

Populism as Rhetorical Politics in Britain and Japan: 'Devil take the hindmost'

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Although expressions of populism around the world have been growing in recent years, examples of these demonstrate a great variety. Britain and Japan provide two cases that show various features of populism. There is a synergy between populism and blame avoidance. In Britain, the British National Party has considerably toned down and modernised its extremist image, and the UK Independence Party advocates a referendum on whether Britain should stay in the EU. In Japan, new populist parties have denounced public workers and their trade unions. On the other hand, major parties have confronted populist parties only superficially and, in the end, actually echo populist discourse. These phenomena can be explained as a blame-avoidance strategy by the major parties. Therefore, populist attacks and blame avoidance can be considered two sides of the same coin.

1. Introduction

Populism has recently attracted people's attention in two countries located on opposite sides of the globe. In Britain, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and the British National Party (BNP) have been called populist parties in recent years (Goodwin, 2011: 69). The same phenomenon has also been witnessed in Japan. The populist Japan Restoration Party (JRP) (*Nihon-Ishin no Kai*) has attracted people's support by blaming the incumbents.

Although there are some differences between the cases in the two countries, and even differences between examples in each country, it is possible to point out some common elements, as will be explained later.

In Britain and Japan, these populist groups won astonishing victories in some elections. For instance, the UKIP and the BNP won several seats in recent local elections. In 2009 the UKIP won 13 seats (16.5%), climbing up to second place in the British elections for the European Parliament and knocking the Labour Party down to third place. The BNP also won two seats (6.2%). In Japan, Toru Hashimoto, one of the co-leaders of the JRP, won the Osaka governor's election in 2008 and the Osaka mayoral election in 2011, beating several major parties' candidates. In the December 2012 election, the JRP became the third party in the

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House of Representatives in Japan, with 54 seats. Though the English-language name ‘Japan Restoration Party’ was chosen by the party itself, it is widely regarded as a mistranslation, because *Ishin* actually means ‘innovation’ in Japanese.

Nevertheless, every journal or magazine competes to feature populist leaders. Populist groups criticise government elites and their vested interests, and their existence stirs up fear. It is possible to argue, therefore, that populist parties and politicians have had an influence far greater than their share of seats in parliaments. As we will see later, major parties and politicians have echoed populist claims in recent years.

These phenomena are arguably caused by blame-avoidance strategies by major political parties and their politicians. As many researchers also point out, recently party politics itself has declined in terms of the number of party members and their influence (for example, Seyd and Whiteley, 2002). In the end, political parties and their politicians have increasingly become dependent upon other factors like media coverage or the Internet, instead of party machines. In these circumstances, it is effective for populists to blame the government for betraying the people. Populist attacks and blame avoidance are, therefore, two sides of the same coin.

The aim of this paper is to illustrate the relationship between populist attacks and blame avoidance. First, I will review the political records of populist right parties or groups in both countries. Second, I will explain their rhetorical features, particularly the synergy between populism and blame avoidance.

2. Populist radical-right parties in both countries

2.1 The BNP and the UKIP

Populist upsurges are widely recognised phenomena in various countries, but until a decade ago discussion of them was limited to only a few examples, such as the People’s Party in the United States, Peronism in Argentina, the Front National in France, and the Freedom Party in Austria. However, after the financial crisis of 2008, the growth of populism has been witnessed in other countries. Some researchers have recently argued in favour of classifying the BNP and the UKIP in Britain as populist (Abedi and Lundberg, 2009; Hayton, 2010).

Initially, the BNP’s core features were anti-Semitism, racism, and hostility to democracy (Richardson, 2011), and the party was rather extremist. However, since Nick Griffin ousted John Tyndall and took over as leader, researchers have highlighted the BNP’s ‘modernisation’.

According to the BNP General Election Manifesto of 2010, the party pledged ‘a halt to all further immigration, the deportation of all illegal immigrants, a halt to the “asylum” swindle and the promotion of the already existing voluntary repatriation scheme’ (BNP, 2010). However, these pledges were much softer than before.

In the 1970s, marching and violence by the National Front attracted considerable

attention, and its method of campaigning more closely resembles the Nazi style than the democratic one (Goodwin, 2011: 34). The NF made clear that it promoted biological racism and anti-Semitism. However, the NF failed to gain support from the electorate.

In the 1980s, the NF entered a virtual demise, while the BNP led by John Tyndall became a major force in the extreme-right camp. However, Tyndall himself held anti-democratic views, declaring *Mein Kampf* to be his bible (*Observer*, 24 August 2003). During his time as leader, the BNP still supported compulsory repatriation, and Tyndall's xenophobic view was based on biological racism. In the 1990s, until Nick Griffin was elected as the new leader, BNP had only one local councillor who won his seat, in 1993. It goes without saying that the BNP was failing as a political party in elections. Not surprisingly, their 'march and grow' tactics led to a 'no-to-elections' party (Goodwin, 2011).

However, Nick Griffin challenged, and replaced, John Tyndall as party leader. After Griffin's election, modernisation in the BNP was intensified. Under Tyndall, the party had stopped calling for the compulsory repatriation of immigrants, but under Griffin the BNP also refrained from openly stating anti-democratic and anti-Semitic sentiments.

It is symbolic that the BNP General Election Manifesto of 2010 was titled *Democracy, Freedom, Culture and Identity*. According to this manifesto, the BNP claimed to be engaged in 'the promotion of the already existing voluntary repatriation scheme', 'Confronting the Islamic Colonisation of Britain', 'Leaving the EU', and 'Renationalising the Welfare State'. On the other hand it also claimed to be promoting 'The Restoration of Our Civil Liberties', which included abandoning the ID card and the new Bill of Rights instead of scrapping the Human Rights Act of 1998, and claimed to be 'Protecting and Enhancing Our Heritage', which included reviving local and county council government and setting up the English Parliament with a pan-British Parliament.

It is important to note that the party tried to change the 'march and grow' tactics into 'election and winning' tactics, although this change was still largely unsuccessful in terms of election results, apart from the European election of 2009.

At the same time, some researchers pointed out that these changes were just superficial and that documents circulated internally in the BNP showed the party still retained anti-Semitic, racist, and anti-democratic values (Richardson, 2011: 38–61). While modernisers in the BNP were advocating a change of strategy, they were not demanding a break from radical nationalism. The aim behind the strategy of 'modernisation' was not to abandon racial nationalism, but rather to distance the BNP from its legacy in the hope of attracting Britons who had not previously supported the extreme right.

In addition, such modernisation was accomplished after studying the 'continental model' provided by Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National (FN). Extreme-right parties have sought to modernise themselves, shed their fascist baggage and, in so doing, acquire political legitimacy and thus electoral support (Macklin, 2011).

A similar feature can be found in the UKIP. Certainly, the UKIP has not been recognised

as a racist party, but it can be seen as a radical-right party.

The UKIP was formed in 1993, just after the United Kingdom signed the Maastricht Treaty. One of the party's core policies since the beginning has been that the UK should leave the European Union, and in the General Election Manifesto of 2010, leaving the EU became a key part of every policy. For example, the UKIP argued that leaving the EU would greatly benefit the UK economically, because significant public expenditures for the EU would be cut and allotted to other areas like the United Kingdom's own health and education.

According to its manifesto, the party's policies concern not only the EU but other policy areas as well. In education, the UKIP promised the creation of new grammar schools, new 11-plus exams for academic as well as occupational education, and a voucher system for parental choice. In health policy, they proposed more private-sector involvement in the NHS, keeping the NHS service free. They demanded that the UK leave the EU but also argued that free trade between European countries was necessary. Thus UKIP policies have been relatively neo-liberal compared to those of the BNP, although both parties are anti-immigration and anti-Europe.

The UKIP attitude toward European issues is very close to that of the majority in opinion polls in Britain. According to Mori-Ipsos, in September 2007, 51% of respondents said the United Kingdom should stay in the EU, and 39% stated the UK should leave. But after the Greek crisis, according to an October 2011 survey, 41% answered that the UK should stay, while 49% said the UK should get out (Mori-Ipsos, 2011).

In immigration, the UKIP calls for more limitations. They have sought to introduce an immediate five-year freeze on immigration for permanent settlement, to end abuse of the UK asylum system, and to expel Islamic extremists (UK Independence Party, 2010). For the UKIP, the most important goal is to leave the EU, rather than to limit immigration. However, UKIP policies on immigration have become very close to the BNP's, because the BNP has avoided advocating biological racism, anti-Semitism, and opposition to democracy.

The UKIP has been popular among Conservative supporters. In fact, several Lords and a MP defected from the Conservatives to the UKIP. One of them was Malcolm Pearson, Baron Pearson of Rannoch, who was the leader of the UKIP from November 2009 to September 2010. However, the best-known figure in the UKIP is Nigel Farage, who was the party's leader from September 2006 to November 2009 and has also served in that position since November 2010. Farage was frequently featured on TV programmes like *Question Time*, *HARDtalk*, and the *Andrew Marr Show*. According to Farage, the Conservative MPs and the Central Office approached UKIP candidates in certain constituencies before the general election of 2001 to get them to withdraw, but he revealed in his autobiography that he had rejected those offers (Farage, 2010: 150-153).

Although the UKIP managed to come in second in the 2009 European Parliament elections, it still won no seats in the 2010 general election. According to Ford et al., the UKIP was able to get more votes in European elections than in general elections because

Europe was a central issue in European elections and because proportional representation was adopted in British elections for the European Parliament in 1999 (Ford et al., 2012).

2.2 Populist radical-right parties in Japan

2.2.1 Mainstream politics stuck in a cul-de-sac

Although some Liberal Democratic Party politicians have made gaffes over nationalist issues, there has been no extreme-right-wing party in post-war Japan. The long-ruling LDP has been a centre-right party, although it has had some radical-right politicians. The LDP also included some war criminals from World War II, but those politicians pursued moderate policies during their post-war careers.

Some populist politicians emerged from a cul-de-sac in recent Japanese politics. Japan suffered from long-term economic recession, divided government, a huge earthquake, and nuclear disaster. The Japanese economy has been in recession for 20 years. Since 2007, no government has survived longer than one year as a result of divided government in both chambers. A huge earthquake hit Tohoku in March 2011, causing a tsunami, which in turn triggered the meltdown of a nuclear reactor. Massive amounts of radioactive material were scattered. Even after this disaster, the government suffered defeat in the House of Councillors, and major bills, including financial bills, were defeated. In these years, whose turbulence recalled that of Weimar Germany, populist politicians began to gather support.

2.2.2 Tokyo

One such figure is Shintaro Ishihara. He has been a governor of Tokyo and, at 80, is now Japan's eldest populist politician. His ideas reflect an older right-wing ideology than do other populist figures. Ishihara had been a LDP politician until he won the election for governor in 1999 as an independent candidate. His stance has been nationalist and xenophobic, and he has committed several gaffes, particularly xenophobic ones. However, this propensity cannot be exaggerated, because his policy aims are focused on attacking bank profits and companies causing air pollution, rather than attacking immigration.

His attitude was also striking concerning the Senkaku Islands issue. Today there are disputes between Japan and other countries concerning three territories: Senkaku, Takeshima, and Chishima. The Japanese government controlled the Senkaku Islands, but since the 1970s China has claimed this territory. Takeshima has been under the control of Korea since 1954, but Japanese fishermen lived there until 60 years ago. Chishima was occupied by the Soviet Union, and later Russia, since the end of World War II. Ishihara has been very aggressive on those issues, particularly concerning the Senkaku Islands. Recently it was revealed that he planned to have Tokyo Prefecture purchase parts of Senkaku from a landowner, but the government was upset to hear this, fearing that Ishihara's aggressive attitude could lead to unexpected disaster. Ishihara initially said the government's attitude was so lukewarm that he had not changed his plans. But he also said that if the government were to get firm on

this issue, he would make concessions. After this revelation, the government made clear its intention to purchase the islands, and eventually did so, while Ishihara kept silent. However, massive protests were sparked in China.

He became a leader of the JRP along with Toru Hashimoto in September 2012.

2.2.3 Osaka

Such populism has also been growing in Osaka, the second-largest city in Japan. Toru Hashimoto, who brought about this populism, is a relatively young lawyer, now 43, but he came to prominence through a television programme that has nothing to do with politics. When he was a popular guest and a comedian of sorts on this programme, he surprised many by standing in the 2008 Osaka governor election and winning it, beating the major parties' candidates. He also ran in the 2011 Osaka mayoral election with the intention of implementing his reform plan. The election for governor was held on the same date, following Hashimoto's resignation, and Ichiro Matusi, Hashimoto's ally, was elected.

He took five notable political stances. First, he proposed a massive decentralisation of the Japanese government. Even if each prefecture government tries to improve health and education, its financial and legal powers are strictly limited by the central government. His alleged aim was to eliminate an over-centralised system and transfer financial and legal resources from the central government to local governments. A special feature of his plan is to divide Osaka City and Prefecture into small wards and subsequently to reintegrate them into a larger city. This larger city would be called Osaka Metropolis (*Osaka Toh*). He thought Osaka Metropolis would make Osaka's administration simpler because the prefecture and the cities under it both governed Osaka. Such a dual governing system is allegedly ineffective because, in many cases, prefecture and city services have overlapped. In addition, Hashimoto called the dual representative system between mayor/governor and council completely inefficient and therefore argued that the number of councillors should be halved.

Hashimoto's second notable position was to attack public workers and trade unions in Osaka. In his opinion, public workers' salaries were too high and the city budget wasted a great deal of money. Since his inauguration, he has cut public spending, particularly the salaries of public workers.

In February 2012, Hashimoto surveyed all city workers about their unions and political activities. The survey asked 22 questions, including, "Did you participate in any activity to support any particular politician?" Hashimoto ordered all Osaka city workers to fill out the questionnaires, including their names, and submit them to the mayor as part of their duties. Any worker who did not comply faced a penalty.

Hashimoto's action stirred controversy. Some criticised the mayor's action as a violation of Article 19 of the constitution, guaranteeing freedom of thought and conscience; Article 28, providing for the right of workers to organise; and Clause 3, Article 7 of the Labour Union Act, which bans employers from controlling and interfering with unions. In the

end, the Osaka City Authority (OCA) suspended its analysis of the questionnaires after the Osaka Prefectural Labour Relations Commission recommended that the survey be called off (*Mainichi*, 5 March 2012).

It was widely recognised that the main targets of his questionnaires were rebellious public workers. In Osaka, some refused to pay homage to the national flag and anthem. After the devastation of World War II, many teachers and workers in Japan refused to sing the national anthem, which they regarded as a wartime custom. The relatively conservative Ministry of Education urged teachers to sing the anthem, but punishment for non-compliance remained relatively light. Hashimoto often argued that those who refused to sing the national anthem should leave the OCA.

In order to suppress these public workers, Hashimoto let the bill pass in the city council and enacted a Public Workers Basic Local Act (*ShokuinJourei*) in which every worker would be ranked. As a result, workers at the bottom would be punished or sacked. It was obvious that rebellious workers would be targets of the Local Act.

Furthermore he ordered his staff to search city workers for tattoos (*Irezumi*), because he thought tattoos might frighten people, which would be incompatible with the role of public workers. However, when the staff inspected public workers, they also searched for tattoos hidden under people's clothes. Workers who refused this inspection were to be subjected to tough penalties. Critics argued that such an investigation had nothing to do with public business and violated workers' privacy. In Japan, tattoos are widely recognised as symbols of gangs (*yakuza*), but nowadays some youngsters also sport tattoos. This investigation obviously went too far, although Hashimoto might have thought that attacking a minority would help rally his supporters.

Japanese trade unions had a far more moderate track record than those in Europe. Nevertheless, Hashimoto attacked them, saying public workers and their trade unions were preventing reform in the public sector and placing Japan on the edge of decline. In addition, parts of the electorate enthusiastically supported such attacks. According to a newspaper survey, 79 per cent of respondents agreed with Hashimoto's 'investigating not just political and union activities but also tattoos on city workers'. Only 17 per cent disagreed (*Yomiuri Shinbun*, 18 June 2012).

Hashimoto's third important policy preference was to encourage competition in all policy areas, particularly education. He thought competition between schools should be introduced in secondary education; he also let the Education Basic Local Act (*KyouikuKihonJourei*) be passed in the city council. The aim of the Local Act is to adopt a school-choice system for 12-year-old pupils. Schools not meeting their quota for three consecutive years would be closed or merged with another. These experiments were similar to the British system since the Education Reform Act of 1988. School choice in secondary education is similar to Thatcherite reform in the 1980s, and the shutdown of failing schools is similar to Fresh Start under the Blair government, although it is still unclear whether Hashimoto's inspiration

stemmed from Thatcherite and Blairite reforms. In addition, teachers as well as other public workers must be ranked in a league table; if they are ranked at the bottom, they will face severe penalties, including dismissal. Hashimoto has been harsh to culture and arts outside the core areas of education. Under him, the OCA sharply reduced the budget for culture and arts, such as orchestra and Japanese traditional arts. In his opinion, if orchestra and the traditional arts are valuable, they can stand on their own feet in the marketplace without any public funds.

Hashimoto's fourth important position is political intervention in education. He criticised the local educational committee (LEC), the equivalent of the local education authority in Britain, because the governor and mayor could not influence the LEC after their appointments. According to the aforementioned Education Basic Local Act, the governor/mayor can decide on educational targets and can sack members of the LEC. Critics also pointed out that this local act violated the Local Education Administrative Act, which stipulated the independence of the LEC. The ORA also proposed the abolition of the LEC itself in its latest plan (*Ishin-no-Kai*, 2012).

Hashimoto's fifth important position is 'decisionist politics'. This was when a leadership asserted the right to make the ultimate decision after an election, even when such a decision would repress the minority. His stress on decisionist politics suggested that he favoured 'dictatorship'. On 30 June 2011, Hashimoto said, 'the most important thing in Japanese politics is dictatorship'. This remark stirred great controversy, but at the same time, he also said 'the council to check, the electorate to elect, and the media. Politics has to dictate in this balance among them' (*Asahi Shinbun*, 1 July 2011). Thus it should be understood that he was merely referring to a strong leadership based on checks and balances among council, electorate, and the media.

Even though he was not referring to a Nazi-style dictatorship, his idea was still controversial because he obviously misunderstood presidential democracy as a system in which the president decides everything. He and the ORA advocated the direct election of the prime minister. He obviously thought the Diet or council should follow an elected leader. Thus he failed to understand the relationship between mayor and council. He also thought that the bicameral system was the cause of 'divided government'. That is why he thought some articles of the constitution concerning the Diet system must be amended, and if that was not easy, local authorities needed to be given enough power to make decisions.

2.2.4 Nagoya

The third example is Nagoya, Japan's third-largest city. Takashi Kawamura, the former Diet member and former Democrat, won the mayoral election in 2009. He was well-known as a maverick in the Democratic Party. After his inauguration as mayor, he set up a new local party called Tax Cut Japan, although this party existed only in Nagoya. Kawamura proposed cutting local taxes and councillor's salaries in half. However, the local bills for

these policies were rejected by the city council, and then his supporters started a petition to recall the council. This petition needed the signatures of approximately one-third of the electorate and succeeded in getting more, thus triggering a recall referendum. Then the mayor himself announced he would resign to run in the mayoral election again, on the same date as the referendum. The periodical governor election in Aichi, where Nagoya was located, would be also held on the same date. Three kinds of elections, therefore, were held on the same polling date: 6 February 2011. In this election for governor Hideaki Omura, Kawamura's ally, stood. Kawamura and Omura won, and voters chose to recall the council.

However, Kawamura has never seen eye-to-eye with other populists. Although Governor Omura set up *Chukyo Ishin-no-Kai* (*Chukyo branch of the JRP*) to cooperate with Hashimoto, Kawamura criticised this move.

Table 1. Support for Hashimoto by employment status under 60 years of age

	strong supporter	weak supporter	non-supporter
self-employed	43	35	22
technical staff	43	33	24
administrative staff	67	17	16
full-time workers	60	30	10
temporary workers or unemployed	42	34	24

Source: Matsutani 2012.

Table 2. Support for Hashimoto by class identity

	strong supporter	weak supporter	non-supporter
Lower class	43	32	25
Lower-middle class	48	32	20
Upper-middle and upper class	57	28	15

Source: Matsutani 2012.

2.3 Who voted for the populists?

There has been some discussion concerning who voted for Hashimoto or other populists. According to a survey conducted just after Osaka's 2011 mayoral election, Hashimoto's strongest support resided among voters in their 60s, although some journalists presumed that the populists' base consisted of young people and underclass. Table 1 shows that the strongest supporters of Hashimoto were full-time white-collar workers rather than underclass (temporary workers or unemployed). Table 2 also shows that the majority of the upper-middle and upper classes strongly support Hashimoto. Interestingly, among his supporters a decisive majority agreed with neo-liberal values (Matsutani, 2012). This contrasts sharply with European examples, in which populists are more anti-immigrant or anti-EU than neo-liberal. Based on the survey findings, the populist upsurges are explained as a reflection of

the people's opinion.

3. Rhetorical features of populists in both countries

3.1 Definition of populism

There have been many studies of populism, and the number has increased in recent years, particularly in Japan. However, despite many efforts to define populism, it is still difficult to do so.

Margaret Canovan explained that populism had two common characteristics: appeal to the people and anti-elitism. She elaborated on the meaning of anti-elitism:

Where (as in modern Western democratic countries) elite political culture is strongly imbued with liberal values of individualism, internationalism, multiculturalism, permissiveness and belief in progress, populism is bound to involve more or less resistance to these, and can at times amount to a relatively coherent alternative world-view (Canovan, 1999).

Paul Taggart has defined populism based on six characteristics: being hostile to representative politics, having a heartland, lacking core values, reacting to a sense of crisis, and being self-limiting and chameleonic (Taggart, 2000). More recently, CasMudde has developed a definition of populism that emphasises two aspects – the distinction between elites and masses, and the idea of a general will (Mudde, 2004). Mudde was defining recent phenomena as radical-right populism.

In addition, Toru Yoshida defines Japanese populism as a 'charismatic style to seek reform, appealing to people using inflammatory rhetoric' (Yoshida, 2011: 14).

Discussions of populism, as opposed to the extreme right wing, sometimes include the left-wing movement. For example, the *Narodoniki* in Tsarist Russia has been identified as a populist movement (Mudde 2002: 215), and recently Occupy Wall Street and Occupy LSX were recognised as populist movements by some politicians and journalists (Fisher, 2011).

This paper does not attempt to define populism precisely. Therefore it is enough to summarise three indispensable elements of populism: appeal to the people, anti-liberal values, and pejorative meaning.

3.2 Not extreme-right but populist radical-right discourses

The UKIP, the BNP, and the JRP tried to escape from extremism, as explained above. In both countries these groups fell into the category of populism rather than extremism.

Of course, several fringe groups lead street protests in Britain and Japan. For example, the England Defence League in Britain and the Citizens against Special Privileges of Zainichi (*Zaitoku-Kai*) in Japan are well-known. However, they are not political parties but street

activists. The CASPZ has sometimes rushed into North Korean schools, or Chinese and Korean shops with megaphones to protest allegedly unlawful actions. However, they do not have special links to any political parties.

Furthermore, populists' positions on some issues were actually left-wing. For example, Hashimoto proposed a no-nuclear-plant policy as mayor of Osaka. After a big earthquake caused a nuclear accident in the Fukushima plant of the Tokyo Electric Power Company, he severely criticised the dishonesty of the power company in order to prevent the reactivation of the Oi plant near Osaka. However, it must also be pointed out that his anti-nuclear-plant policy ended up being stuck in the middle. Although the anti-nuclear principle is retained in the final plan of Osaka Restoration Association 8 Policies (*Ishin-Hassaku*), he finally accepted the reactivation of the Oi plant because of his concerns about electricity shortages. The ORA led by Hashimoto is the predecessor to the JRP.

Objection to nuclear plants has been a big issue for the left wing since 1945. The Social Democratic Party, successor to the Socialist Party in Japan, and its allies have long opposed the nuclear-plant policy implemented by the LDP government. Hashimoto and the ORA have been shifting to an anti-nuclear stance despite the fact that they are obviously right-wing in other policy areas.

It should also be noted that both the UKIP and the BNP opposed British military intervention in other countries, such as in Afghanistan and Iraq. These attitudes were far from right-wing.

3.3 Synergy between populism and blame avoidance

Even if such populists did not control the national government, their influence has been enormous. Not only have the UKIP and BNP been featured on many TV programs, but their anti-immigration stance and Europhobia have also been a major political issue. In addition, politicians in major parties frequently referred to these issues. In Japan the JRP and Tax Cut Japan proposed halving politicians' salaries and reducing the number of Diet members or councillors, but major party politicians are gradually adopting the same policies.

This phenomenon can be understood as the result of blame avoidance. Blame avoidance by politicians and bureaucrats has frequently been explained by political-science scholars. Recently Christopher Hood stated that blame avoidance could be divided into three categories: presentational strategies, agency strategies, and policy strategies (Hood, 2011: 18).

Furthermore, Kent Weaver identified eight strategies of blame avoidance: limit the agenda; redefine the issue; throw good money after bad: pass the buck; find a scapegoat; jump on the bandwagon; circle the wagon; and stop me before I kill again.

Both scholars think that incumbent politicians and bureaucrats are inclined to engage in blame avoidance rather than claiming credit. This is 'negativity bias'. In other words, generally speaking, incumbent politicians and bureaucrats are not willing to take risks (Weaver, 1986: 71–398).

However, both scholars were writing about incumbent politicians and bureaucrats. On the other hand, not all politicians need to employ ‘negativity bias’, because relatively small opposition parties do not have any responsibilities to the current government. If anything, those opposition parties can propose new issues, and they cannot appeal to the electorate without them.

That is why those opposition parties tend to become populists by tackling new issues not addressed by the main parties, unless those opposition parties are falling into extremist ideology. Populists criticise the government on issues – immigration, Europe, public workers – that are difficult for the government to step in and handle. The populists’ rapid growth has become a threat to the government parties. Therefore, while populists themselves might still be limited by the few votes they receive, government parties are increasingly inclined to make populist claims.

3.4 Populist discourse infecting mainstream politicians

An interesting study on print media recently pointed out that mainstream or government parties’ attitudes were frequently portrayed as populist (Bale et al., 2011). According to them, Gordon Brown, the Labour Party, and the Conservative Party were most frequently referred to as populists during the periods surveyed (Table 3). Just after the SNP’s victory in the Glasgow East by-election, the SNP and its leader, Alex Salmond, were also often depicted as populist. Furthermore, Barack Obama, John McCain, and Hugo Chavez were frequently portrayed as populists by the British print media.

Moreover, the issues on which these politicians were called populist ranged widely. They were portrayed as populist for relatively right-wing stances like being anti-immigration, pro-market, and pro-tax cuts, while they were also portrayed as populist for relatively left-wing stances like being anti-Wall Street, against the war in Iraq, and for raising taxes on the wealthy. For every kind of politician, populist discourses were frequently used, while these examples necessarily contained xenophobic or anti-immigrant contexts.

In several cases, major politicians are making statements with virtually the same content as the UKIP or the BNP. For example, David Cameron stated in his speech:

Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream. We’ve failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong. We’ve even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run completely counter to our values. (Cameron, 2011)

Table 3: Political actors labelled ‘populist’ at least three times

October-December 2007			July-September 2008		
Actor	Country	#	Actor	Country	#
Jacob Zuma	South Africa	23	John McCain	United States	26
Gordon Brown	United Kingdom	20	Barack Obama	United States	14
Conservative Party	United Kingdom	16	Labour Government	United Kingdom	11
Hugo Chavez	Venezuela	12	Labour Party	United Kingdom	10
Christoph Blocher	Switzerland	9	Jacob Zuma	South Africa	9
Scottish Nat. Party	United Kingdom	8	Conservative Party	United Kingdom	8
John Edwards	United States	8	Sarah Palin	United States	8
Zulfikar Ali Bhutto	Pakistan	7	Liberal Democrats	United Kingdom	6
Mike Huckabee	United States	7	Gordon Brown	United Kingdom	5
Thaksin Shinawatra	Thailand	6	Alex Salmond	United Kingdom	5
Nestor Kirchner	Argentina	6	Scottish Nat. Party	United Kingdom	5
Labour Party	United Kingdom	6	Joerg Haider	Austria	4
Alistair Darling	United Kingdom	5	FPO	Austria	4
David Cameron	United Kingdom	4	David Cameron	United Kingdom	3
M. Ahmadinejad	Iran	4	AK Party	Turkey	3
John Howard	Australia	4	Nicolas Sarkozy	France	3
Labour Government	United Kingdom	4	SNP Government	United Kingdom	3
Christina Kirchner	Argentina	4	Alan Johnson	United Kingdom	3
Evo Morales	Bolivia	3	Thaksin Shinawatra	Thailand	3
Rafael Correa	Ecuador	3			
Self-Defence Party	Poland	3			
Silvio Berlusconi	Italy	3			

Source: Bale et al. 2011: 119

In his speech, although he did not advocate anti-immigration policies, he criticised a multiculturalism in which racial and religious minorities would retain their way of life. Thus David Cameron implicitly advocated integrating racial and religious minorities into British society by language or other customs.

Labour Party policies show the same tendency. In 2002, Labour Home Secretary David Blunkett refused to apologise after suggesting that asylum-seekers were ‘swamping’ British schools. In 2006, Labour MP Jack Straw sparked debate after suggesting Muslim women who covered their faces with veils were having a negative impact on community relations. Finally, in 2007 Prime Minister Gordon Brown pledged ‘British jobs for British workers’ (Goodwin, 2011: 57).

Some researchers pointed out that the Labour Party backed a sort of ‘multiculturalism’ in the 1990s, but after terrorist attacks in 2001 and 2005, the Blair government shifted from

multiculturalism to 'integration'. In its definition of 'integration', the government stressed civic duty rather than ethnic identity. For example, at a speech to the Commonwealth Club in February 2007, Gordon Brown declared that 'we are a country united not so much by race or ethnicity but by shared values that have shaped shared institutions'. In this speech, Brown demanded that the people, including immigrants, retain the British way of life.

However, such a stance became much closer to the BNP attitude than before. Immigrants' civic integration into British society is written even in the BNP General Election Manifesto:

The BNP recognises the right of legally settled and law-abiding minorities to remain in the UK and enjoy the full protection of the law, on the understanding that the indigenous population of Britain has the right to remain the majority population of our nation (BNP, 2010).

In this way, the attitudes of major parties have grown much closer to those of the populist parties in Britain in recent years. These changes have been prompted by populist parties' discourses.

In addition, populist discourses are influential because public opinion is inclined to be similar. According to recent polls, anti-immigration sentiment is a sort of 'silent majority' attitude, which shows that there is latent support for the BNP (Ford, 2010; John and Margetts, 2009). Therefore, it can be argued that pressures by populist discourse and public opinion led to blame avoidance by major parties.

The same phenomenon can be pointed to in Japan's case. Responding to criticism of his plans to cut public spending and his public-worker bashing, Toru Hashimoto advocated 'decisionist politics' as follows:

Though we argue thoroughly, we must finally decide. The more varied that values are, the more strongly we need a decision-making system. That is 'decisionist democracy'. The elected leader is given the power to decide. That is an election, I think (*Asahi Shinbun*, 12 February 2012).

Just five months later, when a controversial consumer-tax-increase plan was released, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda said:

The Noda government does not avoid deciding; it accomplishes 'decisionist politics' in the proper time (*Asahi Shinbun*, 27 July 2012).

4. Conclusion: Populists take the hindmost

As seen above, a synergy can be identified between populists' actions and blame avoidance by major parties.

Among the many strategies of blame avoidance, a scapegoat strategy is used most frequently in both countries, although the targets are different: immigrants and the EU in Britain, and public workers' trade unions in Japan. In both countries, governments have suffered from the economic downturn. In these circumstances scapegoats were necessary to protect majority's benefits. It can thus be argued that immigrants in Britain and public workers' trade unions in Japan are prone to become scapegoats.

In this way, populism is sometimes identified as anti-liberal, and that is why the term is used in a pejorative way; it is part of democracy but goes against human rights.

As Joseph Schumpeter argued, if democracy were a kind of competition, scapegoats would be inevitable, and they have always been hindmost in history. Insofar as demonizing others is the product of human imagination, it is inevitable in society. Likewise, populists are inevitable in a democracy.

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