

BOOK REVIEWS

Review 1

Title: 'Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse,'
Edited by Ruth Wodak, Majid Khosravinik and Brigitte Mral (2013). London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.
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Right-wing extremism and right-wing populism are phenomena that exist since the end of the Second World War. Right-wing populist movements and political parties, like Le Front National (FN), Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV) and the British National Party (BNP), have gained support in the last decade. The book *Right-Wing Populism in Europe* illustrates how these movements and parties emerge and gain influence by support in different European countries.

The book has twenty-two chapters divided in four sections. It is a collection of articles and case studies by different authors. The division of the book in separate sections ensures that the reader can distinguish the history and emergence of right-wing populism in the different parts of Europe. The first section contains the theoretical background about right-wing populism and different comparative approaches. Section two focuses on right-wing populism in Western European countries. Section three gives an overview about right-wing populism in Central and Eastern Europe. The last section, section four, contains case studies in the Scandinavian context.

In the first two chapters of the first section the authors explain the phenomenon of right-wing populism and give a typology of right-wing populist parties. An interesting question that rises about the subject of populism is: what is the definition of the people populists stand for? Right-wing populists see the people they represent as a homogeneous native group partly due to their ethno-nationalistic mindset. They ignore the existing differences between the people who in reality have different identities and interests. Both authors sum up characteristics belonging to right-wing populist parties. Those parties create, for example, a common enemy in the form of elites or ethnically, culturally and/or religiously foreigners and have a need for charismatic leadership. The author of the first

chapter, Anton Pelinka, also gives a typology of five tendencies in European right-wing populist movements and parties in terms of their past histories and revisionist agendas, the nature of their traditional electorate and their economic interests. In the second chapter Ruth Wodak argues that the strategies and political communication which were used for the rise of Jörg Haider in Austria are adopted by other right-wing populist parties in Europe.

In chapter three Magnus E. Marsdal tries to explain the reasons why the Progress Party (Frp) in Norway gained much support among working-class voters. An interesting topic Marsdal discusses is the relation between Third Way social democracy and the emergence of right-wing populism as a strong political force in large sections of the working-class electorate in Europe.

Aristotle Kallis explains in chapter four how the political spectrum has shifted to the right through the popularization of controversial debates about Islam in Europe. The shift to the right has to do with the 'mainstreaming' effect as Kallis calls it. This effect may occur when extreme right-wing discourse succeeds in embedding the perception of competition and insecurity between the majority and 'others', in this case Muslims. A wider social and political audience will become more receptive to the extremist ideas because of their successful discourse and are more willing to agree to associated negative projections in the future. The extreme right discourse is then perceived as centre-right discourse, in other words acceptable.

In chapter five Hans-Georg Betz discusses the political mobilization of right-wing parties through the confrontation with Islam in Europe. He picks out three issues which serve as an example for the diffusion of arguments and rhetoric among right-wing populist parties in Western Europe and therefore its transnational character of right-wing populism against Islamization. An interesting example in this chapter about the transnational character of right-wing populism is the project 'Cities against Islamization'. This example shows that right-wing populist politicians are focused on defending the whole Western world against Islamization. Betz also mentions that radical right-wing parties made an ideological turn from anti-Semitism to anti-Islam. Parties like the Dutch PVV and French FN seek rapprochement with Israel to unite against their perceived common threat, namely Islam.

Heidi Beirich also emphasizes the transnational, and even transatlantic, nature of right-wing populism in chapter six. She looks at connections between Europe and the United States of America regarding radical right-wing groups, figures and parties. Besides anti-Muslim networks between Europe and the USA interchanges between European and American neo-Nazi and other similar groups have been common in the past decades. Beirich takes the horrible deeds of Anders Breivik as an interesting example on what effect these anti-Muslim and racist movements may have on their members and sympathizers.

The second section contains case studies of several Western European countries and the right-wing populist movements and parties that are present in those countries. In the first case study, chapter seven, John E. Richardson discusses two extreme right-wing political organizations in Great Britain: the British National Party (BNP) and the English Defence League (EDL). Interesting about this case study is the way Richardson pays attention to the discourses of these extreme right-wing organizations. For instance, the BNP uses a moderate discourse to hide the extreme ideological core the party stands for.

To attract moderate people the BNP uses double-talk, which most people do not understand, so they can manifest their beliefs and ideology secretly without appearing too extreme. Another interesting example is the contradiction in the discourse of the EDL: they want to protect the West against intolerant Muslims with intolerance.

John Solomos describes the historical development and transformation of right-wing populist parties in Great Britain in chapter eight. Solomos argues that extreme right-wing parties such as the BNP and EDL have succeeded in presenting themselves as a social and political force. According to Solomos it is necessary to raise awareness for the strategies these parties use.

In chapter nine Michal Krzyzanowski elaborates the discourses of the Austrian right-wing populist party Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) by analyzing two periods. In the first period, the late 1990's/early 2000s, the party was in the government led by Jörg Haider. In that period the discourse of the FPÖ had a nationalistic stance. When the FPÖ was again in opposition under its new leader H.C. Strache (mid-/late 2000s) the discourse became more internationalized and in line with other European right-wing populist parties. The analyses shows that the shifts in the discourse of the FPÖ are based on patterns of continuity and discontinuity and are ambiguous in nature.

Chapter ten provides an overview of German right-wing populism from National-Socialist groups to elitist radical right-wing and xenophobic anti-Muslim groups. Interesting is the fact that right-wing parties have troubles in gaining credibility and acceptance among the wider population in Germany while there is a potential for extreme right-wing attitudes. Therefore it is hard for right-wing parties to become widely acceptable political players. Britta Schellenberg describes this special situation, recent political trends and the changes right-wing parties are undergoing in the German context.

The next case study analyses the political situation in Italy. The authors of chapter eleven, Carlo Ruzza and Laura Balbo, focus on Silvio Berlusconi and Umberto Bossi. They compare their public images and political programmes and how they each relate to their vision of *il popolo*. The visions both Berlusconi and Bossi have on the people requires and legitimize anti-immigration and xenophobic attitudes and discourses. The interesting part of this chapter is the fact that the definition of the people can vary between right-wing populist politicians and this has an outcome on the policies they would like to pursue.

In chapter twelve Brigitte Beauzamy tries to explain the rise of the FN to electoral prominence as the title shows. She uses different approaches to find an explanation for the success of the FN. One interesting approach is the assessment of the impact of the change in leadership from Jean-Marie Le Pen to his daughter Marine Le Pen. Beauzamy states that these different approaches should be brought together in a comprehensive framework to explain the success of right-wing populist parties like the FN.

Merijn Oudenampsen describes various approaches to explain the rise of right-wing populism in the Netherlands. Oudenampsen argues in chapter thirteen that the explanation for the emergence and success of Dutch right-wing populism needs a constructivist approach. A normative or reflective approach is not enough to get a clear view on the success of right-wing populism in the Netherlands or other European countries according to Oudenampsen. In this constructive approach he explains how Dutch populism created 'the people' and how the Dutch consensus model can explain the rapid change of the

swing to right-wing populist parties. Finally he applies these insights to explain the breakthrough and success of right-wing populism in the Netherlands.

The last chapter of section two, chapter fourteen, is an interesting analyses about the Flemish radical party, Vlaams Belang (VB). Benjamin de Cleen focuses on the debate between the VB and Flemish city theatres who do not support the VB. In the analyses the discourses of both the VB and the theatres are examined. A discourse-theoretical analyses was carried out to lay bare the structure of the VB's discourse towards the theatres between 2005 and 2006. De Cleen focuses on the details of the VB's discourse used to criticize the theatres, namely nationalism, conservatism and populism. De Cleen draws an interesting conclusion. The VB presents itself as a democratic party, but the party tries to enforce their demands and do not accept opposing views, giving the VB's rhetoric an authoritarian character.

The third section of the book focuses on Eastern Europe and the right-wing populist parties that recently became successful in these former communist countries. It is remarkable that these case studies made clear that, because of the differences in historical course between Eastern and Western Europe, right-wing populist parties in Eastern Europe focus less on Islamization and more on other minorities like Russians.

In chapter fifteen András Kovács describes the Jobbik party and its success in the Hungarian parliament and European elections. Several reasons are given to explain the rise of Jobbik. For example the increasing distance between institutions and society and the exploitation of Jobbik's appearance by other parties for their own purposes. As a result of this increasing distance the trust of the people in their government, politicians and parliament dropped. Kovács also pays attention to Jobbik's discourse and gives an analyses of its electorate.

Daunis Auers and Andres Kasekamp's chapter sixteen focuses on Estonia and Latvia. Besides providing a picture about right-wing populism in Estonia and Latvia, Auers and Kasekamp compare political party rhetoric along three radical-right populist dimensions: nativism, authoritarianism and populism. They conclude that the radical-right is far more prevalent in Latvia than in Estonia, despite the fact they both went through severe crisis. Auers and Kasekamp also explain why Estonia is less susceptible to right-wing populism, for instance different institutional regulations and differences from a supply and demand perspective.

The last case study of section three, chapter seventeen, is about the Ukraine and the right-wing populist party Svoboda. Anton Shekhovtsov gives an overview of the right-wing populist parties in Ukraine and the nature, rise and development of Svoboda in that context. An interesting part of this case study is the conclusion Shekhovtsov draws that if Svoboda will be able to seize power in Ukraine, its power will pose a domestic and international threat. He then enumerates five points regarding that threat, like Svoboda's anti-Russian position.

The fourth and last section contains five case studies that analyses the rise of right-wing populism in Scandinavia. Björn Fryklund's chapter eighteen is about the development and changes of right-wing populism in the Nordic countries from a historical perspective. He also describes a comparative analyses of populism's different forms of expression in the Nordic countries. Fryklund uses different variables to explain the differences of populism in the Scandinavian countries.

Chapter nineteen discusses some of the problems the Swedish media and political establishment experienced in relation to the media exposure of the Sverigedemokraterna (SD). Simon Oja and Brigitte Mral describe the SD as a party with a different background than other right-wing populist parties in Scandinavia. The SD is in fact a party with an historical heritage of racism and neo-Nazism in contrary to other parties and has links to fascist and Nazi ideology through several individuals. Oja and Mral discuss the arguments pro and con allowing the SD into the media or not. They focus on the discussion if the SD should be allowed to buy advertising space in newspapers and on TV.

In chapter twenty Kristina Boréus discusses how certain kinds of nationalism can contribute to a specific kind of discrimination against immigrants in the form of discursive discrimination. The case study is a comparative analyses of nationalism and discriminatory discourses in Austria, Denmark and Sweden. Boréus focuses on the discursive aspects of discrimination through an analytical study of election-campaign texts in these three countries. An interesting outcome of the analyses is that in Sweden immigrants are represented as national assets.

Stig Arne Nohrstedt's case study is about the publication of the Muhammed cartoons in Denmark and Sweden and the threat spirals that were caused. He argues that these publications are examples new phase in late-modern society: the threat society. The media plays a central role in the threat society according to Nohrstedt. The media have created a culture of fear and thus a feeding ground for right-wing populism. Interesting about Nohrstedt's analyses on the publications are the questionable motives why the cartoons were published. Besides that he states that both newspapers that published the cartoons have a lack of global journalism and they only considered the local and national situation that would occur by publishing them.

The last chapter of this section and the book describes the difficulties and risks involved for journalist when reporting about right-wing populist groups or parties. Christoph Andersson writes about a right-wing populist meeting that he attended as a journalist. During this anti-Islam meeting a television crew was thrown outside by a crowd of participants. Andersson reflects on that meeting and the possible reasons why the situation escalated and television crew was thrown outside. He states that journalist have to fulfil their job to the highest professional standards and discusses strategies that journalists can use in these kind of situations or at right-wing populist meetings. Journalists have to maintain a respectful relationship with these kind of groups to provide important information regarding their activities.

The book gives a good overall view of right-wing populism in Europe. But in order to make the picture even more complete I would recommend the editors to add a chapter about right-wing populism in Greece. Right-wing populist parties in Greece like Golden Dawn and the Independent Greeks have gained popularity in the last few years. Therefore they are worth mentioning in a book about European right-wing populism.

The division of the book in different sections is based on a logical layout of the various countries in different parts of Europe. This is a big benefit of the book. A reader is not obliged to read the whole book if he is only interested in right-wing populism in Scandinavian countries. In addition, the division in sections shows the reader that right-wing populism is not the same throughout Europe, but it also shows the transnational character of right-wing populism in different parts of Europe. Another positive remark

about the book is the different approaches that are used. Each author has addressed his/her case study in his/her own way. This makes the book enjoyable to read, because of the variation in analyses and perspectives.

Because many authors contributed, the book is not written in one specific style. Certain chapters are easier to read than others. Some knowledge of the topic of right-wing populism is required to understand the content of the book. Despite that, I would recommend the book to people who have little knowledge about right-wing populism but want to learn more about it. It is also an interesting book for political science or communication students in order to learn more about the strategies right-wing populist movements and parties use and why they are so successful seen in a scientific way. Scholars and students could use the various case studies as a source of inspiration or starting point for new research as some of the authors suggest further research is necessary on their topics.

All in all, the book is worth reading if you are interested in the topic of right-wing populism in the European context. It provides a clear picture of different right-wing populist parties and movements in different European countries and their nature, connections and developments. The different approaches used in the many chapters make it an enjoyable and interesting read.