

# Career Backgrounds, Professional Network and Party Cohesion: The Success of ANO in the Czech Republic\*

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## Abstract

The volatile and unstable party systems in East Central Europe are associated with the emergence of new parties. However, some such new parties survive and become part of the party system they entered while other newcomers fade away even after they record major electoral success or gain government participation. How can we explain the contrasting fortunes of new parties? What explains their persistence and organizational survival? In this paper, we try to find the answers to these questions by linking the organizational success of new parties to the composition of their elites. We suggest that the similarity in professional and career backgrounds contributes to parties' organizational success by increasing party cohesion, especially at the level of party leadership. We demonstrate our arguments on three new Czech parties – Public Affairs (VV), Dawn of Direct Democracy (Dawn) and ANO – with contrasting political and organizational fortunes. Using data on elites' career and political pasts we show that, unlike ANO, VV and Dawn have comparatively more heterogeneous elite circles which, we suggest, make them more vulnerable to internal conflicts.

*Keywords: party unity; party cohesion; elite professional networks; career pathway analysis*

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## 1. Introduction

The chief concern of this paper is to explain the contrasting fortunes of three political parties in the Czech Republic – Public Affairs (VV), Dawn of Direct Democracy (Dawn) and ANO 2011 (ANO). There are a number of important similarities between these three parties: all three are anti-establishment and populist; most importantly, they can all be

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classified as genuinely new parties in the party system in which they (have) operate(d). However, while VV and Dawn failed in politics and disintegrated quickly after making an electoral breakthrough (i.e. achieving representation in parliament), ANO has managed to transform its initial electoral success into long(er)-term party organizational success. Since 2013, the party has been part of the Czech coalition government and its leader, Andrej Babiš, the country's Finance Minister. In addition, ANO won elections to the European Parliament in May 2014; the party repeated this success in October 2014 by receiving the highest number of votes in the municipal elections, as well as in the October 2016 regional elections.

This contrast in political fate is an interesting phenomenon in itself worthy of explaining. However, ANO's success is also part of a wider phenomenon. New parties challenge established party systems in a number of European democracies. The Czech party system – long considered one of the most stable party systems in post-communist Europe – is one such case in which this phenomenon takes place. The newly-formed ANO party succeeded at the expense of established parties. Studying this new successful party is not only of interest to those focusing on Czech politics. ANO, as a new political project that has, in an extremely short period of time, managed to dominate the entire political scene, represents a case with a wider relevance to contemporary European politics. As a genuinely new formation with openly anti-party sentiments, ANO fits into the wider phenomenon of anti-establishment parties (Hanley 2012) such as Party for Freedom, Syriza, Podemos, or Forza Italia, sharing some elements with these European cases, such as its newness, rapid electoral success, anti-corruption and anti-political appeals, anti-party critique, political outsider status, certain populist elements, its presentation as solution to economic crisis and in particular the disruption of electoral behaviour and established party systems.

How can we explain the contrasting fortunes of the three new parties? What explains their failure or, alternatively, their persistence and organizational survival? We suggest that the answer to these questions can be found in the similarity of the professional and career backgrounds (or the absence thereof) of these parties. In other words, we link the organizational success of new parties to the composition of their elites by arguing that elite homogeneity increases party cohesion and reduces the vulnerability of an organization to internal conflicts. In the next section, we provide the background to our paper by briefly introducing the contrasting political fortunes of the three political parties. Drawing on the literature on party unity and cohesion, section three outlines our theoretical argument. In the empirical section, we present data on the professional background of the elites of all three parties concerned to demonstrate that, in contrast to VV and Dawn, ANO resembles more a political firm than a party (see also Hloušek 2012, and Hopkin and Paolucci for the original formulation of the political firm concept). While this feature might make ANO the frequent subject of political controversy, it might also be seen as a factor contributing to its so far impressive resistance to internal conflicts and factionalism that so often plague new political parties at the critical phase of their development.

## 2. Czech Party System and Its Three Newcomers

The creation of new parties is a recent phenomenon in Czech party system. Scholars have referred to the Czech party system as closed, stable, and institutionalized (Cabada et al. 2014; Kopecký 2007; Berglund, Dellenbrant 1991), well-established with high level of programmatic crystallization (Kitschelt et al. 1999) and robust, and not fragmented into many parties (Hanley 2008; Lewis 2000). This makes the Czech case rather unique in the post-communist environment. In the last quarter of a century, the Czech party system has been marked by the dominance of four major political parties who have had constant parliamentary presence. In addition to these four parties – Civic Democrats (ODS), Social Democrats (ČSSD), Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) and Communists (KSČM), one can see a prevailing pattern of the emergence of new parties. Table 1 illustrates two trends. The first is the shrinking electoral support for the four main established political parties, at the expense of new parties and, second, the occurrence of a phenomenon referred to as flash parties (Hanley 2008). These are parties that gain parliamentary representation, but manage to be present for one term only because of organizational disintegration. As can be seen from Table 1, this has affected nearly all new parties, with the exception of ANO.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, from the three parties that we study in this paper, VV and Dawn disintegrated, while ANO has so far proven to be organizationally stable. Unlike ANO, Public Affairs and Dawn of

**Table 1: Electoral results (Chamber of Deputies) since 1989**

Election years		1992	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010	2013
Results		Votes (%)	Votes (%)	Votes (%)	Votes (%)	Votes (%)	Votes (%)	Votes (%)
Main political parties	ČSSD	6.5	26.4	32.3	30.2	32.3	22	20.5
	ODS	29.7	29.6	27.7	24.5	35.4	20.2	7.7
	KDU-ČSL	6.3	8	9	14.3	7.2	**	6.8
	KSČM	14.1	10.3	11	18.5	12.8	11.3	15
	<b>Established parties</b>	<b>56.6</b>	<b>74.3</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>87.5</b>	<b>87.7</b>	<b>53.5</b>	<b>50</b>
	US	*	*	8.6	*	**	*	*
	ODA	5.9	6.4	*	**	*	*	*
	SPR-RSC	5.9	8.1	**	*	*	*	*
	SZ	*	*	**	**	6.3	**	**
	TOP 09	*	*	*	*	*	16.7	12
	VV	*	*	*	*	*	10.9	*
	ÚSVIT	*	*	*	*	*	*	6.9
	ANO	*	*	*	*	*	*	18.7

\* did not contest

\*\* did not receive electoral support over 5 per cent of the electoral threshold.

Source: Statistical data in table derived from volby.cz.

Direct Democracy became victims of internal conflicts triggered by political scandals. In contrast to VV and Dawn, ANO managed to transform its initial electoral success into a longer-term party organizational success. It has so far been immune to such scandals.

The Table 2 illustrates when the individual parties got into high politics, what representation they attained and when they fell apart. Starting with VV, it was the relationships between party elites that were the core of its problems. VV started as a local party in Prague and got into high politics in 2010, but its success did not last even a year. VV's crisis started when the deputy leader of VV and three other MPs accused Vít Bárta (VV MP and leader) of giving them bribes on regular basis in exchange for loyalty and secrecy in relation to party financing (Česká televize 2014a; Strafeldová 2011; ČTK 2011a). Bárta's attempt to control the party elites in promoting party loyalty and cohesiveness produced exactly the opposite outcome. Although all the 'troublemakers' were subsequently expelled from the party and Bárta was not found guilty of bribery (Ihned.cz 2012a), this scandal deeply divided what was left of the parliamentary party of VV (Česká televize 2014a). In the meantime, Karolína Peake, together with seven other VV MPs, formed a new political party, LIDEM (Ihned.cz 2012b). The VV de facto disappeared from the political system. Quite paradoxically, a party whose image was based on anti-corruption disintegrated due to internal corruption (Leschtina 2012). The corruption case of Škárka and Bárta marked the beginning of VV's end, because this public scandal demoralised and destabilised the party (Eurozprávy.cz 2011), which quickly splintered into smaller groups of MPs struggling to gain control over what was left of the party (Slonková et al. 2011).

**Table 2: Fortunes of VV, Dawn and ANO**

Party-related events	VV	Dawn	ANO
Electoral breakthrough	2010	2013	2013
Vote %	10.80	6.88	18.65
Number of MPs attained	25	14	47
Scandal & disintegration	April 2011	January 2015	none

*Source: electoral results from www.volby.cz.*

The case of Dawn is also illustrative, even though a comparison with both VV and ANO is somewhat more problematic. Dawn was a very small party of only nine members which had neither a nationwide organization nor even an intention to build one. The party fell apart within two years after an electoral breakthrough in the last parliamentary election. Its fall was triggered by elites' disagreements over party financing, decision-making structures, and membership recruitment strategies (see Holotová 2015). The party leader's authoritative approach to decision-making over the openness of Dawn to new members, together with the fact that the party ran out of finances from public subsidies, led to the internal conflicts between Dawn's elites that led to a coup within the leadership structure (see Kopecký 2015; Stuchlíková, Nová 2015; Ihned.cz 2015). The internal party coup was triggered in January 2015 when Marek Černocho was elected leader of Dawn's MPs' club; this election started the division within the party (Brožová 2011; Učňová 2015). Shortly afterwards, ten of Dawn's MPs (out of 14) led by Černocho announced their intentions to form a new

political party called Dawn – National Coalition, independent of the leader of the original Dawn, Tomio Okamura (ČTK 2015a). Following this coup, two other MPs left what was then left from the original Dawn, and Okamura was compelled to form a new party called Freedom and Direct Democracy (ČTK 2015a). Okamura was blamed by the majority of Dawn's MPs for being authoritative (Eurozprávy.cz 2011).

While the scandals that took place in VV and Dawn had transformed into internal party conflicts that later led to their disintegration, in the case of ANO, which has also been confronted with scandals, these did not translate into conflicts within the party that would have endangered its organizational success. It could be argued that, unlike VV and Dawn, ANO has not yet been faced with scandals or crises of the scale that would be critical to its organizational survival and that would directly endanger its stability and position on the political scene. Nevertheless, several testing events related to ANO's involvement in high politics, such as the replacement of ministers, or alleged misuse of European Union Funds for building of the Stork's Nest Farm conference centre and pet zoo (Farma Čapí hnízdo in Czech) by the party leader, provide some evidence of the organizational resilience of the party.

Firstly, most of the previous personnel changes in ANO ministries reflected the ministers' personal scandals (ČTK 2011b), their incompetence or their own decisions to leave the post (Česká televize 2014b). However, the case of the replacement of Minister of Justice Helena Válková in March 2015 by ANO differs from this past practice. Válková was compelled to leave her post on short notice based on a party leadership decision; she was also instructed by the party to inform the public this was her own decision (ČTK 2015c). According to ANO's leadership, Válková was an expert in her field, but did not have the necessary managerial skills to run her resort (Lidovky 2015; Trachtová 2015; IDNES.cz 2015; ČTK 2015c; Česká televize 2015). Válková's case thus signalled that, although her replacement was highly controversial, nobody from the ANO leadership voiced any concerns over the fact that she was forced to step down; it also signalled that the support of the party leader is the most crucial asset when building a career within ANO and that everyone, even ministers, are faced with the necessity to obey instructions from the leadership.

The alleged misuse of European Union funding by a party leader was the second test to date of ANO's stability. This allegation of fraud became publicly known at the beginning of 2016 and centred on EU grant money used to fund ANO leader Andrej Babiš's conference centre, Stork's Nest Farm. Babiš was under investigation by both the Czech police and by The European Anti-Fraud Office for intentionally securing a grant intended for small and medium-sized firms (Neurope.eu 2016) for which his corporation was not eligible (Holub 2016) by applying under an anonymous stock shareholding. As hard as it is to believe, this serious accusation did not have any actual negative impact on ANO. Interestingly, at a special Czech parliament meeting in which Babiš was to provide a sufficient and full explanation, all ANO's MPs applauded him once he finished his speech, demonstrating party unity and support (Novinky.cz 2016).

This reaction is very different to that of VV and Dawn to the crises that occurred in their parliamentary parties. While in these two parties the scandals immediately transformed into splits and internal conflicts that endangered their organizational stability, in ANO this scandal did not lead to the creation of internal opposition or factions oriented against the

party leader. Such loyalty within the party has been demonstrated in other circumstances, for instance during the party congress leader's vote, when Babiš received one hundred percent of the votes (ALDE 2015) or when ANO's MP club dressed in same clothes in order to support Babiš's new crucial tax policy draft for electronic record of sales (ČTK 2015d; Novinky.cz 2015). The above examples clearly illustrate that unlike in VV and Dawn, in ANO, scandals have not so far endangered its stability.

### 3. Party Cohesion and Elite Professional Background

As the above cursory overview of the internal conflicts within some of the new Czech parties demonstrates, political parties are not unitary actors. Indeed, some scholars refer to parties as 'self-evidently collective entities not sharing a single brain' (Giannetti, Laver 2005), 'loose confederations of sub-parties' (Suthanintr 1985) or 'miniature political systems made up of rival party sub-units competing for political and decision-making power' (Sartori 1976: 71). Or, as Boucek observes, political parties are not monolithic structures but rather 'collective entities in which competition, divided opinions and dissent create internal pressures. In turn, these pressures often trigger the formation of factions that render the unitary actor assumption highly questionable' (Boucek 2009: 455–456). The problem of factionalism and disunity is especially pertinent to newly formed and newly governing parties, and this is the case for each of the three studied parties. As Deschouwer (2008) argues, for new parties that are organizationally young, 'moving from principled opposition to coalition potential, and then from this potential to being in power, creates a number of pressures, some of which can be fatal to new parties' organizational longevity. These pressures include the need to hold the party together, to communicate and coordinate between the central party organization and the party in public office, and to manage internal conflicts and relations within the organization as well as with coalition partners (Deschouwer 2008: 7).

At the same time, party unity (or the lack of it) quite likely also matters for the newly created parties. Political parties that show unity are more likely to be seen as legitimate by the electorate which, in turn, positively impacts their electoral performance. Party unity translates into a more attractive public image and better electoral chances and is thus an extremely important factor influencing parties' fortunes in politics. At the same time, party unity is also crucial for a party's organizational survival, as even electorally very successful parties can split due to internal party conflicts. Indeed, organizational longevity – the persistence and stability of party organization associated with the absence of internal factions – is generally considered one of the key indicators of individual party and party system performance (Tavits 2013; Tavits, Letki 2014).

How exactly is party unity achieved? In general, party unity is the result of two processes. The first of these processes is the application of *party discipline*; the second is commonly referred to as *party cohesion* (see e.g. Andeweg, Thomassen 2010). The process of party discipline achieves party unity by the use or threat of sanctions, for example the leadership 'whipping' the party MPs by threatening their re-nomination. The use of such sticks or disciplinary measures need not be limited to MPs and parliamentary parties but can be applied

to other party subunits, for example by the party executive bodies threatening dissolution of local chapters. The exact opposite of various sticks are of course carrots – an offer of various selective incentives (Panebianco 1988), for example party patronage and other perks of the office that are aimed at achieving party unity. When party unity is achieved by *party cohesion*, it refers to a host of processes by which the party elite and party members come to share political attitudes and policy preferences, resulting in a high degree of their ideological homogeneity. In contrast to party discipline, where party unity is to a large degree enforced and manufactured by party leadership, party cohesion stems from commonly shared collective identities, based for example on the social and career backgrounds of party elites and members.

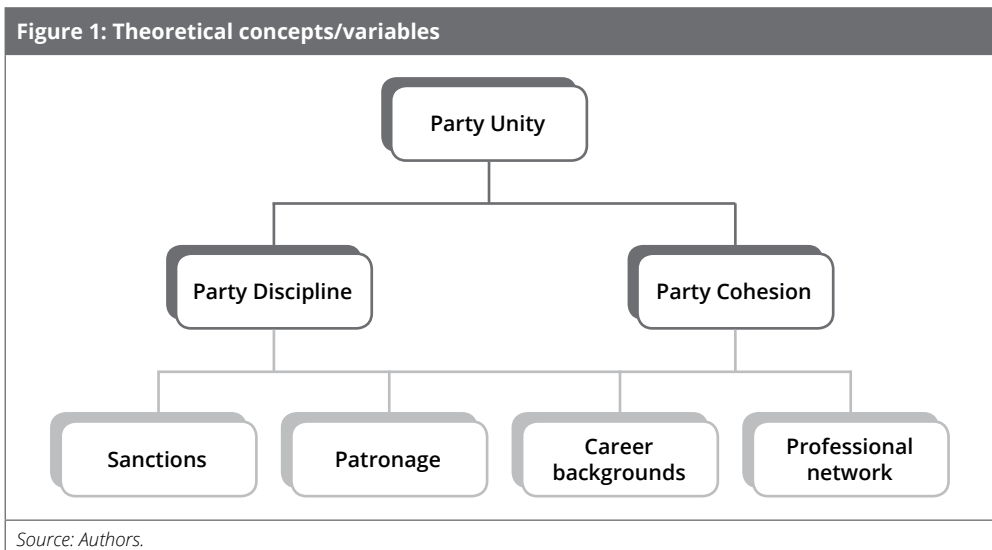
Empirically, the two processes can often be observed simultaneously in the internal life of political parties. The European communist parties, for example, were known for a high degree of both party discipline and party cohesion among their party elites and party members. Organizational troubles, especially typical for political parties that are organizationally young and immature, usually emerge when disciplinary and other punitive measures are used to try to create party unity in the absence of party elites' and/or members' shared political attitudes. For example, as Kopecký (2000) showed in his analysis of new Czech parliamentary elites in the early 1990s, the enforcement of party discipline as a means to achieve high party unity had limited effectiveness usually led to party fragmentation (see also Heidar, Koole 2000). Ideally, the best way to avoid internal party conflicts is to forge common collective and ideological identities, especially among the party elites who are bestowed with the task of initially building and later routinizing and stabilizing the emerging party organization. Indeed, like a large number of scholars before us, in this paper we link party unity with the party elites' homogeneity of their social backgrounds, and their career patterns in particular (e.g. Andeweg, Thomassen 2010; Eldersveld 1964; Suthanintr 1985; Namenwirth, Lasswell 1970; Searing 1971; Edinger, Searing 1967; Farazmand 1999; Siavelis, Morgenstern 2008; Kim, Patterson 1988; Eldersveld, Siemienska 1989; Putnam 1973; Higley, Moore 1981; Higley et al. 1991; Wellhofer 1974; Janowitz et al. 1956; Lazer 2011; Lodge 1993; Mills 1956; Knoke 1993).

In theory, the extent of elite cohesion is dependent on a number of different social background factors of politicians, such as educational attainment, occupational past and social origins. In this article we focus chiefly on two conceptually distinct but empirically related variables: *common occupational backgrounds*, and *common professional links*. Common occupational backgrounds facilitate ties between political leadership by creating 'shared dominant values forging allied elite-elite relationships' (Suthanintr 1985: 26). Indeed, as Edinger and Searing (1967) show, political elites with common previous occupational backgrounds form 'social circles' whose members, having similar occupational socialization experiences, hold similar political attitudes (see also Mill 1956; Lodge 1993; Farazmand 1999). Such social circle members' common social background obtained from their professional and educational past, positively influences attitudinal consensus – i.e. the degree to which leaders share views on specific public policies and broad ideological orientations (Moore 1979: 674). This, in turn, affects party cohesion. In the absence of common occupational backgrounds, as Searing (1971) argues, members of different professions are more likely to be attitudinally divergent from one another and thus the agreement among

elites on the major values, which is essential for effective operation of parties, is harder to achieve.

Regarding the latter, common professional links refers to the existence or absence of shared experience within a particular type of organization, for example: university, company, ministry or political movement. When party elites display high levels of shared professional links, they have usually worked within the same organization in the past, albeit perhaps in very different occupational roles. In theory, the highest levels of party cohesion are likely to be obtained when both the occupational background and professional links of party elites concur. Indeed, some scholars studying elite cohesion refer to such a situation as a dual hierarchy within a party organization (e.g. Janowitz et al. 1956; Siavelis, Morgenstern 2008): when party elites not only belong to the same occupation, but also have common professional links outside of the political party, they are likely to form an informal network within the party structure that is similar to friendship. Janowitz et al. (1956), studying career patterns and elite unity, refer to this phenomenon as ‘the overlap of affiliations of elite members’, where ‘elites hold key posts simultaneously and/or successively in many types of organizations, as they can coordinate diverse activities, create an affinity and common sharing of interests’ (Janowitz et al. 1956: 36–40). In such situations, we are likely to obtain what Putnam (1973) calls a ‘consensually integrated elite’, what Wellhofer (1974) refers to as ‘communities of fate’, and Farazmand (1999) calls ‘interlocking networks’.

To conclude, Figure 1 summarizes the basic analytical approach to the question of party unity, outlining key variables and their relationship. Our chief empirical concern in the following is to establish whether ANO, a relatively successful and organizationally stable new political party in the Czech Republic, has a party elite which is more homogeneous in terms of party elite occupational and professional background than the party elites of both Dawn and VV, which have experienced major organizational upheavals and, ultimately, party disintegration despite having initial electoral breakthroughs.





## 4. Empirical evidence

Before we focus on the empirical data analysis itself, it is crucial to define some of the terms we deal with in this paper. Firstly, in terms of the actual party elites, we focus on two different types of elites, differentiating between elites in ‘the party in public office’ and elites in ‘the party in central office’ as coined by Katz and Mair (1993). While the former encompasses those party elites elected into parliament and/or government, the latter refers to the national leadership of the party organization, consisting of two frequently overlapping groups of the national executive committee and the central party staff (Katz, Mair 1993). Building on this theory of different faces of party organization, we study the background of ANO’s party both in public office and the central office. As a part of the first group, we look at ANO’s MPs, ministers and mayors, while in the second group we analyse the backgrounds of party presidium members, leaders of regional organizations and central party staff.

In relation to the elite sample of the other two studied parties, VV and Dawn, we analyse the background of their party in public office, specifically their MPs. In total, we look at the background profiles of ninety-two ANO elites, twenty-five VV elites and fourteen Dawn elites. In terms of the methods used, the background data of elites have been gathered conducting profile research on the Czech parliament website (for party MPs), and on the websites of the respective political parties (for the other party elites). In terms of the studied variables – career patterns and political experience – we treat these empirically in two separate sub-sections below.

### 4.1 Elite career backgrounds

Table 3 provides evidence related to the career background of elites in the three parties, grouped according to discernible categories (for raw data see Appendix). It shows that ‘managers’ constitute the single largest category in all three parties, but in the case of ANO, this category accounts for 67% of all elites. It is crucial to note that this managerial category encompasses a number of career roles, such as company directors, individuals in executive positions and entrepreneurs. Thus, for the purposes of this paper, we define managerial background as one that involves people managing others and being solely responsible for overseeing the operation of business enterprises and other private organizations in their leading

**Table 3: Career background of party elites**

Career background		
Party elites	managers	other occupations
ANO	67 %	33 %
VV	24 %	76 %
Dawn	36 %	64 %

*Source: [www.psp.cz](http://www.psp.cz), [www.anobudelip.cz](http://www.anobudelip.cz).*

positions. In the case of ANO, and in sharp contrast to VV and Dawn, it appears that the party elite largely consists of a group of people with very similar occupational backgrounds.

It should be noted that the elite homogeneity observed above is part of ANO's broader strategy and largely stems from the party's ideological outlook, especially from its views on the state and the role of politicians in it. ANO has extensively relied on the pragmatic, manager-like approach to running public administration, promising to run the state in a manner similar to running private corporations. ANO strongly emphasised this claim in its electoral campaigns, especially in the campaign prior to the 2013 parliamentary elections, in which the party made an electoral breakthrough. In 2013, the party emphasized that it would 'manage the state like a firm', and revisited this idea again in the 2016 regional elections with the slogan 'lead a region like a firm'. This idea, in a nutshell, is based on the premise that people with hands-on managerial experience from the real world, as opposed to the career politicians of established parties with no 'real-life' career achievement, will provide a solution for the malfunctioning state bureaucracy, growing state debt and overall incompetence of established politicians to handle problems. As our data demonstrate, by opening public offices up to individuals with experience running private enterprises, ANO has turned these ideas into practice and created an elite with a comparatively high degree of occupational homogeneity.

It is also noteworthy to mention that such a political strategy is not entirely new in post-communist Czech politics. In the case of the Civic Democrats (ODS), Hadjiisky (2011) talks about an important group of post-normalisation 'technocrats' that formed the ideology and public image of ODS in the 90's which influenced the party heavily in the years to come. ODS elites shared similar attitudes based on their common professional past, educational profiles and social characteristics. In 1995, for example, one third of the party leadership had a technical or economic educational background (Kostecký, Kroupa 1996). Václav Klaus, the then party leader, co-created the party elite from individuals with similar profiles – competent professionals who knew each other from economic and financial circles. As a result, Hadjiisky (2011: 102) referred to the party as a business enterprise, and Hanley (2004) referred to ODS as a 'tool of technocratic modernisation'. Although later the difference between economists and engineers within the party leadership led to tensions and the struggle for control over the party, in the 90's, the technocratic make-up of the elite and its common ideological profile helped to navigate the party through the important phase of its institutionalization.

To return to the actual data, the highest percentage of elites with a common managerial past (sixty-seven percent) is seen in ANO's elite profile. In terms of ANO party members in public office, twenty-seven out of forty-seven ANO MPs are former managers or entrepreneurs (from various business industries and at different levels of seniority), six out of their seven mayors have managerial career pasts, while four out of six ANO ministers have been previously employed in managerial positions. Furthermore, ANO party members in the central office replicates the same phenomenon of 'manager infiltration' into ANO's party elite structure. Nine out of twelve members of ANO's party presidium have common managerial career backgrounds, while twelve out of fourteen of ANO's regional leaders have managerial career backgrounds. This represents the highest proportion of ANO elites with a common career background out of all elite categories analysed. Four out of six of ANO's employees in the party secretariat have a managerial career past.

As for VV, as demonstrated in Table 3, the party's elite network is not as career-homogeneous as ANO's, and only twenty-four percent of VV elites share a managerial career past. VV MPs held a wide array of other occupations from various fields, ranging from lawyers, teachers, policemen, architects, surgeons and well-known journalists to students or former mayors. In relation to Dawn's elites' career backgrounds, Dawn mirrors VV in this respect. Although Dawn's elite sample saw more managers and entrepreneurs involved – thirty-six percent (five out of fourteen studied MPs), overall, Dawn's elites' backgrounds are also rather heterogeneous, ranging from pilots, teachers, librarians, nurses, hockey players, diplomats to doctors. Indeed, Tables 4 to 11 (in the Appendix), contain detailed data with the specific career background of all studied party elites. They quite clearly indicate that ANO's elites have by far the highest level of common occupational background. In contrast, the composition of VV's and Dawn's elites' career backgrounds displays a far greater degree of occupational heterogeneity, as their elites' career backgrounds included a wide array of professions such as doctors, lawyers, pilots, zoologists, students, nurses, journalists and others.

## 4.2 Professional network

The second variable theoretically contributing to party cohesion, which in turn influences the party unity, is the existence of professional links between party elites. In addition to the existence of a shared career past, professionally linked party elites are said to further contribute to the cohesion of parties, because individuals who have relationships with each other that were formed outside of their party are more likely to hold together and to cooperate in a united manner when party organizations are under pressure. In addition to former careers, we have also studied the potential professional links of VV and Dawn elites. We find that in the case of VV and Dawn, no professional networks existed that could plausibly contribute to these parties' cohesion. The only exceptions are the two VV MPs who were formerly employed at the same security agency (see Tables 4 to 11 in appendix for more details). For Dawn, no former professional networks between their elites have been identified in our elite profile data analysis.

In sharp contrast, ANO elites had in the past been appointed to, or currently still hold, a managerial position within the Agrofert business conglomerate of its leader Andrej Babiš. To be specific, seventeen percent of the studied ninety-two elites<sup>2</sup> have former or current professional links to Agrofert. The fact that nearly a fifth of ANO's leadership held, or still holds, employment in Babiš's firm(s) means that at least a portion of ANO's elites form a part of an unofficial chain of command within ANO. Babiš, being the party leader, while simultaneously for some of the elites, either a former or current employer, creates a chain of dependence which has an impact on the division of power within the party, on the decision-making process and on the position of the party leader. This is reflected in the way the party operates and alters party elites' relationships, which in turn influences how the party operates, how party elites vote in internal decision-making, and mainly how cohesive and, in turn, united the party is.

In addition, the data from the elite career profiles analysis not only indicates that managers from Babiš's business are embedded in ANO's leadership structure, but that they also

occupy crucial party posts that have influence on the functioning of the party. For instance, the post of party communication manager and head-hunter is held by a former Agrofert Human Resources manager who oversees both recruitment and training of new members and candidates for office. Perhaps the most crucial post in relation to party cohesion – the leader of ANO's parliamentary faction/party – is in the hands of a current member of Agrofert's board of directors. The fact that all ANO MPs as well as all new applicants for party membership have to account to the individuals professionally dependent on Agrofert illustrates that the party's unity is indeed closely related to the existence of the professional Agrofert network within ANO that help its elites to keep the party cohesive.

This cohesion is also aided by a very significant overlap of party posts at a different level of the leadership hierarchy. Currently, three members of ANO's party presidium are simultaneously leaders of regional organizations. Moreover, eight members of the party presidium are also members of parliament. In addition, it appears (additional interviews conducted with ANO elites in the fall of 2016) that different levels of party leadership regularly hold meetings to discuss the party agenda and communicate daily via email to keep all individuals in crucial positions informed and updated. Considering all these things together, one could argue that ANO is no longer a party in the classic sense, but more of a political firm. Indeed, some aspects of ANO's operation are similar to political firm parties that have been defined on the basis of their approach to political competition and campaigning or ideology (Hloušek 2012; Hopkin, Paolucci 1999). In particular, the rise of professionalization in campaign management (such as the reliance on marketing experts), the opening of politics to models and practices from the business world, populist ideological catch-all strategies and the critique of the political establishment have been associated with the characteristics of the business-firm parties (Hloušek 2012; Hopkin, Paolucci 1999), and they all also apply to ANO.<sup>3</sup>

However, there are also some important differences. In contemporary literature on the topic, the concept of political firms, or so-called 'business-firm parties', describes parties founded by political entrepreneurs as instruments of their private interests in politics which are designed to help the political entrepreneur to chiefly gain a preferential position in order to support his business activities (e.g. Klíma 2015). In contrast, ANO seems to be using the corporate network of Agrofert (both in terms of personnel as argued in this paper, but also in terms of marketing and party financing) to support its political activities and not vice-versa. Indeed, we suggest that ANO operates as a political firm mainly because of the personnel 'corporate-party' intersection in its leadership. This overlap in leadership aids party cohesion, and in turn keeps it united and more immune to the pressures and shocks of professional politics, which were organizationally fatal to the other new studied parties. Party cohesion results from the existence of the professional Agrofert network in ANO because the party elites are managers professionally linked to the party leader, which leads to firm-like relationships within the party. In other words, the common professional Agrofert past of ANO's elites who occupy crucial party posts alters the relationships between the party elites and party leader and creates loyal relationships forged by former professional links. ANO's internal relations resemble a firm-like hierarchy and dependencies that result in party cohesion, and this mitigates internal conflicts that could transform into crises with the potential to endanger organizational unity.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to shed light on the political fortunes of three new political parties in the Czech Republic and has tried to find the answer to their somewhat puzzling contrast in organizational stability. We have adopted an approach emphasizing the importance of party cohesion as the chief source of party unity and performed an empirical analysis of party elite occupational backgrounds and professional links in all three parties. Unlike ANO, Public Affairs and Dawn became victims of internal conflicts triggered by bribery and party financing scandals because their party leaderships were not united. It was the lack of common career background and the non-existence of professional networks within VV's and Dawn's elite circles that contributed to the destabilization of their parliamentary parties during periods when pressures were being put on the parties as a result of their corruption crises and struggles over party finances or political power. The fact that these parties recruited and appointed elites with different career backgrounds and with no previous professional links did prove to be fatal to them when the first 'hard times' came, because without the party cohesion, the parties were highly disunited and their elites, instead of acting together as a single entity, split and acted on behalf of themselves or the small factions of MPs that they created. Disagreements between these factions over the actions taken to address the scandals transformed into arguments and quickly escalated into internal party conflicts, which contributed to these parties' disintegration. In contrast to VV and Dawn, ANO managed to transform its initial electoral success into long-term party-organizational success by being immune to such scandals. We suggest that this organizational unity is based, at least partly, on the cohesion of its elite network, in itself the result of career homogeneity and the existence of a professional network within its elite circle.

To be sure, we do not argue that career background and professional networks are the only explanatory factors of new parties' organizational unity and in turn survival. The elites' backgrounds themselves cannot solely explain why new parties survive or disintegrate. Rather, we see them as contributing factors in these processes. ANO's origins within the business network of its leader, and its continuous reliance on various Agrofert resources, are frequently criticized by political observers and ANO's political opponents. However, it is exactly this collusion between a political organization and private business that might make ANO survive a critical phase of its development and become a longer-term part of the Czech party system. We also do not argue that the common background and associated unity of ANO's leadership would prevent the party from disintegrating in the future or indeed that this party will not fall apart at all. As the experience of ODS in the past shows, there are and will be many other factors that might influence the political fortune of ANO, such as the overall the electoral outcomes of its political competitors, the economic situation of the country or indeed the possibility of a sole decision of ANO's leadership to withdraw from politics. All these could be reasons for ending political involvement and for ending what has been hitherto a rather successful and stable new party formation.

## Footnotes:

1. TOP 09 might be considered as another exception; however, it is not a genuinely new political subject, as the party was formed as a split of KDU-ČSL by part of its former elites.
2. It is crucial to note that a number of individuals replicate in the studied elite sample, as they hold multiple posts in the party, for instance Andrej Babiš is simultaneously MP, minister and a member of party presidium. Thus, the seventeen percent refers more to the number of party posts associated with Agrofert.
3. Another similarity, which might also have bearing on the party's cohesion, is the dependence of ANO on the funding from its billionaire leader, which has endowed Babiš with a very strong position within the party.

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## Appendix:

**Table 4: ANO's MPs**

Name of MP	Career background
Andrej Babiš	Manager, owner of Agrofert
Helena Válková	Lawyer, lecturer
Jiří Zlatuška	Politician at municipal level, senator
Jiří Holeček	Entrepreneur – real estate agency business industry
Matěj Fichtner	Analyst
Miloš Babiš	Manager, owner of car showroom chain
Jaroslava Jermanová	Manager in company Aksamite
Kristýna Zelenková	Manager and owner of Czech Hotel Consulting
Stanislav Berkovec	Journalist

Pavel Cihák	Manager in department of transport
Ivana Dobešová	Manager of two secondary schools, former teacher
Radka Maxová	Manager (Agrofert)
Roman Kubíček	Manager in multinational company
Josef Vozdecký	Manager in wine industry, former general manager at Bohemia Sekt
Jan Volný	Business manager of HOPI, co-owner of Vypex and JJV 99
Pavel Šrámek	Manager and co-owner of Milknatur and Active Immuno Systems s.r.o.
Roman Procházka	Director of museum in Cheb
Zdeněk Soukup	Czech TV reporter and moderator
Richard Brabec	Manager (Agrofert)
Vlastimil Vozka	Mayor of Most, manager in energy companies
Bronislav Schwarz	Director of municipal police in Most
Stanislav Pflieger	Entrepreneur in construction industry
Martin Komárek	Journalist
Jana Pastuchová	Nurse, conference manager
Pavel Plzák	Surgeon
Ivan Pilný	Former general manager of Microsoft CR, president of Tuesday Business Network
Martina Berdychová	Entrepreneur in drink industry (Fruitstrue)
David Kasal	Manager in hospital in Chrudim
Martin Kolovratník	Manager in Czech Radio, journalist
Josef Kott	Product manager (Agrofert)
Zuzana Sanová	Lecturer at University Hradec Králové
Martin Stropnický	Actor, stage actor, diplomat
Rostislav Vyzula	Professor, Masaryk University
Karel Rais	Rector of VUT Brno
Bohuslav Chalupa	Tax office clerk
Miloslav Janulík	Director of hospital, vicepresident of paediatric society
Milan Brázdil	Manager of regional ambulance service
Jaroslav Faltýnek	Manager (Agrofert)
Ladislav Okleštek	Entrepreneur (transport industry), mayor of Výšovice
Radek Vondráček	Lawyer
Margita Balaščíková	Manager
Pavel Vojcík	Neurologist
Jana Lorencová	Journalist
Josef Hájek	Various positions in mining industry
Jan Sedláček	Business manager
Martin Sedlář	Entrepreneur - Natura Data
Igor Nykl	Cardiologist
<i>Source: ANO website (www.anobudelip.cz).</i>	

**Table 5: ANO's Mayors**

ANO Mayor	Name	Career background
Prague	Adriana Krnáčová	Manager of Czech Amnesty International
Brno	Petr Vokřál	Manager of A.S.A for central and eastern Europe
Ostrava	Tomáš Macura	Financial and general manager of Walmart, economist
Pardubice	Martin Charvát	Manager, construction business
Liberec	Tibor Batthyany	Project manager in IT
Opava	Martin Víteček	Manager in architecture and in packaging industry
Děčín	Marie Blažková	Social worker

Source: ANO website ([www.anobudelip.cz](http://www.anobudelip.cz)).

**Table 6: ANO's Ministers**

ANO Minister	Name	Career background
Finances	Andrej Babiš	Manager, owner of Agrofert
Defence	Martin Stropnický	Actor, stage actor, diplomat
Environment	Richard Brabec	Manager (Agrofert)
Local development	Karla Šlechtová	Manager of EU fund department
Transport	Dan Ťok	Manager in construction industry
Justice	Robert Pelikán	Lawyer, academic career

Source: ANO website ([www.anobudelip.cz](http://www.anobudelip.cz)).

**Table 7: ANO Party Presidium**

Party presidium	Name	Career background
Leader of party	Andrej Babiš	Manager, owner of Agrofert
First deputy leader	Jaroslav Faltýnek	Manager (Agrofert)
Deputy leader	Petr Vokřál	Manager of A.S.A for central and eastern Europe
Deputy leader	Jaroslava Jermanová	Manager in company Aksamite
Deputy leader	Jan Volný	Manager in logistics
Deputy leader	Radmila Kleslová	Lawyer, regional politician
Member of Presidium	Margita Balaščíková	Manager of Hřebčín Napajedla a.s.
Member of Presidium	Richard Brabec	Manager (Agrofert)
Member of Presidium	Martin Stropnický	Actor, stage actor, diplomat
Member of Presidium	Martin Komárek	Journalist
Member of Presidium	Radek Hloušek	Manager
Member of Presidium	Radek Popelka	Manager, entrepreneur

Source: ANO website ([www.anobudelip.cz](http://www.anobudelip.cz)).

**Table 8: ANO Leaders of Regional Organizations**

Region	Name	Career background
Prague	Radmila Kleslová	Lawyer, regional politician
Central Bohemia	František Petrtýl	Entrepreneur in construction industry
Pilsen	Jan Volný	Manager in logistics
Karlovy Vary	Martin Hurajčík	Commercial manager in PENAM (Agrofert)
Ústí nad Labem	Pavel Eliáš	Manager and entrepreneur (meat processing plant)
Liberec	Tibor Batthyany	Project manager in IT
Hradec Králové	Pavel Plzák	Surgeon
Pardubice	Jan Řehounek	Manager in banking and insurance industry
South Bohemia	Radka Maxová	Manager (Agrofert)
Olomouc	Ladislav Okleštěk	Entrepreneur (transport industry), mayor of Výšovice
Moravia-Silesia	Josef Bělca	Entrepreneur
Zlín	Pavel Puštějovský	Manager DEZA (Agrofert)
South Moravia	Marek Janíček	Entrepreneur
Vysočina	Josef Kott	Product manager (Agrofert)

*Source: ANO website (www.anobudelizip.cz).*

**Table 9: ANO Central Party Staff**

Division/department	Name	Career background
Analysis	Darek Kysela	Management (Agrofert)
Regional support	Božena Házová	Journalist, consultant at PR Essential Communication
Communication	Vladimír Vořechovský	PR and marketing manager (Agrofert)
Central manager of party	Erika Duchanová	Manager (UniCredit Leasing, Tatra Trucks)
Regional management	Tomas Krátký	Manager (UROCONT)
New media	Marek Prchal	Digital director, idea maker, campaign manager

*Source: ANO website (www.anobudelizip.cz).*

**Table 10:VV MPs**

Name	Career background
Lenka Andrýsová	Student
Michal Babák	Entrepreneur
Vít Bárta	Entrepreneur, security agency ABL
Josef Dobeš	Psychologist
Jana Drastichová	Primary school teacher
Štěpánka Fraňková	Surgeon
Otto Chaloupka	Entrepreneur
Radek John	Publicist, journalist, moderator
David Kádner	ABL Security agency employee (Vít Bárta's company)

Kateřina Klasnová	Student, journalist
Dagmar Navrátilová	Grammar school teacher
Josef Novotný	Alderman, mayor, senator
Viktor Paggio	Civic activist
Karolína Peake	Lawyer, translator
Jiří Rusnok	Economist in personal agency
Petr Skokan	Entrepreneur
Jana Suchá	Lawyer
Jiří Štětina	Doctor
Milan Šťovíček	Zoologist, primary school teacher
Martin Vacek	Entrepreneur
Kristýna Kočí	Consultant
Stanislav Huml	Policeman, journalist TV Nova
Miroslav Petran	Architect
Jaroslav Škárka	Entrepreneur
Radim Vysloužil	Economist, HR clerk
<i>Source: www.psp.cz.</i>	

**Table 11: Dawn MPs**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Career background</b>
Tomio Okamura	Businessman in gastronomy, tourism, writer and translator
Marek Černoš	Pilot, singer
Petr Adam	Manager construction company
Augustin Karel Andrl Saylor	Teacher
Radim Fiala	Entrepreneur security agency
Karel Fiedler	Entrepreneur construction and online retail
Olga Havlová	Accountant, librarian
Jana Hnyková	Nurse
Jaroslav Holík	Owner of motorcycle manufacturing company
David Kádner	ABL Security agency employee (Vít Bárta's company)
Martin Lank	Teacher, radio reporter
Karel Pražák	Hockey player
Milan Šarapatka	Diplomat, ambassador
Jiří Štětina	Doctor
<i>Source: www.psp.cz.</i>	