

Blame It on Brussels

...

Carlos Correa, Johannes Myrvold, Tale Eilertsen

Political Blame-Games

- What is the phenomena “Blame it on Brussels”?
 - Blame-games is a classical feature of politics in democracy
 - Opposition vs Government
 - European Integration changes the structure of the political blame-game
 - Europeanisation of the blame-game



Why does the politicians blame it on Brussels?

- Governments deflects the blame to avoid responsibility of unpopular policies
- Blame-shifting is shaped by a combination of actors *preferences* and *opportunities*
- Institutional complexity of EU makes them perfect target for blame-shifting

Two different ways of “Blaming the Brussels”

- Governments who deflects and externalize criticism, this way is called *blame-shift* logic
 - Domestic policies implemented by the national executives
 - National government becomes a target for critique
 - Seeks to deflect the blame
 - Outcome of the classic opposition-government dynamics
- EU-level actors becomes more visible target because of their authority, which is referred to as *delegation* logic
 - Policies implemented by the European Union
 - Absence of domestic implementing government → EU-level actors in the spotlight
 - Opposition parties consequently blames the EU

Slow vaccinations in the Czech Republic

- Czech Republic was slow to get started on vaccinating the public
- Babis: “EU is too slow in approving coronavirus vaccines.”
- Babis turning down 70.000 extra dozes of vaccines
- Babis appointing four different health ministers



BREXIT - TAKE BACK CONTROL

- The UK leaving the EU because of economy, sovereignty and migration and immigration
- Migration and immigration is a big problem in the UK
- The EU is a failed economic and political project



The Brexit blame game



- Johnson's Brexit deal failed because of Germany and Ireland
- Johnson wanting to win the blame game rather than making a deal that would benefit both the EU and the UK.

2015 Refugee Crisis

- Andrej Babis: EUs push to force Czech Republic would only fuel rise of extremist parties..
- Viktor Orbán: “If we want to stop the mass migration, we must first put the brakes on Brussels,”
- Prime ministers of Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic [...] argued that west European- style multiculturalism is nothing but trouble an that they have no intention of repeating the same mistakes (*The Guardian*, Sep 2015)



Raise in the prices of electricity and energy resources

- Europes energy prices are skyrocketing
- Countries blame the EU for making market intervention difficult
- Spain: “EU rejects request to change power pricing mechanism”



Conclusions

- Blame games are an effective way for governments to avoid accountability
- The distant relationship between EU and its citizens, and its complicated institutional system, makes it easy for MS to pass the fault to Brussels
- European citizens trust their national governments more than they do the European institutions



MAIN SOURCES

- Gietel-Basten, Stuart. 2016. "Why Brexit? The Toxic Mix of Immigration and Austerity." *Population and Development Review*. 42 (4): 673-680. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44132229>
- McEnchroe, Tom. 2021. "Babiš: EU is too slow in approving coronavirus vaccines." Radio Prague International. <https://english.radio.cz/babis-eu-too-slow-approving-coronavirus-vaccines-8704619>
- Mortokowitz, Siegfried. 2021. "Czech PM under fire after turning down 70,000 extra coronavirus vaccines." Politico. <https://www.politico.eu/article/czech-prime-minister-andrej-babis-coronavirus-vaccines-austria-eu/>
- Laura Mowat. 2017: "EU will FUEL the rise of populism: The New Czech PM warns Brussels over migrant policy" Express <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/890584/European-Union-latest-news-Andrej-Babis-Czech-Prime-Minister-extremist-parties-grow>
- Ian Traynor, 2015; "Refugee crisis: east and west split as leaders resent Germany for waiving rules" The Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/05/migration-crisis-europe-leaders-blame-brussels-hungary-germany>
- Christian Kvorning Larsen, 2015: "Profit or perish? Hungary and the Czech Republic's response to the refugee crisis" <https://www.europeum.org/en/articles/detail/58/profit-or-perish-hungary-and-the-czech-republic-s-response-to-the-refugee-crisis>