

Far Right Parties and Movements in Europe, Japan, and the Tea Party in the U.S.: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

This article examines the extent to which the Tea Party in the US is comparable to far right parties and movements in Europe and Japan. It begins with a review of the major theories of the far right which will be applied in the comparative analysis of the article. This is followed by a description of the ideologies, bases of support, electoral strength or degree of influence, and organization of far right parties in Britain, France, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, all in Western Europe. It also looks at the nationalist far right in Japan. Then the Tea Party in the US is described in similar fashion. The comparative analysis finds significant similarities and overlapping of ideologies and issue agendas, voters, organization, and impact on the party system. It concludes that further analysis is warranted, in theoretical application and expansion in the range and number of cases, for example Eastern Europe and Australia.

Keywords: far-right; anti-immigrant parties; populism; Tea Party; Europe; Japan

Introduction

In this paper I seek to draw some comparisons, and contrasts, between the "Tea Party" movement in the US and far right, the far right nationalists in Japan, and the far right in Western Europe.

I add movements since the Tea Party is not a party but rather a movement which has become significant in American politics by affecting political debate and by the influence it wields within the Republican Party.

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In Japan likewise the phenomenon is more a tendency, whose proponents seek to influence political discourse and force the governments of both major parties, Democratic Party of Japan and the Liberal Democratic Party, to adopt their right wing, nationalist agenda, from territorial disputes with China to the selection of school history textbooks. It is in Western Europe that right wing nationalism is more than movements, but is espoused by political parties, some of whose roots are in pre-World War II fascism (or hark back to it), while others are newer but whose agenda is right wing and nationalistic.

The first part of this paper will lay out some of the leading theoretical perspectives put forward to analyze the extreme right, especially in Europe but with applications to Japan. This will be followed by a description of the far right nationalist movement in Japan, then far right parties in Europe, and finally the Tea Party in the U.S. These descriptions will address the programs or agendas of each party of movement, as well as their bases of support, and their respective means and degrees of influence and strength in their respective political systems. The comparative analysis will follow the individual descriptions of parties and movements in Western Europe and Japan, drawing the comparisons and differences between these and the Tea Party in the U.S.

Theoretical Approaches

This section briefly reviews some of the theoretical literature in the study of extreme right parties. One useful summary and review of ten different theories of the extreme right is provided by Eatwell (2003).

These are: 1. the single-issue thesis, an approach that implies that such parties do well at times of major concerns about immigration; 2. the protest thesis, according to which these parties lack any serious ideology and are vehicles for attacking mainstream parties; 3. the social breakdown thesis, which holds that traditional social structures are breaking down, so individuals are attracted to ethnic nationalism and family and other traditional values; 4. the (reverse) post-material thesis, where mainstream parties, especially on the left, and elites are blamed for social liberalization; 5. the economic interest thesis, with right wing voting is correlated with broad socioeconomic categories, namely unemployed, poorer, and especially younger voters; 6. the political opportunity structure thesis, where, for example, the extreme right is legitimized when political dialogue is "contaminated by its themes," especially the immigration issue; 7.

the “mediatization” thesis, where extreme right parties are helped by a media focusing on “their” issues; 8. the national traditions thesis, in which extreme right parties’ success is enhanced by associating themselves with the national tradition which they hope to help define; 9. the programmatic thesis, where extreme right parties do possess a serious ideology, typically combining anti-immigrant politics with free market economics; and 10. the charismatic leader thesis, one who can appeal directly to the voters and hold the party together. Eatwell attributes extreme right voting to growing legitimacy, rising personal efficacy, and declining (68-69).

I’ll argue that the Tea Party fits several of these theses, namely the protest thesis, reverse post-materialism, economic interest, mediatization, and the programmatic theses. This will be done in the analysis and comparison section following the descriptions of extreme right parties in Europe, the nationalist right in Japan, and the Tea Party in the U.S.

Japan

Much of the focus of those concerned about rising right-wing nationalism in Japan are the increasingly regular visits by Prime Ministers – Koizumi, Abe – to Yasukuni Shrine. These visits strengthen nationalist feeling in China and South Korea (Ryu, 2007: 705). An important question is whether these visits reflect the views and opinions of all Japanese politicians and the public (Ibid: 706). One study finds such feelings strongest among members of the governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). However there is some support for the visits to the Shrine among members of the opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) (Ibid).

In fact they are members of a bi-partisan group of Diet members whose views are the same as those of the conservative-nationalist segment of the LDP (Ibid: 707). In a survey conducted in 2006 53% of LDP respondents supported visits to Yasukuni while 77% of DPJ respondents opposed such visits (Ibid: 717). Those who support the visits believe it is to pay homage to the war dead and re-recognize the importance of peace. Those who oppose cite the damage done to relations with China and South Korea and the fact that the Shrine includes war criminals (Ibid: 719).

Conservative-nationalists are concerned about the lack of patriotism among the young and the loss of Japan's independence (*vis-à-vis* the U.S.) (Ibid: 714). In regard to the latter they advocate revision of Article 9 (the "Peace article"). Koizumi showed a willingness not to allow Article 9 to prevent him from sending ground troops to Iraq and naval and air forces to the Persian Gulf (Ibid). Nationalists also push for a tougher stance with China over the Diaoyutai/Senkaku islands (Seldon, 2008: 75). At least as controversial is the issue of history textbooks, with nationalists pushing, successfully, for the Ministry of Education (MoE) to approve texts that the Chinese, Koreans, and many Japanese academics view as downplaying Japan's aggression leading to war in Asia and the behavior of Japanese troops during the war (Ryu: 715-716; Seldon: 74). The recent phase (2001) of the controversy started when the MoE approved a textbook put forward by "Japan's Society for Textbook Reform" or Tsukura Kai (Bukh, 2007: 685). Such texts, while adopted by only a relatively few schools, illustrate the tendency to downplay Japan's role and actions in WWII but instead present Japan and the Japanese as victim of the war *vis-à-vis* the U.S. and Russia/Soviet Union (Ibid: 687).

In another study of Japanese conservative-nationalism the author points to other studies showing a correlation between conservatism and closed-mindedness, ethnocentrism, and political intolerance (Karasawa, 2002: 649). As I indicate later such attitudes characterize many Tea Partiers. Intolerance is related to lack of familiarity with out-groups and lower knowledge of foreign countries (Ibid). Karasawa's study demonstrated a negative correlation between nationalism and internationalism (Ibid: 656). Another correlation was age and nationalism and patriotism (Ibid).

Commentators are increasingly discussing the new political clout of nationalist politicians and activists in Japan (Hayashi, 2012). They are reaching youth with their nationalist views through noisy protests but especially blogs, tweets, and internet videos (Ibid.). One leader started a political group called Gambare Nippon or Hang Tough Japan (Ibid.). He runs a cable channel that focuses on right wing talk shows. There is a small Sunrise Party of Japan, but the movement is mostly an alliance of politicians, young and old, in the opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and activist groups backed by influential commentators and business executives (Ibid.).

One of these groups is the New Education Group, which advocates a stronger identity for Japan (Council on Foreign Relations, 2002).

Nationalists have taken advantage of economic hardship combined with a politically apathetic public that sets the stage for the election of Shintaro Ishihara as governor of Tokyo (Ibid.). He is noted for his attempt to buy the disputed Senkaku islands and for his offensive remarks about immigrants (Ibid.). More recent was the re-election of Shinzo Abe as leader of the LDP (and current Prime Minister), criticized for recent comments downplaying Japan's war crimes and talk of visiting Yasukuni shrine (2012). Abe has again become Prime Minister following last December's victory in the general election (CBC News, December 16, 2012). Shintaro's right wing populist Japan Restoration Party won between 40 and 61 seats (Ibid.). Abe shares with Shintaro a confrontational stance towards China (Pesek, November 12, 2012).

Nor is nationalism any longer relegated to the fringe of Japanese politics and debate (Matthews, 2003: 76). Ishihara is the country's best known nationalist, mayor of Tokyo and leader of the Restoration Party, now Japan's third largest (Ibid; Tucker, 2012). The JRP is especially strong in the Osaka region (Tucker, Ibid) but its themes resonate more broadly (Tucker, Ibid). Nationalists also emphasize other issues, such as less government involvement in the economy and some relaxation of anti-immigrant positions (Ibid: 83-85). We see echoes of the Tea Party in all this.

Far-Right voting Western Europe

France

In France the extreme right is represented by the National Front (FN), headed by Marine Le Pen, daughter of the notorious founder of the FN, Jean-Marie Le Pen (Business Insider, n. d.). The party campaigns against immigration, Islam, and the Euro (BBC, April 18, 2011). Immigrants are blamed for unemployment and crime, posing a threat to Frenchethnonational identity (Rydgren, 2008: 172). The FN espouses a populist agenda appealing to the political discontent and alienation many French feel from the existing parties.

In the local elections of 2011 the FN won about 40% of the seats where it ran in the run-off (Ibid.). For a time Marine Le Pen was ahead of President Nicolas Sarkozy in pre-election polls last year (Ibid.). Le Pen went on to win 18 percent in the first round of that election.

The National Front currently holds two seats in parliament and is set to consolidate gains in upcoming local and European elections (Edmonton Journal, May 1, 2013). Le Pen is a populist who knows how to mobilize the masses (Crepaz and Steiner, 2011). The FN succeeds in giving concrete political expression to a latent xenophobia, reinforced by the problem of immigration (Brechon and Mitra, 1992). Le Pen denounces the European Union and global finance along with immigration and Islam, claiming they are "crushing the values of French civilization" (Edmonton Journal, May 1, 2013).

Austria

There are two extreme right parties in Austria, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPO) and the Alliance for the future of Austria (BZO) (Business Insider, n. d.). In the general election campaign in 2008 the FPO pandered openly to anti-semitism (Crepaz and Steiner, *Ibid.*). In the 2008 elections the FPO's share of the vote increased from 11% to over 17%, while the BZO doubled its representation, winning over 10% of the vote (*Ibid.*). Both parties proposed an anti-immigrant platform that includes also calling for lower taxes, limited regulation, and greater use of referenda (*Ibid.*). They both are nationalistic and oppose membership in the EU for Turkey and opposed the Lisbon Treaty (*Ibid.*). Before his death in 2008, former FPO leader JorgHeider attempted to hide his xenophobic appeal "behind relatively moderate language" (*Ibid.*). In one of his speeches though he referred to Austria's centuries long wars against the Turks only to have them now fill Austria's classrooms.

The Freedom Party's roots in the neo-Nazi League of Independents, formed in 1949 to represent war returnees and former Nazis is emphasized by some to question its present orientation and its potential threat to Austrian democracy (Luther: 427-428). The League sought to appeal to liberals not incorporated into the socialist and Catholic-conservative subcultures (*Ibid.*). In this light the successor Freedom Party stressed the preservation of individual liberties, free enterprise, and opposition to a large state role (Country Studies, May, 2012). Thus the party possessed two wings: liberal and German-nationalist (Luther: 428-429). Through the phases of its evolution as a party, the Freedom Party has moved from its 'Ghetto' phase in the 1950s to the mid-1960s, where it stressed German nationalism, anti-clericalism, anti-socialism, and protest, through its efforts to broaden its appeal to the young and ideologically liberal in the 1970s and 1980s, to its 'Populist Protest' phase under Heider beginning in 1986 (*Ibid.*).

Its agenda included curbing immigration, crime (frequently linked to immigration), and opposition to further European integration (Ibid: 429-430).

The party's electoral support has risen among all groups, but especially among younger males, self-employed, as well as blue collar workers and the unemployed (Ibid: 431). An explanation of the FDP's success, apart from its organizational strengths, is its challenge to the existing parties' (Social Democrats and Peoples Party) long-time monopoly on political power and the whole system of mutual veto and log rolling (Ibid: 439). The party has successfully pursued a strategy of mobilizing the "horizontal" cleavage between the liberated (decoupled from the "pillars" of Austrian society, socialist and Catholic-conservative) masses and the political elite (Ibid.). Further, the party has ridden the rising wave of Euro-skepticism in Austria (e-International Relations). The tabloid press gave considerable play to Haider and the FPO, especially the widely read Krone, which itself expresses a kind of right wing nationalism along with anti-Semitism, anti-immigrant, and anti-EU sentiments (Heinisch, 2008: 76-77). Television and newsweeklies have also given considerable coverage to Haider and the FPO as underdog (Ibid).

Italy

Italy's extreme right is no longer represented by the National Alliance (AN), as this formerly neo-fascist party moved to the center-right in the 1990s and is today merged with disgraced former Prime Minister Berlusconi's Forza Italia to form the People of Liberty). AN's share of the vote hovers around 12 percent (www.france24.com, March 23, 2009). This shift dates from Gianfranco Fini's assumption of leadership in 1991, renaming the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI) to the National Alliance (AN) (New York Times, March 30, 1994). In fact Alessandra Mussolini, the dictator's granddaughter left to form a new right wing party, Freedom for Action (Repa, January 9, 2004). In 2003 he caused some discontent within the party when he called for immigrants to be given the vote in local elections (www.france24.com). On a visit to Israel a month later Fini denounced Mussolini's anti-Jewish laws and referred to fascism as an 'absolute evil' (Ibid.). Nevertheless only 3 percent of AN voters felt Fini had taken a wrong turn, while 58 percent identified themselves as belonging to the 'center-right' or even 'center' (New York Time, Ibid.).

Today the party of the right is seen to be Umberto Bossi's Northern League (Lega Nord) (Business Insider, n. d.). It's the Lega that bases its appeal on its ideas of the people, ethnically defined, and espouses a populist democratic denunciation of the political system (Tarchi, 2008: 84-84). While calling for an independent northern Italy, which he calls Padania, he also supports smaller government and lower taxes and opposes subsidies for the south and opposes further immigration from outside Europe and from 'Romany' within Italy and Europe (Ibid.). In fact the League has just recently criticized the appointment of Italy's first black minister, who also happens to be a naturalized citizen (Hooper, April 28, 2013). In their criticism they called her appointment merely symbolic and claimed the left merely wanted to abolish the 'crime' of illegal immigration (Ibid.).

Britain

In Britain the former National Front is now the British National Party (BNP). This party actually accepts only whites as members and won 6% of the vote in the last European election in 2009 (Crepaz and Steiner, Ibid.). It obviously opposes immigration and calls for voluntary "repatriation" of non-white immigrants (Ibid.).

It is an ethno-populist party that blames the political establishment for allowing immigrants to "overrun" the country, arguing that "Britain's very existence" was threatened (Falls, 2008: 193).

There is also in England a new right wing youth movement, the English Defense League (EDL), which is virulently anti-immigrant but relatively small and confines itself to street demonstrations (Guardian, 2011). The BNP's viability is questionable, they ran a very limited number of candidates in the local elections this year (2013) (Elgot, Huffington Post, April 10, 2013). The BNP is quite small and ineffectual compared to the right-wing parties in other European countries (Falls, Ibid).

A greater presence in recent elections is the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). The party's major issues are immigration and social welfare in addition to its Euro-skepticism. It calls for tougher immigration and asylum policies, law and order, and withdrawal from the EU (Ibid). The Conservative Party leadership was divided over how to respond to the UKIP in the upcoming local elections (Watt, Guardian, May 1, 2013).

In fact the UKIP won a quarter of the vote in those elections, although they remained a distant fourth in the number of council seats won (Burns, New York Times, May 4, 2013).

Netherlands

Even in traditionally liberal Netherlands parties “touting anti-immigrant and Islamophobic ideas have spread” (Crepaz and Steiner). The Freedom Party (PVV) led by Geert Wilders won 17% of the vote in the 2010 election before this year’s, temporarily becoming the second largest party (Ibid.). It slipped in the election last year (2012), losing 9 of its 24 seats (BBC, September 13, 2012). The PVV has no doubt inherited many of List Pim Fortuyn’s voters, the LPF peaking at 17% in its first election in 2002 (Lucardie, 2008: 162). By the 2006 election the LPF all but disappeared while the PVV won about 6% of the vote (Ibid.).

Wilders has referred to the Quran as a “fascist book” that incites violence and ought to be banned (Ibid.). His party calls for the banning of the full Islamic veil and for curbs on immigration (Ibid.). The party’s advocates have called for a “head rag tax” and taking citizenship away from Dutch Muslims (Business Insider, n. d.).

Wilders and his party have even called for a ban on ritual slaughter of animals, leading to fierce criticism from Israel’s chief rabbi (Haaretz, August 30, 2012). Ambassadors from 10 EU countries asked the government to repudiate the offending web-site (The Journal, April 25, 2013). Finally, the PVV opposed Dutch participation in the financial bailout of Greece (Ibid.). Indeed the party is calling for a Dutch withdrawal from the Euro (Evans-Pritchard, March 5, 2012).

Switzerland

Switzerland’s right-wing party is the Swiss People’s Party (SVP), whose ideological platform is strong rejection of the EU, opposition to all immigration, and “uncompromising” demand for tax cuts (Binswanger, 2011). The party is led by Christoph Blocher, a self-made billionaire who has transformed a party of farmers and shopkeepers into a “professional, strongly financed fighting machine” to pursue his neo-conservative agenda (Ibid.).

The SVP's share of the vote rose from 11.9 percent in 1991 to 28.9 percent in 2007, eclipsing both the Swiss Liberals and Christian Democrats; slipping though in 2011 to 25.3 percent (Ibid.). The party's strategy of blaming immigrants for domestic problems like crime and higher rents still does resonate with many voters (Freedman, 2011). The party sponsored a 2009 referendum that banned the construction of new minarets (Ibid.). They would also expel foreign born criminals from the country.

The SVP's traditional base of support is in rural regions, male, and old middle class, often self-employed, but has grown among workers, lower and middle income groups, and those with less formal education (Shenderovic, 2013). While evoking the rural world and farmers, the SVP has succeeded in becoming a highly modern party, especially effective at political campaigning and public relations (Ibid.). Finally, the SVP is helped enormously by its "domination of the Swiss media," due in part to its provocative messages (The Local, n.d.).

Scandinavia

The Denmark People's Party (DF) does reflect the Scandinavian attachment to the welfare state (Guardian, November 6, 2011). This is also the case with Sweden Democrats (SD), which is not interested in dismantling the Swedish welfare state (Ibid.). Only in Norway is the right wing Progress Party committed to reducing the welfare state (The Nordic Page, October 10, 2012). Originally founded as an anti-tax party, they now argue that immigration is the root of most problems and should be strictly reduced (Ibid.). The FP is now the second largest party in Norway.

Most recently the party took much criticism after one of its former members massacred 77 people as a violent expression of his anti-immigrant animus (Ritter, Huffington Post, 2011).

The DF is 'obsessed' with border security and their hostility towards immigrants (Ibid.). According to the party program Denmark is not an immigrant country and will never accept being a multi-ethnic society (Ibid.). The party employs traditional Danish symbols, the flag, the Queen, notable figures from Denmark's history, to "elicit fear of immigrants, the Euro, and of the end of the welfare state" (Bostrup and Kay, n.d.). The party opposed Danish entry into the EU. The DF is now the third largest party in parliament (BBC, Ibid.). The party seeks the support of the less educated, voters who read few newspapers or watch news on television, and are less involved politically (Bostrup and Kay).

Like the DF's emphasis on 'Denmark for the Danes,' the SD's slogan is 'keep Sweden Swedish' (Business Leader, n.d.). And like other right wing populist parties in Europe they are known for their anti-immigrant nationalism (Ibid.). They wish to roll back the Schengen agreement and reintroduce border controls (Ibid.). The party has accused the Social Democrats of having betrayed the Swedish people with its deference to multi-culturalism, feminism, and "mass immigration" (vice, n.d.). While the party has been at pains to shed its neo-Nazi origins, members are forever making crude statements and engaging in provocative and ugly behavior (Ibid.). Support at least for the SD is stronger among younger and much older people, men more than women, and less educated, greatest among unskilled workers and entrepreneurs, and greater among private sector employees (Scancomark, 2013).

According to recent (2012) opinion polls the SD is the third most popular party in the country (Strand, vice, n.d.). Currently the party is the sixth largest in parliament with 20 seats, and won nearly 6 percent of the popular vote in the 2010 election (Ibid.).

Europe

Crepaz and Steiner draw the distinction between the fascism of Mussolini and Hitler and the new radical right parties (Crepaz and Steiner, Ibid.). The new radical right has chosen different party labels, such as Freedom Party, National Front, or Progress Party. They also claim to be different in their democratic orientation, criticizing the existing political elite for its detachment from the common people.

Finally, the new right supports the free market, marked by their opposition to high taxes, welfare programs, and "arrogant state bureaucrats." In particular they object to welfare benefits for "outsiders" (undeserving) "such as immigrants, the homeless, drug addicts, gays, unwed mothers and modern artists" (Ibid.). The new radical right draws its support from the middle class and blue collar workers (Ibid.). As will be noted below all this informs the agenda of the U.S. Tea Party. And according to Herbert Kitschelt (cited in Crepaz and Steiner) the 'glue' uniting the economic and social agenda of the new right is racism. Their rejection of equality, opposition to the integration of marginalized groups, and their appeal to racist xenophobia make them radical. And their appeal to the anxiety and disenchantment and the "common sense" of the common man define them as populist.

Westin finds interesting differences between “clusters” of EU countries on opinions regarding integration on the one hand and assimilation on the other (Westin, 2003). The five countries high on integration form a Northern cluster, including Sweden, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, and the UK (Ibid: 100-101). An intermediate cluster, EU “core” countries France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Austria all have histories of “guest worker” immigration – and three, France, Belgium, and Austria have significant far right parties (Ibid: 101). These are also the countries with the highest values on a scale of racist self-placement (Ibid: 102). A third cluster, mainly southern, have not yet developed policies on immigration and incorporation, having been until recently major sending countries. They do however, in the cases of Italy and Greece possess far right parties.

As a broader generalization, support for far right parties in Western Europe has shown the greatest increase in countries where highly individualized citizens profess low levels of trust in others and dissatisfaction with the direction their lives have taken (Wilcox, Weinberg, and Eubank, 2003: 138). The countries where in the 1990s these values were most prevalent, Austria, Belgium, France, and Italy also appear to be highly contentious (Ibid). As we’ve seen far right parties are important in each of these.

The Tea Party

In this section of the paper the focus is on who the Tea Partiers are, what they believe, how they’re organized, and their impact on elections and governing.

Beginning with the demographics: ‘they tend to be Republican, white, male, married and older than 45’ (Skocpol and Williamson, 2012:23).

They are more educated and earn a higher income than the average American (Miller and Walling, 2012: 15). A plurality of Tea Partiers is small business owners, in fields like construction, remodeling, or repair (Skocpol and Williamson, Ibid.). These are conservative Republicans, who even when they say they; are ‘Independents’ are simply, usually, more conservative than they believe the Republican Party to be (Ibid: 27). Tea Partiers include social conservatives and libertarians, though the latter are on the periphery of the activist base (Ibid: 38). On the other hand only 14% of Tea Party supporters said social issues were more important to them than economic issues in a 2010 CBS News/New York Times poll (Ibid: 37; also cited in Zernike, 2010).

What motivates Tea Partiers? What are their political beliefs and ideology? All Tea Partiers profess reverence for the Constitution (Ibid: 48-54). Strict adherence to the Constitution as they define it is in fact a mainstay of Tea Party dialogue. To them the Constitution as originally conceived does not permit most of what the federal government does in terms of regulations and social spending. They believe that there are those who are deserving of government benefits, they've earned them, while the rest, encompassing low income and youth, are reaping benefits they do not deserve (Ibid: 59). This is how they reconcile their apparent hypocrisy regarding Social Security and Medicare. They express a great deal of contempt for government, particularly the federal government (Zernike: 69).

Illegal immigration incenses them and they support 'draconian remedies.' According to the CBS News/New York Times poll 82% of Tea Partiers see illegal immigration as a 'very serious' problem (cited in Skocpol and Williamson; and Zernike). They believe illegal immigrants are 'stiffing' the American taxpayer, while 'flooding' hospital emergency rooms and will be beneficiaries of health care reform (Skocpol and Williamson: 60). Finally is the question of racism on the part of Tea Partiers. According to a University of Washington study they tend to see blacks and Latinos as less hardworking and less trustworthy (Ibid: 69). These attitudes may not characterize all Tea Partiers, but they are held by larger numbers than even among avowed conservatives and Republicans (Ibid.).

With the Tea Party there are 'grassroots groups galore' (Ibid: 85). They appeared originally as a response to an on-air 'rant' by CNBC News commentator Rick Santelli, who called for a modern day Boston Tea Party in Chicago on the shores of Lake Michigan (Zernike: 13).

As Tea Party groups sprang up across the country they were organized at the national level through conference calls and conventions (Skocpol and Williamson: 98-99). But the opportunity to bandwagon was not lost by Dick Arney's Freedom Works or the Koch brothers' funded Americans for Prosperity (Zernike: 35). This was an easy fit as the Tea Partiers are extremely pro-business (Skocpol and Williamson: 100-101). And Tea Party groups share the anti-government sentiments espoused by these conservative organizations.

According to a Washington Post survey of Tea Party groups 92% cite mistrust of government as an important factor driving Tea Party support (cited in Miller and Walling: 12-13). Particular animus is reserved for President Obama and Democrats in general (Ibid).

It is unlikely the Tea Party would have become the phenomenon it did without the extraordinary coverage it received from conservative radio hosts and especially Fox News (Skocpol and Williamson: 124-127). The latter became the Tea Party's 'cheerleader in chief' (Ibid: 130). FOX did not merely cover Tea Party events, it anticipated and encouraged them (Ibid: 131-132). FOX provided a 'community of meaning,' framing the Tea Party as grassroots and genuine, spontaneous and independent, and representative (Ibid: 136). And the mainstream media, CNN, began to cover Fox's coverage, responding to FOX's criticisms that they were ignoring this mass movement (Ibid: 139).

Skocpol and Williamson also note the overlap of FOX viewers and Tea Partiers: 63% of Tea Partiers watch FOX with little resort to mainstream media (only 1 in 9 compared to 1 in 4 in the general public (Ibid: 135).

Tea Partiers intend to hold Republican candidates and incumbents to their conservative agenda (Ibid: 177-183). This determination to remake the Republican Party is also seen in efforts to gain control of the party at the local and state levels (Zernike: op cit). They insist that Republican officials act as 'conveyor belts' for 'pre-cooked right wing policy backed by emotional popular pressure' (Skocpol and Williamson: 184). All this presents an opportunity for billionaire funded groups to remake the Republican Party into a disciplined and uncompromising vehicle for pushing radical free market policies (Ibid: 187-188). This could backfire as the general public becomes increasingly aware of the implications of a 'cut, cut, cut' philosophy (Ibid: 187-188). But for now, as seen in the 2012 Republican primaries, conservative activists were able to force the candidates to establish who was the most conservative, who would cut taxes most, cut government the most, and repeal 'Obamacare.'

And Tea Party backed Congressional incumbents complicate efforts to avoid fiscal nightmares, like the sequestration called for if Congress and the President could not reach an agreement on the budget. This is being repeated in the current battle over budget cuts and taxes.

Finally, according to Skocpol and Williamson while the Tea Party movement has demonstrated active citizenship, it is based in large part in no factuality (Ibid: 197-205). What appears to be missing as well is empathy and sympathy with other Americans, casting those without their advantages in cruel stereotypes (Ibid.).

Comparisons

There is in fact then some overlap of Tea Party beliefs and policies with those of the far right parties in Europe and the right wing movement in Japan, with whom it shares some organizational traits. Several of these parties in Europe place cutting taxes high on their agenda. These include the Freedom Party in Austria, the Lega in Italy, the Peoples Party in Switzerland, and the Progressive Party in Norway. Of course opposition to taxes in and of itself does not constitute extreme right.

Coupled with the populism of these parties, their disdain for bureaucrats and welfare benefits for “outsiders” or those somehow underserving, the Tea Party comes closer. As earlier noted there is a strain of racism in the Tea Party movement, which these parties imbibe. They reject equality or the integration of marginalized groups; the Tea Party stereotypes marginalized groups, the unemployed, those on welfare, and illegal immigrants. In fact anti-immigrant feelings are appealed to by virtually every one of these parties, including the French National Front, Austria’s Freedom Party, Italy’s Lega, British National Party, Dutch Freedom Party, Switzerland’s Peoples Party, and Norway’s Progress Party. It also shares with these parties a white male base of support, and a large percentage of self-employed. This is particularly the case with Sweden’s SD, Austria’s Freedom Party, and Switzerland’s People’s Party.

The Tea Party however is not a party but seeks to mold the Republican Party in its image. In this respect the Tea Party is more like the right wing movement in Japan. The latter seeks to steer both major parties, the Democrats and especially the Liberal Democrats, towards their agenda. Like the Tea Party it receives moral support from right wing talk shows on cable television and from influential commentators and business executives. As seen these are exactly the Tea Party’s advantages in the U.S.

Applying Eatwell’s ten theories of the extreme right helps put the paper’s descriptive sections into broader perspective.

As stated earlier the Tea Party fits into five of these theories at least. The Tea Party represents and sees itself as a protest movement, fighting the “liberal establishment” as embodied especially in the Democratic Party and the “liberal” mainstream media. In its anti-immigrant persona the Tea Party would seem to fit the single issue thesis, except that the Tea Party takes on board a raft of issues. Again, its disdain for liberalism and its blaming of the political left for social liberalization partakes of the reverse-materialism thesis. Certainly the mediatization thesis applies, given the almost symbiotic relationship of FOX to the Tea Party. Finally insofar as the Tea Party does possess a serious ideology, combining anti-immigrant politics with its commitment to lower taxes and smaller government (no matter how hypocritical) it conforms to the programmatic thesis.

So while the Tea Party is not a separate organized party as are the right-wing parties in Europe, but rather is seeking to remake the Republican Party, there is as seen considerable overlap in ideology, issues, and mobilization efforts. The right-wing parties of Europe conform to more than one of the theses as well. Finally the Tea Party shares with the nationalist right-wing in Japan its working within the party system, the Republican Party in the U.S. and the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan. Thus the Tea Party fits more than one of the theories of the far right, overlapping with the nationalist right in Japan and far right parties in Western Europe.

Japan itself conforms to the national traditions thesis especially but also to the programmatic and charismatic leader theories. The nationalist right appears to be pushing a comprehensive reorientation of Japanese political culture and polity.

Wishing and seeking to whitewash Japan's role in World War II is only part of a broader agenda that emphasizes nationalism and independent assertiveness. The mayor of Tokyo and leader of the third largest party in the Diet, Shintaro, gives the movement a popular face.

Several of the theories apply to the European cases. As we saw anti-immigration is a common thread, almost constituting a single issue. Nevertheless as most of these have other issues they emphasize includes cutting taxes and reducing the welfare state. The exceptions are the Danish Peoples Party and the Sweden Democrats. Of course these are Tea Party issues as well. The reverse post-materialism thesis holds in the right wing leaders and supporters blame system elites for the supposed ills they have brought on with their social and economic policies.

In several cases, including Switzerland and Austria, the far right parties have been “mainstreamed,” that is, the political opportunity structure thesis. Likewise in Switzerland and Austria the mediatization applies as we saw. Denmark is a clear case of national traditions thesis, but most do share this.

Conclusions

An elaboration of this article would more explicitly compare voting bases and organizational structures. But enough overlap and comparisons were found between the Tea Party, nationalism in Japan, and far-right parties in Western Europe to warrant further analysis.

As van Spanje discovered, far right parties not only have an impact on policy, but the latter is facilitated by the far right, anti-immigration parties’ impact on other parties. This is especially true of conservative parties but he found that far right parties affect the entire party spectrum. As seen the Tea Party has greatly impacted the Republican Party, not only by winning control of local party organizations but by forcing moderately conservative incumbents and candidates to shift their policy positions and rhetoric to the right. They speak to Tea Party issues like immigration as well as taxes and governance.

An expanded article would include far-right parties in Eastern Europe, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania, as well as Australia and other democracies with right-wing parties to test hypotheses about far-right parties and movements more expansively than in this article.

It would also look at far right parties over time, searching for trends in size and strength and whether there is a cycle to these parties’ rise, decline, and reemergence.

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