eEXTREME

November 2019

Volume 20

Number 3

Newsletter of the ECPR Standing Group
on Extremism & Democracy

Newsletter of the ECPR Standing Group on Extremism & Democracy

The *e-Extreme* is the newsletter of the ECPR Standing Group on Extremism & Democracy. For any enquiries about the newsletter and book reviews, please contact the managing editors (extremismanddemocracy@gmail.com).

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STANDING GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS

REGISTER AS AN E&D STANDING GROUP MEMBER

You can join the ECPR Standing Group on Extremism & Democracy always free of charge and at the click of a button, via the ECPR website. If you have not already done so, please register as a member so that our list is up to date and complete.

In order to join, you will need a MyECPR account, which we assume many of you will already have. If you do not have one, you can create an account in only a few minutes (and you need not be from an ECPR member institution to do so). If you are from a non-member institution, we will need to accept your application to join, so your membership status (which you can see via your MyECPR account, and on the Standing Group pages when you are logged in to MyECPR) will be 'pending' until you are accepted.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch!

NEW WEBSITE URL AND CONTACT ADDRESS

Following changes to the ECPR framework for Standing Groups, we have recently migrated our website to the ECPR platform. You can now reach us at: http://standinggroups.ecpr.eu/extremismanddemocracy/.

For general information, membership enquiries, announcements, publication alerts, and reviews, contact us at: extremismanddemocracy@gmail.com.

Please, update your bookmarks accordingly!

WORKSHOP ENDORSED AT NEXT ECPR JOINT SESSIONS

The ECPR Standing Group on *Extremism & Democracy* is proudly endorsing the Workshop 17 'Leadership in the European Radical Left' at the 48th ECPR Joint Sessions in Toulouse, 14-17 April 2020. The Session is chaired by Luke March

(University of Edinburgh) and Luis Ramiro (UNED Madrid).

Description

The European radical left, and associated political science and sociological fields such as left populism, are emerging areas of interest amongst European academics, analysts and policy makers, bolstered by the emergence of newer anti-austerity and left-populist forces such as Syriza (Greece), Podemos (Spain) and La France Insoumise, as well as the continued prevelance of the more established (and not necessarily populist) radical left - parties such as AKEL (Cyprus), The Left-Green Movement (Iceland), die Linke (Germany), and many others.

The extant literature (e.g March 2011, Hudson 2012, Ramiro 2016, March and Keith 2016, Chiocchetti 2017, Katsembekis and Kioupkiolis forthcoming), has tended to focus on questions of party profile (ideology/strategy), membership, electoral and governmental performance, and policy impact. There is an emergent literature focussing more explicitly on radical left party organisation (e.g. Tsakatika and Lisi 2013, Charalambous and Lamprianou 2016) which is however as yet under-developed.

Whilst the study of party leadership per se is relatively rudimentary, fewer sources still focus on radical left party leadership (although see Tsakatika, forthcoming). However, this topic is of increasing importance and interest. Certain radical left leaders, such as Alexis Tsipras (Syriza) and Pablo Iglesias (Podemos) have both headed popular parties and gained support and notoriety beyond their national borders; many radical left leaders have become important figures in their national contexts, in some cases assuming the leadership of their country (Tsipras, Christophias, Voronin) and in other cases leading their party into national government coalitions; others still have been vital agents in the political success (or conversely, political cataclysm) and transformation of their respective parties. In some cases (Melanchon, Marijnissen) radical left party leaders have been compared to far-right populist leaders in their countries. In this context, it is worth noting how diverse the radical left party family is in terms of leadership function and style, with rotating leadership, collective leadership as well as virtual leaders-for-life; gender-balanced and feminised organisations co-existing with rather 'macho' male-dominated leaderships. The radical left thus makes a good party family to examine, with the over-riding question of: is there anything distinctive about radical left party leadership function, style and communication relative to other party families? The topic will allow for interesting comparative analyses from across Europe.

We are particularly interested in three major aspects of radical left party leadership:

1. Leadership as a function of party organisation. Biographical studies of pre-1989 radical left party leaders have stressed the strong grip that the latter have exercised upon their party organisations and the extent to which they have fostered or countered the centralisation of power. Little insight is on the contrary available on the impact of contemporary RLP leadership on their parties' internal organisation. Previous studies have touched upon party organisational linkages with members, supporters and external organisations. However, few studies, particularly on a comparative basis, have focussed on the role that leadership plays in party linkages and in the maintenance of organisational and factional equilibria.

2. Leadership and gender. There are few studies of the radical left and gender (although see Keith and Verge 2016). Formally speaking, the radical left is a very gender-conscious party family, with commitments to feminism and 50:50 gender quotas for candidate and leadership positions widespread. However, these commitments are regularly informally flouted, with many parties (particularly the 'old left') being male dominated. Nor has the radical left been immune to scandals relating to harassment or exploitation. We would argue that claims to 'strive for a society, which transgresses the capitalist and patriarchal logic' (Party of the European Left, 2019), need to be analysed, not taken at face value. 3) Leadership and political communication. It used to be said that there was a very distinct form of communist leadership, sometimes dubbed 'non-charismatic personalism' (Ansell and Fish 2002), whereby (male) communist leaders acted primarily as arbitrators within the party bureaucracy rather than figures who courted wider electoral popularity. Such leaders represented the distinctly bureaucratic apparatchik style of 'comrade card-index' as was Stalin's one-time nickname. In the post-communist era, it is less evident that there is a distinct 'radical left' leadership style. Radical left leaders have become increasingly office and vote-seeking, increasingly telegenic and focussed on (new) media communication, and less obviously simply the ciphers of the party bureaucracy (March 2008). Indeed, left-populist leaders are regularly regarded as charismatic (a term which is inexact and now increasingly contested within the populist literature itself [e.g. Pappas 2016]). Our focus is on what (if anything) is still distinct about radical left party leadership political communication? What explains national variations? Is left-populist leadership itself especially distinct?

We welcome approaches to the above questions, particularly those that have a comparative perspective. Theoretically-informed case studies are also welcome, particularly those which analyse lesser-known national cases, in both Western and Eastern Europe.

UPCOMING EVENTS, CALLS FOR PAPERS, AND CALLS FOR APPLICATIONS

ROUNDTABLE
THE POPULIST RADICAL LEFT IN EUROPE

Event: The Populist Radical Left in Europe: Peculiarities, Prospects, Relevance
Location and date: Loughborough University London, 29 November 2019

Populism is often by default discussed as a phenomenon located at the right or far right of the political spectrum, associated with figures like Viktor Orbán in Hungary or Matteo Salvini in Italy, and conflated with nativist or authoritarian ideas. However, not so long ago, one could find politicians of a very different kind included in media lists with 'dangerous populists', like Alexis Tsipras, leader of SYRIZA in Greece or Pablo Iglesias, leader of Podemos in Spain. Instead of targeting immigrants and refugees, these politicians preferred to target 'greedy bankers,' media 'oligarchs' and 'neoliberal elites' within the EU. Back in the eve of the 2014 European Parliament election, they were often described as threats to Europe's economic stability and instigators of social protest. Soon, Jeremy Corbyn was added to the list of 'dangerous' populists of the Left and has since been a point of contention even for his own party.

Whether one agrees that politicians like the ones mentioned here do have specific qualities and ideas that justify the label 'populist' or not, one thing is for sure: right-wing populism is no longer the 'only game in town.' There are populist politicians, parties and movements at the other side of the spectrum that are relevant and can even claim power, as exemplified by the experience of SYRIZA. Yet they remain under-researched by scholars and under-represented in the media. In this event, we draw on key findings of a new collective volume titled *The Populist Radical Left in Europe* to open a necessary and long overdue discussion. What are the peculiarities of the populist (radical) left in Europe? What are the characteristics that are in common and what differentiates actors that are grouped together in this family? How should we explain the different electoral performances of populist left parties and the fact that they seem to do consistently worse than their right-wing counterparts? How do new populist democratic movements, like the indignados, shift our understandings of populist politics, organisation, strategies of transformation and democracy? In the end, is the populist left still relevant in Europe and what should we expect from such parties and movements in the foreseeable future?

The event will open with introductory remarks by the editors of the volume, Giorgos Katsambekis (Loughborough University) and Alexandros Kioupkiolis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), followed by a round-table discussion and Q&A session.

Participants in the round-table:

- Simon Tormey (University of Bristol)
- Emmy Eklundh (King's College London)
- Marina Prentoulis (University of East Anglia; member of SYRIZA London, Labour, Another Europe is Possible)
- *Chair*: Helen Drake (Director of the Institute for Diplomacy and International Governance, Loughborough University London)

The event is supported by the School of Social Sciences and Humanities and the Populism Research Group at Loughborough University as well as the Institute for Diplomacy and International Governance at Loughborough University London.

CALL FOR PAPERS
SPECIAL ISSUE: POPULISM AND THE PAST

The past is a recurrent theme in public discussions on populism. Time and again observers evoke analogies between contemporary populism and historical experiences, or attribute populist successes to longstanding traits of a political culture. Populists themselves often claim to be the heirs to alleged historical traditions, and use old buzzwords, tropes, and appeals to a more or less embellished past.

In scholarly work, however, the connection between populism and the past remains underexplored. While classic work (such as that of Canovan and Laclau) highlighted the historical and, to some extent, cyclical nature of populism, only more recently have scholars begun to examine the past explicitly as an explanatory factor in contemporary populism (e.g. Mammone 2009; Finchelstein 2017; Kelly 2017; Caramani and Manucci 2019). These analyses, however, remain few and far between.

This Special Issue for the *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* (JCES) aims to build on this emerging work to promote a comprehensive research agenda on the theme of populism and the past, driven by three objectives: a) improving

our understanding of the factors guiding the emergence and evolution of populist movements, beyond the predominant "materialist vs culturalist" dichotomy; b) gaining a more fine-grained understanding of variants of populism, and their social and political implications; c) promoting synergies between different disciplinary approaches to populism, using history as a bridge between them.

The special issue is open to articles examining the various ways in which history, the past, and time have (had) a role in the development of contemporary European populism. Within this broad area, we are particularly interested in contributions that attempt one or more of the following:

- Examine distal causal chains of institutional and/or cultural path dependence, which help account for contemporary populist manifestations and their variations;
- Analyse the links between current populism and historical antecedents, for instance by tracing the effect of political and ideational legacies;
- Explore the role played by the past through the mediation of collective memory, and its mobilization (and/or distortion) by populists.

Articles should focus primarily on European cases. Comparative analyses are especially welcome, as are proposals that expand beyond the traditional foci of studies of populism (for instance by looking at trans- or sub-national cases). Contributions are encouraged from a wide range of academic fields, including political science, political history, history of ideas, political sociology, social anthropology and memory studies.

Submission guidelines

Please send your article proposals to: p.d.tortola@rug.nl no later than **31 January 2020**, to whom informal enquiries can also be made.

Full articles should subsequently be submitted via the journal's ScholarOne Manuscripts site, where you will be asked to identify your article as a Special Issue article from the category selection list. Enquiries about the journal and the submission process should be addressed to the Editorial Assistant, Mary Cenci: jcesedassist@gmail.com.

Articles should be around 6,000-8,000 words in length.

Guest Editors

Stefan Couperus, University of Groningen (s.couperus@rug.nl)
Pier Domenico Tortola, University of Groningen (p.d.tortola@rug.nl)

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS
'WHAT DO THE PEOPLE WANT?' POSTDOC AT SCIENCES PO

The CEE (Center for Centre for European Studies and Comparative Politics) of Sciences Po is looking for a **Postdoctoral Fellow (f/m) (PhD or near completion)** starting from January 1st, 2020 (Salary gross 2950 euros; full time, 18 months, ticket restaurants, social security).

The position to be filled is part of the research project "What do the people want? Analysing online populism in Europe and the US" funded by a VolkswagenStiftung "Challenges for Europe" research fund in collaboration with the Oxford Internet Institute (Oxford University) and GESIS (Cologne). The project offers an exciting work environment for interdisciplinary research at the intersection between social sciences and data science.

Overview:
Digital media are the most important way in which populism is promoted as they allow populist politicians, parties, and movements to bypass the mainstream media which they perceive as biased against them. It remains unclear, however, how widespread and impactful populist concerns are among online audiences and the general public. In this project, we will use several methods, including surveys, tracking peoples' website visits, and what they post online, in order to:

1. map what 'the people' want
2. analyse if they want similar or different things across Europe and the United States, and if so why
3. investigate the effects of exposure to online populist communication on (offline) political outcomes

In providing answers to these questions, the project aims to improve the understanding of the societal (macro) and the social-psychological (micro) processes behind the rise of populism. It is guided by the hypothesis that online populist communication may constitute both a challenge and a corrective for representative democracies and, therefore, should be examined in all their complexity.

Your tasks will be:
- Research on the political content of digital media in Europe and the US
- Collection, visualization, processing and quantitative analysis of social media data (Facebook and Twitter) and web browsing histories

- Writing academic articles, working papers, reports and attend international conferences

Your profile:
- University degree PhD (completed or in completion) in political science or a related social science, computer science or data science, preferably with a focus on quantitative text analysis
- Knowledge of computational science methods (e.g. text and data mining, topic modeling, analysis of social media, social network analysis)
- Competences in quantitative data analysis
- Good command of English (spoken and written). Knowledge of French is welcome but not compulsory
- Knowledge in political science and political sociology or of the academic literature on populism is welcome but it is not compulsory

How to apply:
Submit the following to Caterina Froio via email:
- CV
- A motivation letter
- Your PhD thesis or one writing sample

Deadlines:
- Application: November 22, 2019
- Interview: November 29, 2019

The position is available **starting from January 1st** for a fixed-term of 18 months. The position is located in Sciences Po. The CEE is equal opportunity employer and adheres to the disability guidelines. For further information on the tasks and application process please contact Dr. Caterina Froio via mail (caterina.froio@sciencespo.fr).

KEEP US INFORMED

Please keep us informed of any upcoming conferences or workshops you are organising, and of any publication or funding opportunities that would be of interest to Standing Group members. We will post all details on our website. Similarly, if you would like to write a report on a conference or workshop that you have organised and have this included in our newsletter, please do let us know.

Please, also tell us of any recent publications of interest to Standing Group members so that we may include them in the 'publications alert' section of our

newsletter, and please get in touch if you would like to see a particular book (including your own) reviewed in *e-Extreme*, or if you would like to review a specific book yourself. We are always keen on receiving reviews from junior and senior scholars alike!

Finally, if you would like to get involved in the production of the newsletter, the development of our website, or any of the other activities of the Standing Group, please do get in touch. We are always very keen to involve more and more members in the running of the Standing Group!

REPORTS

ECPR GENERAL CONFERENCE SECTION REPORT

POLITICAL RADICALISM AND ALTERNATIVES TO LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

University of Wroclaw
4-7 September 2019

Lenka Bustikova
Arizona State University

Petra Guasti
Goethe-Universität Frankfurt

The Section on Extremism and Democracy at the ECPR General Conference in Wrocław explored the relationship between political radicalism and democracy. Panels were devoted both to right wing and left wing radicalism with a specific focus on its impact on liberal democracies. The section combined different conceptual, theoretical, methodological and empirical approaches in order to examine the multifaceted and persistent impact of radicalism on (mostly) European democracies.

Overall, the section was composed of 10 panels and 45 papers. The section welcomed 83 authors from 50 different institutions (authors listed on the program). Seven out of these 83 authors had institutional affiliations in Eastern Europe (including Poland), eight paper affiliations were non-European (Australia, U.S.) and 68 authors were from academic institutions in Western Europe. We analysed gender representation of authors listed on the program. The composition of 83 authors of the accepted papers was as follows: 51 were males and 31 were females. Out of the 45 papers that were presented in total, 20 had all male authors (including single-authored papers), 14 had female authors or all female co-authors and 11 papers were co-written by male and female authors.

Two panels were presented on the first day of the conference: Extremism, Populism and Digital Media and Internalising the Insurgency: Understanding the Interaction of Radical Anti-Establishment and Mainstream Parties. The panel on **Extremism, Populism and Digital Media** was co-chaired by Caterina Froio and Ralph Schroeder. Sebastian Stier served as a discussant. The panel discussed whether and how digital media fuel or inhibit the diffusion of extremist, radical and populist ideas and support for extremist, radical, populist parties, candidates and social movements. The panel **Internalising the Insurgency: Understanding the Interaction of Radical Anti-Establishment and Mainstream**

Parties was co-chaired by Ben Stanley and Mikolaj Czesnik. Ben Stanley also served as a discussant. The panel discussed the interaction of mainstream parties and radical parties in a political sphere, in which the differences between them are fuzzier than ever.

Three panels were presented on the second day: Mobilising Around Europe: Pro and Anti-EU Politics and Activism in an Era of Populism and Nationalism; Populism and Radical Grass Roots Mobilization; Radicalisation of the Mainstream. Stijn van Kessel chaired the first panel: **Mobilising Around Europe: Pro and Anti-EU Politics and Activism in an Era of Populism and Nationalism**. Adam Fagan served as discussant. The panel focused on the activities and strategies of pro- and anti-EU actors, as well as the scope for transnational mobilisation and networks. Petra Guasti chaired a panel on **Populism and Radical Grass Roots Mobilization**. Caterina Froio served as a discussant. The panel explored varieties of populist and radical grass roots mobilization, including youth mobilization in Poland. Stijn van Kessel chaired a panel on the **Radicalisation of the Mainstream**. Ben Stanley served, for the second time, in a role of a discussant. The panel discussed the role of radicalized and populist mainstream parties in polarized party systems.

The third day was busy. Four panels were on the schedule: Populism, Conspiracy Theories, and Fake News; The Construction of Sovereignty and Populism as Challenges for Representative Democracy; The Relationship Between Populism and Political Participation; Uncivil Society Revisited. Andrea L. P. Pirro and Paul Taggart co-chaired a panel on **Populism, Conspiracy Theories, and Fake News.** Andrea L. P. Pirro also served in a role of a discussant. The panel discussed the relationship between populism, conspiracy theories and fake news discourses by combining papers on populist actors, populism and the media. Annika Werner and Reinhard Heinisch co-chaired the next panel called: **The Construction of Sovereignty and Populism as Challenges for Representative Democracy**. Reinhard Heinisch also served in the role of a discussant. The panel investigated the salience and construction of sovereignty and populist democratic claims in party supply and voter demand. Saskia Ruth-Lovell chaired a panel on **The Relationship Between Populism and Political Participation**. Nina Wiesehomeier served as a discussant. The panel paid a special attention to different mechanism of vertical accountability and asked if and how populism affects different forms of democratic participation. Petr Kopecky chaired a panel on **Uncivil Society Revisited**. Petra Guasti served as a discussant for the papers. The panel revisited key arguments in the book by Petr Kopecky and Cas Mudde's Uncivil Society by broadening the scope of the investigation. Papers explored mobilization of the uncivil society, the interaction between the uncivil society and radical and mainstream political parties.

On the last day, Petra Guasti and Lenka Bustikova co-chaired a panel on the **Varieties of Populism: Left, Right and Technocratic**. Lenka Bustikova served as a discussant. In addition to the discussion of populism being rooted in a traditional left-right spectrum, the panel also contemplated on the role of technocratic populism in a comparative perspective.

The section discussed a great variety of topics, some old, some new. New themes such as conspiracy theories, the role of media, the role of non-conventional political participation were combined with more 'traditional' topics such as voting behavior and institutional approaches to the study of radical mobilization. The section also noted that the distinction between left and right populism is becoming blurry, as well as the distinction between niche, extremist forms of political radicalization and its mainstream manifestation.

There is plenty more to discuss in Innsbruck in 2020 – stay tuned!

BOOK REVIEWS

JULIA EBNER. RADIKALISIERUNGSMASCHINEN: WIE EXTREMISTEN DIE NEUEN TECHNOLOGIEN NUTZEN UND UNS MANIPULIEREN
SUHRKAMP NOVA, 2019. 334 PP. €18 HARDBACK. ISBN: 978-3-518-47007-7

Linda Schlegel
Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

"There was a choreographed social media campaign to promote it, organized by die-hard fans and amplified by an army of Twitter bots. They posted selfies of black-clad militants and Instagram images of convoys that looked like *Mad Max* come to life. There was even a smartphone app, created so that jihadi fans following along at home could link their social media accounts in solidarity, boosting the invaders' messages even further" (Singer and Brooking, 2018, p.5). This is how Singer and Brooking (2018) describe the first major online campaign run by the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) under the hashtag #AllEyesOnISIS. ISIS, they postulate, had not "hacked the network; it had hacked the information on it" (Singer and Brooking, 2018, p.8) in order to gain a strategic advantage over their opponents, gain publicity and satisfy their supporters. In recent years, ISIS has held a prominent status in the popular discourse on online-radicalization, social media campaigns and digital propaganda. However, many different extremist non-state actors with various ideological backgrounds, goals and social media strategies are seeking to use the spread of digital communication tools to their advantage.

In her new book *Radikalisierungsmaschinen*[1], Julia Ebner (2019), resident research fellow at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue in London, shares her experiences of researching various extremist online groups, their techniques, methods and motivations. She conducted first-hand research on organizations ranging from white supremacists and female ISIS supporters to trolls, conspiracy theorists and hackers by monitoring their activities and conducting undercover investigations on their servers and within their social networks. For instance, she recalls how she took part in a hacking class by ISIS, visited a neo-Nazi festival in Germany after corresponding with both the alt and the new right online, and dove into the archive and breeding ground of conspiracy theories, the online platform QAnon. Especially laudable is her inclusion of groups less often discussed in the

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[1] Published in German; the English title "Going Dark: The Secret Social Lives of Extremists" is expected to be published in 2020.

academic discourse on radicalization processes such as Trad Wives, an anti-feminist organization run exclusively by women for women, which propagates, among other things, male dominance and an acceptance of domestic violence. The underlying structure of the book is rooted in a classic understanding of different stages of radicalization starting with recruitment and socialization, moving to communication and networking and closing with mobilization and attacking, which is used to guide the reader through the different chapters and linking the diverse groups to overarching themes. Ebner does not attempt to generate a new theory of online radicalization but rather seeks to provide the reader with unique insights from her undercover research and to trace commonalities in techniques and methods of various extremist groups in the virtual world.

The lack of explicit references to the ongoing discussions on theories of online radicalization and the exact factors and stages facilitating these processes, is an advantage rather than a weakness of Ebner's account. It should be read as an analysis of the primary data she generated through her research rather than as another contribution to the long list of theories of radicalization. It complements, not only the existing literature on online-radicalization, but also works with a broader focus such as Singer and Brooking's (2018) *LikeWar* and Patrikarakos' (2017) *War in 140 Characters* as well as the discourse surrounding echo chambers (Pariser, 2011; O'Callaghan et al, 2015; Reed et al, 2019) and the risks and chances social media applications can pose to liberal democratic processes and citizens engaged in the virtual world (Papacharissi, 2010). Ebner makes a contribution to the growing literature on the paradox that extremist organizations seek to go back to a past they perceive as superior to modern life - a phenomenon Baumann (2018) called *retropia* - by using the most advanced communication technologies available. They are a hybrid phenomenon, constantly balancing the tension between reactionary ideology and (post-) modern tools of the information society. She supports broader sociological accounts by Baumann and others on how social media contributes to a growing polarization and poses a challenge to liberal democracies through the primary data she collected and puts into context throughout the book.

Overall, Ebner's book offers a valuable first-hand account of the virtual networks and platforms today's extremists use and the tools they employ to influence not only their own supporters but the mainstream media and society as a whole. It underpins empirically the notion that extremists purposefully utilize social media campaigns to polarize, intimidate and sometimes simply 'troll' both political decision-makers and normal citizens. It is part of a deliberate strategy to undermine the very foundations of liberal democracy designed to protect society from extremist influence and will have to be the focus point of many discussions, analysis, research and policies in the years to come.

Linda Schlegel holds a BA in Liberal Arts from the University College Maastricht and an MA in Terrorism, Security and Society from King's College London. Her research interests include (online-) radicalization, de-radicalization, extremist identities, and resilience to terrorism. Linda tweets under the twitter handle: @LiSchlegel

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GIORGOS KATSAMBEKIS & KIOUPKIOLIS, ALEXANDROS (EDS). THE POPULIST RADICAL LEFT IN EUROPE

ROUTLEDGE, 2019, 216 PP. £105.00 HARDBACK. ISBN: 9781138744806

Giorgos Venizelos
Scuola Normale Superiore

Radical left populism? in… Europe? Ten years after political turbulence in Europe and the rise of left-wing populism, the tile of this collective volume edited by Giorgos Katsambekis and Alexandros Kioupkiolis could still sound like an odd area to study – to both public and experts alike. Hitherto, the mainstream conceptualisation of populism has closely associated it with the far-right, and seemed obsolete in identifying left-wing sub-types. Starting from this point, the volume marks its first contribution via filling a significant gap in the existing research on the Populist Radical *Left* (PRL). At the same time, it addresses a variety of issues and concerns raised within the literature on populism, both at theoretical and empirical levels. The volume focuses on a broad set of issues, including

the varying trajectories of populist parties, the challenges they face and the changes they undergo once they enter the institutions, their degrees of radicalisation and moderation, their relationship with democracy, their programmatic positions on socio-economic and cultural issues as well as their stances on the EU.

The introductory chapter provides an overview of the two main approaches in contemporary studies of populism: ideational and discourse-theoretical. It traces their epistemological foundations, offers an up-to-date account of the state of the field and marks their points of convergence. At the same time, the editors scrutinise the ideational approach for its *a priori* conceptualisation of populism as a 'fundamentally anti-pluralistic brand of politics' (p.12) which necessarily frames 'the people' as morally pure and homogenous. They critique this on the basis that, as shown by the ensuing empirical analysis, it presupposes a normative, as well as a regional bias. 'Surprisingly', the number of cases of PRL included in this volume illustrates a relatively large pool of PRL parties in Europe. As the editors clarify, the PRL is not a homogenous party family and there are many different configurations: movement-based, bottom-up experiments; some of which are deeply rooted in digitally oriented forms of organisation (Kioupkiolis, chapter 8); top-down leader-centric projects; formations that achieve different degrees of success; and actors that present different *degrees* of radicalisation and moderation, both with respect populist as well as their leftist component, all depending on the context and the arena within which they operate.

The volume includes well-studied cases of left-wing populism such as those of Syriza in Greece (chapter 1) and Podemos in Spain (chapter 2). Both chapters update the reader with the trajectories of these parties following their ascent to power, focusing on their institutional impact as well as the effect of power on themselves. In chapter 1, Katsambekis deals with the implications for Syriza after signing new bailout agreement that imposed further austerity in Greece, while in chapter 2 Kioupkiolis highlights the increasing centralisation of leadership within Podemos and the abandonment of its movement base; additionally, chapter 2 deals with the impact of the Catalan issue on the party of Podemos as well as the particularity of incorporating a patriotic discourse next to the leftist one. Interestingly, the volume includes cases that are currently being researched but are still under-studied due to their newness: e.g. the other 'left-wing-patriot' Mélenchon in France (chapter 4) and Jeremy Corbyn and the Momentum movement in the UK (chapter 7). There are also 'disputed' or 'borderline' cases, such as the Dutch Socialist Party (chapter 5) and Die Linke in Germany (chapter 6) in which populism is not the main feature that defines the identity of these parties. The authors show that while populist discourse has been part of these two parties' histories it was rather an occasional *mode of communication* rather than a principle political logic. In the case of the Dutch context, Lucardie and

Voerman distinguish between weak and strong populism and in the case of the German party, Hough and Keith show how the degrees of populism depend on the arena where discourse is communicated as well as the politician who articulates It. These two chapters offer a lot on the methodological plane; as they indicate how populism is not a dichotomous category but rather a matter of degree. In chapter 3, Toplišek escapes the typical geographical focus on western, central and southern regions and informs the reader about the under-researched, if not neglected, case of the Slovenian Left in the eastern region of the European continent.

Overall, 'the Populist Radical Left in Europe' makes significant and multilevel contributions to both the literatures within which it is situated. The volume is truly comparative. All chapters, although focused on an individual case each, draw comparisons and mark similarities and differences among other countries, movements and parties - mainly in Europe, but also in Latin America and the US - shedding light on the multiplicity (of ignored) left-populist manifestations. Contra the stereotypical bias, the empirics of this book show that populism is not necessarily xenophobic, racist and authoritarian but it can be egalitarian and progressive with. The findings push for major reconsideration of the concept of populism and point towards the direction of discourse theory and the advancements it has offered to the so-called field of populism studies. In this spirit, Stavrakakis (post-script/chapter 9) urges a self-reflexivity for social scientists and pundits. By uncritically adopting an exclusively pejorative definition of populism, normative, a-historical and ideologically charge content is adopted too. The effects are evident: on the scientific level we are left with the absence of research on left-populism while the euphemistic application of the populist label on the far-right arguably camouflages the dangers on the political level.

The rich empirical material generated in this volume challenges those who criticise Discourse Theory for being overly philosophical and abstract. Indeed, not all chapters ascribe to the discourse-theoretical family strictly speaking, but they do engage with it in significant levels. The incorporation of party politics and policy analysis perspectives in investigating party competition and change in the different cases supplements discourse theory and develops further its research program (Ch. 3;5;6). This book should reach students, research and scholars of populism and the radical left. It has to be noted, however, that it does not address a common scepticism deriving from those who question the usefulness of the concept of populism. Does the rich variety of populist manifestations that come in different sub-types and forms, as this volume skilfully portrays, weaken or strengthen the usefulness concept of populism itself?

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JOHANNES KIESS, OLIVIER DECKER, AND ELMAR BRÄHLER (EDS.) GERMAN PERSPECTIVES ON RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM: CHALLENGES FOR COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
ROUTLEDGE, 2016. 176 PP. £120.00 HARDBACK. ISBN: 9781138195370

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This thoughtful and insightful volume provides readers with a comprehensive overview of Germanophone research on right-wing extremism, and introduces a range of epistemological and methodological debates on the topic at hand. The volume draws readers' attention to the challenges posed by cross-country comparative research, particularly in regard to country-specific contextual factors as well as the fact that much Germanophone research on right-wing extremism is not available in English. Importantly, the editors point out that while research on right-wing extremism is often characterised by rich and varied discussion in relation to the concepts and theories utilised by researchers, 'right-wing extremism' is employed in Germanophone research to describe a wide range of attitudes, behaviours, and parties that run the gamut from the fringes to the mainstream of political life (p. 2). Consequently, an awareness of socio-cultural, political, and historical contextual factors is essential when conducting cross-country research; it is not simply a case of translating the requisite terms and phrases. The editors note, for example, that a recognition of the role of right-wing extremist ideology and its prevalence in society is necessary to understand right-wing extremism today; researchers can take lessons from the history of Nazi Germany and the broad public support Nazi ideology garnered in wider German society (Ibid.).

In practical terms, there are also important distinctions to be made between groups or parties that are *verfassungswidrig* (opposed to the constitution) and those that are *verfassungsfeindlich* (hostile to the constitution) as right-wing extremist groups are closely observed by the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution), and can be banned (Mudde 2000, p. 12). The aim of this interdisciplinary volume, then, is to contribute to transnational debates surrounding concepts, ideas, and research approaches (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods), as well as the particular methodological challenges posed by cross-country comparative research (p. 4).

The volume itself is divided into two principle sections, with the first giving readers an in-depth look into the methodological challenges that accompany comparative research. The four chapters in this section critically reflect upon current methodological approaches to right-wing extremism. In Chapter One, Johannes Kiess and Oliver Decker explore existing cross-country survey data and the perceived need for improvement in this field (pp. 11-30). Katrin Reimer-Gordinskaya discusses mixed method approaches to attitude research and the conceptual discrepancies inherent in standard methodological approaches in Chapter Two (pp. 30-43). Marc Grimm unpacks the discourses that have shaped the concepts of right-wing extremism and societal security in relation to national identity and immigration in Chapter Three (pp. 43-61). In Chapter Four, Karin Liebhart investigates multi-method approaches to the comparative analysis of anti-pluralistic politics in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland (pp. 61-81).

The second section of the volume presents readers with four exemplary case studies, with Oliver Decker, Johannes Kiess, and Elmar Brähler investigating the prevalence of right-wing extremist attitudes in Germany through an analysis of survey data from 2002 to 2014 in Chapter Five (pp. 83-104). Chapter Six sees Julia Hofmann explore the role that social crises and insecurities play in the discrimination of 'others' in the Austrian context (pp. 104-122). In Chapter Seven, Michael Edinger and Eugen Schatschneider navigate the case of the neo-Nazi terror cell National Socialist Underground (NSU), and discuss the challenges it poses to political research (pp. 122-145). Finally, Chapter Eight sees Tanja Wolf cast a critical eye over the classification of right-wing parties in Europe (pp. 145-162).

Events like the global financial crisis, Brexit, the election of Donald Trump to the US presidency, and national elections across Europe have heralded a resurgence in support for right-wing extremist groups and parties more broadly. Consequently, the relevance of, and need for, rigorous comparative analysis is timelier than ever. At first glance, a notable omission from the discussion presented in this volume is the case of *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) and their winning of over 90 seats in the Bundestag after the 2017 German Federal Election, marking the first time since World War Two (WW2) that a right-wing party has made significant electoral gains in Germany. While the volume may have been published before the AfD's political ascendance, it nevertheless offers readers a valuable insight into the findings of empirical research conducted across German-speaking countries, as well as exploring a diverse range of epistemological and methodological approaches central to concomitant debates.

There is little discussion on the gendered aspects of right-wing extremism in the volume aside from a cursory mention in the final chapter on the ideology of Belgian party Vlaams Belang (p. 151). There is a body of "overlooked" German-

language research on the topic (Mudde 2007, p. 90; e.g. Amesberger and Halbmayr 2002; Birsl 1996; Rommelspacher 2001), as well as authoritative journalistic accounts (e.g. Röpke and Speit 2011) that will provide a useful contextual basis for any future Germanophone research that incorporates gender in its analysis. Additionally, the case of last surviving NSU member Beate Zschäpe provides researchers with an insight into the integral role women often play in right-wing extremist groups. Despite these small observations, the volume effectively equips researchers of all stripes with the tools needed to critically reflect upon their own approaches to right-wing extremism, and reminds them to pay close attention to the concepts and ideas employed during their own cross-country comparative analysis.

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MATTIA ZULIANELLO. ANTI-SYSTEM PARTIES: FROM PARLIAMENTARY BREAK-THROUGH TO GOVERNMENT

ROUTLEDGE, 2019. 298 PP. £115.00 HARDBACK. ISBN: 9781138346796

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In recent years it has become a truism that parties challenging the status-quo are on the rise. Even before the observation that we live in a Populist Zeitgeist (Mudde, 2004), anti-political establishment parties produced remarkable performances. Hence, discussing what causes their electoral success seems a somewhat outdated topic. Now we know that a combination of suitable socio-economic conditions (Betz, 1994; Ignazi, 2003), and organisational capabilities (Kitschelt and McGann, 1996; Carter, 2005; Mudde, 2007) shapes their electoral fortunes. As the study on anti-political establishment parties moves into a new phase (Mudde, 2016), it is important to look at these parties from a new perspective and engage with new topics. Mattia Zulianello's 'Anti-System Parties: From Parliamentary Breakthrough to Government' does this very eloquently by looking into the particular experiences of anti-system parties after their parliamentary entry.

Taking a party-centred perspective, the book breaks ground in its definition of an anti-system party (Chapter 2). Zulianello makes a compelling argument that anti-system parties are both ideologically opposed to the metapolitical status-quo *and* remain non-integrated into the national party system. Such definition clearly distinguishes anti-system parties within the broader party family of anti-political establishment parties through their fundamental opposition to the existing status-quo. Particularly, anti-system parties do not aim for sweeping reforms of the existing system in order to strengthen its fundament, as, for example, centrist populist parties seek. Rather, anti-system parties aim for a fundamental change of the existing system by removing and replacing its basis.

The definition enabled Zulianello to base his research on a broad number of West European cases of anti-system parties in the timeframe 1945-2017. More importantly, this definition allowed him to offer a clear-cut categorisation of the placements of political parties within a party system, distinguishing between anti-system, halfway house, complementary, and pro-system parties. The value of this definition and accompanying categorisation lies in their robustness that captures any momentary changes of the party status in a party system. For example, whereas the Greek SYRIZA and ANEL qualify as anti-system parties for their staunch opposition to the policies of the Troika even after their rise to power, their submission to these policies in the summer of 2015 reclassifies them as halfway house cases.

The following three chapters explore the sources for three common developments of West European anti-system parties after their parliamentary entry: the electoral sustainability of anti-system parties (Chapter 3), their diverse modalities of integration within or disembedding from their national party systems (Chapter 4), as well as of their diverse electoral fortunes after a period of government participation (Chapter 5). By using a sound mixed-methods approach, he argues that these developments stem from the party's own agency, including its ideological, programmatic, strategic and organisational choices. From that perspective, he makes the compelling point that any influences from the particular political and social environment rather complement the effects of the parties' own efforts and choices. Indeed, a growing number of works highlights that parties challenging the status-quo are masters of their own fate (Art, 2011; March, 2011; Heinisch and Mazzoleni, 2016). This requires a closer investigation of their media use, leaders, organisational structures, and internal party dynamics, among others. Yet, taking a party-centred focus opens the door for subjectivity. As Zulianello himself recognises, the actions and choices of anti-system parties are a product of subjective perceptions, be that their own or those of their opponents, the electorate at-large, etc. In this context it is important to look into the sources for these perceptions: something that ultimately requires a very intimate access into the parties' internal life.

Where a scholar could take Zulianello's research further is in the study on the interplay between the electoral sustainability of anti-system parties, their modalities of integration and disembedding, and their government experiences. The book's epilogue (Chapter 6) remains rather light in this respect, focusing instead on the conditions for the recent electoral breakthrough of anti-system parties since the catalyst of the Great Recession, the refugee crisis, and Brexit. This is an important topic, but it does not fit well with the overall focus of the book on the experiences of anti-system parties *after* their electoral breakthrough. In this respect the analysis in Chapter 6 seems as a step back in the research of anti-system parties instead of moving forward, as it did in the previous four chapters.

Zulianello indicates that the interplay of the electoral sustainability of an anti-system party, its modality of integration or disembedding, and government experience indeed influence each other. Particularly visible was this in Chapter 4 where he explains the sources for these different modalities, where emphasising on the interplay between the specific party response and its external impulses. Given the central role of parties themselves, Zulianello leaves the door open for further research on whether anti-system parties can be proactive in shaping their electoral sustainability, modality of integration or disembedding, and electoral performance after a period in government. While parties may be conservative in their actions, this does not mean that they do not have an overview

(even if a skewed one) on the surrounding realities that they may channel according to their own goals. In fact, such proactiveness seems to be at the root of Zulianello's explanation for the process of radical disembedding, where a party that is integrated into the party systems seeks a purposeful radicalisation of its ideology and severs its ties with the surrounding political environment.

Overall, Zulianello's book provides a relevant and important research on the experiences of anti-system parties after their parliamentary entry. If you are studying the internal dynamics of party organisations or looking for the sources for the electoral sustainability of new, small, or anti-political establishment parties, their modes of (de-)institutionalisation or electoral fortunes after a period in government, this will be an important source for your work.

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