BOOK REVIEW

POLITICAL MARKET. PARADIGMS AND REALITIES

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The paper Political Market. Paradigms and Realities, by Simona Busoi, is an important contribution and a spadework within our specialized literature. Recently issued by Editura ASE (The Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies Publishing House), in the collection “Et in Arcadia ego”, it offers to the readers a synthesis of the literature destined to the study of political phenomena from an economic point of view, but also a lucid analysis of the Romanian political market.

After reviewing national and international literature referring to individual preferences and choices, economic rationality, methodological individualism, individual preferences aggregation, the motivation of collective choice, one presents the evolving concept of political market, underlining the political competition and the phenomena of rent-seeking, logrolling, of state capture and corruption, and also the legal and illegal pressure groups – with examples and analysis from immediate reality.

An issue rarely analyzed by the specialized Romanian literature, corporate political activity, is comparatively considered, the study including four states: USA, Russia, China, and Romania. One presents the features of corporate political activity in each country and formulates recommendations regarding the Romanian evolution.

Equally important, the electoral phenomenon is a peak of the public services and goods supply-demand type of interaction manifestation (under the form of promises). The moment of political voting represents the main occasion in which citizens, as consumers of public goods and services, become politically active. During intermediary periods, between elections, they are more spectators and receivers of the actions of politicians, manifesting only by means of public opinions of civil society or, in extreme cases, by street actions. In the case of Romanian democracy, the interactions between people and leaders are rather weak between elections, the problems being debated upon in talk-shows and less by direct confrontation between political actors. People’s protests, individually expressed, for example through hunger strike or other extreme actions, or collectively manifested, by meetings, are useless. The implementation of the actual uni-nominal voting system cannot improve the situation. The transmission of political messages towards and from people,
more or less fair political marketing, manipulation or electoral bribe are also included within this study and they are meant to stimulate reflection, as the author refers a weak political awareness from the population. Simona Busoi realizes a conceptual transfer regarding informational asymmetry within political market, by displaying the failures of this market through adverse selection and moral hazard. She refers to the “lemon market” of Acherlof, underlining the “costs of lack of honesty” he spoke about, with reference to political market – a phenomenon of “driving away” of honest politicians by the less honest ones may appear, accompanied by the reduction of quality of policies and of the population trust in the political class.

The study relies on empiric analyses, realized by means of public surveys from specialized entities, which refer to the state of content of population between 2005 and 2010. Starting from the answers received, one displays the interest of Romanian for reading newspapers, listening to radio, watching TV political broadcasts. One adds here a statistical evaluation of Romanian political market based on a survey regarding the euro-parliamentary elections from 2009, which refers to a comparison between the options and electoral behavior that were declared by the participants that were split into two groups: the satisfied and the unsatisfied ones – with reference to life level. One made a comparison between the revenues of the two groups in order to check the correspondence between wealth and answers, and an analysis of the inclination towards political left or right of the two groups aiming towards evaluating the degree of rationality of those questioned.

In a country like Romania, which turned from communism to democracy after 45 years, the political market, with its ups and downs, is a very important subject matter. Politics creates the climate for other activities. The actions of politicians shape the path for the people to study, live, work, and create. The failures of government affects generations. It is sure that both government and people aim towards their own goals, the satisfaction of their own interests. The equilibrium must be kept on the political market. This is made through the sanctions people address to politicians, by means of voting. But the condition that this equally delicate and important mechanism to function is the fairness of the state – scale corruption, including justice, cancels any chance to succeed. Things are even more difficult given the actual economic crisis. These are the issues Simona Busoi brings forward.

Politics always had – apart from spiritual justifications – pragmatic charge and circumstantial bias. But in a world in which economic utility decides upon the hierarchy of life values, political praxis – stimulated by the generosity of democratic principles – assumes the rationality of demand and supply faced with public taste, manipulative and persuasive marketing strategies, distribution of discursive accent on image and audience, with a symbolic production willing to competitively manage interests, needs and issues – both individual and group ones – it formerly invents. Electoral hopes and regrets find their [re]sources within the congruence or divorce of mercantile conduct – which is always ideologically grounded – with everyday value imaginary.
Simona Busoi got her PhD in Economics from The Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies in December 2011. Her paper focused upon political phenomena starting from public choice theory, but referring to other paradigms also. As her papers show, she has an interdisciplinary bias. Her studies as engineer – she graduated the “Politehnica” University in 1993 – proves the logic and rigorous thinking of exact sciences. Her late professional tasks, as editor and editor-in-chief of ASE Publishing House, but also the scientific ones – BA in “Economic Communication Techniques and Methods”, obtained in 2006, from the Faculty of Economy, ASE, Bucharest, with a paper about corporate responsibility, and then PhD – shape his dynamic and inquisitive personality, continuously becoming. Political Market. Paradigms and Realities represents the first paper she signs as a sole author, adding to numerous articles and published papers.