

BOOK REVIEW

Minkenberg, M. (ed.): Transforming the Transformation? The East European radical right in the political process. London–New York, Routledge, 2015. 376 p.

The transformation of the post-socialist region is a dynamically growing segment of political geography literature. Furthermore radicalism, more specifically the recent strengthening of the radical right has been becoming a hot issue. This book gives a closer insight to the role of radical right parties in the region, regarding their involvement in the political processes of the new democracies. Authors of the volume analyse the interaction of the radical right with other political actors (parties, governments, interest groups, syndicates) and the effects of such interaction on agenda-setting and policies in sensitive policy fields like minorities, immigration, law and order, religion, territorial issues, democratisation, privatisation.

After the fall of communism many grievance came to the surface and many economic problems appeared which provided a fertile breeding ground for populist radical right parties. The main aim of the book is to examine key factors of radicalisation, and to under-

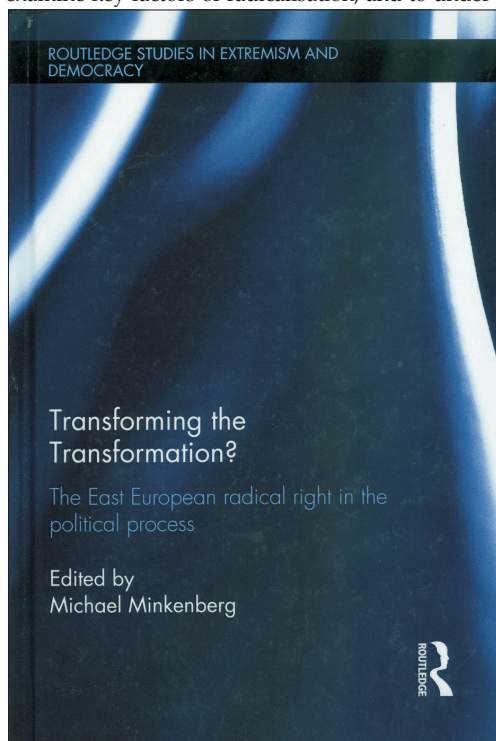
stand radical right political mobilisation in general and its impact in Central and Eastern Europe with a measurable outcomes (policies, election results, regime changes etc.).

The book consists of four major parts and contains altogether fifteen chapters. The first part of the book sets the conceptual framework and introduces a broad discussion about the location of the radical right in the political spectrum. Klaus von BEYME addresses the theoretical as well as macro-political and social contexts of the phenomenon from a pan-European perspective. Then Michael MINKENBERG focuses more on the East European radical right movements by specifying their distinct ideologies (compared to West Europe) as well as the patterns of success and failure in elections and the role of non-party formations, movements of the radical right. The East European radical right is contextualised historically and structurally. The author highlights the volatility of the party systems, the legacies of the non-democratic past and the particular ethnic and cultural make-up of the countries.

In the second part of the book Lenka BUSTIKOVA deals with the transformation of minority issues in the region, starting with the observation that the repressive regimes in Eastern Europe before 1989 hindered the democratic aspirations of many, at the same time curbed expression of group animosity, thus preventing outright attacks on minorities. After 1989 this delicate balance was disrupted as new democracies transformed their economic and political systems, thereby allowing a third transformation. She claims that in states with resolved ethnic boundaries, the expansion of minority rights generated violent responses.

Andrea PIRRO in the fourth chapter looks more closely at the impact of radical right parties in Bulgaria, Hungary, and the Slovak Republic and their contribution to shifts in the party system as far as minority issues are concerned. In these countries the mainstream competitors' response to the radical right is gradual and mostly passive and there are not cordon sanitaire between the radical right and mainstream parties.

Bartek PYTLAS and Oliver KOSSACK in the fifth chapter prove that the active political participation of radical right parties in the sphere of issue competition causes spatial as well as narrative shifts to the right



among their mainstream competitors and in the East Central European party system in general. Moreover, the radical right parties influence the salience of conflicts along the socio-cultural axis.

The last comparative contribution of the second part of the book focuses on the Baltic republics. According to Daunis AUERS and Andres KASEKAMP the three Baltic States share very similar historical trajectories such as the experience of the Russian Empire, and after a brief independence, incorporation into the Soviet Union before regaining independence in 1991. The Estonian and Latvian party systems and elections can be characterised by deeper ethnic cleavages which heavily influences the political discourse. The Estonian party system is more consolidated and less volatile than the Latvian one, and it provides less opportunity for radical right parties to succeed. In contrast, the main reason for the weakness of the radical right in Lithuania is the absence of a large and influential minority (the ratio of Poles is only 6.6%). On the other hand, the mobilisation of radical right is strongest in Latvia, where radical nationalists try to marginalise Russians and other Russian-speaking in-migrants from the Soviet era.

The third part of the book is the largest with four case studies on East Central Europe. In the seventh chapter, Dominika KASPAROWICZ tackles the Polish case. This chapter distinguishes two types of relations between radical right actors (internal and external) which inform their impact on their political environment. Although the book was written by sociologists and political scientists there are also many geographical factors e.g. in Poland the radical right LPR (League of Polish Families) performed best in the traditionally most religious parts of the southeast.

The eighth chapter is the most relevant for Hungary. The evolution of contemporary Hungarian radical right is interpreted by Péter KREKÓ and Gregor MAYER. They discuss the interaction between the mainstream conservative ruling party FIDESZ and the far-right party Jobbik, along with its non-party formations such as the Hungarian Guard. They claim that FIDESZ has been 'transforming the transformation' and implementing some of the policy solutions taken from the manifesto of Jobbik. The specific character of the Hungarian case is that the ruling party has a constant fight against the international political establishment and against the 'colonisation' of Hungary. So the mainstream conservative party FIDESZ tries to withhold and compete with the radical right and use Jobbik as an instrument to reach its political goals and Jobbik served FIDESZ as a 'pioneer' to mark out new pathways in the ideological and political sense, that prime minister Viktor Orbán could then follow afterwards (for example in the case of Hungarian Dual Citizenship Law, the 'Eastern Opening' and so on).

In the ninth chapter Miroslav MARES analyses the direct and indirect impact of the radical right on the

transformation and (de)consolidation of democracy in the Czech Republic. Klaus von BEYME identifies three core fields of democratic consolidation: (1) the institutional conditions of consolidation (national borders, choice of governmental system, option for electoral system), (2) the consolidation of democracy (which means free and active civil society, autonomous political society, rule of law, democratic loyal bureaucracy, market economy), (3) the consolidation of the party system (a minimum of extremism, clear cleavage structure, division of territorial and functional representation, decline of factionalism and voter's volatility, coalition building). Extremism is conceptualised as a negative consequence of these processes. In the Czech case it has only limited importance because no radical right party participated in a coalition government in the post-1989 era. In comparison with Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia a large part of the extreme right is not religiously profiled.

The historical legacy of the 'fight against pan-Germanism' was and continues to be promoted by a section of the extreme right as well as by the 'patriotic left', which is interconnected with the extreme left/communist spectrum. Pan-Slavic groupings are affiliated with the extreme left as well as with the extreme right. Radical right has been divided into several ideological streams, predominately (1) Czech nationalism with an anti-German orientation which has its roots in the Hussite movement of the 15th century and (2) neo-Nazism with a pan-Aryan and German friendly orientation. They were opponents of the dissolution of former Czechoslovakia and they had irredentist demands on Carpathian Ukraine.

In neighbouring Slovakia the radical right label 'Czechoslovakism' a political concept invented to allow the Czech to dominate the Slovaks. But the biggest threatening enemy is Hungary. Typically the northwest region of Slovakia is the most anti-Hungarian, which phenomenon has been labelled the 'bubble effect' and provides empirical evidence that anti-Hungarian feelings do not stem from everyday contacts, but rather from resentments which is politically highly instrumentalised. Olga GYÁRFÁSOVÁ and Grigorij MESEZNIKOV focus on the social context of radicalism, its agenda setting, and trends in popular support, thereby distinguishing societal impact from political and policy impact of the radical right. In such situations, nationalism serves as a classic 'conveniently available' mobilisation tool. Radical right is mobilising collective identities and motivating and encouraging people to distinguish themselves from others.

The SNS (Slovak National Party) was the only relevant political party in Slovakia which rejected Slovakia's membership in the NATO, using anti-globalist and anti-Hungarian rhetoric as the principle tool of voter mobilisation. In Slovakia, similar to Hungary and Poland, the government party does not

use *cordon sanitaire* and adopted some of the standards set by SNS. The SNS is the only party in Slovakia that has succeeded in returning to Parliament after a previous electoral failure and it was member of coalition governments on three occasions between 1990 and 2012. Slovakia sets a good example of an illustrative country case. The structural opportunities for an emerging radical right are also affected by its ethnic heterogeneity, combination of cultural, and socio-economic appeals, as well as the nature of conflict in the early time of transition. Moreover, Slovakia was facing a three-fold transition (political, economic and nation-state building which was also highly relevant, more so than in the Czech Republic after the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993).

The fourth part of the book focuses on the south eastern countries of post-communist East Central Europe. Gabriel ANDREESCU identifies the Romanian Orthodox Church as a new player on the far right by introducing the concept of active and passive resources of radical right politics. The specific kind of nationalist-communist power was the basis for the Party for Greater Romania (PRM). While the PRM gradually declined after 2000, the radical right ideology did not vanish but found other way to the society paved by the Romanian Orthodox Church. The Church has got dominant position in religious education and fuelled by the anonymity and range of the internet, as evidenced by the new relationship between the Church and the state in the 2000s. Religious education actively contributes to receptivity of young people towards radical ideas. As a result 26 percent of the students considered democracy as an inappropriate political system for Romania in 2001. In the early 2000s on the eve of EU accession the main political forces followed containment policy towards the radical right which caused the marginalisation and then elimination of extremist parties from mainstream politics.

Bulgaria became EU member state in 2007 together with Romania. But it has got a more peripheral position and a closer connection to the Near East. Kiril AVRAMOV in the thirteenth chapter studies the emergence and development of the Bulgarian radical right after the break-up of the bi-polar party competition in 2001. The public apathy, a desire for retribution, deeply embedded institutional mistrust; the general feeling of pessimism coupled with fear of the rise of radical Islam provided opportunity for marginal populist radical right parties and movements. The chapter argues that the mainstreaming of the radical right Ataka (Attack) opened the way for speedy growth of a number of other radical right formations on party and sub-party levels.

Alina POLYAKOVA in the next chapter deals with the issue how Freedom and various Ukrainian nationalist groups negotiated their interaction in two western regions, Galicia and Volyn. The cooperation which came to existence in Galicia but not in Volyn, depend-

ed on the size and strength of subcultural networks, the strength of social networks between the party and subcultures, and the appeal of historical legacies of radical nationalism. Between 2007 and 2012 Freedom saw a rise in support across many Ukrainian districts; mainly in the central Ukrainian regions but even in the farthest east regions (Luhansk, Kharkiv), where it has no historical or cultural foundations. Historically, Galicia has been the heartland of Ukrainian nationalism. As EU enlargement has progressed further to the East, Ukraine became the setting for geo-political struggles between EU and Russia, but Freedom, with its populist anti-establishment discourse will likely gain support, and the future of Ukraine's democratic transformation remains uncertain.

To sum up, the case studies of the volume revealed the negative externalities associated with the democratic transition in Central and Eastern Europe. However, it is not an easy task to define ideologically the radical right parties in the investigated countries. The Czech Republic shows a particularly interesting picture, because the right-wing radical parties perform poorly in the parliamentary elections and they have never played a role in any coalition government. This means that the Czech Republic is the most successful in democratic transition and consolidation. However, this is not completely true as the book also mentions that nationalism and islamophobia are still present at the presidential level. Also, it is a difficult question if we can clearly identify Jobbik as a radical right party, and if Jobbik in Hungary changes its present profile by moving towards the centrum (*'néppártosodás'*), than it might bring other far-right parties appearing.

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