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To what extent has populism infiltrated the party system in the United

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Abstract

Populism has become a firm facet of European and indeed Western politics. Previously, populism's role in UK politics has been somewhat overlooked compared to other European counterparts. As such, using qualitative political discourse analysis, this dissertation seeks to assess the extent of populism's infiltration into the UK party system, focusing on three parties in particular: the Labour Party, the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). Drawing on existing academic literature on populism as a conceptual framework, this dissertation will assess the extent to which each party adheres to the central tenants of populism. A comparison of the three parties will then be made, highlighting the far-reaching grasp which populism holds within the UK party system. Populism's position within the UK party system will then be compared with the European context, illuminating similarities between the UK parties and other European parties but also elucidating a 'British' development of populism.

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1. Introduction

Populism has become a prominent political phenomenon across Europe particularly on the far right with parties like National Front (FN) in France, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), the Lega Nord in Italy and the Finns Party (PS) in Finland gaining substantial electoral victories in national and European elections. The recent rise of Donald Trump indicates that populism has in fact become a firm feature of Western politics in general. Despite the wide acknowledgement of populism's grip over European politics, the concept of populism itself is one still fraught with insecurity and contestation with numerous and varied characterisations of the term existing in current literature. Nonetheless, there appears to be a justification for populism as a 'thin-centred ideology' (Mudde, 2004: 544) with at least three notable characteristics.

Across continental Europe populism has arguably played a significant role in national politics for some time. However, for decades populism failed to truly establish itself within the United Kingdom. Parties like the British National Party (BNP) failed to gain any firm political ground in the UK and the infamy of its policies regarding race relations ultimately resulted in public rejection. Yet, in recent years populism appears to have experienced a substantial rise in UK politics with anti-

establishment rhetoric and mistrust of the political elite featuring heavily in national debate. Indeed the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), hailed as a right wing populist party by the likes of Taggart (2012) and Van Kessel (2013), has gained increasing electoral success in the last decade and campaigns primarily on an anti-European, anti-establishment and an anti-immigration platform. Parties traditionally seen as 'mainstream', such as the Labour Party, have adapted party policy and employed populist rhetoric in order to counter against the electoral attack of the populist parties and in doing so have gradually inducted populism deeper and deeper into national sentiment.

Therefore, this dissertation aims to explore the existing literature on populism - its regularities and fundamental principles - and to examine to what extent populism has infiltrated the party political system within the United Kingdom. Whilst some research does exist which highlights populism's role in British politics (Abedi and Lundberg; 2009; Clark *et al*., 2008; Gifford, 2015; Gruber & Bale, 2014), there is little research into populism's recent permeation into UK party politics and as such this dissertation will add to the current literature on populism within the party system. First, the definition(s) and fundamental characteristics of populism, as articulated in previous academic research, will be elucidated. The rhetorical style and language of populism will be revealed, and the status of populism as an adversary of democracy (Urbinati, 1998) will be explored and the cleavages in which populism emerges within democracy will be illuminated. This clear outline of

populism and the explication of its various facets will allow for an examination of populism's grasp and power within UK political parties. The populist underpinnings of several parties, namely the Scottish National Party, UKIP and the Labour Party, will be analysed in order to assess the extent of populism within the mainstream, establishment politics of the UK.

2. The Three Cases

The selection of the three party case studies, Labour, SNP and UKIP aims to show the infiltration of populism into both the political left and right of British politics, despite the different typologies of each party. The Labour party was chosen as it is the second oldest British political party and as of July 2016 claims 515,000 members (Parliament.uk) making it the largest party in the country in regards to membership. This dissertation aims to assess the extent of populism within mainstream, establishment parties and so Labour stands as an appropriate case study. The Conservative party was not chosen, as although it represents the oldest party in the UK, its position as the governing party within the country arguably makes it less likely to engage with populism and the selection of UKIP as a case study accounts for a party on the political right of British politics. Also, the party has not experienced the surges in membership and support as the selected parties.

The SNP represents an establishment party in that it has been participating in Westminster elections and has achieved continuous parliamentary representation since 1967. The party aligns with mainstream socialist-democratic traditions and forms the government in Scotland. As of July 2016, the SNP have a membership of 120,000, making them the third largest party in the UK (Parliament.uk). The choice of SNP once again then can reveal the extent to which populism has infiltrated one of the biggest, mainstream political parties in the UK and highlights devolutions impact on populism.

Although not an 'establishment' party in the same sense as Labour and the SNP, in that it holds only one seat in Westminster, UKIP received the third highest vote share in the 2015 general election and won the European elections in 2014 emerging with 27.49% of the vote (BBC, May 2014). The party has been a firm feature of UK politics since the early 2000s when it garnered increasing support in European elections, using an anti-European platform. In recent years, its populist stance has become increasingly interwoven with its Euroscepticism. Due to UKIPs growing popularity, as demonstrated in 2015, and its influence over the 2016 European Referendum, the selection of the party as a case study will highlight the extent of populism within a recently successful party and a party who is increasingly connected with mainstream UK politics.

3. Populism as an Ideology

Numerous authors have contributed to the academic literature on populism and attempted to pinpoint its fundamental foundations. As Mudde states, many of the interpretations of populism have been 'highly charged and negative' (2004: 542). Some have hailed it as an intrinsic threat to liberal democracy (Rosanvallon, 2008), whilst others have cited it as a natural consequence of the tensions at the very core of democracy (Canovan, 1999). Regardless of this, what is clear is that populism has become a prominent staple within contemporary politics and as such numerous works exist which act to outline its definitions and components.

This dissertation will continue with the outline of populism as 'thin-centred ideology' which can be combined with other ideologies such as nationalism or socialism (Mudde, 2004: 545). It is in this way in which populism can easily be found on either the left or right of the political spectrum with the nature of populism changing depending on the ideology with which it is aligned or the target audience whom it is aimed towards. Perhaps the most commonly recognised feature of populism is the antagonistic relationship which is cemented between the establishment, often encapsulated as the 'corrupt elite', and the 'ordinary people'. Populism tends to espouse a message in which the volonté générale (general will) of the ordinary people is not being met by the political class who are said to be out of touch with everyday life

(Mudde, 2004: 543). Indeed, many have argued that populism feeds upon the distrust the people feel towards the elite and particularly 'politicians who have championed cosmopolitanism at the expense of solidarity with significant parts of their own country' (Calhoun, 2016: 52).

In addition to the anti-establishment sentiment of populism and populist parties, the creation of a homogenised people is another widely acknowledged component of the ideology. As Taggart notes 'populists tend to identify themselves with a "heartland" that represents an idealised conception of the community they serve' (2004: 274) and 'the people' that are placed in opposition to the corrupt elite are no more than the populace of this heartland. As such, once again, populism can assert itself on either the left or the right of the political spectrum depending on the heartland which they are trying to mobilise. The heartland often represents an idealised time which has been lost but which is capable of being revitalised (Taggart, 2004: 274). In drawing on national sentiment or traditional societal structures, populism can often capture the emotional nostalgia of the heartland and use this to highlight the corruption of the present as compared to the idealised past; once again reinforcing anti-elite, anti-establishment feelings. This appeal to a homogenised, unitary people is often exclusionary in that there is a core heartland which must be protected from the corruption and failings of establishment politics and additionally from outsiders of the heartland. Right wing populists often evoke anti-establishment rhetoric whilst also bringing forth issues of immigration, placing not

only elites as adversaries of 'the people' but also migrants. The heartland is absolutely central to populism, with populists often claiming to speak directly for ordinary people and seeking to offer 'immediate responses to the "people's will"' (Pinelli, 2011: 11). This has led some to argue that populists often work to introduce more direct forms of democracy such as referenda (Canovan 2004; Rooduijn 2014; Taggart, 2000). Whilst populists do claim to represent the direct will of the people, which they claim has been ignored by the often murky complexities of establishment politics, there is not an overwhelming, coherent call within populism itself to transform existing forms of democracy.

It has also been noted by various scholars that populism often relies heavily upon the charisma of political leaders (Betz, 2002: 210; McDonnel, 2015: 719). In fitting with the anti-establishment focus of populism, populist leaders often advocate themselves as rogue outsiders of the political elite who are able to not only represent but understand the needs of desires of 'the people'. They hold 'direct, unmediated access to the people's grievances', (Kriesi, 2014: 363) and are not regulated by the robotic political correctness of the liberal elites. Indeed, it is often the charm and magnetism of the leader who leads the party to electoral success. Many have highlighted the problems that populist parties face when changing leader due to such parties' reliance upon the personality of its figurehead. As McDonnel (2015) notes, the leaders charisma and appeal to the followers within his own party is as

important as his appeal to his heartland and that those seen as having the highest levels of charisma are also considered essential to the party's continued success and existence. It is the personality and rhetorical excellence of the likes of populist leaders Marine Le Pen and Berlusconi which have often been hailed as the explanation to their parties electoral success. The populist leader is established as an outside challenger who retains direct links with 'the people' and also with the party's grassroots (Kriesi, 2014: 363). Yet, it is not always the case that a populist leader exudes an innate charisma whilst many non-populist leaders convey great magnetism and personality. Therefore, whilst personal charisma is a common and widely recognised feature of populism, it is not necessarily a concrete characteristic of populism.

4.Peripheral   Features   of   Populism

As noted, the academic literature on populism is varied and somewhat disjointed, representing the often aloof nature of populism itself. Other features have been recognised as common to the populist ideology such as the non-conforming structure of populist parties as compared to mainstream parties and also the imminent sense of crisis utilised by populists. In terms of structure, as afore mentioned, populist parties can often be characterised through their highly centralised nature with a charismatic leader forming an essential part of the parties success (Taggart, 2000: 100-103). Moreover, Rooduijn claims that populist

parties are often formed from a very 'loosely mediated relationship between leaders and followers' and as such reject traditional party structures (2014: 577). However, various authors have highlighted the challenges that populist parties face when confronted with electoral success. When populism begins to appeal to the voting population, parties who rely on the populist anti-establishment agenda often find themselves having to move organisationally closer to parties of the establishment, whom they inherently contest. Populist parties and populism itself thus faces a dilemma; whilst it highlights 'themes of grassroots democracy and popular sovereignty,' as it becomes more accepted and attractive to a wider 'heartland', it often has to conform to a broader and long-term political agenda, and enter a 'path of institutionalism' (Abedi and Lundberg, 2009: 78-79). This can include more structural rigidness and can also be witnessed in a move towards more 'mainstream' policy lines. A smooth transition from outside challenger to institutionalised party is crucial to the parties continued existence and this is something which will be highlighted in the UKIP. However, it must be noted that the success of populist parties like Le Pen's *Front National* demonstrates that populism can thrive when following more regimented organisational forms.

In regards to nurturing a sense of crisis, populism often espouses that something or someone is threatening the cultural identity, the economic security or political authority of 'the people'. Taggart has noted that 'populism is not the politics of the stable, ordered polity but comes as

an accompaniment to change, crisis and challenge' (2004: 275). Indeed national or global challenges such as terrorism or severe financial instability allow populists to nurture a pressing sense of crisis requiring immediate action from the heartland. Consequently, populists, through their utilisation of moments of crisis, or at least illusions of crisis, can strengthen the call for change to the failed workings of the establishment which they claim is failing to protect the 'ordinary people' from imminent threat. Societal groups who are most at risk of income and employment loss, or those whose traditional values or social status are threatened, 'disproportionately support radical right wing parties' (Swank & Betz, 2003: 216). Immediately after the terrorist attacks on Paris in November 2015, Le Pen's National Front achieved around 28% of the vote in the 2015 local elections, compared to only 11% in 2010, and additionally received the highest votes in six out of the thirteen regions (The Guardian, 2015). It was reported that the 'refugee *crisis*' was hailed as the major reason for the populist FPÖ's success in the 2015 regional elections in Austria with the party winning 30.4% of the vote, compared to 15.3% in 2009 (The Telegraph, 2015). Therefore, although an evocation of immediate crisis is not widely credited as a fundamental characteristic of populism, there does appear to be a clear link between supports for populism/the appeal of populism and moments or feelings of crisis and threat.

5. Populist Rhetoric and Style

Whilst the concept of populism as a 'thin-centred ideology' holds some popularity in academic literature, it is recognised that populist rhetoric is used widely by political actors who do not wholly subscribe to populism itself as an ideological foundation. Unsurprisingly much of the rhetoric follows an 'us' versus 'them' theme and is 'typically confrontational in style' (Canovan, 2004: 242). Populist rhetoric places itself on the side of 'the people' and seeks to galvanise a common set of values, beliefs and symbols which can advance the interests of such collective subjects' (Howarth, 2008: 181) and it is in this way in which populism finds its heartland. The establishment and corrupt elite are viewed as inherently bad whilst the views of the people are heralded as inherently good and rational with populist actors often claiming to champion the 'common sense' of the ordinary man. The elite are often accused of being trapped in a liberal, cosmopolitan bubble without any understanding of the 'real world.' Thus populist rhetoric taps into the 'resentment of urban elites who prided themselves on their cosmopolitan sophistication and made clear they regarded their less cosmopolitan countrymen as backward' (Calhoun, 2016: 54).

Importantly, the establishment is not the sole adversary of the common sense and general will of the people. As Canovan states, populist rhetoric and style is an 'appeal to our people, often in the sense of our

ethnic kith and kin' (1999: 5). Populism's characteristic of charismatic leadership heightens the rhetorical success of the populist message. As mentioned above the positioning of the leader as a rogue outsider to the establishment is achieved through the antagonistic and divisive rhetoric of populism. The views of experts are frequently discounted and ridiculed and instead populist rhetoric repeatedly attributes blame 'using a highly emotionalised style' by drawing on the fear and antipathy which people feel towards the political class (Hameleers *et al*., 2016: 2). The rhetorical appeal to emotion, as compared to logic, allows populists to proffer simple solutions to rather complex political issues with a single focus often being hailed as the answer to a multiplicity of political and cultural grievances. Canovan highlights the tabloid style of populist communication, which members of the establishment demonstrate when adopting populist tactics (1999: 5). Such simple and direct communication does not therefore cement a politician as populist but merely demonstrates the malleability of populist rhetoric with it featuring in the language of the political left and right.

Much of the rhetorical appeal of populism rests upon a 'disregard for "appropriate" ways of acting in the political realm (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014: 392). Controversial topics are brought to the forefront and the politically liberal conceptions of global issues are challenged. Across Europe much of the populist discourse focuses on issues of migration with right wing populist parties confronting the concerns of people in regards to the free movement of people. Increasingly this seems to be a

major concern which dominates the electoral success of parties nationally and at the European level. Populist rhetoric and communication style challenges the status quo of mainstream politics 'with expert knowledge being dismissed in the face of valorisation of "everyday experience" (Moffitt & Tormey: 393). The style is one which appeals directly to the common sense of the people and consequently takes on a more familiar tone in comparison to the technocratic language of the establishment actors.

6. Populism as an Adversary of Democracy

Across Europe, as various populist parties and movements gain mass support and populism solidifies itself as an undeniably powerful force within twenty-first century politics, a growing concern mounts as to the state of democracy (Pasquino, 2008; Urbinati, 1998). The attack on mainstream politics, the dismissal of expert opinion and the 'post truth' state of some populist rhetoric, particularly that on the right, has led many like Noam Chomsky to be critical of populism and its potential outcomes. However, others have claimed populism to be a consequence of the tension of democracy itself rather than an external threat to democracy (Canovan, 1999; Pinelli 2011: 12).

The conflicting nature of constitutional democracy, where a system exists which ensures peace and stability but where that system is meant

to represent the people and is elected by that people, provides the cleavage in which populist tensions flow. Canovan elucidates this as the 'two faces of democracy' in which one pragmatic face (systematic rule of law) and a redemptive face ('*vox populi vox dei*') stand in opposition to one another but share an interdependent relationship (1999: 9-13). The redemptive face of democracy advocates a reliance on popular power and plebiscitary action, whilst the pragmatic face advocates a governmental and institutional form of democracy which aims to resolve the conflict of mass political communication. Populism is nurtured when the pragmatic face of democracy fails to represent or adhere to the redemptive, popular face. As Pinelli argues 'party failings, the decline of political participation ... appear among the current factors of the populist challenge' (2011: 6) with the governmental and institutional forms of democracy failing to resonate with different sectors in society. That is not to say that the pragmatic face should be held hostage by the redemptive, but rather that 'pragmatism without the redemptive impulse is a recipe for corruption' and that when the systematic and overly bureaucratic nature of politics is disproportionately followed, populists tend to emerge from this deficit 'promising in place of the dirty world of party manoeuvring the shining ideal of democracy renewed' (Canovan, 1999: 11).

In an increasingly globalised world, the pragmatic faces of individual democracies in the West have gradually become more alike and more cosmopolitan notions of governance have been adopted by institutions

and parliaments. Arguably then, the 'increasing convergence among the protagonists of the political system once representing ideologies and social classes ... compose before the electors the image of a 'political class' distant from their interests and values' and this seems to strengthen the popularity of populism (Pinelli, 2011: 7). The redemptive face becomes increasingly disgruntled with its pragmatic opponent who has become so far removed from the popular will and consequently the very democratic legitimacy of establishment democracy is challenged. Additionally, the increasing prevalence of non-majoritarian institutions with powers which override that of national parliament reinforce the notion that the redemptive face of democracy is eroding. Institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank which are capable of over-ruling the democratic vote of a national people, as seen with Greece, reduce the legitimacy of a liberal democracy and reinforce populism's call for a more direct and anti-establishment system of governance.

So should populism be viewed as the adversary of democracy? Some have claimed that populism highlights the inevitable tensions and 'ambiguity' of democracy (Canovan, 1999). However, this does not necessarily equate to a defeat of democracy altogether by populism. Indeed, some have argued that far from attempting to entirely alter representative democracy, populist parties 'regularly participate in elections and accept the rule of the representative system' (Pinelli, 2011: 11). Whilst the populist ideology elucidates and enforces the

agonistic relationship between 'the people' and the establishment, beyond such rhetoric, most populist actors aim to obtain a majority of votes within parliamentary elections. O'Brien claims that although facing numerous challenges 'democracy as a form of governance is most able to address the competing and conflicting demands entailed (2015: 345). Populism may be the phenomenon which fills the void between the pragmatic and redemptive faces of democracy, but is not yet the adversary to democracy's reigning title.

7. Why Focus on the UK?

As noted by some researchers (Baggini, 2013), populism had previously failed to inject itself into British politics when compared with her European counterparts, particularly in regards to right-wing populist parties. As a result, although research has indeed been carried out focusing on UK populism, little analysis has been undertaken as to populism's prevalence within the party system itself. Therefore, given the theoretical framework detailed above, one must assess whether the outlined characteristics of populism are present within the selected parties. The expected outcome is that populism's grasp within UK politics will be far more far-reaching than has been seen in the past and more severe than perhaps expected, with populism appearing not just on one side of the political spectrum but rather across the political landscape.

8. The United Kingdom Context

As mentioned above, until recently populist parties had failed to gain any solid ground in the UK with parties like the BNP and Respect experiencing little success at the ballot box in national elections. Although the BNP sits firmly on the far right, being hailed as a dangerously nationalistic party with racist and xenophobic tendencies, whereas Respect sits solidly on the socialist left, some have illuminated the roots of populism which they both share, (Clark *et al*., 2008: 524). In particular both parties' 'literature are replete with references to the failings of the British political class' and both display the 'chameleon-like aspects of populism depending upon the environment' (Clark *et al*., 2008: 529). However, their populist message failed to resonate with the British public with the BNP failing to ever gain a seat at Westminster and Respect only ever gaining one seat in 2005 (BBC, May 2005).

Nevertheless, certain indicators point to an increasing distrust of the UK government and Parliament since the beginning of the millennium. In 2005, a study carried out by Eurobarometer showed trust in UK Parliament and government at around 36% and 34% respectively, but by 2012 this figure had dropped sharply to 23% and 21% (The Guardian, Datablog, 2013). In 2009 in particular, trust in the UK Parliament had dropped to 17%, the lowest figure within the seven year period. The 2000s arguably saw the beginnings of a series of scandals and crises for successive UK governments and parliaments. The 2003

Iraq war met with increasing opposition and hostility from the public, numerous political figures were embroiled in expense scandals and the 2008 financial crash resulted in even less faith in government's capabilities and the political system' workings more generally. This lack of trust in the establishment arguably represents a lack of faith in the pragmatic face (Canovan, 1999) of the UK's democracy with many people blaming the cosmopolitan 'Westminster bubble' for failing to foresee or prevent the financial crash. As noted previously, the unequal balance between the pragmatic and redemptive face seems to form the void which populism grows out from. The discontent felt by many, as represented in levels of trust in parliament, towards the ineffective, unresponsive Westminster system resulted in a call for greater adherence to democracy's redemptive face – that is the will of the people. As such, it is important to ask to what extent populism has entered into party politics in the UK.

9. Methodology

In order to explore populism's growth within the UK context, discourse analysis will be used in order to examine the rhetoric and language used by various political parties within the UK. In using discourse analysis, one will be able to make clear links between the existing academic literature on populism and the behaviours and ideologies of these parties, thus enabling an identification of populism according to traditional theory. Analysis will be made of speeches and interviews

given by political figures associated with the selected parties. Additionally, analysis of the selected parties' manifestos will be undertaken. As populism is largely centralised around an 'us' versus 'them' communicative construction and relies upon an antagonistic relationship being reinforced between the corrupt elite and the ordinary people, discourse analysis then provides a direct insight into the ideological foundations of political parties and the populist rhetoric they employ. Populism is an ideology which places 'the people' at the heart of its message and so political discourse analysis allows for a patent examination of the language and style which parties themselves utilise in order to attract their 'heartland'. Whilst populism has received a high level of attention in academic research, populism within the UK has not been widely investigated. Although some have noted the absence of successful British populist parties in earlier years, populism's recent manifestation in the UK has still to be fully examined. The use of discourse analysis in regards to the political rhetoric used by various political parties and actors, and the referencing of the UK populist context against the general academic theory on populism will illuminate the regularities and potential irregularities of populist development within the United Kingdom.

10. The Scottish National Party – An Example of Populism

The Scottish National Party, although founded in 1934 did not come to

power in Scotland until 2007 when the party won 47 out of the 129 seats and formed a minority government (BBC, May 2007). Although a nationalist and socialist-democratic party, this dissertation aims to show that the circumstance of devolution in the UK allows the SNP a populist foundation as well, with a strong anti-establishment stance despite being a part of the Westminster establishment.

If one considers Mudde's definition of populism as representing an ideology which separates society 'into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite'' (2004: 543) who fails to represent the general will and desires of the people, then much of the SNP's message rests on this ideological basis. The SNP regularly places 'the people', particularly of Scotland but also 'the people' across the UK, in opposition to the establishment. In an interview with the Telegraph Nicola Sturgeon claimed that the SNP MPs were not in Westminster 'to settle down and become part of the establishment,' but to 'make Scotland's voice heard and make sure that our interests are not sidelined and ignored' (The Telegraph, May 2015). She is directly evoking the populist characteristic of a necessarily antagonistic relationship between the establishment and the people of Scotland, whose 'ignored' voices, are deemed to be the legitimate source of democracy and reason. Similarly, in the run up to the 2015 general election, Sturgeon claimed that 'the Westminster establishment ... badly needs to be shaken up and reformed and perhaps given the fright of its life' (Channel 4, February 2015). The depute leader and

MP Angus Robertson, when referring to Westminster in an interview with the BBC, said that he 'like so many people in Scotland, of all political persuasions, have had enough of what this place offers and the way it governs us' (BBC, 2014). In the 2015 manifesto, the SNP similarly claimed that Westminster, an 'out of touch' establishment, had the 'wrong priorities and it will be the ordinary people across the UK who will pay the price' (SNP Manifesto, 2015). Thus, there is a clear populist anti-establishment foundation to the SNPs political agenda which depicts Westminster and the corrupt political elite as an enemy of 'the people' of Scotland and indeed the UK as a whole.

Moreover, in regards to populism's appeal to a homogenised heartland, the SNP consistently refer to 'the people of Scotland' as one entity with a homogenous will and viewpoint. Using Taggart's definition of the 'heartland' which is an 'idealised conception of the community they serve', one can establish 'the people' whom the populist message is targeted towards as the populace of the heartland. The SNP's heartland is an independent Scotland completely free from Westminster rule and the right-wing elite who they claim have never represented the will of the people of Scotland, but who rule regardless. The people appealed to within the SNPs populist message are those who feel disaffected from the Westminster system, believing that 'it is so excluded from reality ... it's a totally defunct institution' (Mhairi Black, Owen Jones interview, March 2016).

The SNP also demonstrates the populist characteristic of placing the people's will at the very heart of the political agenda with it being claimed that 'the people are in charge at every single step of the way' (Nicola Sturgeon, BBC News, 2015), often in spite of the realities and mutual understanding of the constitutional structure of the UK. In this respect, once again one sees the conflict between Canovan's pragmatic and redemptive faces of democracy which create the vacuum in which populism grows. The constitutional structure and electoral system of the UK is such that the will of the people of Scotland is not fully implemented and thus comes into conflict with the systematic formation of British democracy. The SNP appeal to 'the people' of their heartland is established by positioning them against the 'Westminster parties', who take 'the Scottish people for granted', (Fiona Hyslop, September 2014) with the Scottish people representing an entirely homogenised, politically like-minded people.

The SNP also conforms to the recognised attribute of populism and populist parties in regards to charismatic leadership. Nicola Sturgeon was polled as the most popular Scottish person among 5,000 celebrities offered to the Scottish public with a positivity rating of 53 and a reach of 85 (YouGov, 2015). Similarly, a poll carried out across the UK found that Sturgeon had the highest net approval ratings of any of the political party leaders with a net rating of +33, with UKIP's Nigel Farage coming second with a rating of +12 (The Herald, April 2015).

Populist rhetorical style, as stated above, is direct and sometimes quite abrasive. Moreover, Populists often proffer simplistic solutions to complex problems, claiming that the struggles of ordinary people can be easily solved (Canovan, 1999: 6). The SNP offers Independence as a simple solution to the Westminster hold over Scotland, which negatively affects the economic and political lives of the Scottish people. However, this disregards the complexities of the interwoven status of the UK's economy and constitution, and ignores the extent of devolved powers Holyrood holds, thus demonstrating the populist tendency to ignore complicated political realities in order to attract the ordinary voter.

Therefore, it seems that strong populist foundations can be found with the political agenda of the SNP, who since 2007 have been a leading party within the Scottish parliament and an 'establishment' party since 1945 when they gained their first seat at Westminster. Arguably then, populism within the UK context has grown into an ideology firmly at the heart of establishment politics, despite having a foundational anti-establishment essence. The SNP is the third biggest party at Westminster and many like White have acknowledged the 'normalisation' of the SNP as a Westminster party (The Guardian, 2015). Whilst in much of Western Europe populism is indeed threatening the establishment parties and has large swathes of public support, in the UK, populism, it seems, has grown rapidly right at the heart of the establishment itself.

11. United Kingdom Independence Party

UKIP was formed in 1993 by Alan Sked after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, but experienced little electoral success until the 2004 European elections where it secured 12 MEPs. As is noted by various scholars, 'UKIP constantly invokes populist appeals to show how it stands up for 'the people's' interests while the other parties support the same old status quo' (Abedi and Lundberg, 2009: 76). It adheres to the central tenant of populism which is the creation of 'the pure people' against the corrupt and failing elite, and entrenches itself as a political outsider. Vine's argues that 'UKIP's success can be attributed far more to its ability to capitalise on voter disillusionment with mainstream politics' (2015: 369). Although UKIP focuses its attacks against the Westminster elite, its central opposition is focused towards the European Union whose bureaucratic technicalities and its unelected elites stand in opposition to the wishes of 'the people'. Indeed, the party's foundational ideology is that of hard Euroscepticism and this remains the party's clear position today with the 2015 UKIP manifesto stating that 'we are firmly opposed to political integration within Europe' (UKIP Manifesto2015). Indeed it has been argued that the pressure applied by UKIP was one of the driving factors in David Cameron's proposal of the in-out 2016 European referendum. However, what seems to have become clear in recent times is that UKIP's modern brand of populist Euroscepticism has garnered

increasing national attention and resulted in growing success for the party.

UKIP characterises the European Union (EU) as an undemocratic, oppressive body with party leader Nigel Farage stating during the run up to the 2014 Scottish Independence referendum, that the Scottish public would be 'swapping your masters from Westminster to Brussels' (Question Time, June 2013). The party repeatedly highlights the 'democratic deficit' which the EU is built upon with the executive branch of the EU, the Commission, and the main legislative branch of the EU, the Council of Ministers, remaining unelected. Farage also claimed, after the Dutch referendum on EU enlargement in 2016, that 'what we are seeing is the big battalions of vested self interest doing their best to completely ignore the will of the Dutch people' (European Parliament, April 2016). Thus we see clearly the 'attempt to gain support through an 'us versus them discourse' and the unwillingness of the 'power elite ... to represent ordinary citizens' (Barr, 2009: 31).

Taggart's notion of 'the heartland' is perhaps most clear in UKIPs creation of a homogenised people, with an idealised vision of a past time being used to attack both the Westminster and European establishment. Immigration features heavily in UKIP's political agenda, as is often the case with right-wing populist parties (Swank & Betz, 2003: 223), and is used to elucidate the cultural shift which has occurred as a result of the free movement of people across the EU. This

issue of immigration is central to UKIPs formation of a homogenised people as it emphasises 'the cultural identity of the people' and as a result positions them 'not only against the bad elite but also against 'dangerous others'' (Rooduijn, 2013: 574). The party frequently places the people at the very heart of its policy, with MPs claiming that Britain needs 'to be a democracy again with the people in charge (Reckless, BBC, 2015). Reckless, a former UKIP MP, also claimed that the party wanted to 'get power out of Westminster and Whitehall here and down to our local communities' and described the establishment parties as a 'cosy cartel' unsympathetic to 'the people' of Britain (BBC, 2015).

In regards to populism's tendency to produce charismatic leaders, UKIP's Nigel Farage has certainly proved an effective and appealing character. In a poll carried out by YouGov, Farage was the only party leader to achieve a positive approval rating, with a +3 figure, with the second most popular being David Cameron on zero (April 18th, 2015). Some have even compared Farage to Tony Blair due to the immense impact they both had on their parties' electoral successes (Bennett, The Telegraph, 2016). The recent chaos which appears to have infiltrated UKIP during the various leaderships contests within the party, after the resignation of Farage in 2016, perhaps bring forth the concerns of some researchers as to the organisational structure of populist parties, which are largely constructed from a centralised and personalised leadership (Abedi and Lundberg, 2009).

Moreover, UKIP also utilises feelings of, or genuine times of crisis within a nation which is a known characteristic of populism (O'Brien, 2015; Rooduijn, 2013; Taggart, 2004), in order to further advance a case against the establishment. Nigel Farage stated that the European elite favour big business that 'take advantage of low prices for your labour,' and in doing so sacrifice the wellbeing and democratic will of 'ordinary' working people (BBC, March 2015). The consequences of increased globalisation are often cited by UKIP as an example of the 'Westminster bubble' failing to recognise the damage that global interconnection has had on low-skilled workers. In UKIP's manifesto the party claims that 'our elected Westminster politicians are impotent' and unable to tackle the power holders in Europe (UKIP Manifesto2015). UKIP's populist stance and style allow them to simultaneously attack both the Westminster and European establishments, placing them in opposition to the interests and will of the people. Such populist rhetoric seemed to be particularly effective after the 2008 crash, heralded as a crisis caused by bad governance from successive Westminster parties. The populist preference of simplistic, direct and sometimes abrasive styles of communication is something which UKIP displays, with the party claiming to address the taboo subjects - namely European membership and immigration - which the establishment are afraid to tackle.

Similarly, the proposition of simple solutions in combating the problems that 'the people' face is clear within UKIP party policy with Britain's membership of the EU often being given as the main source of people's struggles. When confronted with questions about the maintenance and running of public services, or asked about the 'crisis' which the NHS is facing, UKIP often cites free movement as the main cause of difficulties within these sectors. By offering decreased European immigration as a primary solution to public service failings or NHS struggles, UKIP is failing to articulate the complex, multifaceted political processes by which such institutions are funded and ignores the international networks which now help maintain national services.

Therefore, it is clear that UKIP is linked with a populist surge in the UK. The party achieved substantial electoral success in the 2015 general elections. The failure to secure a significant number of seats in Parliament stems from the First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral system which disproportionately favours larger parties. Despite this, UKIPs vote share totalled 3,881,099 (BBC, 2015) which is comparable to the success of France's FN, a party considered as one of the most successful populist forces in Europe, who received 3,528,663 in the 2012 National Assembly elections (Ministère de L'intérieur). Whilst UKIP conforms to the traditional model of a populist party, one that adheres to the main principles of populism, the recent success of the party in the UK, 'a country in which populist parties have played a

marginal role at the national level' (van Kessel, 2013: 176) highlights the rapid nature of populism's rise within the country. The impact of UKIP's populism is perhaps most tangible in the 2016 referendum which saw the United Kingdom leaving the European Union. The issue of European membership and the Brexit campaign were both heavily led by UKIP and the populist ideological foundations underlying both seeped into the agenda of mainstream, Westminster politics. Although Euroscepticism has been ingrained within British political culture for some time, the dramatic growth of populism within the last decade merged anti-elite sentiment and anti-European sentiment into one political force. As Gifford notes 'it is the populist manifestation of Euroscepticism in Britain that is significant (2006: 854) and this has been largely led by UKIP. In a speech Nigel Farage claimed that 'the people' had 'fought against the multinationals ... fought against big politics' and that the UKs exit from the EU would be 'a victory for real people, a victory for ordinary people, a victory for decent people' (ITV News, June 2016). Whilst Brexit is obviously not representative of any one party and so cannot provide clear insights into the UK party system, what Brexit did made clear was that populism was not confined to populist parties, nor was it confined to the periphery. Instead it was utilised 'by prominent politicians, including cabinet member and ex-cabinet members, and powerful individuals in British public life' from a number of different parties (Gifford, 2006: 858). Thus one sees a situation in the UK, unlike any other yet seen in Europe, where populism, as led by UKIP's Euroscepticism, has become so ingrained

into mainstream debate and policy that is has resulted in constitutional upheaval. However, although the success of UKIP and its reliance on populist ideology indicates that populism is heavily entrenched in the party system, the party has experienced internal turmoil and uncertainty after the resignation of Nigel Farage. As such, it will be interesting to see if UKIP changes its ideological position at all in order to account for the organisational challenges which populist parties face when they lose their 'charismatic' leader (Abedi and Lundberg, 2008).

12. Corbyn's Labour Party

As has been argued, populism has developed and become firmly entrenched within establishment party politics in the UK. The election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader perhaps highlights the extent to which populism has become deeply rooted within mainstream British politics. The Labour party is the second largest party in the UK and was founded in 1900, becoming the main opposition to the Conservatives in the 1920s. As a party that traditionally represents the working class, Labour's political agenda has its foundations on the left of the political spectrum. However, some researchers noted a non-partisan, populist shift in the Labour party with the arrival of Tony Blair as leader (Mair, 2002: 96). Blair's appeal to 'the people' was a 'partyless' one in which the target audience became a homogenous whole and Mair claims that this classless, representative function of the Labour party could be

linked to populist ideology. Yet Blair's legacy, one of war and a ruined economy, only sparked the fuel of anti-political feeling within the country and the Labour party's fortune at elections since 2010 has been gradually worsening across the UK. The election of Jeremey Corbyn as Labour leader cemented the populist stance that had been highlighted during the earlier Blair years.

Jeremy Corbyn's appeals lie directly with populism with a strong anti-establishment, anti-elite message being the centre focus of his political agenda, as well as claim to represent the true wishes of 'ordinary people'. As Taggart states 'populism reacts against elites and against institutions' (2004: 275) and the Corbyn section of the Labour party - the ruling section – highlights the indifference of a small elite towards the larger concerns and problems faced by the people. Ken Livingston, formerly the Mayor of London, stated that people have 'suddenly seen in Jeremy Corbyn someone who actually represents ordinary people, not the small elite of the super rich. (RT News, 2015). Corbyn has also cited a mistrust of the global elite as the driving factors for Britain's exit from the EU and the election of Donald Trump in America's 2016 Presidential elections (Farrell, SKY News, 2016). As such, one can see clear populist foundations within the political rhetoric and policy of Corbyn's Labour party; the return of power to the 'decent' people of the UK from a small, corrupt elite.

 Indeed, under Corbyn's leadership, the establishment is regularly

claimed to have let people down and 'left them behind' through elite-centred globalisation. In this sense, both UKIP and the Labour party espouse a similar populist message based on iniquitous free market globalisation. Jeremy Corbyn fits the outsider profile that is characteristic of populist leaders and has often been described as a politician who 'doesn't behave like a typical politician' (The Telegraph, January 2015). He has often acted in the fringes of politics and has voted against his own party a number of times. He evidently displays charismatic qualities, a commonality of populism, winning the 2015 Labour leadership election with a remarkable 59.5% of the vote and then re-winning in 2016 with an increased mandate of 61.8% (Labour.org). The election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader is an insightful illumination of populism's growth in the UK. As one journalist commented during the 2016 Labour leadership contest 'Corbyn's re-election would mean populism had conquered one of the bastions of British representative democracy' (Baggini, The Guardian, July 2016). The populist ideals underpinning Jeremy Corbyn's current politics portrays a situation in which populism has become full entrenched in UK mainstream politics. The politics of anti-establishment is now flourishing best and with most effect within the establishment. An ideology which is inherently opposed to elitism and liberal democracy is being espoused by the political elite and within the confines of western constitutional democracy. The permeation of populism into the second oldest and second most popular political party

in the UK highlights just how far-reaching populism has spread within the UK party system.

13. Comparison of the Three Parties

The Labour Party, UKIP and the SNP all represent different typologies across the political spectrum and each holds different priorities when it comes to policy. Immigration and hard Euroscepticism often drives the policy formulations of UKIP whereas Labour's focus under Jeremy Corbyn stands firmly on the far socialist left with an anti-globalisation, anti-capitalism and anti-elitist message forming much of party policy. The SNP presents itself as a socialist-democratic party with Scottish independence and 'progressive politics' dictating its principle objectives. Arguably, these parties represent politics from the far right all the way along a linear spectrum to the far left, with SNP taking a centre-left position. However, despite the inherent differences which result from these different typologies, all three of these parties share a populist ideological underpinning. Each party places the establishment (whether it is Westminster and/or Brussels) against the democratic will of 'ordinary people'. All three parties appeal to a 'heartland' which represents an idealised state of living and all three parties place the people at the very centre of this appeal. Furthermore, each party analysed is led by a charismatic leader who mobilises and commands a certain level of adoration from the heartland which they attempt to assemble.

The SNP, in its reasoning and ambitions for Scottish independence, cite Westminster as the evil adversary which ignores the democratic will of the Scottish people. The Labour Party in its call for a more equal and less market-driven society cites the corrupt and failing elite of Westminster as the proponents of the inequality which 'ordinary' people face. Finally UKIP, in its call for an independent Britain and decreased immigration, argued that it was both the Westminster and the Brussels elite who created and maintained a democratic deficit in which European bureaucracy overruled the democratic wishes of the British people. Therefore, although each party clearly holds different political objectives, all three attempt to achieve their goals and spread their message through populism. It would seem that despite the significant differing political aims of the three selected parties, populism still permeates every one of them with each adhering to the fundamental tenants of populism. Thus, it can be said that populism, which was previously claimed to have little grip over UK politics, is now an unshakeable pillar within the system itself having infiltrated the left and right of the British party system, and the space in-between.

14. British Populism vs. European Populism

Populism within the UK party system shares some resemblance with that found in other European countries. For instance, UKIP's brand of populism, one which focuses heavily on immigration and

Euroscepticism is one found in France, The Netherlands, Finland, Denmark, Poland and others. YouGov found that 'authoritarian populism' could be found across Europe with high percentages of European national populations holding right-wing populist ideologies concerning immigration, defence and cynicism over human rights. Such views were held by 48% of the British public, similar to the 49%, 50% and 55% of the Danish, Finnish and Dutch population respectively (The Independent, 2016). The populism espoused by Corbyn's Labour Party, and to some extent the SNP, is one that has echoes in Greece and Spain with Syriza and Podemos both addressing issues of inequality and corruption in an increasingly globalised world where national elites place capitalist profit above the wellbeing of national peoples.

This dissertation has highlighted the far reaching grip which populism holds within the UK party system; spanning from the left to the right of the political spectrum. As has been noted by various scholar (O'Brien, 2015; Stavrakakis, 2014; Taggart, 2012), populism seems to be the new normal across Europe with populist parties like Fidesz and The Law and Justice Party actually holding power in Hungary and Poland (Shields, 2007). Such parties have been noted as building regimes that are 'designed to perpetuate the power of the populists' (Jan-Werner Müller, The Guardian, 2016) and therefore one sees examples of populist parties who are not simply on the fringe of mainstream politics but who are actually dictating it. As such, although the UK's experience of widespread populism within the mainstream is not

singular – with echoes being seen in Western and Eastern Europe – the fact that populism has managed to infiltrate itself into long-standing traditional parties is quite interesting. If one looks at populist parties which hold some degree of power in mainstream national politics, like the Law and Justice Party (PiS) or Syriza, one finds fairly new parties (2001 and 2004) in which populism has always been a part of its ideological make-up. Others like Fidesz, Danish People's Party, FPÖ, and to a large extent, FN represent parties who like UKIP, over time, have inducted populism deeper and deeper into their political agenda (Betz, 1993; Luther, 2001; Rydgren, 2005; Szabó, 2011) and again in this way one can draw links between UK party populism and European party populism

However, although the popularity of populist parties has undoubtedly resulted in non-populist parties adopting more populist rhetorical styles and even policies (Schumacher & van Kersbergen, 2014; Bale *et al.*, 2009) what is perhaps unusual about UK party populism is that it has managed to seep into long-standing, established parties such as Labour and the SNP. Both of these parties have participated in the party system since the early 20th century and have been a part of the core of UK politics for some time. As has been shown, SNP and Labour are not merely flirting with populist rhetoric but have instead adopted the fundamentally populist stance which cements an antagonistic relationship between a pure people and a corrupt elite/establishment. This development of populism within the very core of traditional party

politics in the UK is something which requires further investigation and more in-depth analysis however, arguably populism's presence within such long-standing, mainstream parties is something not widely seen across the rest of Europe. Although one sees the emergence of new populist parties in Europe and also the adoption of populism by fringe parties - resulting in later widespread success – in both Europe and the UK, the comprehensive embrace of populism by parties who *are* the establishment is perhaps a British form of populist development.

15. Conclusion

This dissertation has engaged with academic literature on populism and applied understandings of the ideology to the UK context in an attempt to analyse the role that populism has most recently played in British politics and to illuminate the extent of populism's grasp within the UK party system.

Despite the varied contestations which can be found in research on populism, some foundational characteristics appear to be widely agreed upon. The elucidation of an antagonistic relationship between a corrupt and elitist establishment and a pure, ordinary people is a central tenant of populism as an ideology. Furthermore, the ordinary people are conceived as a homogenised group and represent an idealised community which must be protected and are the central focus of

populist actors. Finally, the charismatic charm and appeal of populist leaders is commonly recognised as a common trait of populist movements and parties. The rhetorical style of populism has also been illuminated and the cleavage in which populism can emerge from has been shown.

Such theory provided a background for the qualitative political discourse analysis undertaken which revealed the populist underpinnings of three 'mainstream' parties within the UK. Political discourse analysis of various SNP members' speeches and interviews highlighted that the party conforms to the fundamental characteristics of populism, namely that of an anti-establishment stance and the creation of an antagonistic relationship between Westminster and the people of Scotland. Moreover, the people of Scotland were often conceptualised as a homogenous political group and represented the heartland which the SNP both simultaneously constructed and appealed to.

Qualitative political discourse analysis also cemented the populist ideology fuelling UKIP, a recognised populist party within Europe. Their anti-establishment, particularly anti-European establishment, platform was made clear and their appeal to 'decent', ordinary people left behind by globalisation and deepening European integration demonstrates their construction of the people as a homogenised group. Additionally, political discourse analysis illuminated the populist core now rooted in the Labour leadership contingent with Jeremy Corbyn

and others in his cabinet citing the establishment and global elites as an adversary to honest people.

The prevalence of populism and populist rhetoric in UK party politics and the increasing electoral success of parties like UKIP and the SNP act to show that populism is not an ideology threatening the establishment from the outside. Rather populism has, paradoxically, been nurtured within the mainstream establishment parties and its appeal furthered and normalised by the engagement of traditional parties with the populist sphere. The SNP, the third largest party in Westminster, and the ruling party in Scotland relies on a populist, anti-establishment ideology, thus highlighting the centrality of populism in mainstream, establishment politics in the UK. The Labour Party under Corbyn heavily relies on populist foundations and appeals, and therefore it is clear that populism has deeply infiltrated UK party politics with the Labour party being one of the most firmly entrenched within the Westminster system. The populist manifestations of Euroscepticism, as led by UKIP, have resulted in prominent establishment figures from various political parties indulging in populist rhetoric against the very institutions which they represent and are a part of.

The engrained nature of populism within mainstream British politics, unless scrutinised, could seem somewhat salient in comparison to other European nations. Yet recent populist manifestations in the UK have

resulted in substantial electoral and constitutional changes, not least shown with Britain leaving the European Union – a precedent in European Union history. What is also clear is that while populism clearly has a major influence in establishment politics across Europe, the infiltration of populism into parties who are deeply entrenched in the UK establishment perhaps represents a very British development of populism.

This dissertation aimed to draw attention to and assess the extent of populism's grip within the UK party system using qualitative discourse analysis. This allowed for a clear evaluation of the ideologies and styles which political parties and actors have adopted in an attempt to mobilise 'the people'. A quantitative approach could also be useful, alongside a qualitative approach, in providing a definite analysis and quantification of populism's presence in UK party politics and indeed this could be a focus of future research. Although populism's increasing prevalence in UK politics has been highlighted in this dissertation and whilst it has been found to be very far-reaching within the party system, populism's current position could be short lived with parties like UKIP currently facing internal disarray and other parties like SNP experiencing a fall in popularity in recent local elections. The lifespan and challenges facing populist parties then is another topic which may provide new insights into populism's place in UK politics.

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