



Review Article

Tim Bale: *Supplying the Insatiable Demand: Europe's Populist Radical Right*

Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, 385pp., hardback, ISBN 978-0-521-85081-0; paperback, ISBN 978-0-521-61632-4.

David Art, *Inside the Radical Right: The Development of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, 272pp., hardback, ISBN 978-0-521-89624-5; paperback, ISBN 978-0-521-72032-8.

Simon Bornschier, *Cleavage Politics and the Populist Right: The New Cultural Conflict in Western Europe*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2010, 245pp., hardback, ISBN 978-1-439-90192-2.

Andrej Zaslove, *The Re-Invention of the European Radical Right: Populism, Regionalism, and the Italian Lega Nord*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011, 282pp., hardback, ISBN 978-0-773-53851-1.

Like it or not, the far right is sexy. Emotive, conflictual and colourful, it ticks all the boxes for newsworthiness, making great copy for journalists all the way across Europe. Possibly as a consequence, it is – as anyone who teaches comparative politics can testify – an endless source of fascination (healthy or otherwise) for undergraduates. The same goes for graduate students and full-time faculty. Indeed, Cas Mudde begins his impressive attempt to summarize and systematize our thinking about the phenomenon by noting (p. 2):

Despite its relatively limited electoral and political significance within European politics, particularly if compared to the established party families, no party family has been studied as intensely as the populist radical right. Whereas the (edited) books on party families like the Christian Democrats or liberals can be counted on the fingers of one or two hands, those on the radical right (irrespective of the term used) might already outnumber the combined total of books on all other party families [put] together.¹

¹ To appreciate just how much is out there, see the incredibly helpful <http://www.kai-arzheimer.com/extreme-right-western-europe-bibliography.html>.

Quite why this is the case is an interesting question. Presumably, political scientists (and sociologists and historians) are just as susceptible to the shock of the new as anybody else. Moreover, few of us can resist the temptation to supply such an obvious demand, especially when it comes not just from academic publishers but crosses into the 'real world' of broadcast and print media, think tanks, politicians and policymakers.² These, after all, are precisely the people that we (especially in the UK system) are now tasked with 'impacting' on in order to prove that what we do is worth the money. Many who research and write about the far right also have a normative, partisan or ideological agenda. The parties they focus on are 'nasty parties' par excellence – toxic brands peddling supposedly simplistic solutions to complex problems that more often than not involve setting communities and even nations against each other. This is something that most right-thinking (which is to say left-thinking) academics object to in principle and worry about in practice: what if people start falling for such nonsense in large numbers? Understanding how and why such parties gain support is the first step, it would seem, towards making sure this doesn't happen – or at least happens less often in the future. This agenda is often implicit rather than explicit but it is rarely that well hidden: many journal articles begin and end with a recommendation that unless we do (or avoid doing) such and such then 'the problem' will get worse. Arguments that society and democracy ultimately benefit from the parliamentary presence of parties which represent the complete range of public opinion, however uncongenial, are few and far between.

Whether, however, the current academic enthusiasm for all things far right is an unmitigated good is debatable. On the one hand, at least some of the parties in question (assuming for the moment we can agree on which of them we are talking about) have, like some of their Green and far left mirror-images, moved from the margins to the mainstream of their political systems by providing an attractive alternative for voters fed up with the more prosaic choices on offer in

² See, for example, the following reports: Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.), *Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe*, Gütersloh, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2009; Policy Network, *Exploring the Cultural Challenges to Social Democracy*, London, Policy Network, 2011; Florian Hartleb, *After their Establishment: Right-Wing Populist Parties in Europe*, Brussels, European People's Party Centre for European Studies and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2011; and Matthew Goodwin, *Right Response: Understanding and Countering Populist Extremism in Europe*, London, Chatham House, 2011.

the centre of the ideological spectrum. Insofar as this has happened, and insofar as they have either joined or supported governing coalitions, none of this is to be sniffed at, even if it would be good to see as much attention paid to the electoral and governing record of other so-called 'niche parties' (not a label I find particularly helpful but one American scholars seem particularly keen on). Nevertheless, we need to be careful that our interest doesn't develop into an obsession that skews our sense of priorities. As Mudde himself implies, there is a risk of academics paying the far right far more attention than it really deserves – at least relative to other parties that still garner far more support and exert a much bigger overall effect on public policy than it has yet managed. It is also possible that overstating the threat that the far right poses may actually help rather than hinder it. 'There is', as Oscar Wilde famously put it, 'only one thing in life worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about.' All small parties seeking to gatecrash what are allegedly cartelized systems crave the oxygen of publicity, and the far right is no different. Clearly, those supposedly poor deluded souls who end up voting for it do not do so because they have read the myriad journal articles, monographs and edited collections that have appeared in recent years. But it is not altogether impossible that, via some sort of two- (or maybe three- or four-) step flow of communication, those responsible for their production have played at least a part in far-right parties being taken seriously and therefore appearing on the radar of the ordinary voter.

What, then, when we are phoned by a journalist looking for a pithy quote from someone suitably pointy-headed, can we say we know for sure about the far right? Not much, it would seem. Indeed, Cas Mudde, who argues strongly that we should refine our terms and talk instead about the populist radical right, goes out of his way to stress that a great deal of what we think we know about the parties associated with it is built on sand and based on Chinese whispers. That is not to say that we know nothing – thankfully, there are a few 'known knowns' amidst the 'known unknowns', many of them laid out for us in characteristically clear and comprehensive fashion by Pippa Norris and Elisabeth Carter, both of whose books were published just a couple of years before Mudde's.³ In any case, Mudde

³ Pippa Norris, *Radical Right. Voters and Parties in the Electoral Market*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005; and Elisabeth Carter, *The Extreme Right in Western*

argues, admitting how much we don't really know should never prevent us from making a few educated guesses. It certainly doesn't prevent him from doing so – often to good effect and in ways that should stimulate (indeed, have already stimulated) further research. But, Mudde stresses, our guesses must be precisely that – educated: based on reasonable interpretations of evidence which, ideally, has been gathered in the field rather than from behind a desk. And before we start, he insists, we have to agree, first, on what we're talking about and, second, on who does and does not belong in the party family which is his focus. He therefore begins with the 'core concepts' that for him at least represent the three boxes that any party wishing to gain admission to the populist radical right pantheon has to be able to tick, namely nativism (a term perhaps more familiar to Americans than to Europeans), authoritarianism and populism.

The first core concept – nativism – is particularly important, not least because it is key to our ability to link parties in Western Europe with their putative counterparts in the post-communist East – something that Mudde is admirably keen to encourage us to do. Nativism is defined (p. 19) as 'an ideology which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ("the nation") and that nonnative elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state. The basis for defining (non) "nativeness" can be diverse, e.g. ethnic, racial or religious, but will always have a cultural component.' This means that it can be applied to parties in the West which target immigrants as 'the other' (I'm afraid I, like Mudde, am not yet prepared to countenance the use of that last word as a verb) and to parties in the East which, in the absence of large-scale immigration, focus, for example, on Roma or those national minorities scattered across a range of states by the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. While unfamiliar, then, the term would seem both to make sense and to perform a useful

Europe: Success or Failure?, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005. For a typically sophisticated and stimulating review of both, and of some of the other works then on offer, see Herbert Kitschelt, 'Growth and Persistence of the Radical Right in Postindustrial Democracies: Advances and Challenges in Comparative Research', *West European Politics*, 30: 5 (2007), pp. 1176–206. Also worth reading is Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (eds), *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2007.

linkage function, even if other scholars seem to manage successfully to bring East and West together using different nomenclature.⁴

The second core concept – authoritarianism – is much more familiar but is perhaps less satisfactorily defined. According to Mudde, it is ‘the belief in a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely’ with the qualification that ‘while authoritarians will be more inclined to accept (established) authority than nonauthoritarians, they can and will rebel under certain circumstances’. It is not just the subordinate get-out clause that may worry some. It is also the lack of discussion on why such authoritarianism favours punitive policies on ‘law and order’ generally but reacts badly when, for instance, the state seeks to crack down on, say, tax evasion or traffic offences – action which, like ‘political correctness gone mad’ or ‘health and safety’ in all its myriad forms, always seems to bring out the libertarian (even the human rights activist) in many so-called authoritarians. Given that such reactions are sometimes played on and mobilized by some of the parties Mudde chooses to admit to the fold, this tension would be worth exploring further, although it would be silly to suggest that it seriously undermines the whole schema.

The third core concept and box to be ticked is populism, which Mudde defines as (p. 23) ‘a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite,” and which argues that politics should be an expression of the . . . general will . . . of the people’. This is bound to bother those scholars for whom populism can never be more than a style of argument or a rhetorical technique, a way of effectively (and affectively) pitching an ideology rather than an ideology per se. What such a definition allows Mudde to do is to distinguish between those parties that are apparently merely ‘radical right’ (which for him (p. 26) has to do with ‘opposition to fundamental values of liberal democracy’ and ‘the belief in a natural order with inequalities’) and (p. 31) ‘the temporary dominant form of the radical right, as a radical right reflection of the temporary populist *Zeitgeist*.’ Some might say, however, that

⁴ For a highly stimulating recent example, see Michael Minkenberg, ‘From Pariah to Policy Maker? The Radical Right between Margin and Mainstream in Europe, West and East’, paper prepared for the symposium on ‘The Mainstream Right in Europe and the Populist Temptation’, University of Portsmouth, 9 November 2011.

something that can be 'adopted', as it was, he suggests, by the Belgian Flemish Bloc (VB) and the French National Front (FN), cannot really constitute a truly core concept: if it can be slipped on (and presumably off) almost at will then it is more like a sweater than a skin, let alone something bred in the bone.

Others might argue that Mudde spends far too little time on how well the 'radical right' part of his party family's label really fits together not only with populism but with authoritarianism and nativism. It also seems odd that something so fundamental as a belief in natural inequality is not as much of a core concept as the three just mentioned. Relatedly, there is perhaps more room for debate than Mudde allows around the question (raised, as he is characteristically happy to acknowledge, by scholars like Hans-Georg Betz and Michael Minkenberg) of whether the distinctions between the parties he focuses on and at least some more mainstream conservative parties are differences of degree or kind. And this prompts another question, namely whether there is a disjuncture between Mudde's assertion (p. 29) that 'The populist radical right is . . . a subfamily of a broader nationalist party family' (not a party family that everyone would recognize in any case) and his claim (p. 26) that it is 'a populist form of the radical right'. If the retort is that it can be both, then is the definition really so precise and the line separating this party family from others really so hard and fast? Perhaps at some subconscious level this is something that Mudde himself realizes: hence his simultaneous concern to patrol the borders of his classification against those who might misclassify and his disarming (but in a way disconcerting) admission (p. 41) that 'it is not always easy to pinpoint exactly when a party is in which party family. The process of change (sometimes back and forth) can go on for decades, often leading to sustained periods of ideological hybridization.'

For those of us who rapidly lose the will to live in the face of what can easily come over as nit-picking, making sure that everything is just so before we begin really doesn't matter that much. True, we might disagree with Mudde's list of who's in and who's out (I would like to put in a bid for the inclusion of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) – the so-called 'BNP in blazers' – for instance). But we have long since resigned ourselves to the fact that some parties are born populist radical right, some become populist radical right, and some have populist radical right thrust upon them. And, having done so, we are happy (even relieved) to carry on regardless. But anyone

who shares Mudde's impatience with terminological inexactitude will presumably crave even more conceptual clarity than he himself offers before they can start to explore some of the interesting avenues for further research that he points to once all the throat-clearing is over.⁵

Those avenues are built on Mudde's insistence, first, that we should pay as much attention to failure as success and, second, that both ultimately depend on the dynamic interaction between the political opportunity structures which a party faces ('the external supply-side' discussed in Chapter 10) and its own efforts and capacity, not least as they apply to leadership and organization ('the internal supply-side' discussed in Chapter 11). The latter, not surprisingly given that one of his goals is to kick-start research into it, is seen as particularly important. Mudde laments our lack of knowledge but understands it: 'The internal life of political parties', he notes (p. 267), 'is an endless frustration to party scholars: it is extremely difficult to study.' But difficult, he stresses, need not mean impossible. Yet if we are going to do it, it might be worth pointing out, we (and that includes Mudde himself) may need to scale down our ambitions – not in terms of how much we will be able to find out, but in terms of the extent to which what we find out will really help us answer the question that preoccupies so many of us: why do some populist radical right parties do better than others? Mudde seems to set great store in 'organization' (pp. 264–3). Yet he never really gets any further than saying some parties are more organized than others and that this self-evidently helps them: he doesn't in any sustained way get into the type of nitty-gritty activities that organization allows a party to carry out nor does he discuss at any length how they help. Does he mean, for example, canvassing (face-to-face or on the phone), knocking up voters and driving them to polling stations, delivering leaflets, manning market stalls? Or does he mean recruiting members and candidates, holding regular meetings and training sessions and maintaining two-way communication and discipline? Whatever he means, where is the hard evidence, especially given the importance of the 'air war' over the 'ground war' in (post-) modern campaigning, that all or any of this stuff really matters that much

⁵ See, for the latest (and characteristically impressive) attempt to impose order on the 'great blooming, buzzing confusion', see Joost van Spanje, 'The Wrong and the Right: A Comparative Analysis of "Anti-Immigration" and "Far Right" Parties', *Government and Opposition*, 46: 3 (2011), pp. 293–320.

outside a smattering of marginal constituencies in a handful of first-past-the-post systems? Rightly or wrongly, many much bigger, much more successful political parties have decided (partly because their declining membership bases give them little choice in the matter) that it doesn't. Why should the populist radical right be any different?

More light, of course, may be shed on this by the sort of work Mudde is keen to encourage, most obviously ethnographic research on what he calls 'the meso-level': researchers could (and some have) begun to take, say, a city and map and explain the organizational strength and the electoral performance of the relevant party in ostensibly similar boroughs. Such suggestions, in fact, are all of a piece with Mudde's belief that anyone who wants to understand the populist radical right should be steeping themselves in its culture and familiarizing themselves with its discourse rather than observing (and somehow scoring it) from afar. If we are to map populist radical right ideology, for instance, then the only way to do that, he insists, is to trawl through what the parties themselves produce or (if one is doing comparative research and therefore facing inevitable language limitations) to rely on the work of in-country scholars who have done the hard yards for us. This does not, he emphasizes, mean paying attention to expert surveys or trying to read off underlying ideological stances from the policy-driven concerns of the famous (or, to some people, infamous) Comparative Manifestos Project. It means taking the trouble to read journal articles and books by people who themselves have gathered and examined original sources, be they documents, media report or interviews. Here, it is hard to disagree with Mudde: even those who don't see expert surveys as navel-gazing nonsense on stilts would have to admit that few of those who are flattered enough to fill them out can hope to be truly well-versed in the affairs of more than one or two of the parties they are asked to comment on. Taking the UK as an example, I could (probably) be trusted, for instance, to say something halfway sensible about the British Conservatives, for example; but if the BNP (British National Party) is what you're interested in, then for goodness' sake go and talk to (or, better still, read) Matthew Goodwin, whose new book on the party supplies just the kind of convincing detail that Mudde demands.⁶ Virtually everything I know about that party, if it doesn't

⁶ Matthew Goodwin, *New British Fascism: The Rise of the British National Party*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2011.

come from the media, comes from his research anyway. Unless I'm very much mistaken, the same probably applies to the majority of the other scholars who might be sent a survey. So why talk to the monkey – or even a bunch of monkeys – when the organ-grinder is more than happy to oblige?²

For all that, however, Mudde's method brings with it its own drawbacks. He is less clear than perhaps he needs to be about how he actually goes about converting the raw material he has gathered (and encourages us to gather) into the basis of his judgements about where the parties concerned actually stand. He talks (p. 39) about subjecting stuff to 'qualitative content analysis'. However, by this he seems to mean neither Ragin-style QCA nor any of the myriad forms of (computer-aided) discourse analysis now on offer.⁷ His alternative would seem to be good old-fashioned interpretation carried out by a scholar whom we can trust and who backs up that interpretation with appropriate examples. For some of us, this might be enough, even if we wouldn't fancy trying to get such a commonsense technique past a social science (rather than arts and humanities) funding council in a grant bid. But it is bound to disappoint the high priests and priestesses of robustness and rigour – the sort of people who, along with their followers, can spend an entire APSA panel getting so excited about each other's datasets and methods that they never actually get round to discussing their (with luck non-trivial) findings. Even those who don't get turned on by that sort of thing will nevertheless worry about Mudde's faith in parties' written statements (be they what he calls 'front-stage' or backstage). Certainly anyone with inside knowledge of what actually goes on when parties draw up policy statements, manifestos and programmes will know that they are often contingent compromises which may not be worth the paper on which they are written. This problem reflects and is compounded by an issue that Mudde himself (rightly) worries about, namely the fact that parties – even the top-down outfits which characterize the populist radical right – are never unitary actors, thus making them doubly hard to pin down and pigeonhole.

⁷ For a convincing attempt to combine QCA and case studies in order to understand the variable success of populist parties in both Western and post-communist Europe, see Stijn van Kessel, 'Supply and Demand: Identifying Populist Parties in Europe and Explaining their Electoral Performance', unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Sussex, 2011.

One of Mudde's biggest contributions is to use his trawl through the in-country literature to confront us with (or at least remind us of) what we do and don't really know. It is easiest, perhaps, to begin with the myths he successfully sets out to bust or bury, although it is only fair to note that some of those myths were already under attack from other scholars, too. First (pp. 119–20, 124, 196), Mudde notes, populist radical right parties are not now, if they ever were, particularly keen on neoliberal solutions to economic problems. In as much as they have economic policies, they are typically fairly centrist in their desire to mitigate the harsher effects of global capitalism red in tooth and claw, but their nativism leads to a flirtation with (and sometimes outright advocacy of) protectionism and welfare chauvinism: the notion that benefits should be restricted only to those who qualify as 'one of us' rather than 'one of them'. Second (pp. 44, 115–16), populist radical right parties, although generally speaking they do get more of their votes from men rather than women (possibly, Mudde thinks, because women are more likely to be put off options perceived as violent and/or extremist), are no more likely than other right-wing parties to prevent women rising to positions of responsibility. Third (pp. 138, 181–2), they seem no less capable than other marginal players of compromising their ideals and settling for less, especially if it gets them into power and helps them stay there. Fourth (p. 225), although the media (and he would say too many political scientists) like to talk about the 'typical' populist radical right voter (sometimes old, sometimes young, but nearly always male, disadvantaged, under-educated 'losers of globalisation'), those voters only make up a minority of the party's electorate. Finally (pp. 226, 241–2), it probably makes no more sense to try to distinguish between protest and heartfelt voting than it does to insist either that 'copy-catting' by mainstream parties stymies the populist radical right or that they give it a boost by legitimizing its policies.

Of course, no one who isn't themselves an academic can see the point of such either/or debates when the eventual answer is so obviously 'a bit of both'. But whether all of us who have entered into them will call it a day (maybe muttering something suitably sophisticated about 'essentially contested concepts') is doubtful. After all, there is so much, even about the populist radical right, Mudde stresses, that we don't know, or that we think we know but really don't and (much, much worse) maybe never will. For one thing (pp. 281–4, 29), we still can't say for sure (or what passes for 'sure' in

our game) what effect the parties in question have had on the policies adopted and then implemented by other, bigger parties. One of the most infuriating logical fallacies to which we are prone is *post hoc ergo propter hoc*: simply because, say, a centre-right party tightens its policies on immigration following the entrance of a populist radical right competitor does not mean it was driven to do so by that new kid on the block; chances are that the party was picking up concerns (perhaps ‘on the doorstep’, perhaps from opinion polls, or from its own activists or backbenchers) and that – just as it did long before the populist radical right came along – it seized the opportunity to expose its main opponent on the left as a soft touch.⁸ And, although there are clearly cases where the desire on the part of social democratic and labour parties not to be labelled as such is prompted by concerns about the populist radical right ‘stealing its voters’, it is almost certainly driven just as much (if not more) by the fear of losing support to its main rival on the centre right.⁹ How else do we explain why there has been a general move towards restriction (and towards allegedly more assimilationist integration policies), right the way across the advanced industrial world and not just in those countries with a significant populist radical right presence, even if such moves are often more rhetorical than real?¹⁰ And how else, taking a longer-term perspective, do we explain the ‘immigration stops’ of the early 1970s? It may well be that the ‘mainstream’ right can crowd out the populist radical right – something that seems, Mudde notes (p. 248), to have happened in many post-communist countries – but that may well be a by-product of ‘big-party’ politics rather than their main intention.

⁸ See the contributions to Tim Bale (ed.), *Immigration and Integration Policy in Europe: Why Politics – and the Centre Right – Matter*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2008, also published as a special issue of the *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15: 3 (2008).

⁹ See Tim Bale, Dan Hough and Stijn van Kessel, ‘In or Out of Proportion? Labour and Social Democratic Parties’ Responses to the Radical Right’, in Jens Rydgren (ed.), *Class Politics and the Radical Right*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2012. This collection contains chapters by a number of the authors mentioned in this article, as well as by other renowned experts such as Jørgen Goul Andersen, Hilde Coffe, Meindert Fennema, Elisabeth Ivarsflaten, Herbert Kitschelt, Nonna Mayer, Wouter van der Brug and of course the editor himself, Jens Rydgren.

¹⁰ See, for evidence of (and a fascinating take on) this, Sonia Alonso and Saro Claro de Fonseca, ‘Immigration, Left and Right’, *Party Politics*, forthcoming, available on Sage Online First.

In addition – and here Mudde really goes to town both ontologically and epistemologically – we don't (and maybe can't) really know why support for the radical right has increased in the last couple of decades. Those who blame it on 'globalization' or 'modernization' come nowhere near establishing convincing chains of causation that might explain (with evidence) how such vast developments (even assuming they are more than merely imaginative constructs) push an individual into casting his or her ballot for such parties (p. 208). Meanwhile (pp. 207, 212, 224), there is no consistent relationship between rising support and political dissatisfaction or the numbers of migrants and asylum seekers or economic insecurity. Even ideological affinity, it would appear, may not explain much (pp. 220–4): there are plenty of people who seem to share its values, but only a small minority of them vote for the populist radical right, nor is it clear that those who do vote for it do so because of those values. And while no one doubts that electoral systems do help shape a country's party system (p. 234), 'they help little in explaining the differences in electoral success between different countries, parties, periods, and regions'.

It is not clear whether, after so assiduously melting all that was solid into air, Mudde has given up completely on the idea that we will ever be able to establish correlation and causation and make generalizations which apply across contexts, or whether he continues to hope that, with more time and clearer thinking, we will one day do better. His book, after all, was written a few years ago and inevitably contains claims, positive and negative, that in hindsight can be questioned. That said, such questioning can and should prove fruitful. For instance, in a brief discussion of the important debate as to whether there is a relationship between the success of 'his' parties and particular types of polity, Mudde makes the point (p. 236) that 'there are corporatist and consensual political systems that have seen substantial electoral successes of the populist radical right (e.g. Austria, Belgium, Denmark), and those that have not (e.g. the Netherlands, Sweden)'. Since then, of course, both of the countries in the second set of brackets now fit comfortably into the first, thereby suggesting that this particular link may have more to it than he (and we) thought. Mudde, one feels, would (quite rightly) not regard this as a problem but as an opportunity for those coming after him to get to work. His whole point, after all, is to emphasize the contingency, complexity and contradictions in our knowledge. Indeed, one of the reasons the

book is a *tour de force* as well as a *tour d'horizon* is because it retains the quality of a work in progress, of an author whose political antennae, while by no means infallible, are always twitching. As a result, for every assertion called into question by later research there is a trend spotted early – most obviously, perhaps (p. 296), the populist radical right from the Atlantic to the Urals beginning to share more in common because, especially in the wake of 9/11, Europe's Christian (and therefore, to them, non-Muslim) heritage is fast becoming as important to parties in the West as it has long been to some of them in the East.¹¹

The other great thing about Mudde's book is the sheer quantity of un- or under-developed asides, assertions and hypotheses that other researchers can pick up and run with. The fact that there are so many of these nuggets scattered throughout the text, of course, is bound to be seen by critics as a bit rich given Mudde's sensitivity to the foibles and failings of others on this score. This would be to miss a point already made: this is an author who never once implies that he himself is beyond reproach, someone who is not only big enough to take criticism as well as dish it out, but who positively welcomes controversy as an essential part of any ongoing conversation. Clearly, space permits me to point out only a handful of examples, and even then my list has to be prefaced with a shamefaced apology to anyone who, apart from the authors of the other books we will briefly consider below, is already beaver away (or, worse, has already published something marvellous) on them. There is so much work coming out on this topic that no mere mortal, even with the invaluable assistance of the ECPR's standing group on extremism and democracy, can hope to keep up.¹²

We might begin, not least because we live in such troubled economic times, with Mudde's suggestion (p. 206), made during his discussion of our failure to find a consistent relationship between unemployment and rising support for the populist radical right, that increased joblessness may actually erode its vote because unemployment (and the economy in general) is not an issue that it 'owns' (unless of course unemployment can be persuasively put down to

¹¹ Whether this will help them win over Europe's churchgoers, of course, remains a moot point. For a fascinating discussion on this issue, see Kai Arzheimer and Elisabeth Carter, 'Christian Religiosity and Voting for West European Radical Right Parties', *West European Politics*, 32: 5(2009), pp. 985–1011.

¹² www.extremism-and-democracy.com.

immigrants ‘coming over here and taking all our jobs’). This clearly cries out for further testing since (for the moment at least) the negative impact of the financial crisis on countries’ economies has not been uniform. A more perennial problem is women’s relative reluctance to vote for the populist radical right: not content with the idea that it has something to do with the violence and extremism associated with such parties, Mudde also plays a theoretical hunch that it may have something to do with female voters’ apparent lack of efficacy (pp. 115–18); is there actually any hard evidence for this? Likewise, what is out there to prove or disprove his bold assertions (p. 156) that ‘the more liberal a democracy is, the more antisystem the populist radical right will be’ and ‘the more ethnic and plebiscitary a democracy, the more pro-system the radical right will be’?¹³ Or how about (p. 291) ‘the effect [of the electoral success of populist radical right parties] will be more pronounced on the salience [of mass attitudes] rather than the content of those attitudes’, or ‘More institutionalized parties can be strengthened by both coalition and cordon [sanitaire], while less institutionalized parties can be weakened by both’. Or what, given Mudde’s overriding belief that the supply side (the parties themselves and the systems in which they operate) matters as much as the demand side (the voters), about (p. 245) his assertion that ‘In Western Europe, stigmatization is one of the main obstacles to the electoral and political success of the radical right in countries . . . where the Second World War and the Holocaust have been the key point of reference for the distinction between good and evil in the postwar period’. And what about (also on p. 245) the positive relationship he posits between electoral success and the ‘large nationalist subcultures [that] exist outside of the realm of the dominant populist radical right party, which directly feed important facilities and competent personnel into the local party’?

It is these last two ideas that would appear to have inspired David Art’s fascinating comparative study. Like Mudde, Art deems failure as interesting and important as success, and he eschews solely structural

¹³ Those interested in the ambivalent relationship between populism and (liberal) democracy – and the (not necessarily negative) impact of the former on the latter – can look forward to more being written on this by Mudde in collaboration with Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, an expert on populism and the right in Latin America.

interpretations of either, preferring instead to get inside the parties in question (mainly by talking to as many of its representatives as could be tracked down) in order to show that they are to some extent masters of their own destiny and/or authors of their own misfortune. Failure to thrive (or to avoid implosion) after flattering to deceive, Art suggests (p. 20), has to do with the balance in the party of what he labels 'moderates, extremists, and opportunists', as well as with five organizational attributes, namely 'size, cohesion, competence, legitimacy, and ideological flexibility'. That said, Art is alive to the fact that, as Marx reminds us, 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it . . . under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past'. Moreover, Art argues (p. 22), although legacies matter a great deal more than political scientists characteristically concerned with the present sometimes recall, 'the reaction, and particularly the initial reaction, of other political parties and civil society to the appearance of radical right parties' matters an awful lot too.

Although purists will no doubt cavil at the fact that the methods Art uses to get at each of his case studies vary (presumably with the access he was able to negotiate in each), his book nevertheless takes us some considerable way into the inner worlds of the parties he looks at – places that are often not so much scary as grim, or just grimly amusing. 'Small-p politics' abounds and, by their own admission, many of those who play it are 'poor souls' (see Chapter 3) with no place else to go and often outmanoeuvred by opponents (internal as well as external) blessed with superior skill-sets. In certain countries, Art shows, they are also subject to a degree of ostracism (often as much social and occupational as political) that makes it less likely that they will be joined by sympathizers capable of supplying what he calls the upgrade in human capital that might allow them to match the electoral performance of their non- or less-stigmatized counterparts in other polities.

Art does not lose himself in the world he explores because he is just as interested in the strategies of the parties competing against the radical right, and especially in their decisions on whether or not the radical right should be allowed to enter what he calls 'the coalition market' – decisions that are truly momentous since joining or supporting governments (especially at the national level) confers a degree of legitimacy that may well lead to increased support. Those decisions, he notes, are often taken for short-term advantage by

centre-right parties which believe (without much justification) that they will be able to tame as well as exploit their new best friends. Such decisions are also much easier to take, he observes (p. 238), when those new best friends began life not as anti-immigration parties (that came later) but, like, say, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) or the Swiss People's Party (SVP) 'as the representative of a nationalist subculture or through party transformation'. That said, VB in Belgium has tried both routes to respectability but has still failed, at least at the federal level, to break the cordon sanitaire, although the latter has not in its case meant irrelevance.

There are of course a few limitations and quibbles. Some, inevitably, are to do with classification: UKIP may well be, as British premier David Cameron once called it, 'a bunch of . . . fruitcakes and loonies and closet racists', but how it can be classed as a 'flash party' escapes me. Interviewing, for instance, does not (at least for an anthropologist) constitute 'ethnographic research' (p. 6), nor do data on the socio-economic status of candidates necessarily tell one that much about a party's more ordinary activists, although it does of course allow Art to demonstrate very clearly (p. 51) that 'nonstigmatized' parties seem to attract and hold onto more talented individuals. Art may have missed a trick by not bringing to bear on his study of those grassroots members work on why people do and don't join (and become active or inactive) in political parties. Similarly, slipping in a little more of the recent work on government formation and coalition management might not have gone amiss. And, like Mudde, he doesn't perhaps go into quite enough detail on the activities that organization facilitates nor prove that they matter as much as they might, especially nowadays, when media-savvy political entrepreneurs can indeed conjure something out of nothing. Like the Dutch Party for Freedom's Geert Wilders, they can deliberately avoid building a traditional party so as to maintain complete control of the brand and their freedom of manoeuvre – a phenomenon that Art himself makes reference to in the closing passages of his book and (with the help of another talented young scholar who has also built on Mudde's work, Sarah de Lange) elsewhere.¹⁴ Politics, like life, is speeding up, meaning that fortunes can change more quickly than we assume – a

¹⁴ Sarah L. de Lange and David Art, 'Fortuyn versus Wilders: An Agency-Based Approach to Radical Right Party Building', *West European Politics*, 34: 6 (2011), pp. 1229–49.

point illustrated, for example, by the Sweden Democrats, one of Art's relatively hopeless cases, suddenly striking gold (or at least 5.7 per cent and 20 seats in the Riksdag) in September 2010.¹⁵

Although Sweden is not one of the countries covered by Simon Bornschier, there is considerable overlap between those he studies (France, Switzerland and Germany, in depth, and Austria, the Netherlands and Britain, less so) and Art's cases. Bornschier's book, however, starts out looking very different – apparently inspired not so much by Mudde as by a much older tradition (albeit one recently turbocharged by Hanspeter Kriesi and his colleagues) centring on political cleavages. The recent success or otherwise of the radical right, Bornschier, argues (pp. 5–6), depends on the relative importance of the (cultural) 'libertarian–universalistic' vs. 'traditionalist–communitarian' cleavage and the (socio-economic) 'state–market' cleavage. Broadly speaking, the more the former counts, the better the radical right does. This is in part because it lacks a signature position on the economy, relying instead on its much more distinctive 'authoritarian ethnocentrism'. This clearly dovetails with Mudde's arguments, as does Bornschier's determination to ensure that his cleavage-based approach leaves plenty of room still for agency.

This agency is exercised by the radical right parties themselves. Bornschier might have played this up a little more than he does, although, to be fair, he does zero in on how political entrepreneurs (the archetypal successful case being Switzerland, dealt with in Chapter 6) manage to play up the cultural cleavage by skilfully keying into particular issues around immigration and the threat from 'Europe'. He is keener in some ways to stress that agency is also exercised by established parties. In thinking about the latter – and this is in some ways his most valuable contribution – Bornschier insists that we have to take account not only of the ability of parties on the centre-right to claim ownership of cultural issues but also of the extent to which parties on the left mobilize on them or, instead, try their best to get voters to think in socio-economic rather than cultural terms. It is this, Bornschier argues (Chapter 7), that goes a long way

¹⁵ See, for background, Pontus Odmalm, 'Political Parties and "the Immigration Issue": Issue Ownership in Swedish Parliamentary Elections 1991–2010', *West European Politics*, 34: 5 (2011), pp. 1070–91.

to explaining the failure of the radical right in Germany: the Christian Democrats have been careful not to lose issue ownership on the cultural dimension, while the Social Democratic Party (SPD), rather than setting itself up as the defender of multicultural liberalism, has tacked to the centre on such issues and emphasized the social and economic issues that play to its strengths and its voters' core concerns. Deliberately or not, there has, in Germany, been what amounts to a contracting-out of the kind of progressive stances that might otherwise have led the centre left to polarize the cultural cleavage and, in so doing, lose support in the same way as it did in other countries.

Bornschieer's stimulating book is by no means all plain sailing. Many will applaud his brave decision not to go down the manifesto or expert-survey route. But many will be equally disappointed that he codes print media sources collected during election campaigns in order to establish parties' positions and selective emphasis on particular issues. He also runs the risk (one familiar to all comparativists but which can normally be guarded against by giving a sneak preview of one's work to one or two in-country experts) of undermining readers' faith in his judgements on the cases with which they are unfamiliar by what he says about those they know more about. Anyone with a passing acquaintance with British politics since the late 1950s (assuming they hadn't already given the whole thing up as a bad job on learning that the newspapers Bornschieer codes are Rupert Murdoch's *Times* and *Sun*) would no doubt be interested to read (p. 48) that in the UK 'the immigration issue until recently has been almost absent from the political debate'. Still, Bornschieer's lack of familiarity with the British case means that it is open to another (and with luck equally gifted) scholar to fully explore, in a focused comparison, the parallels between the way the issues in question have historically been handled by the Conservatives and the CDU and Labour and the SPD, even if the debate in Britain has recently been ratcheted much further towards restriction and assimilation than in Germany.

That Bornschieer did not include Italy as one of his case studies leaves all the more room for Andrej Zaslove, whose absorbing book provides (like Goodwin's on the BNP) just the sort of comparatively attuned monograph which Mudde urges us to read if we want to understand how the populist radical right ticks before moving on to

cross-national generalization. Zaslove covers all the aspects that someone familiar with Mudde's book would expect to see: a convincing justification for classifying this regionalist party as populist radical right (in some ways the main purpose of the book); an admirable determination to take the ideology of the party as seriously as its tactics and strategy; and a suitably qualified assessment of its influence in government. Whether any of the possible futures for the Lega Nord which are outlined in the book's discursive conclusion are borne out in reality, however, is anyone's guess. Given what happened in Rome in November 2011, anything seems possible. The Lega's leader, Umberto Bossi, may become more convincing than ever in his preferred role of tribune. Alternatively – and the irony would undoubtedly be delicious – he may find himself tarred with the same brush as all the other politicians who betrayed 'the people'.

Forecasting the future, of course, is a mug's game. It is hard enough, as all the authors discussed above point out, to understand what has already happened. Conversely, it is all too easy to convince ourselves that something as obviously interesting as the populist radical right is more important than it actually is. That doesn't mean that anyone, least of all me, is saying 'enough already'. But at a time when Europe is facing what, for once, can genuinely be called a crisis, it may be worth taking a couple of steps back and considering whether what has already happened will be able to tell us much about what will happen next. The fate and fortune of the populist radical right will be profoundly affected by the ongoing failure of parties right across the spectrum to come up with a convincing response to the irrational impact of markets that they cannot, dare not, or choose not to control. Populist radical right parties may benefit from that failure, electorally and/or by being invited into coalitions considered sufficiently broad based to stand a chance of imposing austerity. On the other hand, they may become (if only for a while) something of an irrelevance as cultural anxieties are trumped by more immediate economic concerns. The kaleidoscope is being shaken, and shaken hard. No one yet knows how things will look when the pieces eventually settle.