

Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe. By Cas Mudde. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 404p. \$95.00 cloth, \$34.99 paper.

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According to Cas Mudde, the vast (and still expanding) academic literature on radical right parties in Europe has too often relied on fuzzy conceptualization, unproven assumptions and poor quality secondary data. His new book seeks to review, clarify and critique this literature and to introduce a pan-European perspective, examining the radical right in both Western Europe and Eastern Europe in a single framework. The book breaks down into three principal sections addressing the conceptualization and categorization of the populist radical right; its ideological character; and the explanation of (some) radical right parties' success.

Mudde first seeks to clarify the nature of parties variously labelled 'populist', 'radical right', 'extreme-right', 'anti-immigrant' and 'ultra-nationalist'. To avoid the sociological determinism prevalent in much of the literature-- which reduces parties to the socio-demographic characteristics of their electorates or underlying social trends shaping voter preferences-- Mudde builds a typology centring on parties and shared official ideological positions. After reviewing concept formation strategies, Mudde argues that the core group of parties at issue is best defined as 'populist radical right' (PRR) because they combine populism with ideologies of nativism and social authoritarianism. This categorization excludes not only elitist far-right groups in the neo-fascist tradition and traditionalist conservative Christian parties, but also groupings such as the Scandinavian progress parties and *Forza Italia* which - despite anti-immigrant stances - Mudde sees as having 'neo-liberal populist' ideologies. Mudde's categorization

largely picks out 'usual suspects' such as France's *Front national* (FN), the *Vlaams Blok* (VB) in Belgium and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's misnamed Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) in Russia, but also, surprisingly, includes parties such as Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the Croatia Democratic Union (HDZ). Other parties sometimes studied under the rubric of radical right populism, such as Vladimir Mečiar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) or Italy's 'post-fascist' National Alliance (AN) - now a conventional conservative party in Mudde's view - are, however, excluded.

Central to the ideological identity of PRR parties, Mudde argues, is the well known identification of outsider groups - immigrants, national minorities, cosmopolitan intellectuals, drug users, gays and lesbians, Jews, Muslims, Roma - as threats to the state or nation. Like earlier authors on exclusionary radical right-wing populism in Europe such as Paul Taggart or Hans-Georg Betz, Mudde sees this as implying illiberal, ethno-centric, majoritarian models of democracy with plebiscitary elements, diluted checks and balances, and weak minority rights, rather than outright rejection of democracy. However, he challenges both the views of feminist scholars who interpret the radical right as a uniquely male-dominated and misogynistic political movement and the influential arguments of political scientists such as Hans-Georg Betz or Hebert Kitschelt & Anthony McGann who see PRR parties in Western Europe as representing a fusion of chauvinism and neo-liberalism formed in reaction to the mobilization of left-libertarian movements and parties. Although drawing on disproportionately male electorates, women are no more underrepresented in PRR parties than in those of the conventional right and, although socially conservative, many PRR take what Mudde terms a 'modern

traditional'(p. 93) view of the role of women as centred on, but not confined to, home and family.. However, PRR parties generally favour not economic neo-liberalism but a 'nativist economy' in which market forces serve the national community and have free play only within local or national boundaries. Unsurprisingly, PRR parties are in the vanguard of euroscepticism. However, like some more mainstream right-wing parties, many have moved to anti-EU positions relatively recently and most see the need for some alternative form of European co-operation. Radical right 'Europeanism' has, however, produced no durable organizational expression or PRR 'Euro-party'. PRR parties, Mudde also notes, have an underlying hostility to globalization, although this is a major preoccupation only for parties with strongly anti-American attitudes.

Overall, Mudde argues, comparative studies seeking to explain PRR success have proved inconclusive. Many of the dozens of books and articles on the radical right that have appeared in the last three decades have taken a 'demand side' approach seeking to identify social conditions that form the 'perfect breeding ground' for PRR parties. Taken together, Mudde concludes (pp. 229-30), 'demand side' analyses have produced contradictory findings due to vague or inconsistent conceptualization and a failure to theorize linkages between macro-social structures and individual voting decisions adequately. The long-term shifts in values and changes in class structures common to most advanced post-industrial societies offer little plausible explanation for sharp cross-national variation in radical right parties' electoral support in Europe or for the sudden surges in support that frequently characterize their development. 'Supply side' factors such as national political opportunity structures, Mudde thinks, can explain why some PRR parties make electoral breakthroughs. However, formal institutions such electoral

systems seem less important than the role of the media and historically-rooted far-right or radical nationalist sub-cultures. The subsequent crucial phase of PRR party consolidation in the national party system is, however, driven by internal organizational factors such as PRR leaders' skills as party managers, strategists and media performers and the creation of effective propaganda machines.

As well as more primary research and better conceptualization, Mudde thinks a paradigm shift is also required. The radical right should, he suggests, no longer be regarded as 'normal pathology' of liberal democracy reflecting the strains and crises induced by socio-cultural modernization. Instead, it should be seen as 'pathological normalcy' representing in more radicalized and extreme form many widely held beliefs and insecurities. The real question, he concludes, is not why the radical right parties have so much electoral support, but why their electoral support is not far larger.

Mudde's book offers a lucid, supremely well informed overview of a sprawling, complex literature and a penetrating, if overstated, critique of its accumulated insights. The book is at its strongest in its incisive discussion of concept formation and categorization and its provocative conclusions on the relationship of the populist radical right to the mainstream of European democracy. Its weaknesses lie in an over concentration on ideology and the lack of any really effective comparative (re-)analysis of its own. Arguments and findings are presented and assessed in broadbrush terms and sometimes rather summarily dismissed through the juxtaposition two or three variables in simple tabular form. There is also a need for more systematic discussion of variation between PRR parties. This is especially noticeable in the book's lumping together of West European and East European cases. This makes sense as an exercise in ideological classification and offers a

welcome corrective to stereotypes of Eastern Europe as a region riddled with atavistic extremism. However, it obscures the different paths through which PRR parties have emerged in Western and Eastern Europe and the very different party system and social contexts in which they still operate. Mudde is probably correct to argue that in time much of post-communist Europe will be transformed into a mere sub-region of the developed West. However, such convergence cannot currently be assumed. Greater sensitivity to Europe's different configurations of post-industrial capitalism and democracy would therefore have enhanced the book. Despite such limitations, the critical scope and depth of Mudde's book mark it out as a major work offering an indispensable roadmap for future research on populism and right-wing politics in contemporary Europe.