

**Akkerman, T., de Lange, S.L. and Rooduijn, M. (eds.): Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe. Into the mainstream?** London–New York, Routledge, 2016. 298 p.

Radicalism and the strengthening of the radical right parties have become dominant phenomena of recent political transformations. As a result, the topic of the transitions of radical right-wing parties has become a dynamically growing segment of political geography and political science literature. This book is an important theoretical contribution to the core issue along with the inclusion-moderation thesis, which holds that participation in democratic institutions and procedures will amend the radical nature and ideology of political parties. Authors of the volume analyse the ‘mainstreaming’ of various radical right-wing parties in several countries and different political situations in Western Europe, which is also a rather current process in Hungary if we consider the transition of the party *Jobbik*.

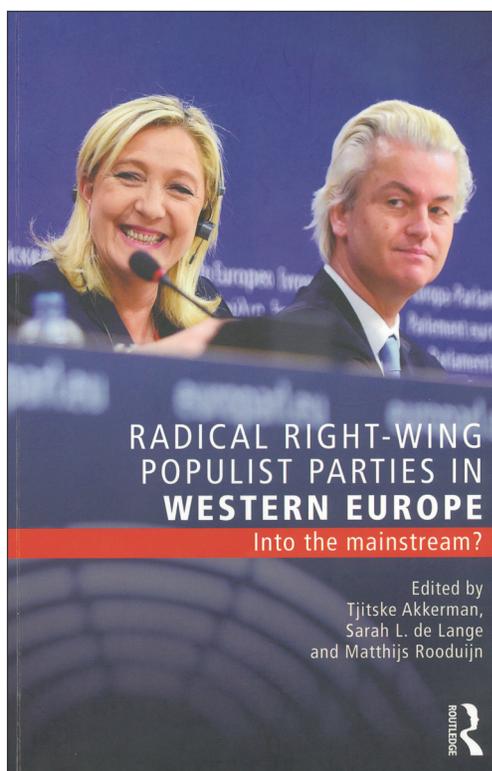
The authors provide us a description about the behaviour of radical right parties according to their goals and positions. In the 1990s, growing intolerance against immigrants and increasing populism gave the opportunity for many radical right-wing parties to escape from the margins. The French National Front

(*Front National*, FN), the Austrian Freedom Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, FPÖ), the Norwegian Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*, Frp) and the Swiss People’s Party (*Schweizerische Volkspartei*, SVP) became supported by more than 10 per cent of the electorate as a result of increasing disappointments of voters. After the turn of the millennium the Danish People’s Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*, DF) and the Flemish Interest (*Vlaams Blok/Belang*, VB) also crossed the 10 per cent threshold and many other radical-right wing parties emerged on the scene so the upward trend continued for the radical right-wing party family. The average vote share of radical-right wing parties in national elections increased from 8.0 per cent in the 1990s to 12.5 per cent by nowadays.

Some of these radical right parties even entered governments, either as cabinet members or as support parties of minority governments. Every radical right-wing party had to face the dilemma between vote maximising and office-seeking. Participating in a minority government always comes with price and these parties had to give up their radical profile, but on the other hand, they could more likely achieve their political goals. In Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Norway, Finland and the Netherlands radical right-wing parties took up the responsibilities that come with holding office, while the Danish People’s Party and the Party for Freedom (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*, PVV) agreed to support minority governments without formally joining them. In total these radical right-wing parties participated in multiple coalitions, leading to the formation of 17 governments between 1990 and 2015. The main aim of this volume is to assess whether the described developments have induced radical right-wing parties to move into the mainstream.

The book consists of two major parts and contains altogether thirteen chapters. The first part of the book sets the conceptual framework in general and presents the explanatory model for mainstreaming. Tjitske AKKERMAN, Sarah L. de LANGE and Matthijs ROODUIJN address in a general and comparative way the question whether and in what ways radical right-wing parties have moved into the mainstream by use of expert surveys, comparative manifesto data analyses and their own measurements. They assess how radical right-wing parties mellowed programmatic positions, broadened their scope of issues and toned down populist stances, or how mainstream right-wing parties became more radical.

The term ‘mainstream’ is widely used in political science, but definitions are generally lacking. According to the authors the term has at least two different meanings. On the one hand, it refers most often



to centre-left and centre-right parties like Christian democratic, conservative, liberal and social democratic parties. So it denotes parties that have a centrist position on the classic left-right scale and attribute importance to socio-economic issues. In this sense, the term 'mainstream parties' is often used in contrast to 'radical parties' and 'niche parties' (including radical right-wing populist parties, green parties, left-libertarian parties and regionalist parties that exploit programmatic niches). On the other hand, the term 'mainstream parties' is used to describe established parties that are loyal to the political system and oppose anti-establishment and anti-political movements, which seek reforms to overthrow the existing political system, and the norms and values on which it is based. In this meaning the term 'mainstream' can encompass programmatic and positional centrism, the high salience of socio-economic issues, and behaviour and stances that show commitment to the principles of liberal democracy and to the formal and informal rules of the political game.

Radical right-wing parties potentially face high costs when they join the mainstream so it is a big question how to combine a populist stance with office after entering government. Many of their voters become disillusioned once they are in office. Government participation can have a moderating effect on radical right-wing parties' stance because it is difficult to maintain an anti-establishment profile, as governing parties are in many way part of the establishment. In a minority government there might be more opportunities to maintain an anti-establishment profile than for radical right-wing parties that are member of a majority government. Mainstreaming can be a short-lived phenomenon, however, when it is only the coalition forcing them into the mainstream. When the government participation terminates, very often these parties return to opposition, and radicalise again. Thus, the phenomenon of mainstreaming is often not the result of internal change and may, therefore, be ephemeral. On the other hand, a radical (niche party) profile, and anti-establishment attitudes tend to be barriers to entering office but they can be rewarding electorally. Therefore, a vote-seeking strategy may be a disincentive for radical right-wing parties to move into the mainstream.

In the second chapter authors operationalise the three dimensions of mainstreaming and describe the data that they used to measure them. In addition, they analyse changes in party scores in order to discern general patterns of mainstreaming. They study whether the programmatic profiles of radical right-wing parties have changed over time, and if so, whether these changes signal that these parties have become more like mainstream parties. AKKERMAN, LANGE and ROODUYN measured radicalness, anti-establishment character and 'nichness' of radical right

parties. The most commonly used methods for the estimation of party positions and their salience are the analysis of election manifestos (manifesto based approach) or the analysis of actors' (e.g. party members, voters, experts) perceptions of parties' positions and their salience. While manifesto-based approaches give us more reliable estimates because they rely on an extensive, predetermined coding scheme, perception-based approaches produce more valid estimates because they tap more easily into a general notion of left and right, and other party attitudes.

Overall there is no indication that radical right-wing parties tend to become less radical. Only the Danish DF has been in office continuously since the turn of the millennium and it is the party that has become most clearly mainstreamed. But it is the only example that fully confirms a correlation between experience in a coalition government and mainstreaming. In contrast, the Swiss SVP has also been continuously in office, but this party has become more radical over time. Nevertheless, the Swiss case can be an exception because the seven members of the Swiss government are elected by the federal parliament and there is no real president or prime minister, and the coalition has never been based on a common legislature programme, so parties enjoy a considerable level of autonomy with respect to their representatives in government.

As the authors measured, from the early 2000s radical right-wing parties have on average begun to pay more attention to socio-economic issues, which could be taken as a sign of mainstreaming. However, mainstream parties also experienced a period around the millennium when they more emphasised these issues than before, which makes the changes in the agenda of radical right-wing parties less distinct. Moreover, radical right-wing parties have started to pay more attention to sociocultural issues in this period, which means that they reinforced their niche party profile. Authors could clearly distinguish the radicalisation of the Dutch Pim Fortuyn List (*Lijst Pim Fortuyn*, LPF) and the Belgian VB, and the mainstreaming of the Austrian Alliance for the Future of Austria (*Bündnis Zukunft Österreich*, BZÖ) and the Dutch PVV. This means that the first two parties gradually devoted more attention to sociocultural issues and less to socio-economic ones, while the latter two moved into the opposite direction. The comparative analysis also suggests that mainstreaming could indeed be related to the question of participation in government and, therefore, to shifts from vote- to office-seeking. For example, the mainstreaming of the DF, FPÖ and PVV occurred prior to the elections in which these parties assumed office or in which they started to support a minority government. Inversely, the Belgian VB radicalised after a period of exclusion through the cordon sanitaire. At the same time many radical

right-wing parties began to re-radicalise during or after their government participation. All in all, these observations indicate that being in office may have a temporary mainstreaming effect.

In the third chapter Matthijs ROODUIJN investigates whether voters for radical right-wing parties and mainstream parties have become increasingly alike over time. Many researchers argue that those who vote for radical right-wing parties tend to have lower socio-economic status and they can be considered as the 'losers of modernity' because they have to compete with immigrants for low-skilled jobs. ROODUIJN displays a mechanism which can also be observed in Hungarian political contexts. He claims that when mainstream parties are radicalising their message and use populist discourses they intend to convince voters who previously supported radical right-wing parties. On the other hand, radicalisation could also result that the more moderate voters leave the party. To assess the attitudes and sociodemographic characteristics of voters for the radical right-wing ROODUIJN applied the European Social Survey (ESS). For every variable of interest, he pointed out how regression coefficients have changed over time. He expected that radical right-wing voters do not differ significantly from mainstream voters. In general, from a socio-economic point of view, radical right-wing voters have not become increasingly similar to mainstream voters because they tend to have lower educational levels, and they belong to lower socio-economic classes which status has not changed in the last decade. But when attitudes towards the European integration were measured, the author observed that radical right-wing voters were significantly different from mainstream voters in 2004, 2006 and 2008, but not in 2012. It means that the gap between the two groups decreased considerably and according to his analysis this convergence is mainly the result of the radicalisation of the mainstream voters and not the 'mainstreaming' of the radical right-wing voters. Overall, since the beginning of the millennium there has been a distinct but decreasing gap between voters of the mainstream parties and voters of the radical right-wing parties, which is mainly due to the radicalisation of mainstream voters, for radical voters have not mainstreamed at all.

The second section of the book is the largest with nine case studies about Western European countries. They focus on electorally successful radical right-wing parties with stable party organisations. Authors of this section selected only those parties that have already gained an electoral breakthrough and for whom national office is at least in the longer term a realistic option. Most parties, except for the Flemish Interest, the French National Front and the UK Independence Party (UKIP), also had the opportunity to enter national office. Many of them

renewed their ideological profile just like the Swiss SVP and the Austrian FPÖ. The Finnish Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset*, PS) did not have to start from scratch, partly because it was formed as a successor party of an agrarian populist party in 1995. The others are new parties that emerged in the 1970s or later, but not all of them started as radical right-wing parties. These parties managed electoral breakthroughs at one point or another, and gathered sufficient electoral support and attention through media coverage to be able to put pressure on the policy agendas of the political competitors. They can also be characterised by a blackmail potential in the sense that they have been able to politicise issues like immigration, European integration or law and order issues, which forced other parties to amend their policy agendas.

Majority system is a hard challenge for FN and UKIP to gain access to parliament and these parties have great difficulties also in gaining coalition potential, as some of them, like the Belgian VB and the FN, have been subjected to a cordon sanitaire by other parties. This political isolation and stigmatisation by the mainstream parties resulted in the prioritisation of vote-maximisation because it is the most realistic option for radical right-wing parties. Yet, most of the other radical right-wing parties dealt with in the book (e.g. FrP, PS, PVV, SVP, FPÖ) have managed to gain coalition potential at a certain point. The Danish DF and the Swiss SVP participated more than once in national office, the others have only a one-time experience which noted that coalition potential can be gained but also can be lost again. The former two parties have got the longest history of (semi-)inclusion into national office and continuous blackmail and coalition potential, while FrP, PS, FPÖ, PVV have got incidental or recent (semi-)inclusion into national office with substantial blackmail potential.

Nowadays, FN, which is commonly considered a model for the Western European radical right, is at a political crossroads ahead of the 2017 presidential elections. (*Manuscript was submitted on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017, before the French presidential elections took place. – The editor.*) The filtered political rhetoric and demonisation has allowed the party to broaden its electoral support and tap into new social groups such as women or younger voters. Presidential polls promise Marine Le Pen new electoral heights in the 2017 elections and public opinion polls suggest that the FN's negative views of immigration, Islam or the EU are currently shared by a large proportion of the French. According to Gilles IVALDI changes of the electoral market include a growing attitudinal convergence between the conservative and the radical right poles of the French electorate, which augments the potential for future coalitions. Although the FN seems to be gradually normalising in French politics, nonetheless a majority of the French still regard it as an extremist party with little governmental credibility.

This kind of incredibility towards the radical right-wing appeared in Dutch elections held earlier this year. Led by Geert Wilders, PVV has been the focus of international attention ahead of the general elections in the Netherlands because events there bear some similarities to what happened in recent US and British elections. But it has not happened in the same way. Although Prime Minister Mark Rutte (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*, VVD) lost 8 from 41 seats and Geert WILDERS gained 5 to 15 seats, the resounding success of radical right failed this time. The map of election results shows that the base areas of PVV are near to the German border, mainly in the southern Limburg province and in the northern Drenthe.

To sum up, contributions to this volume revealed that Western European radical right-wing parties have been mainstreaming to relatively small extent on the dimension of radicalness, but there has been partial or substantial mainstreaming in the other dimensions such as niche profile, anti-establishment ideology and extreme right reputation. These parties have overall remained radical in their positions on issues related to their nationalist ideology (immigration, authoritarianism, European integration). The inclusion-moderation thesis is partially inadequate in the case of radical right-wing parties because electoral competition generally has not pressured these parties to moderate. Exceptions to these findings are UKIP and FN, where plurality or majority systems had a moderating effect. The case studies showed that mainstreaming can be a successful strategy if the choice for office-seeking is internally supported by the party elite and activists. On the other hand, a radical profile, a niche party profile, and anti-establishment attitude tend to be barrier to entering office but they can be rewarding in votes. Therefore, a vote-seeking strategy may be a disincentive for radical right-wing parties to move into the mainstream and lose the voters as a result of the moderate turn. They have to choose between the short-term vote-seeker and the long-term office-seeker strategies.

These questions are also relevant for the Hungarian *Jobbik* (and other parties in East Central Europe with similar radical right-wing platforms), which seems to have chosen the long-term office-seeking strategy, but the effects of this mainstreaming will come to light only in the 2018 elections.

ZOLTÁN BERTUS<sup>1</sup>

## Errata

Hungarian Geographical Bulletin (2017) Volume 66 Number 1. p. 3: Affiliation of authors Emilio GONZALEZ and Paula TRIVINO is University of Cordoba, Spain.

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Economic and Social Geography, University of Szeged, Szeged, Hungary.  
E-mail: berzoltan16@gmail.com