Populism and Moralization of Politics
in the Age of Systemic Crisis
── A Sociocybernetic Case Study of Japanese Politics ──

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1. Introduction

In many countries, economic and political problems have been stirring up social turmoil. Especially, economic problems have been epicenters of political earthquakes and social unrests. Social turmoil is apt to create unusual political climates. So-called "populism" is one of the by-products of such political climates. We should also notice that populism is a by-product of democracy itself. It has ambivalent effects to democracy. Populism could provide voters with an opportunity to change an existing political scene, on the one hand. However, on the other hand, populism could come along with self-righteous assertiveness and intolerance to political pluralism. How does this problematic side effect of populism appear?

Mény and Surel (2002: 2) write, "the concept [populism] is no longer used to describe, almost exclusively, Third World countries governed by charismatic leaders, but has increasingly been applied to situations in

Western Europe." Albertazzi and McDonnell (2008: 2) argue, "since the early 1990's in Western Europe, populist movements have achieved their best ever results in countries like France, Switzerland and Denmark and have entered national government for the first time in state such Italy, Austria and the Netherland." Instead of examining the cases in Western Europe, this paper[1] will contribute to the study of populism by examining a non-western and non-Third World case, a case of Japanese politics. Considering the simultaneous emergencies of populism in western democracies, there should be a common societal condition that offers populism opportunities to get political momentum. How can we describe the societal condition of contemporary populism?

To answer these research questions and meet the research purpose, we need a theoretical approach that has enough generality to provide scope for comparative studies. So, this paper will examine our case of populism from a sociocybernetic point of view, especially on the basis of Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory, which is one of major theoretical legacies of sociocybernetics. While political scientists tend to focus on the ideological content of populism, or conceptualize populism as political discourse, strategy and so forth. This paper will rather pay attention to contemporary societal circumstances that provide fertile soil for populism and describe it as a complex phenomenon in the circumstances. As sociocybernetics shares a constructivist point of view with other sociological approaches, this paper observes the phenomenon "populism" and its circumstances from

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a constructivist point of view. This approach will shed light on societal conditions of contemporary populism and its constructivist dimension on the systemic level of society.

2. Definitions of Populism

As many scholars say, populism is an elusive phenomenon. Ionescu and Gellner（1969: 1）write, "there can ... be no doubt about the *importance* of populism. But no one is quite clear just what it *is*. As a doctrine or a movement, it is elusive and protean"（emphasis by the original authors）. Ernesto Laclau also states, "'Populism' is a concept both elusive and recurrent"（Laclau 1977: 143）. Reviewing the history of the study of populism, Paul Taggart remarks, "the holy grail of a definition of populism is elusive"（Taggart 2002: 66）. To find general concept of populism, Taggart（2000: 2-4）has pointed out six themes that we should consider:（1）hostility to institutionalized representative politics;（2）identifying itself with heartland of their idealized people;（3）lacking a core value or ideology;（4）coming about as a reaction to a sense of crisis;（5）passing as a short-term episode;（6）taking on the hue of its environment like a chameleon.

Referring to Taggart's and other scholars' work, Margaret Canovan distinguished two types of populism: New Populism and Politicians' Populism （Canovan 2005: 74-78）. In the former type, populists challenge existing political parties and claim that they are authentic representatives of the people who have sovereignty[2]. This political attitude is also a challenge to institutionalized representative politics, but it（as Taggart says）lacks core values and takes on the hue of their environment. The latter type of

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2) The term, "New Populism" was originally discussed in Taggart（1995）.

populism is carried out by existing, professional politicians[3]. It also bypasses existing divisions of political parties and traditional confrontations of ideologies or classes. Canovan says, "outside the USA, Politicians' Populism is associated more with the weakening of traditional party structures" (Canovan 2005: 77). In this situation, the mass media prepares a stage of "audience democracy" (Manin 1997) for populist leaders. "Television maximizes the importance of personal leadership, allowing and encouraging leaders to appeal to the electorate as a whole" (Canovan 2005: 77).

Acknowledging the elusiveness of populism, Mudde and Rovia Kaltwasser (2012) try to reach a "*minimal* definition" of populism to keep conceptual clarity and applicability to empirical and comparative study. They define populism as "thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people" (Mudde and Rovia Kaltwasser 2012: 8) [4]. In his study of nationalism, Michael Freeden used the term "thin-centred ideology" to describe the characteristic of nationalism (Freeden 1998: 750–751). In my understanding, a thin-centred ideology is a patchwork of a small number of ideologies that are chosen arbitrarily for political purposes. So, compared to "thick" ideologies such as liberalism and

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3) Mazzoleni (2008) conceptualized this kind of populism as "soft populism", in which mainstream politicians adopt softened populists attitude. Snow and Moffitt (2012) called the same type of populism as "mainstream populism".

4) This definition of populism appeared first in Mudde (2004: 543). Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell acknowledge that this definition is the most widely used definition of populism in recent years. However, they do not agree with the homogeneousness of the elite. Instead, they put "a set of elites and dangerous 'others'" on the other side of the confrontation (Albertazzi and McDonnel 2015: 4-5).

socialism, the scope of thin-centred ideology to offer concrete and practical policies is limited. According to Mudde and Rovia Kaltwasser, the core concepts of populism are "the people", "the elite" and "the general will." And, opposites of populism are elitism and pluralism（Mudde and Rovia Kaltwasser 2012: 9）. As cited above, in populists' perception, "the people" is pure and "the elite" is corrupt. Populists appeal that they are authentic representatives of "the general will" of the people. Here, it is worthwhile to note that Mudde and Rovia Kaltwasser grasp a moralistic nature of populism in their definition. They argue, "populism is in essence a form of *moral* politics"（Mudde and Rovia Kaltwasser 2012: 8, emphasis by the original authors）[5].

There are other approaches that conceptualize populism as discourse, strategy, political style and so forth. Here we cannot step into an intensive review of various approaches to populism. However, for the purpose of this paper, it is worthwhile to refer to an approach that conceptualize populism as a political style. Jagers and Walgrave（2007: 322）proposed a thin definition of populism that considers it as "a political communication style of political actors that refer to the people." In this definition, "political actors" include not only politicians but also movement leaders, interest group representatives and journalists. Moffitt and Tormey（2014: 387）sees populism as one of political styles, which are "the repertoires of performance that are used to create political relations."[6] Instead of the content of populist ideology, they focus on the performative dimension of political actions and the relationship between political actions and the people. They point out three elements of

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5) The moralistic nature of populism has already been noted in earlier studies. Peter Wiles pointed out it as one of major characteristics of populism. He wrote, "Populism is moralistic rather than programmatic"（Wiles 1969: 167）.

6) They argue that their definition offers larger scope for comparative analysis than other scholars' definitions（Moffitt and Tormey 2014: 387）.

populism as a political style: populists (1) appeal to "the people", (2) get political momentum from the people's perception of crisis, breakdown or threat, and (3) disregard the "appropriate" ways of acting and present themselves as "outsiders" in politics as usual (Moffitt and Tormey 2014: 391-394).

As stated above, this paper is mainly interested in the societal circumstances of contemporary populism. In my view, common circumstances that developed democracies have been facing in these three decades are chronic and massive systemic crises such as growing government debts and economic crisis after the Lehman shock in 2008. In this paper, the term *crisis* will be used to refer to a situation described as "crisis" by its observers. It means that we should note how the situation is described and what effects the description has on the political scene. According to Niklas Luhmann, "crisis" is a schema that describes A as B (for instance, a drink as wine, a social phenomenon as a "crisis") (Luhmann 1997: 110-111; Luhmann 2000: 300). The schema "crisis" creates a pressing impression and makes people feel that something must be done about the situation. This paper will also use the term *systemic crisis* to refer to a crisis caused by societal subsystems—— to use the term of Luhmann's social systems theory, functional systems—— such as economic system, political system and so forth. The following will serve as examples of systemic crises: the lingering recession in Japan since early 1990's, the sovereign debt crisis in Europe since 2009, the political dysfunction such as "congressional dysfunction" over the debt-ceiling in the USA in 2011. Systemic crises often influence each other and deepen the crises: a serious economic problem stimulates the political conflict and weakens the government, and the political confusion worsens the situation ... In 2011, managing director of International Monetary Fund Christine Lagarde described the "vicious cycle" between economy and politics. "Weak growth and weak balance sheets—of governments, financial institutions, and

households—are feeding negatively on each other." "This vicious cycle is gaining momentum and, frankly, it has been exacerbated by policy indecision and political dysfunction"（Beattie 2011）. She described the situation as an inter-systemic crisis caused by the economic and political system. This paper will call such an inter-systemic crisis involving two or more functional systems as a *multifunctional systemic crisis.*

As long as the situation described as "crisis" persists, a sense of urgency——to borrow Taggart's phrase, "a sense of crisis"——influences the political scene. The more serious the crisis is and the longer it persists, the more deeply the people's confidence in existing political parties and political institutions become undermined. The important point is that the people think the political establishment——existing politicians especially who are in power——is responsible for the crisis and its persistence is a proof of its incompetence. The weakened confidence in politics and the political establishment provides budding, non-mainstream politicians with an opportunity to launch a political campaign as "reformers". Such outsiders who have been marginalized in the political arena can *reject*, without hesitation, the existing political distinctions that have been structuring the political scene. For instance, Ross Perot rejected the existing party structure （Republicans versus Democrats） and appealed that he deserved to be the President during the U.S. presidential election in 1992. One of prominent pioneers of sociocybernetics, Gotthard Günther formulated "any value that does not accept the proffered choice" as a "rejection value"（Günther 1962: 351）. In the light of the sociocybernetics view, Perot appears as a presidential candidate who *rejected* the existing two-valued choice of American politics and might have restructured it.

For the purpose of this paper, it is useful to conceptualize populism as a style of political communication because this conceptualization connects

the study of populism to our constructivist point of view. In the following discussion, this paper treats populism as a performed style of political communications that rejects and restructures existing leading distinctions of politics by introducing the distinction: "the people" and their threat. In the populist style of political communications, actors speak in the name of the people and criticize their political targets that they are harming the people's interests and rights.

3. A Case Study: the Koizumi Administration in 2001−2006

In this section, this paper provides a case study of Japanese politics to discuss populism in a systemic crisis. To be specific, our case is about the Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's political actions and the mass media's descriptions of Japanese politics in 2001−2006.

When he run for a presidential election of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (LDP), he did not have a powerful factional base. "Insiders predicted Hashimoto [former Prime Minister, his biggest rival] would win by a large margin because he headed the largest LDP faction" (Bowen 2003: 44). Koizumi got massive support from the rank-and-file members in primary elections of prefectural organizations of the LDP. LDP lawmakers could not disregard the result of the primaries (Park 2001: 458; Boucek 2012: 200). Against the prediction, he defeated Hashimoto, who had a powerful factional base in the LDP. It was an unexpected victory. The *Japan News* described an unconventional character of Koizumi, "In early 2001, when he was running for the presidency of the LDP, Koizumi got a favorable reaction from voters by loudly declaring his determination to 'destroy' the ruling party [LDP] together with its 50−

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7) *Japan News*. 2006. "New Govt to Address Many Issues." August 30, p. 4.

year history. As a result, he has been nicknamed a henjin （eccentric）."[7] Koizumi was not a mainstreamer in the LDP and interestingly he was an unconventional politician for the public. He was "known as a 'weirdo' within the party" and was "none of the above" for the rank and file （Bowen 2003: 44）. However, he saw himself as a reformer. He said, "people call me a 'henjin' （eccentric）, but I am a man of reform."[8] Normally, as a candidate for the party leader, he should have said that he would "destroy" the rival parties. However, he declared that he would "destroy" his party.

This political performance has two implications. First, he ignored—rejected （Gotthard Günther）—the existing political distinction （confrontation） between the ruling party （LDP） and the oppositions. Second, he replaced the existing distinction with another distinction: a reformer and resistance forces. He criticized his opponents in the LDP and called them as "resistance forces" （old-guard cronies）. He restructured the political confrontation from an inter-party struggle to an internal struggle of the LDP. Despite the eccentricity of his performance, his political gambits had political rationality at that time. The economic recession since 1990's had completely undermined the people's confidence in the ruling party （LDP）. The situation was advantageous to opposition parties. As a leader of the cornered ruling party, he decided to change uncooperative colleagues of his party into major political adversaries and restructured the political scene. Then, he and his party got an opportunity to win as a "reformer". He was positive and negative to his party simultaneously. So, we can say that his performance was paradoxical. However, he de-paradoxized it by introducing the distinction reformer/ resistance forces. Using this distinction, Koizumi excluded a part of his

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8) *Japan News*, 2001. "Koizumi Becomes Icon for LDP Revival/But Flexibility Fails to Translate into Specific Measures." April 25, p. 3.

colleagues out of the party as adversaries of his reform policy.

Otake（2003）names this type of populism as "reform populism." He describes it as a sort of theater democracy that uses a moral, dualistic rhetoric such as a good/bad-distinction[9]. In May 2001, Koizumi said in the Diet as a new Prime Minister, "All opponents of my cabinet are resistance forces." Of course, he himself is a "good" reformer and the opponents are "bad" old-guard conservatives（"resistance forces"）. Mass media described the political scene by this moral schema. This moralization and dramatization in the context of crisis are the characteristics of reform populism in this case.

Figure 1　Approval Ratings of Mori Cabinet and Koizumi Cabinet
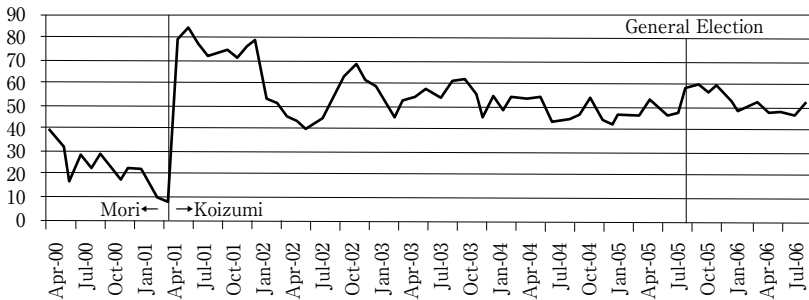
Source: Japan Broadcasting Corporation Polls, Apr. 2000–Sep. 2006.

The approval ratings of his and his predecessor's cabinets suggest the situation to which Koizumi was reacting. Koizumi succeeded his predecessor Yoshiro Mori（LDP）as the Prime Minister in April 2001. We can see a drastic change in the approval ratings of the two cabinets（see Figure 1）. The Mori cabinet had been suffering from low approval ratings and Koizumi

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9)　Otake（2006）uses "populism" just to refer to dualistic theater politics which uses a good/bad-distinction. Indeed, his definition fits to some Japanese cases, but I rather define the term more generally and specify it with adjectives such as "moral" to open the possibility for comparative studies of populism.

dramatically changed the situation. In May 2001, after the presidential election of the LDP, The *Washington Post* reported, "public opinion surveys released this week show support for the Koizumi cabinet ranging from 85 to 87 percent, a 50-year high for some polls. The change in public mood is dramatic; the approval rating of his LDP predecessor, Yoshiro Mori, had sunk to 8 percent"[10]. Koizumi revived his party dramatically by his performance.

His political drama came to a climax with the General Election in September 2005. The underlying agenda of this election was an economic reform to overcome the lingering recession that Japan had been suffering since early 1990's. Indeed, a sense of crisis had been shared in this respect since then. In August 2005, his postal privatization bill was rejected by the House of Councilors (the Upper House of the Diet). Afterward, Koizumi immediately dissolved the House of Representatives (the Lower House) and proceeded to the General Election. He set "postal service privatization" as a main and only agenda of the election. Just after the dissolution of the House of Representatives, Koizumi said, "The Diet said postal reform isn't necessary. Is that really so? I want to ask the people whether they are for or against postal reform", and "this election is all about postal reform."[11] He fielded candidates, who supported his policies, in his opponents' constituencies as "political assassins" and dramatized the General Election as a fight between good "reformers" and bad "resistance forces" through the mass media. The election appeared as if it was nothing but an internal political struggle between pro-Koizumi faction and anti-Koizumi faction in the LDP. And, opposition parties were left out of the attention (Ando 2005). Electoral analysts

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10) *Washington Post*. 2001. "Politics as Spectator Sport; 'Koizumi Phenomenon' Grips a Nation Used to More Reserved Leaders." May 30, p. A－13.

11) *Japan News*. 2005. "Koizumi Dissolves Lower House Sept. 11 Election Set after Upper House rejects Postal Reform Bills." August 09, p. 1.

thought that postal service privatization could not be a main agenda of the General Election because voters were not interested in it, and political parties and candidates did not take a clear stance on it（Kabashima and Sugawara 2005）. However, it could and brought a victory to Koizumi.

4. Moral Populism and Democracy

In a democratic society, people's choice（through an election）gives political and legal legitimacy to politicians as representatives of the people. Politicians who adopt a populist style of political communications also have to win the people's support in elections. In this respect, populism does not necessarily harm democracy. However, as scholars say, populism is often regarded as a threat to democracy[12]. So, the problem is *how* populism becomes a threat to democracy.

In Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory, politics and the mass media are described as autonomous social systems that operate in their specific ways. Public opinion works as an interface between these two systems and their societal environment. The mass media observes politics through public opinion（such as polls）, and politics observes its societal environment through public opinion as well[13]. Through public opinion, politics can observe how

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12) For example, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser（2012: 16）say, "often populism is seen as a threat to democracy, undermining its key values and striving for an alternative, an authoritarian system." And, Canovan also says, "populist movements are widely regarded, especially in Europe and Latin America, as threats to democracy"（Canovan 2004: 244）.

13) I use the word "societal" in the same meaning as "gesellschaftlich" in Luhmann's writings. Luhmann often uses "Gesellschaft"（society）as an encompassing social system which includes all communications. In his writings, "societal（gesellschaftlich）" means related to the encompassing social system.

the public observe itself and political issues. According to Luhmann, there must be two freedoms in public opinion: freedom to choose themes of communication and freedom to express our opinions. Luhmann defines public opinion as *communications on political themes* with these freedoms（Luhmann 1971: 13）. Free public opinion provides the political system with enough complexity to deal with problems of the complex society, that is to say, the modern, functionally differentiated society. Otherwise, public opinion cannot fulfill its function by bringing various themes and opinions into political discussions. Above all, the *moralization* of political communications hinders this function of public opinion, because moralized communications are intolerant of disagreements. Moralized communications always offer "right" and "good" opinions. People are not expected to offer their personal opinions in moralized communications[14]. They are expected to agree with such "right" and "good" opinions. Luhmann calls this non-interactive communication as "manipulation"（Luhmann 1971: 13）. In a democratic society, the political system observes public opinion and takes in the complexity of its societal environment. Moralized, "manipulative" communications hinder it. Populism, which criticizes the political establishment and appeals to the people for a change of politics, does not necessarily hinder the function of public opinion. However, when populism starts to use or is described by a moral rhetoric, it becomes an obstacle for free public opinion and a threat to democracy.

5. Relation between Political System and Mass Media

We can see clearly that Koizumi's political drama was presented on the

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14)　Taggart also suggests that intolerance is central to analysis of populism （Taggart 1995: 37）.

screen of the mass media. Ishida（2005）critically described the relation between Koizumi and the mass media, especially Television as "complicity" after the General Election in 2005. However, this phrase is not enough to describe the complex relation between the political system and mass media.

The political system and mass media autonomously operate with their own structures that decide the fields of possibilities of their operations. Luhmann defines "structures" of social systems as conditions that set the range of possibilities of connectable operations（Luhmann 1997: 430）. Dualistic distinctions such as reformer/resistance forces also limit the possibilities of operations of the political system. So, we can see these distinctions as structures of the political system.

These distinctions work as sensors to perceive differences of political stance that stimulate political communications. By the political distinction（reformer/resistance forces）, Koizumi got an opportunity to clarify who are his allies and enemies. Thanks to this distinction, the political system could reproduce political communications. The mass media prefers conflicts as its news stories. Conflicts provide an uncertainty of who will be a winner（Luhmann 1996: 59）. This political uncertainty helps the mass media to produce its news values. Koizumi profited from massive media coverage of his political performances. In this way, the political system and mass media operate autonomously and interrelatedly. Therefore, when politics provides the mass media with news materials that attract the people's attention, there could be such cycle of interrelated operations.

Interestingly, Koizumi himself also had an experience to be a victim of moralized politics during a factional struggle in the LDP in early 1990's. Koizumi said, "the mass media distinguished 'the good' and 'the bad'. Some people refrain from making comments not to be labeled as an old-guard crony." A Koizumi's political ally, Taku Yamazaki（a lawmaker, LDP）

Figure 2　Functions and Performances of Political System and Mass media
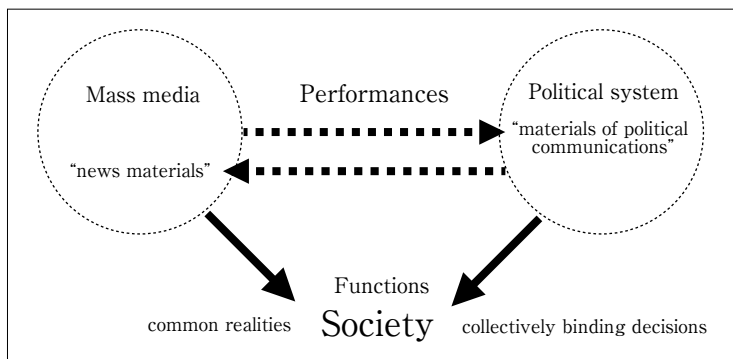
said, "the mass media labeled（us）as old guard cronies and set a political current toward political reform. During debates in television programs,［I was］imposed to play a role of a representative of old-guard cronies. And, they［"reformers"］often said［to me］'you are wrong'."[15] We can find the intolerance of the moral narrative framework in this case as well. Koizumi might have learned the power of the framework to silence political opponents from his experience. As we know, the framework worked again more dramatically in 2000's.

We can schematize this relation between the political system and mass media on the basis of Luhmann's theoretical framework（see Figure 2）. Luhmann distinguishes two aspects of workings of subsystems of society, functional systems: *function* and *performance*. Function is a contribution of a subsystem to society as a whole. Performance is a contribution of a subsystem to its societal environment, above all, to the other subsystems （Luhmann 1993: 156）. The function of the political system is to provide

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15)　*Asahi Shimbun*. 1993. "A Label 'Old-Guard Conservatives' Has Wings Distinguishing Good and Bad." November 27, p. 29.（in Jpapanese）.

possibilities to make collectively binding decisions (Luhmann 2000: 84). The function of mass media is to provide common realities that can be assumed as known to the public (Luhmann 1996: 120－121). Whereas function is a contribution to the society as a whole, performance appears differently in each recipient system. For instance, the political system provides the mass media with facts such as political actions and comments, and the mass media uses some of them as news materials. Providing news materials is the performance of politics that appears in the mass media. The mass media provides common realities by disseminating information. Politics can use some of them in political communications. So, providing materials of political communications is the performance of the mass media that appears in the political system. On the one hand, we can describe the moralization of politics as mass media's performance in the political system. Politicians can or must see the moralized reality as given and make political actions in consideration of it. However, on the other hand, we should notice that political actions provided by the political system enable the mass media's performance. So, we should also notice that such a series of performances of the two systems brings about moralized politics[16].

6. Moral Populism and Systemic Crisis

In 1991, the so-called Japanese "bubble economy" burst. Since then,

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16) Discussing American cases, Heineman (2005: 65) regards to "embrace a socially conservative and economically populist agenda" as moral populism. Moral populism in our cases brings about a division only in politicians. However, the American case could create a deep political rift in American society because issues concerning religious, moral beliefs are apt to be uncompromisable.

Japan had been suffering from the lingering economic recession. It is called Japan's "lost decade." The long recession made people lose confidence in Japanese economy and politics, and Japanese society was filled with a feeling of stagnation. A phrase such as "due to the lingering recession" became a usual refrain of depressing news that report the rise of bankruptcies, unemployment rate and so forth. In fact, during a decade after the burst, Japan's unemployment rate increased by 2.5 times（see **Figure 3**）. However, fortunately, it did not cause serious social unrest. So, we could say that there was a vague and chronic feeling of crisis. Koizumi made good use of the situation as a political opportunity[17]. As wrote above, Koizumi became a leader of the ruling LDP in 2001, just after a decade since the burst. The people hoped him to break through the situation. He appealed that he would beat down the mainstreamers in his party, and presented himself as a "reformer". This political action brought him high approval ratings（see **Figure 1**）.

Figure 3 Japan's Unemployment Rate after the Collapse of the Bubble Economy
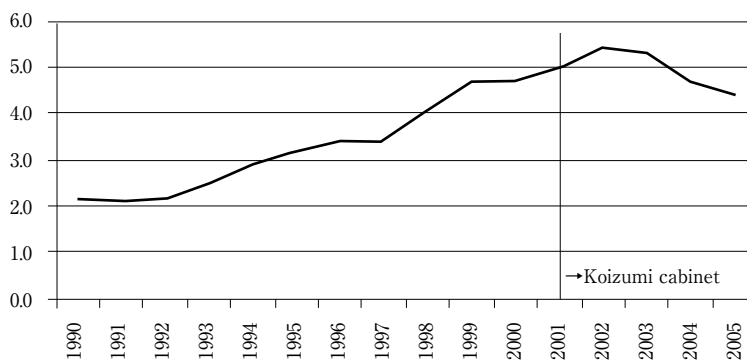
Source: Labor Force Survey, Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications
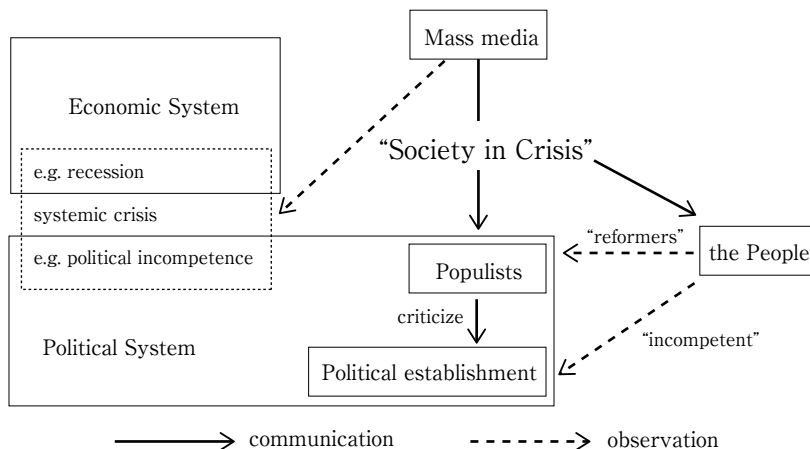
17) Mulgan（2002: 97）writes, "The Koizumi administration tried to exploit a sense of crisis to effect its radical reform program".

This case suggests us a general scheme of populism under systemic crisis (see Figure 4). The mass media spreads descriptions of "society in crisis". The constructed and disseminated reality of "crisis" increases political dissatisfaction of the people and provides political challengers, in our context, populists with political opportunities to get political momentum. As we can see in the case of Japan's "lost decade" or the global economic recession after the Lehman shock, systemic crises often persist for months or years. The persistence of crises makes people disappointed deeply at the political establishment and populists can make good use of the situation to gain political momentum. Populists criticize the political establishment for its incompetence and accuse it of being an obstacle of reform, a threat to the people's interests. This criticism will be spread by the mass media again. And if the people recognize that they are facing not only an economic crisis, but also a political crisis because of incompetence of the political establishment, we can describe the situation as "multifunctional systemic crisis."

It is certainly true that this kind of societal process is probable in democratic society. However, we should notice that a strong sense of crisis tends to bestow strong popularity (not, legitimacy) to self-claimed reformers. Everyone says "agree!" to the necessity of reform. This strong popularity makes it easy for populists to talk assertively with, so to say, a sacred cause. In this situation, there could hardly be productive political competitions that are the foundation of democracy. When everyone agrees with the necessity of reform, what kind of distinction decides fates of politicians? If the answer is *effectiveness/ineffectiveness* of policies that they propose, there would still be a hope of handling the crisis. However, what we learned from the case of the Koizumi Administration was that the distinction could be moralized.

Once the leading distinction of politics is moralized, populism comes along with the problematic side effect. Under the situation of systemic crisis,

Figure 4　Populism under Systemic Crisis


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                           ┌─────────────┐
                           │ Mass media  │
                           └─────────────┘
┌──────────────────────────┐
│  Economic System         │         "Society in Crisis"
│  ┌────────────────────┐  │
│  │ e.g. recession     │  │
│  ├────────────────────┤  │                                    "reformers"
│  │ systemic crisis    │  │         ┌──────────┐ ◄───────── ┌───────────┐
│  ├────────────────────┤  │         │Populists │            │ the People│
│  │ e.g. political     │  │         └──────────┘            └───────────┘
│  │ incompetence       │  │           criticize │           "incompetent"
│  └────────────────────┘  │         ┌───────────────────────┐
│  Political System        │         │Political establishment│
└──────────────────────────┘         └───────────────────────┘
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──────────▶ communication　　- - - - - ▶ observation

populists have opportunities to enjoy great popularity and the opponents can be daunted by it. In our case, the political struggle between Koizumi and his opponents was described by the moral, good/bad-distinction. The struggle was played on the screen of the mass media and followed a story line of popular morality play. In popular morality play, the bad（antagonist）makes the good（protagonist and/or innocent people）suffer at first. But, in the end of story, the bad is defeated and punished, and the good is rewarded with victory and happiness. Koizumi was rewarded with the electoral victory, and the opponents of the Koizumi's reform who were cast as "the bad" were punished with the electoral defeats. Once the political scene begins to follow the story line of the morality play, a victory of "the good"（protagonist）and a defeat of "the bad"（antagonist）are expected by the people. In this narrative framework, opponents are fated to lose. There is only a little room for productive debates on effective policies.

7. Conclusion

After the end of the Cold War, classical political distinctions have lost their power to lead politics. Luhmann says, "Liberal and socialist parties can no longer offer politics which are different in principle. Equally, the schema conservative/progressive means little in a society which is changing so rapidly" (Luhmann 1998: 7). After "the end of great narratives" (Jean-François Lyotard), politicians and political parties are contesting one another not over the superiority of their principles or ideologies, but over the superiority of their performances to the societal environment. So, they have become more vulnerable to the societal (especially economic) disturbance. This eagerness for performance is true for not only politics, but also other functional systems. Luhmann writes, "the efforts made mainly for performance enhancement make functional systems more sensitive to their environment" (Luhmann 1997: 793). Concerning politics, the vulnerability of political systems offers fertile soil for populism. Political challengers can make use of the vulnerability to push mainstreamers into a corner by criticizing their poor performances.

However, populism does not necessarily become a threat to democracy. It is a style of political campaign in contemporary liberal democratic society. Populists appeal to the people that they are authentic representatives of their will and seek support from them through the mass media. And, if they win elections, they will become a new political power and change a political scene. It is a probable political strategy to change a political scene in free and open society[18]. However, once populists or the mass media start to use a moral

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18)   In this point, it is interesting to examine if populism could be a political style of "insurgent politics" in the developed network society. Castells suggests the potential of populism for a regeneration of democracy (Castells 2009: 297).

distinction, populism becomes problematic. As we have seen in our case, the moral narrative framework tends to silence political opponents of populists and push them into a corner without enough policy debates. We should be vigilant for this intolerance of moral populism.

As the recession after the collapse of the Japanese bubble economy did not cause serious social unrest, moral populism in our case did not become radicalized. However, if the situation deteriorated further, the moral populism should have become radicalized. Depending on each society's circumstances, there could be not only moral, but also nationalistic, ethnic or religious radical populism that brings intolerance into political discourse. We can conduct case studies of these types of radical populism from comparative points of view.

The intolerance of radical populism is a threat to open and free public opinion and democracy. So, radical populism is another systemic crisis caused by combined performances of the political system and mass media. As also seen in the crisis caused by combined performances of the economic system and political system, these multifunctional systemic crises are and will remain a chronic symptom in the age of systemic crisis.

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