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Did anti-establishment parties have a positive effect on political representation?

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INTRODUCTION

The Great Recession has brought several crises. Apart from the financial-economic one, which took years to recover, the consequences spread to different fields and areas. Notably, a political crisis spread around Europe, especially in the countries most affected by the recession, i.e., Southern European countries. What happened was a complete incapacity of the political class, both left and right-wing, to answer to the discontent of the people and to find a solution to the crisis. Scholars such as Peter Mair talk about a fully-fledged crisis of political representation. In this context, a new wave of anti-establishment parties rose. New challenger parties, outsiders to the political scene, claimed to be the solution to this crisis, promising to be better able to represent than the "elite", i.e., the mainstream parties in government.

As a political science student, I often found myself wondering what happens after these parties win the elections. On many occasions, their success was celebrated as a page-turning moment for the political system, and a lot in the literature has been said about the reasons for their success. What I am interested in is the approach that these parties took to parliament and government: how did they behave, and how did they respond to the needs and demands of the electorate? How was their relationship with the "establishment" that they fought in their campaign, and did they succeed in changing the political scene? And, most importantly for this dissertation, did they solve the crisis of representation by being better representatives?

Thus, this thesis aims to investigate the extent to which anti-establishment parties had a positive effect on political representation, once they gained representative government roles.

To do so, I will first of all define what representation is, how it can be interpreted in different ways, and what led to its crisis. The first chapter of this thesis is devoted to these issues. Starting from Anna Pitkin's study on representation, I will discuss the difference between different approaches to representation, specifically between descriptive and substantive representation, to later provide a brief historical overview of how it evolved over time, looking at the various changes in party systems in Europe. To do so, I will

necessarily discuss the long-time debate between the delegate and trustee model of representation, as well as the chain of delegations that leads the representative to be entrusted with their role and holds them accountable for their in-office decisions. The responsible v. responsive model of representation will also be addressed. The last chance in party system and representation is the one this thesis is mostly about, and it is the one that followed the post-Great-Recession political crisis. For this reason, the second part of the first chapter is dedicated to the analysis of this phenomenon.

In the second chapter, I will dig deeper into the analysis of anti-establishment parties' evolution and integration into the system, to describe how their interaction path is shaped. I will first describe what are the factors that influence the electoral sustainability of anti-establishment parties after their electoral breakthrough, to then analyze their relationship with the system and the way it changes once they are in government. The second part of this chapter is perhaps the most relevant one of this dissertation since it answers the initial question: looking at different case studies in which the ideological congruence of anti-establishment parties with the electorate is analyzed, I will provide an overview of the of these parties to be or not to be more responsive than mainstream ones, analyzing the level of congruence between the electorate as a whole and the different parties in some case study.

In the third and final chapter, I will apply the notions described in the previous one in the comparative analysis of two of the most relevant anti-establishment parties: the Italian 5 Star Movement (M5S) and the Greek SYRIZA (Coalition of the Left).

From a methodological perspective, this is a review-based dissertation, meaning that I will draw from a number of analyses carried out by different scholars, providing a review of the studies of anti-establishment parties' behavior when in office as well as of the concept of representation in general. Among the primary sources, I will draw from three recently published books by Mattia Zulianello, Davide Vittori, Daniele Albertazzi & Duncan Mc Donnell. I will refer to both comprehensive, quantitative studies with a big sample and to qualitative case-study analyses of the behavior of different anti-establishment parties (not reducing the discussion to post-Great-Recession parties only, but also encompassing previous ones). In the analysis of anti-establishment performance in responsiveness to the electorate, no comprehensive study has been carried out.

Therefore, I will answer the starting question of the dissertation by looking at the trend in the case studies that have been conducted (notably, from Italy, Spain, Greece, and Germany).

CHAPTER 1: REPRESENTATION AND ITS CRISIS

An introduction to the topic

In order to address the main question of this thesis, which is if the rise of anti-establishment parties has had a positive impact on the performance of political representation by the parliament and therefore by the government (since the focus is on fusion-of-power systems) it is pivotal to first of all define what representation is. Political scientists have defined this crucial concept in different ways; at the same time, depending on the socio-political context, politicians and parliamentarians can represent the electorate in different ways. The aim of this chapter is to first and foremost to define what is representation, in order to explain what brought to its crisis in the past decades (and if such a crisis exists at all). I will start by briefly describing how the same idea of representation evolved in the course of history, to later give an account of the different theories of representation that were discussed by Hanna Pitkin in her 1967 book "The Concept of Representation", a work of pivotal importance in the study of this subject. I will then discuss the two approaches to representation, the trustee and delegate models, to later analyze how the representative is entrusted this role, by delineating the principal-agent relation in a chain of delegation. After this picture of the different understanding of representation, I will investigate the factors that led to a crisis, in the sense of a failure of the parties to be responsive to the requests of the electorate, drawing mostly from the work of Peter Mair, to conclude by discussing the role carried out in this scenario by anti-establishment parties, who were able to fill a representation gap by presenting themselves as more responsive towards the citizens. This chapter plays what can be defined as an introductory work, providing an in-depth definition of the concepts that will be at the basis of the analysis carried out in the following chapters, and helps construct the theoretical framework on which the whole thesis is built.

1.1. What is representation?

There is a lot of discourse, in the academic literature, about a crisis of representative democracy, and of political representation overall. The understanding of the word "representation" itself, however, can vary, and surely it evolved over time. It has, and in fact still is, been the subject of discussion among political philosophers and scientists, and this section aims to provide a clear view of what political representation is, which is fundamental to analyze later what brought to its crisis.

The idea of political representation did not exist in the ancient world (Pitkin, 1967), as it was originally "borrowed" from the Roman legal context, where it was commonly accepted to have a lawyer acting as a representative in judicial proceedings (Russo & Cotta, 2020). In the moment in which it entered political thought (long before the development of political science per se), this concept was strictly connected with the idea of someone being authorized to act on behalf of others, and not so much with the idea of democracy. This is far from the common understanding of representation today, where one is seen as the precondition of the others: in Schattschneider's words, it is unthinkable to have democracy without representative parties (Schattschneider, 1960, as cited in Mair, 2005). During the absolutism period, the king was actually identified as the "representative" of the people, and this is conceptualized in the words of Thomas Hobbes: the king is the representative of the commonwealth (Russo & Cotta, 2020), and as such he carries at least one duty: looking after the safety of the people (Hobbes, 1651, as cited in Pitkin, 1967). Hobbes refers to the representative as an "artificial person": one whose words and actions are not of its own, but of another, the "author". As I will discuss later, this is not so dissimilar from the "delegate" model of representation. Because the representative has been authorized to act by the author, the real owner of the action, and because of this authorization they have the right to perform. The representation function of the actor, in this case, the king, is the product of this right, combined with the responsibility of carrying out its duties. However, although in Hobbes we find a

distinction between limited and unlimited authorization, there is no understanding of time, or election, limit. (Pitkin, 1967)

The notion of representative government developed during the process of affirmation of parliament sovereignty in the UK, and later during the French Revolution. It is in this context that Montesquieu recognized that a representative assembly is the only way to ensure the respect of the self-government principle. The "marriage" between democracy and representation, however, happened in the second half of the 19th century, when constitutionalism and representative institutions had started to spread across Europe, and it was for the first time mentioned in the scholarly writings by John Stuart Mill in 1861. (Mill, 1961, as cited in Russo & Cotta, 2020). Around this time there was a major shift in the understanding of democracy: if in the ancient past this idea had been connected with a direct participation of all the citizens in the decision-making process in a very small political system, in its revival it was conceptualized as "representative democracy", which takes place in a nation-state system and is characterized by decisions taken by elected officials, regular elections, universal suffrage, freedom of speech and assembly (Dahl, A democratic dilemma: system effectiveness versus citizens participation, 1994). Scholars like Downs and Schumpeter focused in their work on the importance of representation for the functioning of a democratic system. In 1962, finally, representation was placed as the centerpiece of liberal democracy by Giovanni Sartori, according to whom this element, combined with political freedom and some degree of power limitation was what differentiated it from a direct democracy model (Sartori, 1963, as cited in Russo & Cotta, 2020).

1.1.1 Different kinds of representation: Hanna Pitkin's analysis

The pioneering work for the scientific analysis of what political representation is was carried out by Hanna Pitkin in the 1967 book "The Concept of Representation". Here, she distinguishes between at least 4 types of representation.

Formalistic representation

The ideal type of formalistic representation was described by the Organshaft school, of which the highest representative is Max Weber, and it derives from the classical "authorization" perspective described above (Pitkin, 1967). The focus here is on group relationships: representation is made up of two elements, on the one side the authorization to act, and on the other the accountability for the action, meaning that the representative has to be responsive to the represented (Russo & Cotta, 2020).

The label "formalistic" derives from the fact that it focuses on the formal aspects of the social relation between representatives and represented, which is depicted in the form of a transaction that takes place before the representation process even begins: once again, there has to be a prior conferral of authority to deliberate with binding authority on behalf of others. Democratic elections are in this case the way to grant this capacity, being acts of vesting authority (Pitkin, 1967).

Descriptive representation

Formalistic representation focuses on the legitimate authority to represent but fails to define what it is that should be represented (Russo & Cotta, 2020). According to descriptive representation theory, an elected assembly should mirror the opinions of the community that elects it: it is metaphorically described as a miniature picture of the society that is being represented (Pitkin, 1967). The "descriptive" aspect, therefore, does not limit itself to shared social characteristics between represented and representative, which are still important (Russo & Cotta, 2020). In the more recent literature, researchers have focused on the lack of descriptive representation of minorities, and in the European specifically of women, that are generally under-represented in this sense. In practice, the way found by the vast majority of countries to overcome this issue is through institutional mechanisms such as gender quotas, which are more and more common at different levels of government. (De Vries, Hobolot, Proksch, & Slapin, Representation, 2021)

Symbolic representation

In the symbolic representation theory, the focus is on the perception of the represented: it is about their belief that the political leader actually represents them. Authorization and accountability play no role here: it is not a case that this is the kind of representation used by authoritarian rulers, that make large use of symbols to create a connection with the

people (Pitkin, 1967) (Russo & Cotta, 2020). Politicians in this view "stand for" the nation itself, they become themselves a symbol of it and as such represent it (Pitkin, 1967). Democratically elected politicians also offer symbols while carrying out their functions: citizens tend to perceive the government as working for them when they hear politicians' speeches in parliament or watch them propose amendments bills (De Vries, Hobolot, Proksch, & Slapin, Representation, 2021)

Substantive representation

This is the view of representation that Hanna Pitkin theorizes after revising the other kinds of representation: she focuses on the capacity of the representative to answer to the substantive interests of the citizens, taking into account their questions and needs. The fundamental aspect here is responsiveness: in Pitkin's understanding, this is the capacity of the representative to react positively to the demand of the constituents (Russo & Cotta, 2020). Similarly, in his "Polyarchy" Robert Dahl defined the continuous responsiveness of the governments to the preferences of the citizens as the key element in a democratic system (Dahl, 1971). There is therefore a focus on the input and output of policymaking: there is a recognized mandate from voters to support a certain policy (De Vries, Hobolot, Proksch, & Slapin, Representation, 2021). Representing in this view acquires the meaning of "substantively acting for others". The concept of substantiveness is something that was missing from the authorization view- descriptively representing a group does not necessarily imply a good quality of representation (Pitkin, 1967). However, there is still empirical evidence of the fact that descriptive representation of minorities does actually improve substantive representation, at least as far as parliamentary activities are concerned (Ruedin, 2009, as cited in De Vries, Hobolot, Proksch, & Slapin, 2021). The quality of this substantive representation is measured through congruence, i.e., the overlap between the position of the median voter and of the policy maker (Mansbridge, 2003). Another understanding of congurence, is the extent of overlap between each party and the part of electorate that votes for them. This understandign assumes what Katz and Mair refer to as "party government model", where parties present different choiches, based on which allows voters decide, and are then incharge of tranlating them into policies maker (Mair, 2013). This can also acquire a dynamic form, as representatives might shift their position to accommodate a shift in public opinion or to anticipate what they believe

they will approve in the next election. The representative, therefore, passes from respecting the mandate they acquired in the previous elections (which is the mechanism to ensure that public policy carried out reflects the "will of the people") to the one that they rationally anticipate: this kind of representation is referred to as anticipatory representation (Mansbridge, 2003)

1.1.2 How to represent? Trustee v. Delegate

In an electoral discourse to the electors of the constituency of Bristol in 1854, the political thinker Edmund Burke stated that political representatives should not act like ambassadors and be mere "delegates" acting with an authoritative mandate, but they should instead act and decide according to his own and mature judgment, since legislating and governing are not a matter of will but of reason and judgment (Burke, 1854, as cited in Russo & Cotta, 2020) This does not mean that he did not consider important the opinion of the constituency, but rather that he believed that to be fully responsive a representative should be able to adapt to deliberate freely, to serve the interests of the community. This speech, which is considered to have foundational value for our understanding of political representation, opened a long-lasting debate on how an elected representative should act when exercising its functions (Russo & Cotta, 2020): a representative acts as a delegate if they pursue the policies that are approved by the public opinion (e.g., following the electoral program through which they were elected), regardless of their own opinion and/or expertise on the matter; on the other side, they act as a trustee if they pursue the policies that promote the general welfare, according to their knowledge (Fox & Schotts, 2009). Delegates, therefore, look out for the interest of one part, their constituency, are defined by the same part in their action and are therefore more responsive to sanctions than trustees, who look out for the good of the whole community and depending on their judgment (Rehfeld, 2009).

According to electoral behavior researchers, there is a tradeoff between competence and ideological congruence: voters tend to privilege a competence kind of accountability when there is little uncertainty about the candidate's ideological position (although ideological incongruence does not prevent electoral rewards of trustee representatives) (Fox & Schotts, 2009).

Trustees, delegates, representation and democracy

According to Andrew Rehfeld, the trustee/delegate debate has to do with the accountability of the decision-maker towards the people, or of the representative towards the represented, but not so much with a general theory of representation: as they argue, constituency could have strict control over the representative and still instruct them to be a trustee, or on the other side, a trustee representative might decide to take on the specific interests of a particular group. The debate is not confined to democracy either, as it can also apply to non-democratic systems as well (Rehfeld, 2009). As for which of the two ideal types should apply in a democratic system, this is a normative matter, whose answer is not the object nor the the aim of this discussion. What is true, however, is that different models of representative democracy present different combinations of the kind of representation and the representatives acting as trustees or delegates.

In cleavage-based democracy, as described by Mair, characterized by a strong link between parties and civil society, the representation is descriptive, as it reflects both the different social groups and their different value system. The representative acts in this case as a trustee (and the ideological congruence is high, supporting Fox and Schotts' argument) (Mair, 2005, as cited in Thomassen & van Ham, 2014). Thomassen and van Ham identify a second model of democracy, "competitive democracy", which in their view, a revision of Mair's opinion, succeeded cleavage-based democracy. It is based on the "responsible party model": there is a strong left-right divide, that is not necessarily represented by parties, and so citizens vote for the party closer to their own view. In this case, the representation is more substantial than descriptive, and the left-right congruence remains high. MPs are in this case delegates, not so much of the voters themselves but of the party they are part of (Thomassen & van Ham, 2014). The third type of democracy, first described by Bernard Manin in 1997, is the so-called "Audience democracy": in this model, parties and candidates compete for their competence and not for their ideological position, which leads to an extremely low level of congruence. The kind of representation is based on the accountability mechanism only: in this perspective, we could compare it to the "formalistic representation" model described by Hanna Pitkin and previously

discussed. The representatives, therefore, act purely as a trustees, and as such they are elected in the first place (Manin, 1997, as cited in Thomassen & van Ham, 2014).

1.1.3 The chain of delegation: principals and agents

Regardless of the type of representation that takes place in parliament, parliamentarism is widely accepted as the legitimate vehicle for popular representation by citizens (Strøm, 2003). To understand the relationship between representative and represented in this regard, scholars have borrowed, scholars have borrowed a model formulated in the 1970s by economics researchers such as Holmstrom and Shawell: the so-called "Principal-agent theory" (hence, PAT). This model, where the principal delegates its power to the agent, relies on some core assumptions: the actions taken by the agent have an impact on the principal, implying a payoff; there is information asymmetry, meaning that only the outcome of the action can be seen by the principal, while the decision-making process that leads to the outcome is not so visible; there is an asymmetry in preferences as well, i.e., the agent's preferences are different from the ones of the principal; there is a unified principal, which leads to a coherent set of preferences by its side; there is shared knowledge about the "structure of the game" by both principal and agent; finally, the principal can exercise a bargaining power on the agent through the possibility of imposing an ultimatum to have its preferred solution implemented. As a consequence, agents receive outcome-based incentives from the principals, and at the same time, there is an efficiency tradeoff between the two parties (Miller, 2005). This agency theory helps understand the process of delegation of decision-making power that occurs in parliamentary systems, or to be more specific in fusion-of-power systems, where a direct chain of delegation can be identified, from the citizens up to the public administration, and the executive is accountable to the legislature and can be removed by the latter. At the same time, the legislature is accountable to the citizens that elect it: in PAT terms, citizens are the principal to the parliament, that is the principal to the executive (that on its side is the principal to public administration functionaries) (Strøm, 2003). The accountability mechanism takes place ex-post, after the agents have made the decisions since by definition the principal is entitled to punish or reward them for their performance (Fearon, 1999, as cited in Strøm, 2003)

Agency problems in parliamentary systems

The chain of delegation can generate agency problems when the agent fails to act in the best interest of the principal. On the one side, problems of adverse selection may occur when the principal is unaware of the capacities or preferences of the agent they appoint and thus select the "wrong" one; on the other, moral hazard occurs when agents take actions contrary to the interests of the interest, which is easily doable since principals cannot fully observe them.

Fusion-of-power systems rely heavily on ex-ante control mechanisms when it comes to selecting the agents, which is manifestly evident when it comes to cabinet appointments. This process of screening, which is also incentivized by the prominence of political parties, that control delegations of representatives both from the citizens to the parliament and from the parliament to the cabinet and are thus extremely influential in their recruitment, helps parliamentary systems to be better equipped to deal with the adverse selection problem. However, as a consequence of the multi-stage chain of delegation and the indirect accountability of the executive to the citizens, the problem of moral hazard is much more prominent: the constraints on the agents are weak since there is very little ability on the principal side to know how the agents are performing. This is even more evident when coalition governments are formed since decisions taken in this context are the product of a bargaining process and of a compromise that is purposefully kept private in the negotiations between parties (Strøm, 2003).

This problem can be alleviated through what Mansbridge refers to as "narrative" or "deliberative" accountability: an understanding of accountability according to which it is not merely a sanctioning or selection mechanism, but also the capacity of agents to "give account" of the motivations that lead them to make decisions, even when they change policy or, with a higher degree of difficulty, when they change the underlining principles that guide them in their choices (Mansbridge, 2009).

1.2. The crisis of political representation

Schattschneider defined party politics as the constituent element of representative democracy: they are the ones in charge of carrying out the representation function in parliament, and without them, the same notion of representation would be meaningless in a democratic context (Schattschneider, 1960, as cited in Mair, 2005). The implication of this argument, developed most influentially by Peter Mair in the 2000s, is that if parties fail in their role, as they are doing, it is the idea of representative democracy itself that is failing. Voting can be understood in two ways: in its expressive interpretation, its purpose is for the people to be able to express their opinions and preferences and have them represented in parliament, and later in government through public policies. In its instrumental interpretation, on the other side, the purpose of voting is to form a government. In the former case, there is a prospective voting mechanism; in the latter, the voting is retrospective (Rose & McAllister, 1992). What has happened is that, from the late 1980s and in the 1990s. parties began failing to fulfill their expressive function as a consequence, among others, of the widespread dominancy of bipolarism and of the consequent spreading of purely bipolar political systems, which made it difficult for the different society groups to identify in a party that was able to represent their particular opinions. This new predominance of the instrumental understanding of voting was recognized by parties themselves, who asked to be judged as governor: there was a shift in the parties' "center of gravity", from the fulfillment of the representation function to the exercise of governing function, which accounts to the other major responsibilities of parties (Mair, 2005, 2009). What followed is what we can identify as a fully-fledged crisis of political representation: mainstream parties seem to have lost their capacity to represent the interest of the people in parliament, and seem to be more concerned with representing "the interest of the state to the people" (Mair, 2009)

The loss of capacity on the representative's side to interpret the "expressive" vote has also led to a crisis of legitimacy of the parties themselves: without the representation function, it could even be the case that parties should not be entrusted in governing function, leaving this important task to groups of people perhaps better suited: experts, regulatory agencies, even judges (Sartori, 2005, as in Mair, 2009). This erosion of legitimacy was also caused by other factors that entered into play: on the one side, democracies witnessed a privatization of power in the formation of public opinions (as it is manifest with social

media); on the other, there has been an increase in the seek for demagogical forms of consensus, that do not need parties to play an intermediate role (Verma, 2019).

1.2.1 Which preferences?

In order to respond to people's preferences, it is important first of all to be able to distinguish what these preferences are. It has also become increasingly difficult for parties to identify what the aggregate preferences are: to put it in other words, it is unclear what the demand is. First of all, politics is not organized anymore only in its economic left-right dimension, which on the contrary has lost importance. On the other side, other issues, unrelated to each other, have gained importance, leading to a multidimensional organization of politics (Hardin, 2000, as cited in Mair, 2009). Moreover, and consequently, collective identities are now fragmented, and issue preferences is more and more volatile, which adds to the difficulty of identifying the issues that the electorate expects to see represented in parliament (Andeweg, 2003). In more recent developments, this phenomenon could be explained by what Caramani defines as the "mediatization" factor: the traditional channels of party communication have been neglected in favor of the social media, which although in principle should increase the direct relationship between leaders and the electorate, improving their responsiveness capacity, has actually a negative effect since it has allowed opponents to continuously bring up new issues that catch the attention of the public, and of which parties are not even aware (Caramani, 2017)

1.2.2 A mutual withdrawal

Mair identifies the most manifest sign of the failure of parties as representative of the society in a mutual disinterest: citizens are proven to be more and more disinterested in politics; on the other side, the political elites have no incentives to represent the people and thus they "withdraw" to the institutions. This can be defined as a mutual withdrawal. On the popular side, the disengagement of citizens from conventional politics finds several proof. First of all, electoral participation has been declining since the 1990s, with

a higher rate of electoral abstention reached in the 2000s, with a constant negative trend that arrives to the present day: although elections are held more frequently than ever, less and less citizens are de facto enjoying their voting right (Kostelka, Krejcova, Sauger, & Wuttke, 2023). A high level of electoral instability has also been recorded, with electoral outcomes that are more and more unpredictable; parallelly, there has been a net decline of partisan predisposition and attachment, which lead to a "split-ticket voting" phenomenon: depending on the electoral arena, people vote for different parties. Finally, party membership has also been decreasing since the 1990s. On their side, the elites have also moved from civil society to government, with the spreading of catch-all parties. Inter-party boundaries have eroded, and once in government parties are more closely associated with their supposed opponents than with voters. The reduced need for support also comes from practical stances, since party funding systems have expanded. Moreover, because the opposition role has been taken up by non-conventional parties and associations, it makes less and less sense to have an enduring opposition, therefore leading parties to privilege, even more, their office-seeking behavior, prioritizing their government role. This mutual withdrawal has led to a shift from a cleavage-based, competitive democracy model to the "audience" democracy one, where to put it in Pitkin's terms representatives "stand for" the people, they act not as agents but they act instead of them, and the private and public sphere end up being two separate realms (Mair, 2005).

There is some disagreement on this notion of "party failure": according to other scholars, such as Thomassen and van Ham, what we are witnessing is not so much a crisis of representation, but more of a change in kind. As previously mentioned, they distinguish between the cleavage-based and the competitive models of democracy: the latter succeeded the former, and with its characteristics, it found a different, yet efficient way, of representing the people. Because of the erosion of party loyalty, in the competitive democracy phase parties had to compete for votes by positioning themselves on the left-right dimension, while in the cleavage-based model, the competition was on a more diverse number of issues (and the much stronger link between different social groups and their descriptively representative party made competition for votes less of a priority). In the same way, the shift from competitive to audience democracy was purely another change in the way of representation: in this case, because of the mutual withdrawal

theorized by Mair, policy preferences are much decreased, and thus the focus of the competition has been on the competence. (Thomassen & van Ham, 2014)

According to another interpretation of this widening gap between civil society and parties, parties did not abandon their representation role in favor of their governing one but rather abandoned both of them in favor of increasing electoral support only: once in government, they focus on short-term policies only, whose aim is to secure re-elections. The result is the opposite of what Mair claimed: parties end up being extremely responsive- in a fashion that could be compared to the notion of anticipatory representation (Caramani, 2017).

1.2.3. Responsibility and responsiveness

When exercising their function, and especially when governing, parties must find a balance between two attitudes: on the one side, they have to be responsive towards the demands and preferences of the electorate (considering the aforementioned difficulties); on the other, they have to act responsibly (Mair, 2009). The word "responsibility" has acquired different meanings: for Sartori, it was a synonym for accountability; for Downs, it referred to consistency in the position taken by the party and the consequent predictability in choices. Anthony Birch, studying the British constitution, for the first time identified a notion of responsibility that is detectably different from the ideas of accountability or responsiveness: those who make decisions have to act in a "prudent" way and with consistency, taking into account the various factors that might impact the output of the policy carried out. As a consequence, parties in government are not completely free, but their hands are partly tied and their action area is limited. In this sense, responsibility, and responsiveness, as much as they are both desirable, are not always compatible with each other (Birch, 1964, as cited in Mair, 2009). This incompatibility is increasing nowadays, as the commitments that bind governments in their actions are twofold. First of all, prior commitments, taken by previous executives, do have weight, as public policies cannot simply be canceled in favor of new ones (Rose, 1990, as cited in Mair, 2009). Moreover, as a result of globalization and the "Europeanization and internationalization of policy parameters", acting responsibly for governments also means complying with the external constraints imposed by

supranational and international organizations. Governments are accountable to institutions such as the UN, the WTO, the Council of Europe, and the European Commission, which in a sense become a new principal for them, and as their agent, they act in a responsive manner towards their request, more than they do towards their other principals, the people towards they are also accountable (Mair, 2009), although, in parliamentary systems, the accountability is indirect. This in in fact in breach of the singularity systems that characterize fusion-of-power systems (each agent has one unitary principal), which can lead to tensions and growing strains, where the institutional checks and balances and the oversight function are not as developed as in other systems (Strøm, 2003). Another explanation of this shift, from a responsive to a responsible government, is provided by Robert Dahl, who already in 1994 was pointing out how there is a tradeoff between efficiency and democracy in the growing governance of transnational institutions: in order to be able to work, they have to give up to the same idea of representation, and the democratic idea of single individuals being able to have a voice in the subject matter risks being outmoded (Dahl, 1994).

1.3. Are anti-establishment parties an answer to the crisis?

In their study on the possible "change in kind" of representation, Thomassen and Van Ham conclude that there is no empirical evidence of a systematic decline of representation in democratic systems, but rather that what is corroborated is that the way of representing shifted to a party-based representation only to a bipolar system, where what really counts is the left-right dimension. To put it in their words, "Rather than a decline in (the quality of) representative democracy, we seem to be observing a change in kind." (Thomassen & van Ham, 2014). Most of the scholarly literature, however, agrees that there is a crisis, accepting Mair's claims. Although there is no unitary vision, what is accepted is that, at least, something changed.

To quote once again Peter Mair, the growing complexity of governing and the depoliticization of their action has led to the development of a new opposition, much more expressive than conventional parties, that is often characterized by a populist rhetoric (i.e., a rhetoric that respects the parameters set out by Cas Mudde in his scholarly

work on populism). This new opposition can be defined as irresponsible, meaning that it does not deal with the issues for which governments are accountable to supranational and international institutions, but rather argue against them. This is exemplified by the strong Eurosceptic mobilization, favored by the new opposing parties (Mair, 2009). However, the populist characterization is not a requirement for the new opposition parties to be defined as "anti-establishment", in the sense that they act against the "establishment" of the conventional party politics. On the contrary, technocratic parties share many of the critiques of party government that are raised by "populist" parties: they share the idea of a common unitary interest that must be defended, with a homogeneous vision of the people, and see society in a non-pluralistic view, therefore not being open to compromises. In both cases, the representation model that is followed is the trustee one, and the relation between people and the political elite is unmediated (meaning that the parties' linkage function is unnecessary). Finally, the importance of accountability, both vertical (from the institutions to the electorate) and horizontal (i.e., the check and balances system) is much reduced, in the populist case because the leaders are the "people" themselves, in the technocratic one because the expertise provided takes away the need of any type of constraints (Caramani, 2017).

1.3.1 The eurozone crisis and the shift to "tripolarism"

The 2007/2008 financial crisis made more evident the effects of this representation crisis (which, for the purpose of this thesis, I will assume exists), causing another shift in the electorate-parties relationship. As a matter of fact, the eurozone crisis caused several negative effects in economic terms: apart from an economic recession, European countries witnessed an increase in the unemployment rate, followed by an increase in the public debt on GDP ratio (Greece was the country most hit by the crisis, but a negative pattern was witnessed all across EU Member States, with Southern Europe countries that registered more negative data than the EU average). To overcome these economic issues, both center-left and center-right parties, which in different moments were both in government across the countries, had to converge to similar austerity policies, that were imposed mostly by the EU commission. These two elements, the center-right convergence, and the adherence to EU guidelines, which coincide with what was earlier

defined as a "responsible" way of governing, lead to a dramatic change in political behavior. According to the standard model of economic voting, when the electorate is unsatisfied with the public policies carried out, it should punish the incumbent in favor of the opposing parties. This mechanism works particularly well in a bipolar system, such as the one that was dominant before the recession. Because both left and right parties were in government during the crisis, however, the electorate chose to punish all of these parties, which we can define as mainstream. Who was favored by this attitude was the kind of opposition that was described by Peter Mair and that was discussed above: protest, anti-establishment parties that, mobilizing the population about these policies, imposed from above and therefore not representative of the citizens' preferences, nor interests, were able to gain a lot of success in the elections after the crisis. As a matter of fact, at the beginning of the 2010s high records of "extra-system volatility" (i.e., transfer of votes to parties and movements not previously in parliament, and therefore out of the institutional system). This caused what we can define as a shift from a bipolar to a tripolar system, characterized by competition between the mainstream center-left and center-right parties and the new, protest parties. This was witnessed, in some countries, by a modification of the electoral laws, better suited for a multipolar than a bipolar system (Freire, Barragán , Coller, Lisi, & Tsatsanis, 2020).

This success can be simply explained: mainstream parties that are in the government, especially in times of crisis, are forced to take unpopular measures, therefore acting with a high degree of responsibility, but completely failing to represent the grievances of a major part of the population, that suffers the consequences of these unpopular measures. On the contrary, because of their absence of responsibilities, anti-establishment parties are much better able to perform this central representation function (Plescia, Kritzinger, & De Sio, 2019). In fact, what has been found in a study conducted during the 2016 Brexit referendum campaign in the UK is that voters are more and more reluctant to trust politicians and experts, regardless of their left-right position, and prefer to listen to people that are more "like them" and that therefore they trust more to be able to defend their interest, in a pattern that resembles descriptive representation (Hobolt, Leeper, & Tilley, 2016)

Concluding remarks

After Hanna Pitkin published her "The Concept of Representation" in 1967, the debate on what political representation is and how it should be translated into action – i.e., how an elected representative should act once in office to perform his representation duty – has moved from a political philosophy discussion to a political science one, opening a new era of academic research on this subject matter. In the 1990s, after decades of studies on what representation is, and how decision-making power is de facto delegated to the representative, a shift in the political order in most representative democracies has led to a new debate: did representation enter into a crisis? What emerged from the analysis carried out in this chapter is that there is no univocal form of representation, and depending on the context it can be performed in a descriptive, substantial, or even symbolic manner, and representatives can choose to act respecting the political mandate he has been given or by doing what they believe is best for the citizens. After the 2007/08 financial crisis and the eurozone crisis, the way of representing changed once again, with mainstream parties that became more and more responsibly towards external constraints and new protest parties that were able to emerge by addressing the grievances of the electorate. The next chapters will be devoted to analyzing how these parties and movements behaved once they entered into parliament and understanding if they had a positive impact on representation, with a special focus on what happened in three Southern European countries: Italy, Spain, and Greece. The three countries were all characterized by a shift from a mainly bipolar system to a multipolar one, according to the mechanism discussed above. Italy, the country with the highest rate of party fragmentation among the three countries analyzed, shifted from a bipolarism phase that had characterized the late 1990s and the 2000s to a tripolar phase, with the rise of the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (hence, M5S) that was able to gain a large share of electoral support in the 2013 political elections. In Greece, the country most hit by the eurozone crisis, the mainstream center-left party PASOK lost much of its electoral support in favor of the anti-establishment party SYRIZA. Finally, in Spain, the traditional bipolarism between the Popular Party (PP) and the Spanish Socialist Worker Party

(PSOE) was altered by the new parties Ciudadanos and Podemos, the anti-establishment party that will be at the center of this analysis (Freire, Barragán , Coller, Lisi, & Tsatsanis, 2020).

CHAPTER 2: DO CHALLENGER PARTIES LIVE UP TO THEIR PROMISES?

An introduction to the topic

In the academic literature, a lot has been said about the reasons that lead to the development and spreading of anti-establishment parties, both in general and in the specific context of the post-Great Recession crisis, as a response to the failure of traditional parties to represent the electorate and be responsive to its demands. What this chapter aims to do is to provide a picture of what happens after anti-establishment parties enter the political institutions, from their parliamentary outbreak to the moment in which they directly participate to the executive.

The first part of the chapter is devoted to the study of the integration into the political system of these challenger parties, drawing from the comprehensive analysis carried out by Mattia Zulianello in his book "Anti-system Parties". I will start by examining the concept of electoral sustainability, both in general (with major references to the study carried out by Nicole Bolleyer) and in the anti-establishment context specifically, to then analyze different models of interaction streams with the political system. Finally, I will analyze the performance of a variety of anti-establishment parties in government, to try to understand if and to what extent they comply with their electoral mandate in the public policies they carry out, and what are the factors that can influence the outcome, relying on an in depth-analysis by Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell.

In the second part of the chapter, I will provide an answer to the central question of this dissertation: are anti-establishment parties better representatives than mainstream parties? The major challenge in answering this question is the lack of a comprehensive study of the responsiveness of anti-establishment parties. However, I will use different case study analyses of their ideological congruence, compared to mainstream parties' congruence. Notably, the studies that have been carried out follow the understanding of congruence where it is measured as the overlap between the median voter position and the party, i.e., between the party and the whole electorate, not with the electorate of the party

This chapter is central not only because it answers the research question I posed, but also because it sets the different aspects on which the case study analysis of the following chapter will be based.

2.1. The process of integration of anti-establishment parties into the system

2.1.1. Party organization and electoral sustainability

To understand if anti-establishment parties were able to improve political representation, it is first of all important to analyze how they behave once they gain representation in parliament for the first time, since it is through their participation in institutions that these parties can show if they are or are not able to be responsive to the electorate.

This section is going to explore what it is that leads newly represented parties to achieve electoral sustainability, i.e., being able to be re-elected, thus maintaining their linkage function in the long run, (Bolleyer, 2013).

The role of party organization in electoral sustainability

Nicole Bolleyer, in her book "New Parties in Old Systems", argues that parties' long-term fate is shaped by the interplay between the strength of the internal organization of the parties and their origin. Specifically, she distinguished between rooted new parties, which already have a linkage to a social group when they are founded and are more likely to represent interests in the long term, and entrepreneurial new parties, which lack affiliation to a societal group and serve mostly as an electoral vehicle of the elite (Bolleyer, 2013).

A strong internal organization matters for party cohesion (intra-party consensus on major political questions), which affects its stability and legitimacy. The former refers to the extent to which the party is immune to division, avoiding or reducing intra-party conflicts to lower the probability of party dissolution. The latter has to do with the external perception of parties: to have a positive public image, it is crucial for the party to appear

united and stable (Ignazi, 2014, as cited in Cirhan, 2024). The organizational extensiveness (size of membership and of the same structure) has lost much of its effect on electoral success, and it can be considered trivial (Cirhan, 2024). This is an effect of the change in the party system described in the previous chapter, because of which the loss of membership support did not have a major impact as could be expected. What instead seems to matter in terms of mobilization effect is a deeply rooted local organization with a high number of local branches, which enhances long-term loyalty. Still, there is a tradeoff between a strong local linkage with the electorate and the party cohesion, improved by a stronger central control (Foster 1982, as cited in Cirhan, 2024).

The leadership-structure dilemma

Notably, the factors that facilitate parliamentary breakthrough can turn into an obstacle for re-election: this is the case of electoral volatility, which has benefitted many anti-establishment parties but has also proven to be a major weakness in the long term (since, in the meantime, other parties might be able to win over their share of the electorate). To overcome this issue, some degree of institutionalization is necessary to survive (Panebianco 1988, as in Bolloyer 2013). How to reach this institutionalization can become a dilemma: party elites want to pursue their immediate interest, thus protecting their position in front of the electorate (Bolleyer, 2013). However, the advantages of institutionalization are many: as was later argued, new parties are able to gain re-election while others are not depending on the higher degree of organizational cohesion and rootedness, and not necessarily on the impression they left in office (van Kessel, 2015). Bolleyer referred to this phenomenon as a "leadership-structure dilemma", and the electoral sustainability of new parties depends on the capacity of the party elite to overcome it. This becomes manifest when it comes to leadership renewal: it is a phase that can be insurmountable in the absence of a good party structure. This is the case, for instance, of the Dutch Freedom Party, which is fully centralized around the figure of the leader Geert Wilders and is unlikely to survive without him. On the opposite side, the French National Front, as linked as it was with its founder Jean-Marie le Pen, still was able to overcome a leadership renewal. This is particularly true for entrepreneurial parties, which largely depend on the party-building strategy of its elite. Rooted parties, for their very nature, are more likely to establish lasting support (Bolleyer, 2013). Van Kessel's

analysis is consistent with these results: surviving challenger parties are characterized by strong organizational cohesion and/or a rooted party organization.

Intra-party conflict also has a major impact on the institutionalization process of new parties: the higher it is, the harder it is for the party to be able to integrate into the system, affecting the public visibility of the party itself (Zulianello, 2019).

2.1.2. Anti-establishment parties' parliamentary outbreak

All parties must deal with some crisis in terms of communication with the electorate once they gain representation. This phenomenon, however, is much more widespread when it comes to anti-establishment, "unorthodox" parties: the lack of experience of the newcomers, emphasized by the media attention on the internal structure of these parties, combined with alternative candidate selection mechanisms that are more likely to lead to reduced party cohesion. Notably, there is no consistency in the way in which anti-establishment parties are organized: some parties aim to be "virtual" parties (such as the Italian Five Star Movement), others have a strong hierarchical structure, and others are much more decentralized (Hartleb, 2015).

Further studies have analyzed what are the conditions that lead to electoral sustainability for parties that, at the moment of their parliamentary breakthrough, could be defined as anti-establishment. Mattia Zulianello, mostly taking over Bolleyers' work, studied how the interplay of the different conditions analyzed so far is more likely to ensure long-term stability for anti-establishment parties. He also considers some elements that can be defined as "external supply factors", thus looking at some structural conditions: on the one side, electoral volatility; on the other, the disproportionality of the electoral system, given the more proportional it is, the easier it is for parties to access parliament. This is because the number of votes gained can have a different effect in different countries.

Some is also given to party ideology, following Ronchon's division between challenging and mobilizing parties, the formers which aim to win support based on established cleavages, the latter which want to mobilize new political identities (Ronchon, 1985, as cited in Zulianello, 2019). Mobilizing parties can be divided into parties that want to

create a new cleavage and parties that want to represent groups that are neglected, first and foremost minorities (Lucardie, 2000, as cited in Zulianello, 2019).

What influences the electoral sustainability of anti-establishment parties?

None of these factors is, by itself, neither sufficient nor necessary: contrary to Bolleyer's finding, the rooted origins of parties and the level of intra-party conflict can lead to electoral stability both when present and absent, depending on the interaction with the other conditions. Anti-establishment parties are more likely to endure when there is a rooted origin, combined with a low level of intra-party conflict and a low disproportionality system. The same result is obtained if, in a stable party system with a low disproportionality, a rooted origin party presents itself with a prophetic ideology. If the intra-party conflict level is low, the same is true, in this case for entrepreneurial new parties. Intra-party conflict and a highly disproportionate system can still ensure sustainability if the party can introduce and represent a new ideological dimension.

On the other side, the absence of sustainability, which is also explained by different factors, is more linear: it depends, mostly, on high levels of intra-party conflict and electoral volatility, in this case confirming Bolleyer's argument. A disproportionate system also has an effect: notably, in the case of the French National Front, it was the decisive element that led to the outcome of "non-sustainability" (Zulianello, 2019).

2.1.3. Anti-establishment parties' interaction with the system

Once they reach representation in parliament, new anti-establishment parties have, in one way or the other, to interact with the party system and the institutional setting in place. The way they do this is pivotal to understanding the way in which these parties act in terms of policy support, or policymaking when they are in government: to put it in other words, it helps understand how the representation function is performed, and thus to answer the question of this dissertation.

Overall, changes in a party's interaction streams can be due to internal factors, for instance, a change in the leadership of the party, or a strategic calculation by the same leadership, such as the so-called "programmatic adaptation", i.e., a modification of the party strategy. A change in the dominant government coalition conformation might also

trigger a change in the interaction stream. Some external factors intervene as well: the attitude of the mainstream parties towards the new parties might affect their behavior, or external circumstances might change in a dramatic way the primary goal of the parties, i.e., the policy objective for which they stand.

Positive integration, negative integration, radical disembedding

According to the same Zulianello, there are three kinds of integration (notably, positive, negative, and radical disembedding), that he analyzed through a case-study analysis of different anti-establishment parties in Europe.

Positive integration is witnessed when a party completely loses its anti-establishment attitude, turning into a pro-system party. The reference "role model" is the German Green Party: after years of anti-establishment attitudes and following its defeat in the 1990 elections (in which it lost parliamentary representation), the new leader Fischer committed the party to an office-seeking strategy which, in the end, lead the party to completely move away from radicalism and position itself as a leftist reform party.

On the other side, negative integration is witnessed when a party actively cooperates with the system but still presents some anti-system instances in its ideological core. It can be achieved through an indirect path when, although not directly participating in the government, anti-establishment parties provide external cooperation to the executive. This is the case of the Danish People's Party (DF), which, regardless of its non-direct participation in government, once elected was able to be vocal about immigration and crime-related issues, and much less on issues related to the European Union, thus allowing it to be considered a coalitional actor by the center-right (which, on its side, aligned more with the anti-immigrant stands of the DF). The change, thus, occurred mostly for programmatic adaptation reasons. A change in the dominant coalition, on the other side, played a role in the Italian 5 Star Movement (M5S) integration stream, together with an electoral defeat in the 2014 European elections: after some trial and error, in 2017 the founder and leader Beppe Grillo took a step back in favor of MP Luigi Di Maio, who was able to turn the main goal of the party to policy-seeking. Negative integration is achieved through a direct path when the party participates in the government, as happened to the

Greek SYRIZA, which managed to remain true to its ideological background with some level of programmatic adaptation (and to the same M5S in the post-2018 elections).

Radical disembedding is an interaction stream that goes opposite to integration: it occurs when a party that is not anti-establishment pursues anti-establishment goals. This is the strategy adopted by the Dutch PVV leader Wilders, who followed a path of isolationism and radicalization, not because of external changes but rather in a strategic calculation about maximizing votes (Zulianello, 2019).

2.2.4. How do anti-establishment parties perform in government?

As discussed in the previous chapter, to evaluate the quality of representation it is necessary to consider how they perform once they enter the political institutions, and if their action corresponds first of all to their electoral promises, and to the demands of the electorate. So far, we have analyzed how they act after their parliamentary outbreak; however, it is pivotal to consider how they perform once they enter into government, since only at this stage, which is defined by Mattia Zulianello as the third transitional moment for anti-establishment parties, (Zulianello, 2019). Traditionally, in the literature, anti-establishment parties (especially those that present a populist attitude) are considered to be charged with an "additional cost" when it comes to governing since the "purity" of the ideas and messages they stand for might be undermined by the necessary cooperation with the political establishment. In most cases, anti-establishment parties participate in coalition governments, and the cost in terms of electoral support paid by the new parties is higher than that of their coalition partners (Van Spanje, 2011). However, empirical analysis of anti-establishment parties' behavior in government has proven that they are not necessarily doomed to fail (Albertazzi & McDonnel, 2015), as several other factors can explain the different outcomes of anti-establishment parties in government.

Northern League and Swiss People's Party performance in government

In an analysis regarding the 4th Berlusconi government in Italy, a coalition government composed of the PDL (People of Freedom) and the LN (Northern League), which out of the two is the party closer to the definition we have given of anti-establishment parties, Albertazzi and McDonnell found that, contrary to the theoretical expectations, it was the

LN which managed to carry out more of its policies. Its rhetoric focused on two aspects: reducing immigration and improving regional autonomy in Italy. Although the government failed to deliver on the immigration side (with very few results, which were later considered unconstitutional by the Italian Constitutional Court), the party obtained some significant results on the regional autonomy side, managing to provide more fiscal autonomy to the regions. On the other side, the PDL, which for this dissertation can be considered a traditional, establishment party, which had called mostly for economic reforms aimed at reducing the unemployment rate, the public debt, and the fiscal burden, performed extremely poorly, not delivering any of the policies it had called for (at the moment of government termination, in 2011, the statistics on those aspects showed records that were worst of the ones recorded in 2008, at the time of government formation). In the same years the Swiss SVP (Swiss People's Party), was participating as a coalition partner in the Swiss Federal Council, a striking example of consociationalism, presenting itself as an anti-establishment party standing mostly for anti-immigration and anti-EU policies. The party performed very well, proving successful in its anti-immigration stands (it was nevertheless helped by the Swiss direct democracy system since many policies were approved by a popular referendum) and gaining if anything satisfactory results on the anti-EU side, since although it lost the referenda on the matter it had supported, it remained true to its initial rhetoric, and was helped by the fact of not having ever focused on the achievement of specific results in its electoral promises, but rather promising an anti-EU attitude with which it complied (Albertazzi & McDonnel, 2015).

How do parties portray themselves after incumbency?

Mattia Zulianello, in his analysis of anti-establishment parties' behavior, has tried to empirically understand to which these new parties experience electoral losses after governing, and what are the variables that play a role in this outcome. To do so, he considered primarily if the parties themselves changed their rhetoric and post-incumbency electoral campaign to claims of the successes obtained while governing, presenting the party as a "competent" one, able to govern, as it happened for instance with the same LN after its first participation in government (in the 1st Berlusconi government) or if they kept appealing to a distance from the political establishment, respecting their

initial "anti" attitude. This is the case for the Greek Syriza, which although failed to respect its promises, being forced to accept the Third Memorandum imposed by the EU, still presented itself as the only party able to fight against the established and therefore to defend the interest of the Greek people: the rhetoric here was not about competence, but about "issue ownership" (Zulianello, 2019). Other findings point to the fact that, after participation in government, non-right-wing anti-establishment parties tend to show less negative and assertive language, proving to be more future-oriented and more inclusive, in a trend that partially contradicts Zulianello analysis (since, in the aforementioned cases, the LN can be identified as a right-wing party, while SYRIZA is positioned on the left side of the political spectrum) (Ceron, Gandini, & Lodetti , 2021).

What institutional characteristics influence the post-incumbency success of anti-establishment parties?

Zulianello also considered the institutional system of the country in which the anti-establishment parties operate, focusing mostly on the variation between more consensus majoritarian systems. In the former case what emerged is that, in line with the findings by Albertazzi and McDonnell previously discussed, there is no determinism in anti-establishment parties failing to deliver and losing their identity in participation in a coalition government, as on the contrary, they can present themselves as "halfway" parties, defending their ideas while still proving able to positively cooperate with the system. In this regard, the type of coalition (specifically, if it is a "minimum winning coalition", i.e., if the parliamentary majority that supports the government is relatively small) and the status of the anti-establishment party within the coalition itself, i.e., if it is a junior partner, which influences its capacity to be a veto player. The outcome of this might vary: if on the one side, the small veto-player party can force the government to adapt to its policies, thus granting responsiveness to the stands of the party, it can also make it appear irresponsible (Zulianello, 2019).

The results of this analysis prove that, once again, only a combination of these factors can explain the variation: notably, the way in which the party presents itself only plays a decisive role in combination with other factors in determining the success of the party in its post-incumbency campaign (while, on the other side, the absence of consistency

between the party discourse and its action in government seems to be sufficient to cause the failure of the party) (Zulianello, 2019). According to the analysis by van Spanje, however, more than this kind of consistency what actually impacts post-incumbency electoral losses is the consistency between the original message of the anti-establishment party and its performance in government, and the loss of the original "purity" plays a major role in this sense (Van Spanje, 2011).

In consensus democracies, political parties that maintain a cohesive campaign strategy after leaving office often benefit from a perceived lack of transparency and accountability within the system. This continuity can serve as an electoral asset, bolstering their standing among voters. However, in majoritarian contexts, the dynamics are notably different, especially for junior partners in coalition governments.

This is the case, for instance, of the French Communist Party and Greece's ANEL. Despite their efforts to articulate a unified post-incumbency message, both parties suffered significant electoral drawbacks. This can be attributed to the majoritarian context, which tends to favor larger parties and exert pressure on smaller ones, particularly those in junior coalition roles.

In contrast, the Greek SYRIZA managed to navigate this majoritarian landscape more effectively. Its negative campaign message resonated within the broader context due to two major factors: its status as the leading party in the government and its position as a credible alternative to the dominant party, New Democracy. By capitalizing on these factors, SYRIZA was able to maintain its competitive edge despite the challenges posed by incumbency (Zulianello, 2019).

2.2. Are anti-establishment parties more responsive to citizens' preferences?

After having analyzed the trajectory of anti-establishment parties once they enter the political institutions, at different levels, which is pivotal to have a clear picture of their behavior as representative agents, I will now focus on the empirical analysis of their results in terms of responsiveness towards the electorate.

In the previous chapter, I have discussed the reasons why anti-establishment parties were able to present themselves as better representatives of the people, therefore aiming at filling a representation gap caused by the incapacity to represent mainstream parties. In the academic literature, however, the question of whether these parties succeeded in this is still not answered, as no systematic research has been conducted on this topic. What emerges from case study analysis of anti-establishment parties' congruence with respect to the electoral as a whole, i.e., looking at the position of the median voter, is that, overall, they show no higher responsiveness than their mainstream counterparts, proving to be more congruent to the electorate only in some cases, and in some specific issues that they can claim as their own. It can therefore be affirmed that anti-establishment parties did not have a relevant positive effect on representation. To measure this, it has been assessed the degree of issue congruence between parties' positions and the electorate ones, i.e., the extent to which they coincide. (Brause & Kinski, 2022; Collier & Sánchez-Ferrez, 2021; Kübler & Schäfer, 2022; Masi, 2021; Plescia, Kritzinger, & De Sio, 2019).

2.2.1. Issue congruence in a variety of anti-establishment parties

The Greek case

The data provided are a measure of the degree of substantial representation in different national party systems, looking at the variations between different parties. Issue congruency in some cases differs when analyzing different issues. This is the case of the Greek party system, which shows extremely low levels of congruency when looking at the left-right- political scale in the post-Great Recession era, being an outlier in the overall Southern Europe scenario. However, when looking at substantial representation in more diverse issues, namely immigration and bailout deals, apart from more traditional left-right issues, the results are at the opposite extreme, with Greek parties showing a higher degree of congruence than other Southern European countries. In either case, however, the two anti-establishment parties, SYRIZA and PASOK, a right-wing challenger party, did not show higher responsiveness than mainstream parties. In the first case mentioned, the results prove rather the opposite, with the center-right mainstream party "New Democracy" showing relatively higher issue congruence. Moreover, SYRIZA at the

radical left still proved to be more congruent than PASOK (Coller & Sánchez-Ferrez, Politicians in Hard Times: Spanish and South European MPs Facing Citizens after the Great Recession, 2021).

The Spanish case

A growing congruence at the center-right in the left-right analysis has also been witnessed in the (mainstream) Spanish Popular Party (PP), although in this case, the records for the party system showed a high level of congruence among all parties. The second study presents, in this case as well, significantly different results: while agreeing that overall congruence is relatively high in Spain, it recorded a significant variation in the level of issue congruence of single parties, especially with non-left-right matters as immigration (while, in line with the previous study, traditional matters shows a overall higher level of congruence). As a matter of fact, the most responsive party seems to be in this case the anti-establishment Podemos. However, a trend for challenger parties cannot be derived, since, at the extreme side of the scale, Ciudadanos (the other major anti-establishment Spanish party) presents the lowest degrees of congruence. Looking at the broader picture, neither in Greece nor Spain, according to these studies, challenger parties proved to be better representatives than mainstream ones. Another analysis of the post-Recession party-voters congruence was carried out by looking at both the party perspective and the individual one (i.e., obtaining data both through an elite survey and a mass one) in a comparative study of Spain and Italy's behavior, and the results confirm the previous findings as long as Spain is concerned, highlighting both how the left-right dimension is generally more represented by the elites and how "Ciudadanos" showed low records of congruence (Coller & Sánchez-Ferrez, Politicians in Hard Times: Spanish and South European MPs Facing Citizens after the Great Recession, 2021).

The Italian case

In the Italian party system, results are similar to the Spanish ones: the overall degree of congruence is generally high, and it remained relatively stable even following the Great Recession (whose main effects were visible, as well as in Spain, in the change in party system, specifically the passage from a bipolar to a multipolar system. Moreover, once again resembling the case of Ciudadanos, the challenger, anti-establishment M5S shows

a low degree of congruence, thus proving unable to substantially represent the people (Coller & Sánchez-Ferrez, Politicians in Hard Times: Spanish and South European MPs Facing Citizens after the Great Recession, 2021). Moreover, an analysis of the level of congruence of the two Conte governments, the former composed of an alliance of two anti-establishment parties, the M5S and the League (the former LN), the latter by the same M5S and the mainstream Democratic Party (PD), showed that in the Conte II government issue congruence was higher than in the Conte I (De Vries, Hobolot, Proksch, & Slapin, Representation , 2021). In line with these results, a study carried out by Beniamino Masi comparing the "Representative Deficit Index" of the different Italian parties in the context of the 2018 political elections showed that, although being a big party in terms of electoral support, the M5S presents a high deficit score, even in the core issues of its campaign (wealth redistribution). Looking at the ideological congruence in the center-right coalition, in this case, anti-establishment parties proved to be more responsive than the mainstream one since the League and the Brothers of Italy (FDI) presented a lower deficit than Force Italy (FI, the former PDL) (Masi, 2021).

In a study of the differences in responsiveness between anti-establishment parties and mainstream parties with the same position in the political spectrum, looking in this case at a bigger sample including parties from Italy, Austria, and Germany, it emerged that, in line with the previous results, responsiveness is not higher in anti-establishment parties. These challenger parties proved more responsive in cultural-related issues than economic ones, and overall, again corroborating Masi and Coller and Sánchez-Ferrez results, they are not particularly responsive in the issues they claim to "own" (Plescia, Kritzinger, & De Sio, 2019).

The German case

Finally, in an attempt to understand the responsiveness specifically of right-wing anti-establishment parties, Kübler and Schäfer analyzed the behavior of the German AFD (Alternative for Germany). They found that the political positions of the party are, overall, more extreme than the ones of the public opinion, therefore showing a low level of congruence and a failure in filling the representation gap it claims to be addressing. However, the level of congruence is particularly high in the specific position of

immigration, so after AFD's entrance into parliament in 2017 overall congruence increased. The authors also recorded an indirect effect of the outbreak of AFD, which has not been addressed by the previous studies mentioned: because of the level of support for its immigration policies, mainstream German parties also generally shifted to more strict positions in this regard, thus causing an increase in the congruence of the whole party system with the electorate between 2013 and 2017 (Kübler & Schäfer, 2022).

Concluding remarks

Although challenger, anti-establishment parties have been a part of the political scene since the first shift in party systems in the 1990s, systematic studies on their behavior once they enter the political institutions, both at the parliamentary and governmental stage, have mostly been carried out after the rise of anti-establishment parties that followed the political crisis caused by the great recession. The integration of these parties into the system takes place in three major phases. Firstly, anti-establishment parties must survive their parliamentary breakthrough to effectively carry out their linkage function. In this regard, different scholars agree on the fact that a high level of party organization, combined with relatively little intra-party conflicts, plays a major role in improving the electoral sustainability of newly represented parties. Secondly, they have to properly interact with the system, and they can do this following different paths: there are positive integration models, in which parties directly participate in the government, and negative integration ones where they externally support the government. Lastly, they have to properly govern, and implement the policies they advocated for during the electoral campaign and while at the opposition. The analysis of the performance of different anti-establishment parties in government showed that they are not necessarily meant to fail in keeping up with their promises and that their degree of success largely depends on the way in which they present themselves during and after their incumbency, as well as other structural factors such as the type of coalition they are in, and the political system in which they act.

The last issue at stake is if, and to what extent, anti-establishment parties are better representative than their mainstream counterpart, i.e., if they show a higher degree of issue congruence with the electorate (as a whole) thus proving more responsive to their demands. There is no systematic study of this issue; however, different case studies point to the fact that there is no empirical evidence that anti-establishment parties' responsiveness is higher than mainstream parties, with some cases in which it is even lower, depending on the kind of issue taken in consideration.

Overall, anti-establishment parties, after having undergone their path of transformation and integration into the system, show no major differences in their behavior compared to mainstream parties, therefore their effect on political representation was a minimal one. In the next chapter, I will provide a deeper analysis of the path followed by two different anti-establishment parties in their geo-political context, investigating their specific and individual characteristics.

CHAPTER 3: CASE-STUDY ANALYSIS

An introduction to the topic

In the previous chapter, I discussed how political representation has entered into a crisis in the European scenario after the financial and economic crisis of 2008, the Great Recession, and how a new wave of anti-establishment parties has tried to fill this gap in representation by going against the so-called "mainstream" parties that dominated the political arena. Thanks to the widespread desire for a change by the populations of different countries, many of these parties, after entering parliament, managed to be appointed in governing positions, if not to directly lead a government.

In Southern Europe, where the effects of the crisis were the most visible in terms of unemployment, high debt-to-GDP ratio, and negative economic growth, these new challenger parties gained significant electoral success in a particularly short time span, and in a matter of a few years they managed to go from being outsider parties, proclaiming their being "different" from the political system, to be the major political actors in the national and international scene, obtaining representation in parliament and government (Freire, Barragán , Coller, Lisi, & Tsatsanis, 2020).

In this chapter, I will analyze in a detailed way the behavior of two of these parties. On the one side, the Five Star Movement in Italy was, in a sense, a complete revolution in both the Italian political system and in the European scenario in general, given its rapid breakthrough and its peculiar characteristics that differentiated it from most other parties. On the other, SYRIZA in Greece, although being much more "traditional" in its origins and evolution, gained success extremely quickly in the aftermath of the Greek economic and financial crisis of 2009, and is notable for having been the first of these anti-establishment parties to participate in government (with the leader of the party Alexis Tsipras being appointed as Prime Minister), and for having dealt with the signature of the much-depreciated Third Memorandum with Greece's creditors (Coller e Sánchez-Ferrez 2021; Freire, et al. 2020; Vittori 2023; Zulianello 2019).

The M5S and SYRIZA, while emerging in the same context of the answer to the political crisis that followed the Great Recession, present different origins (the former is an

entrepreneurial party, the latter a rooted one, following Bolloyer's distinction), as well as an ideological position. Moreover, while both cases are an example of negative integration, SYRIZA reached it while at the government, while the M5S while in parliament. These differences, together with similar outcomes (both parties fund themselves having their first government experience with another anti-establishment party with different ideological views, namely ANEL for SYRIZA and the League for the 5S) and especially similar results when it comes to the analysis of their performance as representative, make the two parties a fitted option for comparative analysis.

The following two sections will analyze the path of integration into the system of the two parties, following the scheme set out in the previous chapter, to then discuss their impact on political representation.

3.1. Five Star Movement

The birth and rapid success of the Five Star Movement, M5S, was unexpected and completely new in the Italian and European political scenario, not only for its rapid success but also for its digital-based system, which aimed at the direct participation of all members through online platforms, thus calling for an internal direct-democracy system. Its founder was the actor, presenter, and comedian Beppe Grillo. (Vittori 2023; Zulianello 2019). In 2005, together with the IT entrepreneur Roberto Casaleggio, he launched a personal blog, *beppegrillo.it*, where he dealt with national and international politics-related topics, with large space left for the criticism of the economic system and of the political class in general. Specifically, he denounced the "selfish and malicious caste" that governed politics. The blog gained rapid success, and in 2009 it was ranked as the ninth most influential website in the world. At the same time, Casaleggio and Grillo created local meetup groups (again organized digitally, through the *meetup.com* website), where a protest, and mobilization process started. In 2007, this activism was boosted by the organization of the "*vaffa-days*", which were crucial for the development of activism on the ground (Passerelli et al., 2013, as cited in Zulianello, 2019). After some first engagement efforts in the electoral arena, in 2009, the two of them officially founded the M5S which, as the name says, is specifically a movement and not a party, to underline its fundamental difference from the "establishment". In its founding "non-statute", the movement established its programmatic priorities and its need to reform the political

system, by rejecting *a priori* coalitions with other parties. Notably, the movement in its structure still fell within the definition of "party" provided by Giovanni Sartori and accepted by the literature (Zulianello 2019).

The movement gained major electoral success in the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis of 2008/2009 (the Great Recession) and the political crisis that followed in Italy: in 2011 Silvio Berlusconi resigned as prime minister, leaving space for a "grand coalition" lead by the professor and economist Mario Monti and encompassing center-left and center-right parties. This was a technocratic government, appointed to help Italy get out of the economic crisis but proving widely unpopular. In 2013 it participated in its first political election, turning out to be the most-voted party. The general trend was confirmed in 2018, when it expanded by 1 million votes its electoral support and was able to participate in government for the first time (after a process of institutionalization which will be discussed later) (Vittori, 2023).

3.1.1. Ideological Background

The M5S was born, first and foremost, as an anti-elitism movement, which aimed at reforming the political scene, composed by "dead" parties (Grillo, 2011). As affirmed by the same Beppe Grillo on several occasions, the M5S, at least in its initial phase, identified itself as a "post-ideologic movement". In a 2013 post, he affirmed that "the time of ideologies is over", that the M5S is "non-fascist, non-leftist, non-rightist" and "above every effort to ghettoize, juxtapose and mystify" its program, which is open to everyone without prejudices (Grillo, 2013). Despite these affirmations, it is still possible to position on the political scale the issues it stands for. From an economic issues point of view, the party had adopted positions that can be identified with leftist ones, as can be derived from its electoral manifestos: it always stood for reforms aimed at redistribution policies and protection and investments in the public sector, against the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a small elite (specifically, multinational companies CEOs). In the idea of not leaving anyone behind, in the 2014 European elections, the M5S called for the abolition of the Fiscal Compact and of the balances-budget rules. Most importantly, together with the sociologist Domenico De Masi, Grillo called for a universal basic income, to be

extended to the EU level, which was the basis of the cornerstone of the 2018 electoral campaign of the party: the citizenship income proposal.

From a cultural perspective, the position of the party has been more ambiguous, especially with regard to immigration. As a matter of fact, while always standing for the equality of all human beings, several declarations have been released against illegal immigration, and while calling for a reform of the Italian citizenship laws, it voted against a proposal for an Ius Soli reform in 2017. The same is true for civil rights: while the membership, as well as the same Beppe Grillo, endorsed same-sex marriage, these rights never appeared in the manifestos, and the party abstained during the vote for civil unions in 2016 (Fatto Quotidiano, 2016) (Vittori, 2023).

Finally, in EU-related matters, the position is once again ambiguous: while calling on several occasions for an "idea" of Europe and the protection of rights at the EU level, in an inclusive approach, and a stronger European Parliament, it has also been mostly critical towards EU institutions and policies, and the so-called "EU propaganda" (Vittori, 2023)
.

3.1.2. Normalization and institutionalization of the M5S

In the previous chapter, I discussed how party organization reflects on the electoral sustainability of parties. In the M5S case, we are in front of an entrepreneurial party, since when even before its official foundation in 2009 Grillo presented himself as an outsider, and thanks to this approach he obtained credibility in the public opinion eyes. From an organizational point of view, the movement always called for a system of participatory democracy through the web, specifically through the M5S online blog, the "Rosseau platform", owned by the "Five Star Movement Association". Here, surveys are proposed to the membership, which is called to vote in internal party decisions, such as policy positions, candidates, and (although with a non-binding effect). This kind of consultation, however, which only presented "take-or-leave" options, soon turned into a plebiscitary mechanism, used to confirm the decisions taken by the leaders and to prevail over the internal opposition. Other systems of participation, assembly-based (where, since 2017, the assembly has been composed of the online membership, have been established, with the major objective of allowing the membership to submit its legislative proposals. The

procedure, however, was complicated, and the turnout in the sessions organized to discuss them (16 in the 2013-2018 legislature) was extremely low (around 25%), especially if compared to the average turnout in the surveys (around 75%) (Vittori, 2023).

Thus, the central control over the movement has always been strong, which, according to Bolloyer's and Zulianello's findings, could contribute to explaining why the M5S not only achieved electoral sustainability but gained a 10% share of the vote more in their second political elections. On the other side, the movement never achieved a strong decentralized organization, as the "center" always opposed autonomy, which is exemplified by the expulsion of several local cancellers in Emilia Romagna, a political laboratory in the period following the 2012 election of the first M5S mayor, Federico Pizzarotti, in Parma.

As for the central organization, in 2015 a "directorate" (*direttorio*) was established, composed of 5 MPs, with coordination functions between the parliamentarians and the leadership. In this regard, up until 2017 the only real "leader" was Beppe Grillo, whose role of Guarantor was accompanied by an official recognition as "Party Leader" (*Capo politico*) to accommodate the electoral law. However, the situation changed in 2017 when MP Luigi di Maio became party leader, and Grillo withdrew from (most of) the political scene, only intervening in strategy-related issues and much less on policy ones.

There is therefore an internal contradiction between the ideological position of the movement, which in its first statute claimed to be "leaderless", and the practice which features a strong "leaderist" stamp (Vignati 2015, as cited in Zulianello 2019)

Looking at internal cohesion, differently from other parties it is not possible to identify proper "factions" or organized groups (while some visible differences were present between a group that wanted to defend the purity of the movement and a more pragmatic one, more open to compromises, lead by Di Maio). The movement itself has always been opposed to factionalism, as it feared it would undermine its public image (Vittori, 2023).

Looking at the interaction stream of the movement, right after the party parliamentary outbreak the first effects on the public image were visible. In the 2013 national elections and the parliamentary breakthrough of the M5S, which became the largest Italian party in terms of share of votes and electoral seats, some changes were visible firstly in a

decrease in its public perception of a party that differs from the traditional ones. It has been perceived more and more similar to the parties it used to criticize. The image of "Purity" called for by Grillo was thus gradually lost (Bordignon & Ceccarini , 2014).

As for the integration per se to the political system, as mentioned in the previous chapter the M5S, at least up until its first participation in government (in the Conte I executive), is a textbook example of negative integration. Already since 2013, some kind of institutionalization had been necessary (and the creation of the Directorate is proof of this). Still, Grillo and M5S representatives had always reclaimed their "purity" by rejecting, a priori, any kind of alliance with the other parties. While being at the opposition in parliament the movement only accepted to vote in favor of proposals that were completely in line with its ideological positions, regardless of the party that proposed them (if a governing party or an opposition one). A major obstacle faced by the M5S in those years, which eventually led to its integration, was the birth of the Renzi government in 2014 and the challenge that the new Prime Minister posed, portraying himself and his renewed version of the Democratic Party (of which Renzi was the leader) as better able to achieve the same objectives of the movement (namely, more transparency, and renewal of the political life). After the initial success of Renzi in the 2014 European elections, and the consequent relatively dissatisfying result of the movement, the defeat of the prime minister in the referendum for a massive constitutional reform, against which the movement had conducted a combative campaign, represented a page-turner moment in the integration of the M5S. After this moment, its strategy shifted from a vote-maximizing approach to an office-seeking one. More political importance and recognition was gained by other figures apart from Grillo, and soon Luigi Di Maio became the most visible representative of the movement. In 2017, a new statute was approved, which introduced significant organizational reforms, first and foremost the introduction of a political leader, the "legal and institutional representative of the M5S", who acts in a co-leadership with the "guarantor", the custodian of the values. The latter role was reserved to Grillo (who could retain it for life); the former, with a renewable 5-years mandate, was obtained by the same Di Maio. Under his leadership, the movement changed his approach in the following electoral campaign for the 2018 political elections: the possibility of

cooperation with other parties was envisaged, in absolute contrast with the position previously held by the movement (Zulianello, 2019).

In the aftermath of the political elections, where the movement reached a relative majority as the most popular party, voted by 32.7% of the population, but failed to reach a number of seats that allowed it to govern by himself, Di Maio made an appeal to both the two other major parties (the League and the PD) to agree on a "contract of government", where a compromise between the electoral programs was made. The agreement was eventually reach with the League, and in June 2018 the Conte I government was born, where Di Maio participated as deputy-prime minister (together with Matteo Salvini, the League's leader) (La Repubblica 2018; Zulianello 2019). Even with the participation in this coalition government, however, the movement was able to maintain some of its ideological positions, expecially on economic themes such as the "citizenship income" above mentioned, which was introduced by this executive. This is the reason why, ultimately, it is possible to claim that the party went through a process of negative integration (Zulianello 2019).

3.1.3. M5S in government

As mentioned, the movement participated for the first time in a government experience in the Conte I government, born in June 2018, three months after the general election that signed its electoral success. The appointed prime minister, Giuseppe Conte, a former lawyer, and professor, was a "homo novo" in the political scene, whose role was to be the executor of the "contract of government". However, he was still an expression of the M5S, having been presented during the electoral campaign by the same Luigi Di Maio as a possible minister in a hypothetical Di Maio government (Ceccato, 2022). The alliance between the M5S and the league was presented from the beginning as something transitory, a government tradition not meant to be translated into a stable electoral and political alliance, born to realize the electoral program of the two parties. This first government experience was marked by electoral competition between the two parties and the emergence of the League over the M5S. This trend was marked by the League victory in the European election of 2019, when it gained 34,26% of the vote share, compared to

the 17,06% result of the M5S, which halved its support compared to the previous year (Ministero Interno, 2019). In the summer of the same year, Matteo Salvini announced its withdrawal from government support, thus causing a government crisis. Following these events, the M5S managed to form a new governing coalition with its former competitor, the mainstream PD. This new government, once again led by Giuseppe Conte, compared to the previous one presented a more long-term perspective (as confirmed by the joint participation in a regional election soon after the government formation) (Coduti, 2020). The political crisis of the movement, whose electoral results kept proving unsatisfying, continued throughout the Conte II era, with Luigi Di Maio's resignation as political leader in January 2020 (Monaldo, 2020). After a transitory period that lasted more than one year and after the fall of the government in 2021, the leadership of the movement passed to the same Giuseppe Conte, who was formally elected as "president" in August 2021, following the approval of a new statute (Crimi 2021; Cuzzocrea 2021). In the meantime, the movement was supporting the new "grand coalition", a technocratic government led by the former president of the European Central Bank, Mario Draghi. (La Repubblica, 2021) This was a time of internal tension in the movement, as well as tension between the movement and the Prime Minister. Specifically, the aforementioned divide between the "purist" group and the "pragmatic group" (Vittori 2023) became more and more evident, especially after the beginning of the war in Ukraine and the different approaches to Italian and EU support displayed by Luigi Di Maio's group (who was, at the same time, minister of foreign affairs in the Draghi government) and the orthodox side of the party. The tension eventually led, in June 2022, to Di Maio's decision to leave the movement, together with several other MPs, thus causing the biggest parliamentary split in the history of the Italian Republic (Open Polis, 2022). Soon after that, the M5S announced its decision not to vote for the confidence of the government, causing a new government crisis that led to new elections and ultimately signed the end of M5S's experience in government (ANSA, 2022).

3.1.4. M5S effect on responsiveness and representation

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the effects of the M5S on responsiveness were not as high as expected- if anything, it can be said that the movement failed to increase

responsiveness in the sense that it did not prove to be more ideologically congruent than other Italian parties – looking at the whole party system, right-wing anti-establishment parties such as the League or FDI proved more responsive than the movement (Masi, 2021). Looking at the "Representative Deficit Index", the data confirm that it did not provide better results than other parties. Looking more specifically at the different issues it stands for, wealth distribution is one of the areas less congruent with the voter's opinion (which is notable considering that it was the major flagship of the movement during the 2018 electoral campaign). In this regard, the citizenship income still seems to be more supported than other redistribution policies, such as a flat tax introduction. Similarly, there is low support for the policies related to public security and immigration specifically: although this was never the main standpoint of M5S propaganda, the topic was still extremely debated during the same electoral campaign. The areas in which, on the other side, the deficit index is lower, are related to positions in the field of public services (Masi, 2021). One aspect in which the movement is in fact different from the other parties is, or at least used to be, it that its voters as well as its candidate do not want to be placed on the political scale (Pedrazzani and Segatti 2016, as cited in Freire, et al. 2020), which ends up scattering the ideological positions in a wide scale (Freire, Barragán , Coller, Lisi, & Tsatsanis, 2020). This is, after all, in line with the propaganda of the movement, which as previously explained aimed at being post-ideological, rejecting the traditional left-right divide.

Looking at the congruence of the M5S in government in the 2018-2021 period, i.e., in the period of the two Conte governments, congruence proved to be much higher in the Conte II government than in the Conte I, given that in the latter case the average positioning of the government was much more shifted to the right than the average voter, while in the former case, it was only slightly more shifted to the left (De Vries, Hobolot, Proksch, & Slapin, Representation , 2021). It is worth noting, however, that these results are not in line with other findings, which suggest that the average voter in Italy is more shifted to the extremes, them being both left and right than the party system as a whole (Coller & Sánchez-Ferrez, Politicians in Hard Times: Spanish and South European MPs Facing Citizens after the Great Recession, 2021).

3.2 SYRIZA

The Greek political scenario has always been characterized by a widespread presence of anti-establishment parties, both in the center and at the extremes, so that they have been defined, together with populism, as "the most important chapter in Greece's regime change" after its democratic turn (Pappas 2014, as cited in Vittori 2023). Because of this, when Syriza was created in 2004, as an electoral coalition composed of different leftist groups, dominated by Synaspismós (SYN), it had difficulties in presenting itself as something new and anti-establishment (Vittori, 2023).

In the years following Syriza formation, SYN, which during the 1990s was a center-left party", shifted more and more to the left, adopting more Eurosceptic positions. The alliance also tried to get closer to civil society and social movements, as proven by the election as leader of SYN of Alexis Tsipras in 2009, who had previous experience in the party's youth movement. Nevertheless, the electoral success of the party was still unsatisfying, and the attempt to get closer to social movement proved unsuccessful when the party failed to sustain the protests for the killing of a 15-year-old student by the police. The real opportunity for the emergence of SYRIZA, which the party was fully able to capture, was the economic fallout of the country and the discovery that GDP data had been manipulated by the party then at government, New Democracy. The subsequent agreement, signed in 2010, with the "Troika" (composed of the European Central Bank, the European Commission, and the Monetary Fund), was extremely opposed by the population, which started a radical protest movement, the *aganaktismenoi*, which denounced the feeling of absence of popular sovereignty. In particular, it was protesting against "the political elites" and the established political crisis, identified as responsible for the crisis (Pappas & Aslandis 2015, as cited in Vittori 2023).

In this context, SYRIZA managed to capture the discontent by presenting itself as a supporter of the movement (it was the first one to endorse the protests, which were being fought by mainstream parties). It did so vertically and horizontally: on the one side, it integrated the instances of the protest groups in its positions; on the other, it invited its members to actively take part in the protest, as normal citizens protesting the system. It called for the bail-out of the Memorandum (the agreement signed with the Troika) and

made of this and the fight against the austerity measures and the neo-liberal agenda its flagship.

In the following electoral campaigns, the party gained more and more success. In 2012, when two subsequent elections were held, SYRIZA transformed from a coalition of small parties to a fully-fledged party, with a vote-maximizing approach. In the 2015 elections, SYRIZA was the most voted party, while failing to gain a majority that enabled it to win. Despite this, it still managed to form a government coalition with the right-wing, anti-establishment ANEL: the first Tsipras government was the first time, in the European scenario, that a fully anti-establishment coalition reached the government level (Vittori 2023; Zulianello 2019).

3.2.1. Ideological Background

Differently from the M5S, SYRIZA presents no claims of being post-ideological, and in his positioning in both economic and cultural-related issues, it is unequivocally a leftist party – perhaps, even a radical left one. Before 2013, its program in economic terms was overall about more public intervention in different sectors of the economy. As mentioned, after 2013 its program focused completely on the fight against austerity and the impositions of the Troika. Policies for improvement of the welfare system were relevant in the program, as well as basic income ones (although not as much as in the M5S case). About a traditional cultural issue such as immigration, the party always fought against the inhuman treatment of Frontex, underlying the importance of inclusion and integration of the migrants in the country. Similarly, concerning same-sex marriages, it always supported equal rights.

The position on EU-related is more ambiguous: in a historical perspective, it has been critical regarding the different EU treaties, so to be defined as "soft-Eurosceptic" (Verney 2011, as cited in Vittori 2023); however, SYRIZA never proposed a "Grexit" and, it anything, tried to propose economic reforms at the EU level in order to get out of the stagnant situation the country was stuck in. After all, SYN was originally a Eurocommunist party; what SYRIZA seems to want to achieve is a reform of the European system as a whole. As Katsourides argues, SYRIZA has proven to be more

committed to the EU projects than its electorate, thus providing relatively low congruence on this issue (Katsourides 2016, as cited in Vittori 2023)(Vittori 2023).

3.2.2. Normalization and Institutionalization of Syriza

Although SYRIZA started presenting itself as an anti-establishment party in 2010/11, and although its previous efforts to do so, looking at Bolloyer's analysis of party origin, the party falls into the category of what we can define as "rooted new party". In fact, as previously explained, the party started off in 2004 as an electoral coalition between different parties, which were already, in a sense, "established" already in the 1990s. According to the findings in the previous chapter, this seems to be a good indicator for explaining the electoral sustainability of SYRIZA (which did, in fact, gain representation following its parliamentary breakthrough) (Bolleyer 2013; Zulianello 2019).

Looking at the organizational history of the party, in its early stages it called for participatory internal democracy, and great relevance was given to the positions of the different parties that composed the organization: it is not a case that SYN, in the first phase, opted for a coalitional structure rather than for a unification of the different parties, and it kept is own internal organization system (Vittori 2023). The motto of the coalition was, in fact, "unity in diversity" (Eleftheriou 2009, as cited in Vittori 2023).

The level of membership participation is lower than M5S's ones, as it is mediated through the local cells of the party, and members are only consulted in central decisions when the Central Committee establishes the issue is important enough.

This Central Committee is, overall, the most relevant body of the party since it controls both the central organization of SYRIZA and its activities in parliament. However, the parliamentary representation of the party played a crucial role in its institutionalization process since it gained major powers when SYRIZA gained a parliamentary relative majority in 2012. In a more and more centralized party, especially following government participation in 2015, it was the part of the party where more debate was still possible, up to the point that the leftist area, in opposition to the signature of the third memorandum, ended up leaving the party to form a new one, Popular Unity (LAE).

The Central Committee, on its side, is composed of party's delegates elected every two years. According to the SYRIZA statute, it is the body in charge of the political direction of the party, and it evolved from an institution that represented the different parties that composed the coalition up to 2013 to a unified institution after the SYRIZA constitution as a fully-fledged party. However, the Central Committee lost much influence not only in favor of the parliamentary delegation but most notably when Tsipras became prime minister in 2015, since it lost a major part of its political coordination function in favor of Tsipras himself, who was at the same time head of the party and head of the government (Vittori, 2023). What emerges from this picture is, overall, a party with a good organizational structure, which turned from a pluralistic organization to a more and more centralized one, which as explained is good for unity and stability, and has an overall positive effect on electoral sustainability (Bolloyer, 2013; Ignazi, 2014, as cited in Cirhan, 2024).

Finally, the level of intra-party conflict seems to be relatively high, although in this case its general negative effect on electoral sustainability is compensated by the good organizational structure and the rooted origins. The reasons for the high level of factionalism lay in the same origins of the party: being born of an electoral alliance between different parties with different sensibilities and interests, it presents a pluralist nature that underwent a trade-off between an increased role of the leadership of the new organization. On paper, factions are allowed to exist and present their instances within the party; in practice, however, competition is extremely high when it comes to leadership, and because of that different splits happened, starting from the former leader Alavanos in 2009 (Vittori, 2023). The last split happened recently, in November 2023, when a group of 45 MPs left the party in opposition to the new party leader, Stefanos Kasselakis (Il Post, 2023).

As the M5S, SYRIZA is an example of integration with the political and party system through the negative path. Differently from the movement, however, it achieved this integration through the direct path, given that most of the process took place when the party was already participating in the government as a majority party.

The integration process was almost fully led by Alexis Tsipras, who both during the electoral campaigns of 2012 and onwards and especially during his government experience found a way to appear, in a sense, reassuring to the system and the external forces. If right after the beginning of the *aganaktismenoi* movement the party was able to position itself on the "anti-memorandum" side of the newly created political cleavage (opposed to the pro-memorandum forces), calling for its immediate abolition, after the electoral success of 2012, while still at the opposition, the rhetoric passed to an intention to renegotiate the Memorandum and bailout terms, in a way that was more favorable to Greece. Nevertheless, Tsipras maintained the claim that the Memorandum would still endanger the permanence of Greece in the Eurozone, being criticized by mainstream parties for this.

In this phase, the major objective of SYRIZA was still vote-maximization (which was ultimately the reason for its transformation into a fully-fledged party), in order to exploit the favorable moment (and possibly achieve a parliamentary majority to be able to govern. However, the rhetoric became more and more moderate, to broaden its electoral base from the radical, protest groups to a larger part of the society. After the 2014 elections, in which SYRIZA became the most popular power, its rhetoric and strategy turned to actual policy proposals to be implemented in a possible government formation: in September, the party drafted a proper program in a meeting in Thessaloniki, where it established 4 pillars for national reconstruction and a reform, especially in matters of fiscal policies, at the EU level. Shortly after this, when new elections were once again held, the party confirmed its dominant position, but, lacking two seats to reach a majority that enabled it to govern, ended up forming the coalition government with ANEL.

The same formation of the government is a sign of the negative kind of integration: both parties were always sided in the no-memorandum front, and both rejected a priori any kind of coalition with pro-memorandum parties, thus remaining, in a sense, true to their most salient position (Zulianello, 2019). Integration, in the case of SYRIZA but also of the same ANEL, was thus reached not through cooperation with mainstream parties, as it happened to the M5S, but by accepting and implementing measures that were considered to be accommodating of the system, first and foremost the Memorandum and the austerity measures.

3.2.3. SYRIZA in government

To quote Davide Vittori, the two events that mostly characterized the most SYRIZA and Alexis Tsipras governing experience were the consultative referendum for the rejection of the memorandum, and the following decision to sign the memorandum (despite the victory in the referendum) (Vittori 2023).

Despite this, the party still managed to present itself as anti-establishment in its rhetoric for the following elections (which were held in the same year of the referendum, 2015, and ended up securing a second mandate for Tsipras, with a minimal vote loss of -0.88% of the vote share). The economic plan of the Thessaloniki manifesto was completely abandoned during the first Tsipras incumbency, and the party failed to achieve its proposed goals. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, the party justified its final decision to sign the Memorandum claiming that it was a necessary compromise and a tactical and temporary measure only, underlying how it was the best option for Greece and that it was the only actor capable to implement it avoiding its dramatic implications, by reducing at the minimum possible level the social cost of the agreement (Tsatsanis and Teperoglou 2016; Katsourides 2016, as cited in Zulianello 2016). Overall, in the campaign for the new 2015 elections, the propaganda was much less against the austerity measures and more about how to reform the domestic political system. In the end, to quote once again Tsatsanis & Teperoglou, the party managed to gain electoral support thanks to its effort in the negotiations of the Memorandum and the way it represented the process in its propaganda, rather than for the actual outcome of the negotiation (Tsatsanis & Teperoglou, 2016). Looking at other factors that can influence a positive electoral result in the post-incumbency period, it is worth noting that the Greek majoritarian party system played a relevant role (Zulianello 2019).

3.2.4. Effects of SYRIZA on responsiveness

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the literature is not univocal when it comes to assessing the overall level of congruence between the Greek post-recession party system and the electorate. In left-right-related issues, congruence is much lower than it other Southern European states. Looking at the specific case of SYRIZA, however, it emerges

that overall congruence between MPs and the electorate seems to have increased in the period between 2007 and 2015 (although, as explained, the positioning of the party itself and its role in the Greek party system changed dramatically in this phase). Notably, it seems not to have suffered from the broadening of its electoral support to the centrist, more moderate electorate, which still showed a lower level of congruence with the party than its traditional, radical left electoral base. In the interpretation of these data, however, it has to be kept in mind that the parliamentary delegation of SYRIZA was extremely small, and a proper evaluation of this change in congruence level is inevitably biased (Coller & Sánchez-Ferrez, 2021).

Looking at more cultural issues, the overall level of congruence seems to be higher, which makes for a better quality of substantive representation. However, SYRIZA does not stand out for a particularly higher level of congruence compared to other parties (Coller & Sánchez-Ferrez, 2021).

Finally, looking at EU-related issues (which in the case of SYRIZA are particularly relevant), the overall European identity of MPs rose in the period following the crisis, despite a widespread opinion that the Union did not meet Greek interests. On the voters' side, support for the EU diminished since 2012, which seems not to have been met by the elites in their positions (Freire, Barragán , Coller, Lisi, & Tsatsanis, 2020). In the previous sections, I have discussed how SYRIZA managed to capture the discontent caused by the austerity measures. However, a study showed how radical-left parties, including SYRIZA, are still always more supportive of the EU than their electorate. Notably, this is true even for radical-right parties, thus also encompassing SYRIZA's government partner ANEL (Freire, Moury, and Teperoglou 2014, as cited in Freire, et al. 2020).

Concluding remarks

In a time of profound political crisis, the 5-star movement and Syriza have been two anti-establishment parties that managed to emerge as representatives of the discontent of the people. The two parties differ in their origin, with the M5S, with its digital democracy basis, being far more innovative than the more traditional Syriza, the result of an electoral coalition that in a span of less than 10 years turned into a fully-fledged, anti-establishment

party. They also differ in their ideological position: once again, the M5S aimed at overcoming the traditional left-right divide, posing itself as post-ideological, while Syriza adhered to the more "classical" extreme left ideas.

What they share, however, is a rapid path of integration into the system which challenged them to perform in what they had promised to do: be better representative of the needs of the people, advocating for the population and not for the interest of a small elite, or of supranational authorities such as the EU. SYRIZA's path of integration was more rapid than M5S one, being the first anti-establishment party to reach a government position (and to pass the first post-incumbency electoral test). The M5S, on its side, before acceding the government went through an entire legislature in parliament, at the opposition of the executive. Even in this case, the movement managed to be extremely successful in the first elections after its parliamentary outbreak, finally reaching a government position.

The other major aspect that the two parties share is that, looking at some empirical studies, they failed to be better representatives than their mainstream counterparts: looking at the analysis of the congruence between their position and the position of their electorate, no significantly higher level of congruence have been recorded. Again, this result is a product of the analysis of the congruence between the whole electorate and the single parties, which do not look at the congruence of each party with its voters. This could end up being a limit in the analysis since it does not provide pieces of information on how anti-establishment parties such as the M5S or SYRIZA represent the people who actively voted for them.

All things considered, this analysis provides an overall negative answer to the starting question of this dissertation, i.e., if anti-establishment parties have had a positive effect on representation. What they did for sure, however, is to completely change the party system they were acting in, shifting from a bipolar to a multipolar system, and, at least in an initial moment, to mobilize a share of the population that felt more represented by these outsiders than from the already existing parties. And this, per se, is always good news in a democratic system.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I tried to understand if and to what extent anti-establishment parties that emerged as a response to the political crisis that followed the Great Recession proved to be better representative than the mainstream parties, the "elite", against which they conducted their electoral campaign and gained a major vote share.

There is no univocal way of understanding representation: it can be symbolic (when there is a belief that the representative is, in fact, representing), descriptive (when the characteristic of the representative corresponds to those of the represented), or substantive (when the ideas the representative stands for correspond to the represented ones). Similarly, the delegation of decision-making power from the principal, i.e., the electorate, to the agents, i.e., the representatives, can follow two opposite models: they can be trustees, entrusted to represent and make decisions, or delegates, with a clear and specific mandate.

After these challenger parties enter the political institution, they have first of all to try and secure re-elections, and the probability of electoral success seems to be influenced, among various factors, by the strength of the internal organization, as well as the origin of the party itself. Anti-establishment parties can integrate in various ways with the system: they must choose if they want to remain true to their identity while interacting with other parties (negative integration) or if they want to completely shift their positions to more responsible, mainstream ones (positive integration). Post-great-recession anti-establishment parties, overall, tend to show a mixture of both behaviors and in the cases of the M5S and SYRIZA, there was a gradual integration into the system up until their government role, in which they necessarily had to compromise. In both cases, however, they managed to remain in part faithful to their ideological background, which makes for two cases of negative integration. Analyzing anti-establishment parties in government, what emerges is that they are not necessarily meant to fail, and in many cases, they actually respected some of their electoral promises (as widely discussed, this was not the case for SYRIZA, which despite failing to respect its promises on the Third Memorandum still managed to preserve its vote share).

Finally, to answer the initial question of this dissertation, i.e., if anti-establishment parties have a positive effect on representation, the short answer would have to be "no". As a matter of fact, looking at the studies carried out in which the ideological congruence of anti-establishment parties and of mainstream parties with the electorate is compared, no significant indicator of such a trend has been found – if anything, in some cases the congruence was lower. The same result has been found in different parties in different countries, which indicates some level of external corroboration.

However, it has to be kept in mind that this dissertation is a review of previous studies, and no systematic research on this issue has been carried out yet, which does not allow me to provide a definite answer to the question. Moreover, the results of the analysis might differ if it was taken in consideration the ideological congruence between the single parties and their voters, rather than with the whole electorate.

After delving into the world of anti-establishment parties in power, I find myself having more questions than before starting to work on this dissertation. For instance, I wonder if there is a correlation between the level of congruence shown by parties and their post-incumbency (or post-parliamentary outbreak) electoral results. Another phenomenon that should be addressed in the future is the behavior of anti-establishment parties after their government experience, when they end up in parliamentary opposition, to see if their interaction with the system is at this point different than their pre-incumbency one.

Anti-establishment parties such as the 5 Star Movement and SYRIZA had promised to change their country's political system, and in fact, they did. Their simple presence in the institutions, and their persistence nowadays, 15 years after the Great Recession crisis, is a sign of that. However, they changed a lot over the years, and they necessarily had to compromise and depart from their original positions to be able to be effective in their parliamentary and governmental action. The data I provided in this dissertation show that, at the end of the day, they did not contribute that much to solving the so-called crisis of representation. However, as I also enlightened in the conclusion of the final chapter, the simple fact that they were able to mobilize the electorate to vote for them is a good sign from a democratic perspective. The journey these parties took, going from complete outsiders to being a substantive part of the political scene, which has been at the center of

this dissertation, has been in the spotlight in the news for the past decade. And this fact, per se, renders this topic worth of notice.

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