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The Rise of Entrepreneurial Parties in European Politics, by Vít Hloušek, Lubomír Kopeček, Petra Vodová, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, 215 pp., 74,89€ (hbk), 58,84€ (ebk), ISBN 978-3-030-41915-8 (hbk), ISBN 978-3-030-41916-5 (ebk).

A good share of literature on changing political landscapes in Europe has focused on the concept of populism and consequently its rise has been mapped by many studies of populist parties and leaders. But are there additional concepts pertinent to understanding contemporary European politics? According to the book at hand, the answer is a resounding 'yes'. Although the cases of *entrepreneurial parties* the book analyzes demonstrate a great deal of overlapping with populist parties, by the end of the book the authors should have convinced the reader that there is merit in treating the two distinctly. It is important to note, however, that the closeness to populism is increased due to a broader definition of the term 'entrepreneurial'. To borrow a term used in the book, the authors are in fact writing about 'one-man shows' - centralized and hierarchical parties organized by means of business logic and created as a project of a *political* entrepreneur looking to further their political and/or financial interests. Such projects are understood to be a revolutionary trend, which, aside from providing an apt topic for research, from the authors' point of view presents a danger to liberal democracy as we know it.

The book covers the cases of twelve entrepreneurial parties, the analysis of which is well guided by the groundwork laid in the first two chapters. These chapters should be commended for their clarity in demonstrating how the research was approached. Hloušek, Kopeček, and Vodová

explicitly note that they are primarily seeking a case-based explanation of the phenomenon rather than generalization. With parties from Northern, Western, and Central and Eastern Europe represented, the authors have certainly covered a lot of ground, but they do admit that there may yet be some additional cases. The introductory chapters also show good linkage with theory, further strengthened by the authors' own contribution in the form of a typology of entrepreneurial parties. By intersecting two dichotomies – whether or not the entrepreneur is a businessman, and whether or not they managed to establish a party with members and territorial structure – they have generated four categories of parties, according to which the analytical chapters are structured.

The third chapter of the book therefore first takes interest in parties which are a spin-off from a business empire. These include Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, Vít Barta's Public Affairs, Andrej Babiš's ANO, Viktor Uspaskich's Labour Party, and Janusz Palikot's Palikot Movement. This most voluminous of all chapters shows the varying successes all five of the leaders had with attempting to build their party's membership and territorial presence. Big financial resources and ownership of important mass media generally proved to be very useful, but the onus is still on the businessman to attractively present themselves and to avoid intra-party dissent.

The fourth chapter is more brief and presents cases of two businessmen who chose the path of limited party membership and territorial presence. Namely, these are Frank Stronach's Team Stronach, and Igor Matovič's Ordinary People. While the former party is shown to have failed due to the lackluster vigor of its leader, the latter is the exact opposite - the energetic Matovič has managed to propel his party to its first parliamentary victory in 2020. His struggles with party cohesion and stability are, however, shown to have been substantial, which is why the authors deemed Ordinary People to be only partially institutionalized.

The fifth chapter moves on to political entrepreneurs. The cases of Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom and Tomio Okamura's Dawn of Direct Democracy represent parties with a limited

member and territorial base. The lack of both financial and party resources is a challenge, but Wilders' experience in politics shined as a factor that ultimately enabled him to succeed where Okamura failed - in establishing and maintaining strong, unchallenged party leadership. Thus, Wilders' party remains a relevant actor in politics while Okamura's was disbanded.

The sixth chapter contrasts the preceding chapter's parties with those that have managed to build a solid member and territorial base, more specifically, with the Norwegian Progress Party, Pavel Kukiz's Kukiz 15, and Tomio Okamura's Freedom and Direct Democracy. The example of Okamura's new party demonstrates the need to learn from past mistakes, while the example of the Progress Party shows how a lack of external resources can be compensated by building a strong organization.

Finally, in trying to summarize what is important for building resilient entrepreneurial parties, the last chapter smartly takes another close look at the least successful projects. Evidently none of the four major ways of building the party represent a sure-shot formula for survival. Moreover, with their strong centralization of power and an often consumerist approach to party programs, entrepreneurial parties seem to be above-averagely affected by intra-party conflicts stemming from power struggles and ideological heterogeneity. Despite these obstacles, a skilled leader can, at least in the short term, achieve success even without strong financial and party resources. For long-term survival and substantial electoral success though, a strong party organization seems preferable. Nonetheless, the absolutely paramount role of the leader is precisely what is said to distinguish entrepreneurial parties from conventional ones. But even though some general conclusions have been drawn, the book also highlights the importance of specific contexts and how well the entrepreneur navigates them.

Overall this is a highly relevant and pioneering study that should intrigue all academics studying European politics. Published in 2020, it presents the very latest of information, despite the fact that some bits (most notably on Ordinary People) could already do with some updating.

That, however, is perhaps a testament to the relevance of the topic and to the prediction that entrepreneurial parties are here to stay. Richness of the accounts the book offers is its yet another major strength, arising certainly to no small degree from the brave descriptions of all sorts of behind-closed-doors dealings. Indeed, with how well the book documents the party-building process with respect to its success or failure, one could even remark that it would make an excellent read for political entrepreneurs themselves.

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