

Charvát, Jakub and Just, Petr:

KRIZE POLITICKÉHO STRANICTVÍ A NOVÍ STRANIČTÍ AKTÉŘI V ČESKÉ POLITICE.

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The publication *Krize politického stranictví a noví straničtí aktéři v české politice (Crises of Party Politics and New Party Participants in the Czech Politics)* is focused on political parties in the Czech Republic and the characteristics of and the most important changes in the Czech party system between the 1996 and 2013 parliamentary elections to the Chamber of Deputies, although the authors are most interested in the last two elections, in 2010 and 2013. These are often referred to as a political 'earthquake' on the Czech political scene.

The introduction of this book presents some basic information about the importance of political parties for democracy. There have been some qualitative transformations in political parties in recent years, however, and we can see this transformation in the Czech Republic, at least since the 2010 elections. Until that time, the Czech party system had been classified by most domestic and foreign authors as relatively stable and with a low rate of electoral volatility, especially in the context of other post-communist countries in Eastern Europe. After the Velvet Revolution of 1989 and the dissolution of the former Czechoslovakia, there was a relatively short, turbulent formation period of the Czech party system. Afterwards, approximately from the second half of the 1990s, the Czech party system began to be more concentrated and stabilized, until the election in 2010.

The main aim of the authors Jakub Charvát and Petr Just is to find out how much and in which aspects the elections in 2010 and 2013 differ from earlier elections. Their analysis focuses on the character of the 2010 changes and whether they were just temporary, were repeated, or whether they even intensified in 2013. Nevertheless, the authors themselves state that it is not possible to predict how the party systems will look in the future (because the results of future elections could be caused by a unique situation in the country) or whether this is a new phase or evolution of the party system, one which may well be adopted by other Western European countries in response to their changing political situations.

The inquiry into the Czech party system and its stability and changes is based on both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis. The first approach is used to analyse and describe qualitative changes in the Czech party system. This part is based on an interpretative case study which primarily uses the concepts of *anti-establishment reform* and *business-firm parties*. The quantitative part of the analysis deals with three main indicators – the continuity of the party system as the stability of total electoral support of the established political parties, the concept of electoral *volatility* which measures how dynamic electoral support was, and a calculation of the *effective number of parties*. These are used to analyse the elections from 1996 to 2013. In addition, the *Corruption Perception Index* is presented, as regularly measured by the nongovernmental organization *Transparency International* from the second half of the 1990s.

The first chapter is devoted to the theory of party system dynamics based on measuring continuity, volatility and stability, which is important for the quantitative part of this study. The reader finds here an explanation and calculation of the *effective number of parties* index introduced by Laakso and Taagepera and

a few ways to measure *volatility*. Volatility, especially, is broadly discussed and a series of different approaches are summarized. After that, the differences between a *genuinely new party* and *continuous parties* are explained as well as the term *critical elections*.

The next chapter focuses on a description of the Czech party system and a summary of earlier research on that system since the election in 1989 to 2006 and how different authors have classified these elections in relation to the concept of critical election. Charvát and Just computed the percentage of the votes obtained by the two biggest parties, the *Czech Social Democratic Party* (ČSSD) and the *Civic Democratic Party* (ODS), and the percentage of electoral support for the core of the system which was formed by ČSSD, ODS and two other parties – the *Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia* (KSČM) and the *Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party* (KDU-ČSL). These two percentages are compared to the total electoral support for all parties elected to the Chamber of Deputies. Additionally, the authors used quantitative analysis to determine the percentage of wasted votes, the electoral support for new parliamentary and (new) nonparliamentary political parties in each election and the percentage of votes for a 'changing fifth party' which was in the Parliament.

Chapter three describes the electoral 'earthquake' which took place in 2010 and 2013. However, the reader can find here not only an extension of the quantitative analysis from the previous chapter updated by these two elections, but also data on volatility and the effective number of parties.

The subsequent chapter is theoretically oriented, but this time it is devoted to the classification of the political parties. After the long era of elite parties, mass parties and catch-all parties qualitatively different types came into existence. In the 21st century we can see a new

type of party which is highly professionalised and oriented only towards electoral success. These parties are led by managers and we can label them as *business-firm parties*. Mostly they are not based on ideology and they have an *anti-establishment* appeal. These parties were very successful in the Czech Republic in 2010 and even more so in 2013.

The last chapter is focused on a description of the political context and the possible reasons why business-firm parties with anti-establishment appeal were so successful in 2010 and in the early election which took place in 2013. The authors use the above-mentioned Corruption Perception Index which showed that people in the Czech Republic perceived the problems with corruption more intensely in 2010 compared to a few years previous. As a symbol of anti-corruption movement, two parties which were each led by a businessman were elected. The first party was called *Public Affairs* (VV) and it was informally led by Vít Bárta. This party was elected to the Parliament in 2010 only. In the following election, *ANO 2011*, led by billionaire Andrej Babiš, was even more successful. Although both VV and ANO 2011 are business-firm parties, there are some differences between them. VV lost their support very early on, while ANO 2011 is the most popular party in the country according to election preferences, even after three years in the government.

To sum up, this publication deals with the very important topic of the crises of political parties in the Czech Republic, observable since the 2010 election. Both traditional parties, ČSSD and especially ODS, lost their credibility and dominance in the system while new anti-establishment parties led by businessmen have become more and more successful. The question is whether this is just a temporary and unique situation or if it is the start of a new period which will prevail also in other countries in the future.

The authors provide the reader with all of the important information about the development of the Czech party system, especially since 1996, and their qualitative and quantitative research is accompanied by many different concepts and approaches to the study of party systems. Although some analyses, like the effective number of parties or the index of volatility, were presented by other authors as well (see e.g. Havlík 2014), it is still a very interesting book which contributes to the study of the Czech party system in a broader context and perspective.

References:

Havlík, Vlastimil. 2014. 'Výsledky voleb.' In: *Volby do Poslanecké sněmovny 2013*. Ed. Vlastimil Havlík. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 141–159.

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ally perfect human beings we should choose capitalism. His book is a debate with Marxist philosopher G. A. Cohen's text *Why Not Socialism?* which claims the opposite. What are Brennan's arguments?

Why Not Capitalism? is divided into four chapters. In the first one, Brennan summarizes Cohen's argument for why socialism is morally superior to capitalism. He introduces Cohen's thought experiment with a *camping trip* among friends. Everyone is equal and works hard for the good of the community and people act like socialists there. Brennan writes that Cohen wants us to imagine how it would look if people there acted as they do in real-life capitalism (they would not be equal, wouldn't be rewarded according to their needs, would be selfish etc.).

Then Brennan explains why socialism cannot work (information and incentive problem) and that even Cohen, unlike some other socialists, admits that capitalism is *more feasible*. This, according to Cohen, however, does not mean it is more *intrinsically desirable*. Brennan disagrees even with that and argues that 'even if people had morally perfect motivations, we would still have grounds to prefer capitalism' which 'is not merely better economics than socialism in the real world' but 'rather, even in utopia, capitalism occupies the moral high ground.'

In the second chapter, he parodies Cohen's argument while using 'the same structure, format and tone' of it to turn his argument into 'an even better argument for capitalism.' To describe an ideal capitalist society, he chooses the Disney children's animated cartoon *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse* and lets the readers find out on their own why Cohen's argument is flawed. And thus, he introduces the ideal people living in the capitalist world. Again, they work for the good of all without the negative, morally bad and egoistic characteristic of the real world.

Brennan, Jason:

WHY NOT CAPITALISM?

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Jason Brennan, like many political philosophers, has his own vision of a utopian society. Brennan, an American scholar specialized in politics, philosophy and economy, also writes for the 'bleeding heart libertarians' blog which is about combining free markets and social justice (Zwolinski 2011). The question we could ask is: Should our own vision of utopia be capitalist or socialist? Brennan tries to convince us that even if we all were mor-