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***The Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership* by R.A.W. Rhodes and Paul 't Hart (eds.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 772pp., £95.00 (h/b), ISBN 9780199653881**

The book here reviewed places itself in the context of the well-known series of Oxford Handbooks and it does so by providing a major contribution to the study of one of the most important and controversial topics in the social sciences: political leadership.

The starting assumption of the editors is that there has been a recent revival of the study of the impact of individual leaders, after structuralist, institutionalist and rational-choice approaches had all set the issue aside. In the editors' own words (p. 17), '[The] Handbook encapsulates the resurgence by asking, where are we today? It orders the multidisciplinary field by identifying the distinct and distinctive contributions of the disciplines'. Overall, the entire work is organised around some dichotomies stressed in the editors' introductory chapter: leadership as leaders and leadership as an interactive process; democratic and dictatorial leadership; leadership as a cause and leadership as a consequence; agency and structure; personal traits and luck; a leader's success and failure; leadership as art and profession.

Several disciplines are taken into account and both normative and empirical perspectives find their space. Furthermore, diverse approaches and methodologies are acknowledged. The volume (almost 800 pages, comprising 46 chapters and 61 authors) encompasses a lot of sub-themes organised into seven parts, dealing with (1) traditions in the study of political leadership (from philosophy to political science, public administration, psychology and others); (2) analytical and methodological perspectives; (3) leaderships in their context (e.g., party and populist leaderships, leadership in networks, etc.); (4) executive Western leadership; (5) leadership below and beyond the national level; (6) leadership outside the West; (7) a final debate on leadership training, gender and leadership, and what we know so far. Each chapter addresses at least some basic points, providing a general introduction, overview of the literature and its implications for the field, and possible future research directions.

The book is written in a smooth but nonetheless rigorous way, and even non-specialists of particular disciplines can fruitfully read all the chapters. Needless to say, it is not possible to enter the detail of the content here, but suffice to say that everyone who wants to approach the topic for one reason or another will find an extremely rich picture of the state of the art and an outstanding source of information, thought-provoking debates, and suggestions for further studies. In sum, the editors have packaged together a piece which is well worth reading and which succeeds in answering the question posed.

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