

Cabada, Ladislav et al.:

**STRANY JEDNOHO TÉMATU
VE STŘEDNÍ EVROPE.**

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Political parties and party systems are among the most frequently researched topics in Czech political science. It may seem that little is left to write, but this is not the case. The events of recent years, in particular, have given impetus to further research into Czech political parties and the party system. After gradually stabilizing over a period that lasted almost two decades, substantial change has come to the party system at both the individual-party and systemic levels.

An intriguing phenomenon that, although not specific to the Czech Republic or recent history, has lately played a key role in Czech politics is the emergence of issue-based political parties, including Public Affairs, Tomio Okamura's Dawn of Direct Democracy, and Andrej Babiš's YES movement. *Single-Issue Parties in Central Europe*, edited by Ladislav Cabada of the Faculty of Arts at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, is a noteworthy contribution to the debate over the form taken by current political parties and party systems.

The book is divided into three main sections. In the first chapter, Cabada briefly introduces the basic theoretical assumptions and current state of research that frame the chapters to come. This first chapter is followed by an analysis of particular single-issue parties operative in the various countries of Central Europe – the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Austria, Slovenia, and Lithuania.¹ The book's crucial chapter should be its last, in which the results of the analyses of the different countries are com-

pared. But unfortunately, this chapter, like the introduction, is brief, meaning some of the analytical opportunities available are left unexplored.

The introductory chapter on basic theory focuses on single-issue parties and niche parties, but unfortunately does not entirely succeed in distinguishing between the two, nor in making clear how these terms will be understood and worked with in the analytical section to follow. In that section, the authors themselves admit to a significant difference between these categories. Single-issue parties may be seen as a subcategory of niche parties. But the absence of a clear, thorough conceptualization and operationalization of these terms causes confusion. The cases selected – i.e. the particular political parties subjected to analysis – are also problematic. No clear answer is given concerning the criteria used to make the selection of cases.

Niche parties are defined as political parties that reject the traditional class-targeting policy and socioeconomic division of society and instead base their strategy on politicizing particular issues. The authors classify niche parties into different subtypes: single-issue parties, single-use parties, business-firm parties, media parties, protest parties, and generational parties. The final chapter analyzes political parties classified using these subtypes.

After an introductory overview is provided, the theory is specified for the Central European context. The authors rightly recognize this may be problematic, since the theoretical assumptions are all based on research done into Western European political parties (e.g., the cleavage theory), where the political system is quite different to the party system in Central Europe.² This may lead to follow-on inaccuracies, and indeed they have occurred in this publication. Communist parties, for example, are classified several times as niche parties and single-issue parties; the authors sometimes reject this classification, as in the case of the Czech Republic, and

sometimes do not, as in the case of Slovakia. No further explanation is offered. Likewise, Slovakia's Hungarian minority parties are overlooked in the analysis, despite the fact that ethnic parties are classified as single-issue parties and niche parties. By contrast, Lithuania's AWPL³ is analyzed in the chapter on Lithuanian niche parties. There should also be a more extensive discussion on the classification of extreme right parties and Green parties as niche parties. This classification is open to debate, particularly in the case of Green parties (See, e.g., Hloušek, Kopeček 2010: 83–104).

The analytical section follows, providing a rigorous examination of niche parties in the countries noted. The evolution of the party system within each country is always briefly described to start. The authors then focus on particular political parties. The aim is to describe the internal development of the parties, their platforms, their relationship to the voters, strategies, leadership, media support, financing, and their use of political marketing. But most chapters devote their majority focus to the parties' history and platforms. The description of the parties should have been done in a stricter manner; the fact that it was not relates to the lack of conceptualization and operationalization noted earlier. Aside from this, the analytical section offers abundant detail and delivers a comprehensive base of information for further research.

The final chapter divides the niche parties of Central Europe into the categories defined in the introductory chapter. The authors note that Central Europe contains niche parties of all these subtypes. Single-issue parties (environmental, ethnic, communist, and right-wing) are frequently present alongside single-use parties (the Slovak Alliance of New Citizens, or the Czech Republic's Public Affairs), business-firm parties (once again, Public Affairs) and media parties. Many countries in the region have had at least one

protest party (such as Hungary's LMP), and generational parties (particularly Slovenia's retiree party DeSUS) are also found. It will be intriguing, in light of this, to see how the existing niche parties (the YES and Dawn of Direct Democracy movements in the Czech Republic, the OLaNO movement in Slovakia and the Your movement⁴ in Poland) develop in Central Europe and which new parties seek loopholes in party systems. The development of party systems in Central European countries in recent years speaks to the likelihood that niche parties will play an increasingly important role. Research into this issue will thus be crucial in the future.

This publication provides insight into the fascinating, topical issue of political parties that are eroding the traditional conception of parties. It summarizes previous findings on niche parties and provides a comprehensive analysis of niche parties in Central Europe. Readers are familiarized with the characteristics of particular niche parties, and with findings on their performance and position in the party systems of Central Europe. The book is interesting. It covers unbroken ground in Czech political science. However, the analytical section could have been built on a more comprehensive theoretical base. Given recent developments in Czech politics, it is likely that further texts on the same topic will follow. Thanks to this publication, the authors of these forthcoming works have something to build on and perhaps to challenge.

Notes:

1. The selection of cases leads us to question why Lithuania is included among the Central European countries while political parties in Estonia and Latvia are left out of the analysis. The answer is not given in the book, so we may only assume it was done for purely geographical reasons.
2. The only exception to the countries included in the analysis is Austria.

3. The political party of ethnic Poles in Lithuania.
4. The former Palikot movement.

Sources:

Hloušek, Vít and Kopeček, Lubomír. 2010. *Politické strany: původ, ideologie a transformace politických stran v západní a střední Evropě*. Praha: Grada.

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Carvalho, Joao:

IMPACT OF EXTREME RIGHT PARTIES ON IMMIGRATION POLICY: COMPARING BRITAIN, FRANCE AND ITALY.

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One of the most consequential and most topical issues in political science today centres on the extreme right and immigration. With the political and economic crisis in Europe now receding, the issue has gained importance, and numerous scholars are now exploring the influence of extreme parties on national political systems. The topic of immigration itself has aroused great interest both in the academic world and among the general public in the Europe of the new millennium.

Many authors have highlighted the problematic notion that mainstream parties are co-opting the extreme right. This has mainly been interpreted as a bi-dimensional political process, but an understanding from the comparative perspective has been lacking. How these co-option processes occur must be determined to initially grasp the impact challenger parties have on the political system

and to understand how the mainstream parties develop formal and informal co-option strategies to face these challengers.

Joao Carvalho's monograph, *Impact of Extreme Right Parties on Immigration Policy: Comparing Britain, France and Italy*, published by Routledge in 2014, aims to fill the gap in the literature created by the lack of a systematic analysis of extreme right parties within their political systems and to contribute to our understanding of this political process. Carvalho is a postdoctoral researcher in the Governance, Competitiveness and Public Policies Research Centre at the University of Aveiro in Portugal. The book is the outcome of a long-term research project developed at the University of Sheffield. Carvalho's comparative analysis focuses on the political impact of the leading extreme right parties in Western Europe. He analyzes the approach to immigration policy taken by the British National Party in the United Kingdom, the National Front in France, and Lega Nord in Italy between 2001 and 2009, hypothesizing that these extreme right parties have had a significant impact on immigration politics and policy in the 2000s.

In his second chapter, Carvalho explains that his research methodology is based upon a surprising mixture of two different strands of research: studies of extreme right parties, and studies of immigration. The author justifies this mixed approach relatively well and illustrates its indispensability for subsequently evaluating the impact of extreme right parties on immigration policy. Carvalho clearly defines the party family of extreme right parties using a combination of spatial and ideological approaches closely connected to Sartori's concept of the anti-system party. He goes further to suggest a single typology for extreme right parties, inspired by Elisabeth Carter's classification into five main party types: neo-Nazi; neo-fascist; authoritarian xenophobic; neoliberal xenophobic; and neoliberal populist.