for age-related reasons. Based on the tendencies prevailing so far, making this forecast is easier than assuming that there will be a trend reversal. The conditioned analysis we are looking at is constructively critical; it assumes that learning processes might set in. After all, very good reasons would be needed to support the assumption that a party with such a large membership base is content to drift towards its demise with its eyes wide open. At present, the CDU does have this capital, and, to go on using the jargon of our time, who is competing against this asset?

What about the Greens, who are so often declared to be the new people's party? Their membership amounts to about 60,000. Adding CDU and CSU together, we may safely assume that the ratio is ten to one at a minimum. The media, however, create a completely different impression. Very frequently, they talk about new members joining the Greens and about the major parties having lost hundreds of thousands since the reunification. While this is true, their membership figures are melting from a high level, and actual figures are enormously far away from those of the small parties whose gains steadfastly refuse to develop, particularly if we compare them to the people's parties. That the latter have problems dealing with modern developments – who would dispute that? Consequently, the critical question is about their *problem processing competence*. These questions will be analytically pursued below – and there is a great deal of circumstantial evidence indicating that it is the people's parties who will be in demand, not the little ones who would like to be big but aren't yet. This is why it is so important to keep an eye on the Kretschmann experiment – important for both sides, big and small.

A party which disregards its members or even dispenses with this arsenal of faithful followers divests itself of its capital. Skilful investments in elections may temporarily substitute for it, but the effort to obtain approval without it becomes more risky. Parties which shrink in this way figuratively live on stilts instead of having both feet firmly planted on the ground of the voter market. A party that intends to dispense with its capital, its membership, loses any claim to being a people's party. The success of a political party partially consists of its ability to attract and retain members even in times when their inclination to form a bond is low. This truly constitutes a big difference between major and minor

parties. And besides, party members have their own base in civil society (Liedhegener 2009).

By definition, it is part of the character of a people's party that it should be de-ideologised to a certain extent. This is why we talk of the values of a people's party, not of its ideologies. And because people's parties are characterised by a wide range of political ideas, they can never be single-issue parties which the Greens still are, properly speaking; we have observed the outcome in 2011 in Berlin. Those were not the credentials of a people's party but of a narrow-minded, ideologically charged and highly biased perspective. By contrast, the ability of people's parties to act pragmatically is much greater. They need to be able to do this, if only because of the numerous interests they are carrying along.

Another achievement of a people's party is reaching the status of a catch-all party, attracting as many people as possible to its sphere of influence. As far as its superstructure of political ideas is concerned, the CDU is related to Christianity by its very name. Still, it defines itself as supra-denominational, although the Catholic part is probably much more firmly rooted. This is why we will have to try and understand what being a Catholic means today, not in the religious, clerical, or theological sense but in the political context (Vogel 2010), addressing values like the concept of subsidiarity or thinking in terms of solidarity. These two have an immediate impact on the assessment of social-state approaches, a context in which Protestant approaches similarly play a part. In addition, there are the cultural Christian convictions of those who are not religious in the narrow meaning of the term. Then, there is the question of how to integrate fellow citizens with an Islamic background in this canon of values. This is why, unlike the churches, the CDU will have to highlight its "C" politically so that its increasingly heterogeneous spectrum of followers finds itself reflected in the canon of values of this people's party (Uertz 2010, 2011). By interpreting this canon in narrow Christian or even Catholic terms in a society which is now more colourful and markedly more secular, a Christian democratic people's party would invalidate its claim to integration and isolate itself in society. The wider its interpretation, the less plastic and concrete its communication of values, the more members would feel impelled to leave by this relativism. Consequently, the art of leading a party and designing a modern programme is to find an intermediate position which not merely elicits support but motivates and attracts people.

To quote another example, it is in keeping with the aforementioned catch-all character to be a union for all in social terms. In the 1950s and 1960s, this worked for the CDU. Even in the period after the reunification, the CDU was *the workers' party* in the new federal states at first, if you interpret this as meaning that more than half of the workers in the east voted CDU at the time.

Today, however, the question is whether a recently-evolved lower class and a lower middle-class that is fearful of its status still can see a perspective of being integrated in a prosperous society and enjoying a certain degree of political protection. At the same time middle-class performers must be made to feel that their function is appreciated and they are supported accordingly. Moreover, in our globalised world it is important to get leading societal and economic authorities to support the whole, to keep Germany attractive as a business location, and to motivate people to make their way in Germany. Organising such coherence was a traditional achievement of people's parties, taking nearly irreconcilable interests or world views very seriously, promoting them by way of compromises at first within the party and later in everyday government. Such integration can be performed only if trust is placed in the party by various sides and reinvested at the polls. Of course, this also makes for high membership figures which, however, were not characteristic of the union parties from the beginning. Still, such an "integration machine" never permitted any doubts to arise about its catch-all character.

Therefore, one characteristic of a people's party is the width of the societal spectrum it covers. This spectrum must be accepted and must not be regarded as a conflict between opposing interests. However, if the intra-party groupings which organise this spectrum within the party are seen as disturbing the peace of the party or, more precisely, the union, the essential integration engine will not work. Naturally, the mechanism needs to be controlled, directed, and managed from the top down. This was the great achievement of the party's leadership in the past, and it must be followed up. Moreover, the ability to say that numerous interests are playing a part is attractive to the members of such a big party. All interests are given a hearing within the party, and it is the party which handles the process of societal clarification. If people trust a party to do this, that party will remain interesting.

To be sure, we are still confronted by the problem of disenchantment with parties and politics. Called political alienation by scientists, it is indeed a burden on our political culture. It manifests itself not only in "Stuttgart 21" or similar spectacular events. Opinion polls and statements by many citizens reveal that people are distancing themselves from the political process. To that extent, it is almost good form now to keep bashing politicians and suspecting the party system in general, saying, for example, that people in the political arena deal with politics only because it is to their advantage (Blome 2009; Gabriel and Holtmann 2009). Another, weightier charge is that parties have become indistinguishable, they resemble one another too much, and they are too middle-of-the-road, in a manner of speaking. Which position is social democratic, which is Christian democratic? Overlaps have grown relatively large by now (see e. g. Junge 2012).

But let us just imagine a situation in which the people's parties have eroded completely. Let us assume that the scenario of an imminent decline is correct. There would no longer be anything to distinguish them from the minor parties, the Greens, the FDP, the Left, and other hopefuls. The former people's parties would have to negotiate at eye level. However, the minor parties would also have to mutate into bigger parties, and there is no indication of that. But if the people's parties were to disappear, they would no longer play their part in supporting coalitions, and political predictability would be lost.

THE CDU'S FUTURE POTENTIALS

Although the CDU is in power at the moment, it is not optimally set up as a party. It is true that this is by no means atypical for parties in power, for as such their primary task is to govern and control the state – all the more so in the politically turbulent times we have been witnessing throughout the present financial and debt crisis. The attention paid to the party itself, not to the government, appears relatively insignificant for this reason. The elections of 2005 and 2009 were won by a hair. Parties in government may suffer the fate of turning into mere election machines. This is where the parliamentary party, the secretary general, and the other members of the leadership caucus come in (Schwarz 2009). It is they who must plan for the future, foster young talents, and draft strategies that increasingly attract the attention of those who are politically interested and, of course, of the media. This would indicate

that a people's party is functioning properly. Even if this is not the case, a people's party in power will focus its attention on strong leaders, meaning the strategic leadership, integration, and mobilisation performance of those at the top. And the thrilling question which arises every day is whether this expectation can be fulfilled.

The biggest problem currently facing the CDU is that many people who favour it in principle are depriving the party of their support in elections by refusing to go to the polls. There is clear evidence of a certain apathy or at least a marked weakness in mobilisation. This is a great reserve pool which the CDU must tap. Failure to mobilise may certainly be related to the swiftly changing kaleidoscope of grave political circumstances. In 2011, the CDU did perform various shifts in energy, defence, and educational policy which many of its potential followers were unable – or unwilling – to follow, be it because of their swiftness or on general principles. The problem is not that the party's former voters find its political opponent particularly interesting. Probably, many sympathisers of the CDU do not regard the social democrats with their three aspiring chancellors as much of an alternative. Rather, it appears that many CDU followers are sunk in resignation. This should not be so. This is where the party needs to create a new, inspiring idea, for it has hordes of followers and a faithful electoral base, and it can turn its potential to good account. But it will also have to work harder on concepts, on presenting innovative and mobilising ideas that are worth fighting for. The concept of a performance-based society might be updated by paying tribute to and supporting those who help the societal process to advance. This includes families with children as well as the working population as well as entrepreneurs who show initiative and shoulder responsibility.

Of course, the organisation, too, needs to become more receptive towards, for example, ecological developments. It may be that this should have been done a long time ago by, for instance, convening a new group within the CDU to address ecological subjects. In the conservative camp, to which some assign the CDU, introducing a new integration feature would be a point of some importance. Thus, for example, the party might consider a woman of non-German extraction but with a patriotic aura who thinks in conservative terms and is eloquent and successful in business. This would serve to correct the party's image a little and steal a lot of the opposing camp's thunder. And, of course, there are still the subjects in which the CDU is traditionally successful, such as social market economy.

Many analysts of people's parties, including some in the CDU itself, argue that part of the problem lies in the fact that the CDU has lost a powerful opponent. This may well be true; socialism in its material form finally turned out to be what the conservative side had always expected: an erroneous political and social concept that is not sustainable. But this is an old story that is no longer suitable for generating political approval. Nevertheless, it is true that the western democracies still have to hold their own against dictatorial but economically successful regimes like China, for example. Another challenge that will probably persist for quite some time is that of reconciling Islam with the values of the west. Islamist threats have not disappeared, and the major parties of the west that are consolidated by the rule of law must find an answer to it.

Generally speaking, the west is undergoing a phase in which it must hold its own in the process of globalisation and demographic change. To guarantee security in the face of these challenges is a great task, but it is likely that major integration parties will be better able to cope than parties whose radius of political action is identifiably smaller. Another issue for the future will probably be the need for society to close ranks in the face of challenges in foreign, economic, and cultural policy as well as in geopolitics. In other words: small, internet, fun, or protest parties cannot guarantee Germany's security, peace, and development – at least not on their own.

CONCLUSION

One aspect that is not being adequately dealt with at the moment is the need to develop these scenarios and communicate what is at stake. One piece of circumstantial evidence supporting this may be the rise of a party like the Pirates whose focus is less on society as a whole and more on special issues which, however, will not serve to build or seriously develop a society, nor will they serve to make and/or keep the party able to govern, particularly in times in which the global economy is as turbulent as it is at present. If we succeed not only in communicating the seriousness of political issues but also in recognising their consequences, answers in high politics will meet with greater resonance as well as with political parties that can credibly assure the public that they stand for these answers. It would be quite constructive, therefore, to draw a clear picture of the opponent that can be broken down into the citizens' everyday lives – without becoming the picture of an enemy. At any rate, people have always formed camps on the basis of what they do not want,

what they wish to disassociate themselves from at any cost (Scherer 2011, Petersen 2011). We should not underestimate the option of projecting a party's identity in this way – without, however, giving it any populist features. Failure to give colour and contours to a party's identity would be tantamount to allowing the mobilisation potential of a people's party to wither, leaving non-voters as unmotivated as before.

There is one critical point which appears important for the CDU, the question of whether it will have to learn to better perceive the people's attitude towards their lives. This was done in the immediate post-war period when the party successfully put the social currents that existed at the time on a more general footing. Possibly, the party may have to think more about how to get back in touch with that glorious era (Maier 2007). Of course, the CDU did not have all these capabilities right at the start in 1949. It only developed them after it had established itself against the competition – the CDU against the German Party, and the CSU against the Bavarian Party. Now, in the 21st century, we must ask critically whether the CDU is capable of identifying and gaining control of the currents that dominate our lives.

Next to the life experience of our modern society, which can be broken down into a growing number of different groupings, it is at least equally important for a people's party to perceive what societal interests need to be taken into account. This means that a political analysis should always be associated with an analysis of society. It is to be hoped that these analyses form part of the people's parties' political consultancy, for they are closely related to political approaches. This is one of these strong suits of Elmar Wiesendahl's critical and fact-packed discourse on people's parties (Wiesendahl 2011). Thus, the major parties should be repeatedly taxed with critical questions: do they address people's attitude to life? Are they still attractive to large segments of the population? Do they have a magnetic effect? Are they embedded in society? Do they address all age groups equally? Do they have charismatic personages who fascinate, convince and mobilise?

People's parties have been compared to tankers or elephants often before. Maybe we would do better to compare them to a jumbo jet flying through turbulences. Many things are rattled around. People feel queasy. As in politics, what ultimately counts is success in reaching the destination. The destination of a people's party always is to be the dominant

party in government and appoint its members to the top executive posts. If it is no longer strong enough for that, elementary deficits must be diagnosed. But there is no question of that even in the middle of the 17th legislative period of the federal diet. As more parties are added to Germany's multi-party system, the slices of the cake that go around grow smaller. We no longer have a three-party system, which is why it is unfair and/or somewhat simple-minded to draw comparisons with earlier periods.

Conversely, one might say that it is a positive fact worthy of note that at least one major party, the CDU, has been able to hold its own even in a changed multi-party system. This configuration is stabilised by programmatic adaptations and top-flight personnel (Wagner 2011). And if the parties of the union were to succeed in the midst of societal transformation to forge an alliance with those forces that stand for progress as well as societal stability, the situation of the CDU as a people's party would not be bad at all. Success in this regard is predicated on meeting some of the conditions that have been briefly sketched out in this paper. To that extent, the fate of the CDU lies in its own hands.

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- 1| *"You should never write them off too soon, these German Christian democrats. For you might find yourself in the wrong all of a sudden."*
- 2| *"The CDU will have to take leave of its claim to being a people's party [...] People's parties have outlived the very conditions on which their life is based, and they will never revive again [...]."*
- 3| *"[M]embership will not dwindle to zero; rather, it will level off, although it remains to be seen whether this will be at 400,000 or 200,000 members."*

THE CDA IN THE NETHERLANDS

Paul Lucardie

"We will not bend to the left, we will not bend to the right" – thus Dries van Agt, whom the new Christian Democratic Federation appointed its first top candidate (and thus its political leader) in 1976 (Van Agt 1976: 24). Actually, he first tried to form a coalition with the social democratic party (*Partij van de Arbeid*, PvdA) after the parliamentary elections of 1977 because that party had been the big winner at the polls. Only after this attempt had failed did he arrive at an understanding with the moderate right-wing liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*, VVD).

This tells us something about the status of the Christian democrats in the Dutch party system. Although the new party tried to establish itself in the political centre, it gradually drifted towards the right, materially restricting its chances for the future. This being so, maybe it should try shifting to the left again, in certain areas at least, so as to "re-centre" itself. To document this – undoubtedly controversial – proposition I am going to quote some empirical data in this contribution. To begin with, however, a brief account of the development of the Christian democratic party appears in order.

FOUNDATION, RISE, AND DECLINE OF THE CDA

The foundation of the Christian Democratic Appeal (*Christen-Democratisch Appèl*, CDA) in 1980 was a retarded birth. Since the end of the 19th century, there had been Protestant and Catholic parties in the Netherlands which often collaborated but nevertheless kept their distance. They were networked with numerous Protestant or Catholic organisations: trade unions, farmers' unions, youth associations, women's associations, universities, radio stations, and health insurances, nearly all organised on an ideological basis and formally or informally linked to political parties. This "pillarisation" began to erode only in the 1960s. Until 1967, however, the Protestant and Catholic parties held a clear majority in the Dutch House of Representatives (*Tweede Kamer*: "second chamber", although its weight had been greater than that of the indirectly-elected first chamber ever since 1848).

Pillarisation was undermined by secularisation, individualisation, theological renewal, new mass media, and the rise of a "post-materialist" or libertarian post-war generation that was critical of any authority, weakening the ties between Church and party. In the 1970s, the two major Protestant parties, the Anti-Revolutionary Party (*Anti-Revolutionaire Partij*, ARP) and the Christian-Historical Union (*Christelijk-Historische Unie*, CHU), decided after laborious negotiations to federate with the Catholic People's Party (*Katholieke Volkpartij*, KVP), dissolving their own organisations in 1980.¹

In 1977, the Christian Democratic Federation had won 49 of 150 seats in the House of Representatives. The number of mandates the new party received at the next parliamentary elections was almost the same (see Table 1). When Ruud Lubbers, a pragmatic entrepreneur, replaced the somewhat stiff and formal Van Agt as leader of the party in 1982, the CDA did even better in 1986 and 1989, reaching 54 mandates. Lubbers collaborated equally well with the VVD and the PvdA. From 1982 to 1989, he led a coalition with the right-wing liberals and from 1989 to 1994 with the social democrats. In these years, the CDA even succeeded in winning voters without a religious affiliation although the majority of its electorate belonged to one of the Protestant churches or the Catholic Church.² When Lubbers no longer stood for election as top candidate in 1994, the party lost many voters, particularly among those whose affiliation

Table 1: Distribution of seats in the Dutch House of Representatives (1977-2010)

	1977	1981	1982	1986	1989	1994	1998	2002	2003	2006	2010
CDA	49	48	45	54	54	34	29	43	44	41	21
PvdA	53	44	47	52	49	37	45	23	42	33	30
VVD	28	26	36	27	22	31	38	24	28	22	31
D66	8	17	6	9	12	24	14	7	6	3	10
GL	6	9	9	3	6	5	11	10	8	7	10
SP						2	5	9	9	25	15
CU	1	3	3	2	3	5	5	4	3	6	5
SGP	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	2
LPF								26	8	0	
PVV										9	24
Others	2	0	1	0	1	10	0	2	0	2	2
Total	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150

Abbreviations:

CDA: *Christen-Democratisch Appèl* (Christian Democratic Appeal);
 CU: *ChristenUnie* (Christian Union), until 2002: Reformed Political Union and Reformed Political Federation;
 D66: *Democraten '66* (Democrats '66);
 GL: *GroenLinks* (Green Left), until 1989: Communist Party of the Netherlands, Evangelical People's Party, Radical Party, and Pacifist-socialist Party;
 LPF: *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (List Pim Fortuyn);
 PvdA: *Partij van de Arbeid* (Labour Party);
 PVV: *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Party for Freedom);
 SGP: *Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij* (Reformed State Party);
 SP: *Socialistische Partij* (Socialist Party);
 VVD: *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy);

Source: Kiesraad (www.verkiezingsuitslagen.nl).

towards a church was weak or non-existent. Now reduced to 34 seats, the CDA was no longer indispensable in a coalition government and was forced to reconfigure itself in opposition.

To most Christian democrats, this was a novel experience.³ At first, the CDA was relatively unsuccessful: in 1998, it lost another five mandates, reaching a low point in its election returns. Four years later, however, it won 43 seats, once again constituting the biggest parliamentary party.

Jan Peter Balkenende, a university teacher, had re-established the unity of his party. His balanced and moderately conservative position in the multi-culturalism debate that was highly topical at the time enabled him to win votes not only from the party's core electorate but also from newcomers without a strong religious affiliation. Just like Lubbers, Balkenende first collaborated with the VVD (2002-2006) and then with the PvdA (2007-2010).⁴ To be sure, he did not have much success: all three coalitions which he led broke apart prematurely. When, despite everything, he stood as top candidate again in 2010 he suffered a spectacular defeat. The CDA won no more than 21 seats, a new all-time low. Ranking fourth among the country's parties for the first time in its history, the CDA was outstripped by the VVD, the PvdA, and the Party for Freedom (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*, PVV) that was founded by parliamentarian Geert Wilders in 2006, two years after he left the VVD.

After difficult internal debates and a tumultuous party convention, the Christian democrats decided to form a coalition with the VVD that was to be supported in parliament by the PVV. For the first time in the history of the Netherlands, this liberal-Christian democratic government was led by a liberal Prime Minister. This may partially explain the VVD's growing popularity in surveys, in contrast to the diminishing approval ratings of the Christian democrats.⁵ While the CDA's decline might be partially explained by leadership deficiencies and campaign errors, there are probably structural causes at work as well, including changes in the party system and in society.

THE SECULARISED PARTY SYSTEM

Cultural struggle dominated the Dutch party system from the start; class struggle came later (Lucardie 2006:331ff.). Denominational parties – Protestant or Catholic – dominated the parties from the introduction of universal franchise in 1918 to about 1967. Unlike most European countries, the line of conflict between denominational and secular parties in the Netherlands in the 19th and early 20th century was defined by two terms, "right" and "left". Protestant and Catholic parties belong to the right wing, liberal and social democratic parties to the left (Lipschits 1969: 48ff.). The situation changed only after 1945. Since then, the socio-economic line of conflict between state interventionism (social equality) and free market economy has been dominating the party system and the interpretation of the terms "left" and "right".

The liberal VVD, which was founded in 1948, is regarded as "right-wing" by most voters. Since 1970, psephological studies have placed it between 7 and 8 on a scale from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right). The PvdA's rating generally was 4, i. e. to the left of the centre. Being a party of the centre, the CDA should have ranked somewhere between 5 and 6 but had to be content with a position between 6 and 7, somewhat to the right of the centre and not very distant from the VVD. There has been no change in this regard in recent years although some electoral researchers say that after 2000, the implications of "left" and "right" are no longer exclusively socio-economic but also socio-cultural. These days, "right" is synonymous with nationalism and authoritarianism, whereas "left" is identified with cosmopolitan and libertarian values and a multi-cultural society. In this relatively new cultural struggle, too, the CDA occupies a position somewhat to the right of the centre, once again not far away from the VVD (Van Holsteyn and Irwin 2011: 165ff.).

In substance, therefore, there is not much difference between the CDA and the right-wing liberal VVD in the view of most voters. Only where ethical questions are concerned – abortion, euthanasia, prostitution, Sunday observance – do the positions occupied by the Christian democrats differ from those of the liberals, which in those instances reject any restriction of individual freedom, as some social democrats do. To most voters, however, this ethical cleavage is less important than the socio-economic and socio-cultural line of conflict. For the same reason, a clear majority of Christian democratic voters endorses a coalition between the CDA and the VVD. Only about one third prefer a coalition between the CDA and the PvdA (Van Holsteyn and Irwin 2011: 170f.). This has not always been so: in the 1990s, the majority of CDA voters favoured cooperating with the social democrats. Developments in practice partially followed the voters' preferences. Between 1980 and 2011, coalitions between Christian democrats and liberals were somewhat more frequent than those between Christian democrats and social democrats (13 years vs. 10 years). Moreover, tensions were more frequent between the CDA and the PvdA whenever they governed together.

We may say, therefore, that Christian democrats and liberals really should be partners in an alliance. On the other hand, they also compete. Whereas competition formerly used to be restricted by the bonds between Church and politics, this hardly applies today. Only a minority of voters who are very faithful to their church never doubt their decision

to opt for the CDA, while a growing number of Catholics and Protestants cross over between the CDA and the VVD more and more frequently. However, church loyalty is gradually diminishing in the Netherlands. The churches are losing members rapidly. In the year when the CDA was founded, nearly 10 million or about 70% of the Dutch population belonged to a Christian church, whereas in 2005, that number was down to nearly 7 million or 45% of a population that had grown in the meantime (Becker and de Hart 2006: 30f.).⁶ Moreover, only a fraction of these members go to church regularly.

So the electoral base of the Christian democrats has been shrinking slowly but inexorably. At the same time, the number of voters who reject the CDA has been growing. As a survey of May 2011 shows, nearly 80% of voters think the CDA unappealing, far more than those who think the same about the VVD (56%) and the PvdA (64%) and even the PVV (70%).⁷ Similarly, an overwhelming majority of voters think that the other minor Christian party (CU) is unappealing, which might possibly be interpreted as a reaction against the formerly dominant pillarisation.

Thus, the Christian democratic party is forced to compete with the VVD for a growing number of swing voters. Since 2006, the national-populist PVV has been wooing Christian democratic voters, too (see Vossen 2011). According to electoral researchers, the CDA lost about seven mandates to the VVD and three to the PVV in 2010.⁸ Most of the (virtual) seats that the CDA "lost" in surveys after the elections went to the VVD.⁹

The Christian democrats are well aware of their precarious situation (CDA 2010). Yet the party is in several minds about how best to compete with the VVD and the PVV. Some prominent party members of the right wing – mostly Catholics – advocated laying greater stress on conservatism, while the left wing argued for a return to the political centre and the idea of Christian solidarity (Vollaard 2006; Voerman 2011: 16ff.). Fairly abstract at first, the debate solidified into a concrete question in 2010: should the CDA opt for a coalition with the right-wing liberal VVD that would have to be supported by the PVV, or should it go into opposition? At the party convention where the decision was made, a two-thirds majority voted for joining the government and only one third for opposition. Naturally, this is by no means the end of the debate about the party's ideological course. On the contrary, the decision to join the government is not necessarily the same as embracing conservatism; for

many party members, the decision was probably pragmatic rather than ideological. "Well, the country must be governed", people said, "and not by the left-wingers, either." The question about the course of the party will probably have to be clarified further in the next few years, when a new election platform will have to be developed and a new top candidate elected.

THE FUTURE OF THE CDA

Today, it is difficult to predict what course the Christian democrats will adopt in the next few years. Because the party cannot afford a split just now, a radical change appears rather improbable. In the past, the party has always endeavoured to avoid factional squabbles and reconcile opposing interests. Very likely, it will do the same now. To be sure, some – moderate – change would be required to regain lost votes and reach out to new voters.

Where and how could the CDA win votes? Electoral research suggests that there is a relatively large group of voters with which the established parties hardly concern themselves: those who combine social-democratic or "left" views in socio-economic matters with conservative or "right" ideas in socio-cultural matters (van der Lubben 2006). These voters rebel against privatisation and liberalisation in the energy sector and in public transport and against pension cuts and other reforms in the social security system, but they also oppose multi-culturalism and the liberal drug policy in the Netherlands.

The CDA already reflects the views of these voters adequately in the socio-cultural but not in the socio-economic sector. In the last few decades, the economic and social policy endorsed by the Christian democrats was liberal rather than social democratic. In its 2010 campaign, the PVV attempted to win over these voters, with some success. In the event, Wilders did reject pension cuts, although his critical attitude towards Islam appears too extreme to many of these socially conservative voters. Therefore, it is not improbable that such voters might find their way back to the CDA, provided that the Christian democrats amalgamate their value conservatism with social democratic ideas. People who vote for the PvdA and even the Socialist Party (SP) might be prepared to give their vote to the CDA, sharing the former parties' socio-economic views but not their enthusiasm for multi-culturalism and their

progressive-liberal ideas on crime (prevention is better than punishment), the legalisation of drugs, prostitution, etc. To achieve this, the Christian democrats would not necessarily have to abandon their Christian identity and avow conservatism explicitly. They might, however, try to learn from their German sister party how to retain a Christian image of man without over-emphasising Christian identity.

To avoid alienating traditional voters, any shift to the left in the socio-economic field should not be too sudden and dramatic. The party's course should be changed in a succession of small, inconspicuous steps. And, of course, the new leader and top candidate of the party should support this change at the next election in a way that ensures its media appeal.

There are never any guarantees in politics. Any change of course, modest though it may be, harbours risks. The other parties might claim that the CDA is unreliable and inconstant. If the worst came to the worst, the CDA might lose yet more traditional voters without winning new ones. If the Christian democrats should not change their course in the second decade of the 21st century, they will probably retain their electoral base but hardly attract any new voter groups. As indicated above, the number of church-going traditional voters will probably go on shrinking. In that event, the CDA will have to reconcile itself to the end of its ability to play a dominant part in the Dutch party system. As a medium-sized or even small party, it might occasionally be invited to join a government coalition as junior partner, but would often be forced to remain in opposition. Its position in the party system would be similar to that of the Christian People's Party in Denmark or the Christian democrats in Sweden (Steffen 2006).

It is certainly not easy to choose between a not-unrisky return to the political centre – as explained above – and a secure but dwindling position to the right. For now, the Christian democrats might console themselves with a saying ascribed to the *pater patriae*, the father of the fatherland, the Prince of Orange and Count of Nassau, nicknamed “the taciturn” (Mörke 2007: 268): “Point n'est besoin d'espérer pour entreprendre, ni de réussir pour persévérer” – in English: “You do not need either hope to do something or success to persevere.” Fighting for religious freedom and independence from Spanish dominance, he suffered many defeats and spent all his fortune. Lastly, he even put his life on the

line. Ultimately, however, he reached his goal. His heirs still reign in the Netherlands, and his ideals of denominational coexistence and tolerance still inspire the Christian democrats today – and others as well.

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- 1| The name given to the federation in 1980 was "Christen-Democratisch Appèl". For more about the previous history of the CDA, see e. g. ten Napel (1992); for a brief history of the Dutch party system, see Lucardie (2006); for more details, see e. g. Wielenga (2008).
- 2| Psephological studies show that in 1986 and 1989, 16% and 15% (respectively) of the Christian democratic voters did not belong to any church. In those years, more than half of those who voted PvdA and VVD were not church members (Van Holsteyn and Irwin 2011: 159).
- 3| The KVP never was in opposition, the ARP only from 1946 to 1952, the CHU from 1946 to 1948, 1965-1967, and 1973-1977; see Lucardie (2006: 345).
- 4| Because neither the CDA-VVD nor the CDA-PvdA combination had a majority in parliament from the 1990s onwards, they needed a third party to make up a majority: 2002-2003 the List Pim Fortuyn (LPF), 2003-2006 the left-wing liberal Democrats 66 (D66), and 2007-2010 the Christian Union.

- 5| Opinion polls show that in October 2011, the VVD might have won 35 to 37 mandates, the CDA only 15; see online: <http://www.synovate.nl> (25 October 2011). By February 2012, the number of the Christian democrats' virtual mandates was down to 14 (<http://www.synovate.nl>, 1 March 2012).
- 6| The figure has probably diminished further by now.
- 7| Politieke Barometer, "Het politieke krachtenveld", <http://www.synovate.nl> (8 November 2011).
- 8| Politieke Barometer, "Nieuwkomers, weglopers en trouwe kiezers", <http://www.synovate.nl> (18 June 2010).
- 9| According to opinion polls, the CDA had lost another seven or eight seats by December 2011; see Politieke Barometer, "Winst en verlies", <http://www.synovate.nl> (20 December 2011); and Politieke Barometer, "Ex-CDA'ers en ex-PvdA'ers", <http://www.synovate.nl> (18 November 2011).

THE AUSTRIAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (ÖVP)

Dietmar Halper

Every day, politicians are plagued by articles entitled "Can our democracy still be saved?" or "The end of the people's parties". We should not let ourselves be duped by this media predilection for doomsday scenarios, which is why I am not one of the Christian democratic apocalyptics – although the current situation is almost enough to convert you to that view. After all, prophesying the doom of the people's parties has been traditional for almost 40 years now. In 1972, the revolutionary socialist, Joseph Buttinger, announced the demise of the people's parties in his book (Buttinger 1972). Approximately since that time, the people's parties have indeed been continuously losing votes and have been continuously under pressure. At present, surveys give the Austrian People's Party 25% (cf. ATV.at 2011), which puts it far away from the 30% mark which is often described as the "people's party limit" in political science (e. g. Schönbohm 1985). Critics are already pointing out that the ÖVP should no longer be called a people's party but, semantically more correct, a medium-sized party. In spite of these considerations I still believe in a great future for Christian democracy. For this reason, it is important to highlight this again and again and develop the Christian democratic programmes actively.

People's parties occupy a position of eminent responsibility especially in highly differentiated, multi-ethnic and pluralist societies. Debates within the parties serve to articulate and hone down conflicts of interest, avoid extremes, and search for the lowest common denominator. People's parties are better than either single-issue or clientele parties at formulating commonweal interests and reflecting them in the heterogeneity of their members. And if we compare the major issues highlighted by the Christian and social democratic people's parties to those addressed by the opposition, we see that the people's parties cover a wider range of contents and issues than the parties of the Austrian opposition. People's parties are open to voters and members of all creeds and social strata. As catch-all parties incorporating different wings, traditions, and focal issues, they are able to balance conflicting interests internally and formulate positions from which the majority of citizens may benefit. The people's parties' functionaries come from a variety of social strata, age cohorts, and professions, and the creeds that encounter one another in a people's party differ widely as well. The effect of this heterogeneity is to stabilise the system – not only in people's parties. The question is, therefore, whether the people's party might not be exactly the type that is predestined to formulate a basic consensus that is acceptable to all citizens.

Because of their membership structure, people's parties must place consensus before conflict. The Austrians are fond of saying that the ÖVP consists of 54 sub-organisations: nine federal states with six sub-organisations each. Territorial heterogeneity and the differences between the interests of the functionaries force the ÖVP to try and satisfy everyone's interests with each and every new bill – employers and employees, farmers, senior citizens, young people, and women.

A heterogeneous membership structure is both a challenge and a treasure. This diversity is of particular value in democratic policy because intra-party policy-making has always involved outstanding achievements in integration, between denominations as well as between major political traditions – liberalism, conservatism, and Christian socialism. Integrating different ideologies which used to stand irreconcilably side by side, hampering the liberal and democratic development of the body politic, constitutes a unique achievement of the Christian democratic people's parties.

To avoid the sort of post-democratic confusion suggested in a somewhat alarmist way by Colin Crouch in his book (Crouch 2005), there is an on-going need for people's parties. I am convinced that social peace will depend on the existence of strong people's parties recruited from the body of the nation, advocating the best socio-political concepts in a wise political contest, always integrating, never dividing. Only the people's parties lay claim to being able to develop offerings for all citizens. Socio-political integration will have to be provided in the future, too, because today's particularly virulent issues include generational equity, distributive justice, and migration. Therefore, we need to develop social market economy further to form a third path between neo-liberalism and socialism. Social market economy defines itself as an economic and social order which revolves around the individual. It aims at self-fulfilment for all people according to their abilities. Social market economy strives for optimum development opportunities for all people, independently of their social background, age, and gender. Everyone is needed, no one must be left out. Eco-social market economy is an integration model which amalgamates economic competitiveness, social fairness, and ecological accountability. Especially in these times of economic crisis, this kind of policy-making acquires a progressive facet. The ability to strike a balance between different societal interests is one of the core properties of naturally-grown people's parties, counteracting the centrifugal forces of pluralisation. In a democracy, people's parties unfold their emancipation potential by promoting reconciliation instead of extremes – no small contribution towards stabilising democratic political systems. Equally exhausted by crises and hyper-individualism, citizens yearn for normality and security. The eco-social market economy on which the ÖVP relies is a regulatory model which, if the right steps are taken, may see to it that the current second recession is followed by sustainable economic recovery. But the path to this perspective is long and stony, for the labours of day-to-day politics show quite another picture at the moment. There is some hard work ahead for the ÖVP.

THE ÖVP'S RECORD AFTER 2008

Let us begin by taking a brief look at the record of the Austrian people's party. The returns of the last elections to the National Council in Austria, which took place in 2008, yielded the following results: Austria's social democrats, the SPÖ, were returned as the strongest party at 29.3%,

followed by the ÖVP at 26%. Austria's Freedom Party (FPÖ) came in third at 17.5%. At 10.7%, the Austrian Future Alliance (BZÖ) came in fourth. The BZÖ is a right-wing populist faction, the product of a split in the FPÖ that was still led at the time of the National Council elections by Jörg Haider, the right-wing populist who was well known in Germany and died in a car crash after the elections. The Greens only came in fifth at 10.4% of the vote.

What lessons could be learned from that parliamentary election? The results achieved by both SPÖ and ÖVP in 2008 were the worst in the entire era of the second republic. Having reached less than 30% of the vote, both can no longer be classified as major parties. Ultimately, the result reflects the bad image of the work of the red-black government in the legislative period before 2008. The chancellor, Alfred Gusenbauer, and the vice chancellor, Wilhelm Molterer, did not succeed in moulding the government parties into a workable configuration. This may be partly due to the ÖVP's success in the coalition negotiations after the election of 2006, but certainly more to the SPÖ's distrust and thirst for revenge. The SPÖ profited most from the swing votes among the population when it replaced Alfred Gusenbauer with Werner Faymann as top candidate. This is also the reason why the SPÖ's result was better in the end. At the same time, nobody was particularly tickled by newcomers to the Austrian National Council. Parliament remained closed to the Liberal Forum as well as to a Christian-socialist list headed by the former president of the Tyrolean Chamber of Labour, Fritz Dinkhauser, whose party won second place in the elections to the Tyrolean regional parliament from scratch.

Who voted ÖVP, and who did not? 33% of the voters under the age of 30 opted for the Freedom Party, 20% for the Austrian People's Party, and only 14% for the social democrats or the Greens. A disproportionate share of male workers voted for the liberals. Well above one third of the workers – particularly unskilled workers but also skilled workers – voted FPÖ, and only 25% gave the social democrats their vote. The number one among workers is no longer the social democrats but the Freedom Party. Conversely, the Christian democrats received a disproportionately high number of votes from young women and youths from rural areas. The Greens obtained most of their support among female voters aged 30 plus and from the educated upper-middle classes.

Nearly 40% of pensioners voted for the social democrats, 28% for the Austrian People's Party. Among farmers, the ÖVP's success still is better than average, with four out of five farmers voting ÖVP. However, this appears in its proper perspective if we look at the small share of farmers in the spectrum of the Austrian electorate. Among the self-employed, the ÖVP took the lead at 23%, followed by the Greens at 21%, unmistakable evidence that even entrepreneurs – especially those operating one-person companies – may have a high affinity for the Greens. In these sectors, the self-employed no longer vote mainstream automatically, a warning to the ÖVP to pay more attention to the group of the newly self-employed.

What happened in Austria after the parliamentary elections of 2008? Immediately after the defeat at the polls there was a change at the top of the ÖVP. Wilhelm Molterer, the top candidate, went out, and Josef Pröll, the Minister of Agriculture and the Environment, came in. This swift change spared the party the turbulences of an internal power struggle and afforded it a fresh departure. Ultimately, 2009 proved a very good year for the ÖVP. There was a saying current at the time to the effect that "the Austrian federal chancellor's name is Werner Faymann, and that of the head of government Josef Pröll." In the European elections, the ÖVP regained its number one position all over Austria, and in the subsequent elections to the parliaments of Carinthia, Upper Austria, Vorarlberg, and Salzburg the regional parties produced similarly respectable results for the Austrian People's Party.

The decline came in 2010. Josef Pröll, the Minister of Finance, had to answer for a budget that had long been delayed and, consequently, severely criticised by the media before it had even been tabled. The government was unable to make any major advances in various important fields that should have been tackled, particularly old-age pensions, administrative reforms, health, and care. To top it all, the ÖVP was defeated in the elections to the regional parliaments of Styria and Vienna. All in all, 2010 was not a particularly good year for the ÖVP.

The same trend continued in 2011. The country was shaken by a lobbying scandal. It was rumoured that Ernst Strasser, ex-minister of the interior and an active member of the European Parliament for the ÖVP, was a lobbyist, having taken advantage of his function to support international corporations in the European Parliament. Then, the next setback

arrived: Josef Pröll, the vice-chancellor and federal party chairman, was taken ill with pulmonary embolism and spent weeks in intensive care, leaving the ÖVP practically without a leader in this difficult phase. After his recovery, Pröll ultimately responded to his personal medical condition by completely withdrawing from federal politics.

In May 2011, he was succeeded as federal party chairman by Michael Spindelegger, whose leadership was not contested. But the corruption scandals in the ÖVP's years of government from 2000 to 2006 never left the party alone. Moreover, all attempts to delete the corruption scandals from the agenda have remained unsuccessful. Recently, the Austrian parliament has convened a committee of inquiry to investigate the issue, keeping its public virulence alive and keeping the government from dealing with its major reform projects.

FOCAL POINTS OF RESEARCH

Based on this status quo, researchers close to the Austrian People's Party are currently addressing several key areas which we think are strategically crucial for the future of Christian democracy.

The first key issue is Christian democratic politics in urban areas. Austria's ten biggest cities are home to one third of the country's voters. The ÖVP can only win a national election if it succeeds in those cities. But it is precisely in those cities that the ÖVP is facing its biggest structural problems. In Vienna, the ÖVP has fallen to somewhat less than 14% since the last elections to the regional parliament in 2010. And if you cannot do better than almost fourteen per cent in a big city like Vienna with a population of more than 1.7 million, you have to make a great effort and achieve very good returns in the rest of Austria if you want to be successful overall. Without good results in Vienna, the ÖVP cannot win. Our objective must be to grow stronger in all cities.

In Austria's second biggest city, Christian democracy has already succeeded in this. A social democratic stronghold for decades, Graz is now governed by a Christian democrat, Siegfried Nagel, who was highly successful on a ticket featuring markedly conservative values and economic liberality. Once again, however, the electorate's behaviour in national and regional elections differs markedly. In 2008, in the last local elections, the ÖVP won 38.37% of the vote but only 26% in the last

parliamentary elections in the same year. The problem appears even more drastic in Dornbirn, Austria's tenth biggest city. There, the ÖVP won an absolute majority in the elections to the local council but only 26.7% in the elections to the National Council. The strategic dilemma confronting the ÖVP is this: even in cities where it invariably does well in regional elections it loses votes in national elections. How to explain that?

One simple answer might be: "The ÖVP must do more in urban politics to obtain better returns in the cities." However, if we analyse the results of recent elections we find that the problems are more profound and cannot be resolved quite as simply. Having taken a very close look at the election results of the last 15 to 20 years, we of the Political Academy cannot support without reservation the theory that enhanced urban politics will bring better election results. Whenever the ÖVP was successful, it was equally successful in urban *and* rural areas. And whenever the ÖVP did poorly in elections, its results were weak in the cities *and* in the country. Ultimately, the only difference between election results was that amplitude spikes were more extreme in the cities than in the country. This means that voters in the cities today are more flexible and less loyal to any particular party, which is why the differences between the ÖVP's best and worst returns in one and the same city are so great. But no election result was ever related to specifically urban political questions. This means that political issues, such as old-age pensions, security, the economy, energy, environmental protection, health, and care affect urban voters quite as much as those in the country. Such issues only need a different touch for different regions, and they must be broken down differently. We are currently working on a solution for this problem. The strength and power we have at the local level must be transmitted more effectively to the federal level in the future.

Our organising and campaigning capability in urban areas is another question. For one of the ÖVP's strongest suits has no effect in the cities – our dense network of sympathisers, members, or functionaries who represent the ÖVP's ideas and political proposals among their friends, at the workplace, in clubs, or in their families. Moreover, the ÖVP must increase the power of its organisation in the cities. "Visibility in public" is the key in this case. The ÖVP should enhance its physical presence in the cities through campaign workshops – mobile teams that approach voters personally on the spot.

Another strategic focus should be on reaching out to neo-Austrian voters. There are nearly 1.5 million people with a migration background in Austria, i. e. their parents were born abroad. Three in four of these persons (1.075 m) themselves moved to Austria at some time or other (first-generation migrants). 352,000 have parents who both immigrated from abroad, while they themselves were born in Austria (second-generation migrants). Around 653,000 persons with a migration background have obtained Austrian citizenship.

Some 70% of first-generation migrants hail from countries outside the EU. At 349,000, people from ex-Yugoslavia form the largest group, followed by ethnic Turks at 162,000. Most of the migrants from inside the EU come from Germany (126,000) and Poland (56,000). The picture presented by second-generation migrants is similar: their parents mostly come from ex-Yugoslavia or Turkey.

Thus, the 653,000 new Austrians who are entitled to vote form a new block of voters in which all political parties are interested, all the more so as one in three children in Vienna and one in five children in Austria has a migration background. Therefore, we may safely assume that the new Austrians will play a strategically important role for the people's party in the future. Yet the voting behaviour of this group of voters has been poorly researched so far. There are several reasons for this. First, the proportion of new Austrians who are prepared to answer in election surveys is below average, or else they refuse to answer altogether. Second, most polls on the voting behaviour of migrants lump together ethnic Germans, Poles, Turks, and Serbians, although their voting behaviour differs quite widely.

The most comprehensive study so far on the voting behaviour of migrants was presented by Günther Ogris of the Institute for Social Research and Consulting (Sora); unfortunately, it only covers Vienna, the federal capital (Beig 2010). However, Ogris' results must be taken with a grain of salt because his sample is small and not representative. For the study, which dates back to 2008, 370 Viennese workers with a Turkish or ex-Yugoslavian migration background were interviewed and grouped by name. Among the new Austrians, the social democrats are in the lead; at the time, 60% of Austro-Turkish workers said they had voted SPÖ in the last elections to the municipal council. Among the ex-Yugoslavs, the SPÖ's approval rating of 33% at election time and 44%

at survey time was markedly lower but still the highest of all. Thus, the SPÖ is the most popular party among migrants.

There is yet another intervening variable: the election turnout among new Austrians is lower than that of old Austrians. Thus, no more than 59% of the ethnic Turks and 35% of the ethnic Yugoslavians stated that they were reliably making use of their right to vote. Another study commissioned and published by the *Kurier* daily in 2000 stated that 35% of the Vienna-based foreigners would vote for the ÖVP, 32% for the SPÖ, and 14% for the Greens. Among the new citizens entitled to vote, the Greens were ahead at 30%, followed by the SPÖ (18%) and the ÖVP (16%). However, we know neither the size of the sample nor the period of study of this particular survey. Again, any conclusions regarding this new target group should be taken with a pinch of salt because of their low election turnout and the deficiencies of the sociological database. At the same time, Christian democracy has discovered a new strategic focus in the voting behaviour of the naturalised Austrians because relatively few new Austrians vote ÖVP. This makes the voting behaviour of naturalised Austrians an interesting issue which may well turn into an enduring problem, given the structural shrinkage of the electoral base. In other words: the ÖVP must begin right now to consider very diligently the question of how to deal as a Christian democratic party with groups of voters that form new target groups. In almost all cases, outreach is confined to individual ethnic groups. In Austria, this works well with ethnic Poles, Romanians, and Croatians. Conversely, the ÖVP signally fails to reach the ethnic Turkish population, meaning that Muslim voters hardly ever opt for Christian democracy. In this context, the ÖVP needs to clarify the question of how to reconcile Islam with Christian democracy. In the opinion of the ÖVP, there is a certain potential among families, tradesmen, and the self-employed. Strategically, however, the ÖVP must ask itself whether it wants to reach all groups of migrants equally or restrict itself to migrants from specific cultures.

Based on Andreas Wüst's investigations in Germany (2006), the following temporary working hypotheses may be formulated for Austria:

- The interest in Austrian politics as well as the turnout at elections is slightly below the average of the Austrian-born people, and the new Austrians' interest is dominated by factors other than ethnic origin (age, education, gender).

- Many people not born in Austria live in extended families. They will vote for a party whose social policy aims to preserve these structures; in Austria, this is clearly the ÖVP.
- Counteracting this tendency, the Greens especially are seen as more generous in their policy of reuniting families (a highly important political concern to new citizens).
- Moreover, migrants tend to settle in underprivileged urban areas (e. g. Favoriten and Brigittenau in Vienna) where the SPÖ is strongly entrenched by tradition.
- Similarly, it is probable that there are hardly any differences between Austria and Germany as far as the parties preferred by the various cultures are concerned. People who were born in the former eastern bloc tend to prefer the ÖVP. In Austria, they include Romanians, Bulgarians, Russians (particularly Russian Jews migrated to Vienna), and Poles.
- For the largest group of naturalised migrants from ex-Yugoslavia, there are no empirically secure figures available so far.

A third crucial issue in our strategic considerations is where and/or how new parties might arise as new competitors. Trust in politics is diminishing apace. Many citizens no longer want to engage in it. Bashing politics has become part of the media's standard repertoire. This is why I occasionally ask journalists, "When was the last time you had good words to say about a politician?" So far, none has been able to answer my question off the cuff. This contempt for the political profession must be superseded by respect again. The opinion that government is staffed exclusively by people who are incapable, powerless and without leadership qualities must not be allowed to take a firm hold in the public mind. People quite rightly expect leadership qualities from their politicians, especially in times of crisis.

There are good, committed, and qualified persons to be found in the ranks of the ÖVP. Trust is the currency of policy. As long as we as politicians do not enjoy the people's trust, they will be critical towards our work and our decisions and ultimately refuse to vote for us. This general disenchantment with politics offers new parties a break. In Germany, the Pirates succeeded in entering the regional parliament of Berlin right

off the bat on a post-gender programme and with a focus on transparency and new media. To a certain extent, the rosy outlook for new parties is due to our pluralist and individualised society. When deciding which way to vote, citizens no longer ask themselves, "Who best represents my world-view?" or "Where is my political home?" but "From which party do I personally stand to benefit most if I vote for it?"

At present, there is a vacuum for one or more new parties in Austria. The greatest threat to the ÖVP might be posed by a party of economic liberalism. The confederation of industry has repeatedly avowed its intention to support such a party. Similarly, the Austrian billionaire, Frank Stronach, has repeatedly emphasised in interviews that he is ready to support a new party financially or found it himself (APA 2011). The ÖVP especially would lose votes to a pro-business party, even though it might be no more than 2 or 3%. Given the tense situation of Christian democracy today, even these 2 or 3% would be a severe blow.

But there is also room for a new party in the socio-politically liberal camp. Unlike Germany, where the Pirates' approval rating was up to 10% in recent surveys (Hebel 2011), the Austrian Pirates are still faltering, but they are getting a boost from Germany (Dax 2011). Austria's Pirates have set their target for the parliamentary elections at 2%, while the political scientist Peter Filzmayer estimates their voter potential at up to 10%. In Filzmayer's view, any new party in Austria has a chance of obtaining a two-digit result simply because it appears as such. For the ÖVP, it would be more desirable if the Pirates were to stand successfully in elections than if a new economically liberal party were to be founded. While the Pirates would mainly deprive the Greens and the social democrats of some of their votes, an economically liberal party would mainly bleed the Christian democrats. As early as 2008, the ÖVP was made painfully aware of this exchange of voters when it lost many economically liberal voters to the BZÖ. To be sure, Jörg Haider's demise has reduced the threat of a repetition of the BZÖ's success because his successor, Josef Bucher, does not have Haider's charisma and the alliance will barely make it into parliament by 2013 – if at all. Given good campaign work, the ÖVP should be able to recover the votes it lost to the BZÖ.

THE STRENGTHS OF THE ÖVP

These new challenges aside, the ÖVP has some traditional strengths for winning future elections. Its greatest strength is its dense network of functionaries, particularly in rural areas. The ÖVP is a mayors' party, and it is very well set up on the spot. In more than 1,600 of 2,200 local governments, the ÖVP provides the mayor – around three quarters of all mayors. Mobilising civil organisations is another of the ÖVP's strong points. Thus, the farmers' union and the Young ÖVP are quite efficient mobilisation forces. But mobilisation is always a matter of atmosphere in a mainstream party. At the moment, the ÖVP's functionaries are not in a very optimistic mood. The party's own functionaries harbour expectations which the government cannot fulfil. They expect the government to tackle more matters and, in a more abstract way, to get things done. In the functionaries' view, the ÖVP is currently stagnating. They tell the party, "You are the engine and the mainspring of this government, please get a move on!" However, a coalition government cannot fulfil these expectations if the coalition partner, the SPÖ, refuses to play. Thus, you are landed with a motivation problem among the rank-and-file that can only be resolved by providing more information on the one hand and pledging to win the next election on the other.

Led by Michael Spindelegger, the ÖVP has been repositioning itself as a Christian social mainstream party since the spring of 2011. Unfortunately, our competitor has succeeded in labelling the ÖVP among the voters as a party pandering to the well-to-do who are anxious to preserve their status. Emancipatory projects like "co-ownership for all" and a development-oriented human image have thus been manoeuvred into the defensive. Consequently, the ÖVP is now doing more to strengthen its image as a representative of all occupations and social strata. Our chance in this case lies in the fact that the ÖVP comprises six sub-organisations. The target groups of the workers' union, the business association, the farmers' union, the union of senior citizens, the women's movement, and the Young ÖVP cover wide swaths of the population. We should make use of this to influence these sectors politically instead of frazzling ourselves in internal debates. Moreover, the orientation of our people's party's programme should be reflected in its political practice. The focal points initially named by Spindelegger include freedom, self-determination, efficiency, security, a proper balance between the individual and society, sustainability in all walks of life, and a preference of subsidiary solutions over centralism.

Because of the numerous affairs mentioned above – Strasser, Telekom, BUWOG, etc. – Michael Spindelegger's personal integrity and credibility now form a sub-issue in civil politics. The trust we lost through those corruption scandals can be recovered only by returning to values such as modesty in office. Lastly, the ÖVP must ask itself some uncomfortable questions in addressing its recent defeats at the polls and its current low approval rating: how can we make voters understand us better? Which of our values are appreciated by the electorate?

The repositioning process led by Spindelegger aims to make the ÖVP understandable to all citizens. Each voter should know at a glance what good it will do him to vote ÖVP. To be successful in politics, you need to make specific issues your own, take over the lead in addressing them, and score through positions of your own instead of merely reacting to the initiatives of your competitors. Quality in substance enables even a junior partner in government to win elections and become the party with the highest vote again in 2013. However, the economic and Euro crisis is forcing politicians to tackle other tough subjects. At present, Austria is fighting to retain its triple-A rating and intends to introduce a debt curb on the German pattern from 2016 onwards.

One thing is certain: the times of post-materialist navel-gazing and scurrilously gaudy posturings are over. These days, politicians need to confront tough economic realities again: a new precariat has evolved, the middle class is melting, immigration costs the state more than it benefits from it, people's take-home pay is stagnating, the Austrian population is ageing, and the funding of the social security systems is not assured in the long run. The people's party will confront all these urgent matters with the seriousness they deserve. It is the ÖVP's political will that the prosperity which the population has generated for itself should not dwindle. Consequently, the party will be convening seven issue-specific conferences to develop new focal points and action programmes before the parliamentary elections of 2013. Important objectives include strengthening the manufacturing sector, containing the farm-to-factory movement, enhancing the infrastructure and the educational structure, securing the supply of energy in the long run, and ensuring that it remains affordable to the consumer. Further critical points include financing the social security system sustainably in the face of dwindling birth-rates and reducing unemployment despite the upcoming second recession. At the meta-political level, the ÖVP is asking itself how best to realise distributive justice (between employers and

employees, between taxpayers and benefit recipients) and freedom (of choice). We are also considering striking a balance between the taxation of work and property. Thinking is not subject to restrictions within the ÖVP, which is why the primacy of politics will be discussed at length. The global financial and economic crisis and the upcoming second recession show that even a market economy needs strict regulations and an order-policy framework if it is to serve the common good.

In my opinion, the strength of Christian democracy rests on our values. The principles of Catholic social doctrine are achievements which we must not neglect but cultivate. Exhausted by hyper-individualism many people are in search for binding values. If we explain to the voters that we are serious, and if we represent and live our values credibly, we have a strong future ahead of us. By doing this, the ÖVP, born from the body of the nation, will accommodate the Austrian people's penchant for consensus.

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