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MIGRATION TO EUROPE AND RIGHT-WING POPULISM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UKRAINIAN-RUSSIAN WAR

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ABSTRACT

With the war between Ukraine and Russia, Ukrainians began to migrate to Europe. Europe is also home to migrants from Africa and the Middle East. All these migration movements have made the theses of right-wing populists in Europe attractive and influenced positively the right-wing populists' electoral success. Europe is struggling with waves of migration and at the same time is experiencing the rise of right-wing populists. In order to increase border security, protect sovereignty and preserve the local culture, a multidimensional border security concept is being implemented that exploits all the possibilities of technology. In the political space that is secured to protect the territory in which sovereignty is based, the phenomenon of migration is countered with right-wing populist elements.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Ukrainian-Russian war, which began on February 24, 2022 with the invasion of the Ukrainian territory by the Russian army, has caused a political, economic, cultural and social crisis, as well as a major humanitarian crisis and migration mobility. There has been an intense movement of migrants from Ukraine to European countries (The Economist, 2022). This migration has also led to a conjuncture in European politics where right-wing populist parties have gained strength and the political space has been securitized. It is widely discussed in the international community that Ukrainian grain exports have not been able to take place as usual due to the war and that the export of agricultural and food products in limited quantities could cause a global food crisis in the long term. For this reason, there have been warnings of an increase in migration to Europe, especially from countries in Africa and the Middle East (Drozdiak, 2022; Besheer, 2023; Deveci Bozkuş, 2022). All these developments have led to the fact that issues of migration control and border security have become the most important agenda in Europe due to the war between Ukraine and Russia.

As the war between Ukraine and Russia continues, right-wing populist leaders have achieved advantages in elections in many European countries. In these elections, which took place in the atmosphere of war, populist rhetoric and tools such as stopping migration and protecting borders, which were among the political goals of far-right parties and leaders, paved the way for the implementation of concrete practices in European politics. This study examines the political space constructed with populist elements such as immigration, anti-immigration and border protection, which are the main items on the agenda of European politics after February 24, 2022. In the European countries where populism has transformed politics as a political actor in the sense of Carl Schmitt's friend-enemy distinction dichotomy and shaped it with elements such as security, native/non-native, ethnocentrism, Euroscepticism and border protection, what concrete policies and practices are implemented to prevent migration and increase security measures, and are there differences in practice between countries? Several concepts are used to analyze these policies and practices.

In the literature on populism and border security, migration and security policies, the concept of territorial populism is discussed (Mazzoleni, 2024), which is one of the specific definitions of

populism that are important for the problematic of this study. Territorial populism, which can be conceptualized as the reinforcement of current policies and goals of far-right populists in the political sphere of security with xenophobic emphasis on the territorial part, which is the constitutive element of the concepts of border and security, is one of the basic codes of anti-immigrant sentiments in contemporary Europe.

Qualitative research methods were used in this study. Discourse analyses of party leaders were obtained through newspaper and archival research. Analysis of the policies and practices of political leaders and actors such as the EU reacting and responding to developments related to the Ukraine-Russia war was conducted using print, visual, and digital media.

Theorizing populism and Securitization

The constitutive element of the concept of populism is the conflict between the innocent public and the elites as a distinction between "us" and "others" (Müller, 2018). Although populism is a concept that is much debated (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017; Canovan, 1981; Taggart, 2000; Urbinati, 2019), it is generally considered to be the antagonism (Laclau, 2005) between these two camps. Though there is no consensus on the definition of populism, there is a theoretical dimension constructed on the basis of the people and elites. Populism, which emerged around the struggle of the people against corrupt elites who include politicians and non-state actors –undermines national sovereignty- like the European Union, NATO, etc. While populism has no ideological baggage (Taggart, 2000, p. 2), it has different facets that can range from bipolar conflict (elite/people) to the domination of the majority.

Populism has developed in different countries and geographies, shaping the political conjuncture and creating new actors in the political sphere. As the first populist movements in the literature, populist social movements in Tsarist Russia and the USA in the 19th century is considered by many theorists (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 21-23; Müller, 2018, p. 34; Canovan, 1981, p. 5-6) as the core and starting point of the concept of populism. In this period, populism with social-revolutionary, corporatist, and anti-monarchist content caused radical changes and transformations in many countries, especially in Europe, until the period between the two world wars. The second wave of populism emerged in Latin American countries in the 1960s and 1970s with the rural-urban distinction. Then, in Latin America, there is a model that can be called left populism in the 1990s, where the heterogeneous masses excluded by the existing system and the establishment as a reaction to neoliberalism have been directly engaged by charismatic leaders such as Eva Morales and Hugo Chavez, by eliminating the institutions of representative democracy, and led by the policies of charismatic and left-wing leaders as the true representatives of the people (Weyland, 1996; Mouffe, 2019; Ateş, 2023, s. 398).

The third wave of populism is the blending and merging of far-right ideology and populism in Europe, which has continued from the 2000s to current. Although there are political parties in Europe that can be characterized as left populists, such as Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece, far-right populism is the dominant political actor. Migration is the main reason for the rise and expansion of far-right populism in Europe. The far-right became mainstream in the 2000s, affecting large segments of society with populist waves and it has turned into a heterogeneous structure (Mudde, 2022, p. 33-35). According to Mudde, global political developments such as the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, the economic and financial crisis in 2008, and the refugee crisis in 2015 have contributed to this situation (Mudde, 2022, p.32). So it is now necessary to focus on the issue of security and securization, which has been effective in expanding the base of right-wing populism.

With the end of the Cold War, the content, actors, and methods of the concept of security went through a transformation process, and a transition was made to a security concept with a different perspective (Mandacı & Özerim, 2013, p.107). The state-centered and militaristic definition of security has begun to be questioned. One of the contributors to this process and one of the architects of the transformation of the concept of security is the Copenhagen School.

With the Copenhagen School's securitization theory that is constructed by various actors in almost every field of socio-political life and in this process of construction, they create their own security threats and become an element of power (Buzan, Waever, & Wilde, 1998). In securitization theory, the securitizing actor is the one who through a certain discourse and actions, convinces the rest of society that a group/subject poses a threat to society, thereby providing legitimacy for

extraordinary actions and activities to take place (Baysal, 2022). The legitimation of the securitization of an actor/subject perceived as an immediate threat is important here and it is necessary to go one step beyond discourse and use performative (Austin, 1962) elements. With the securitization of migration, which is a multidimensional and multi-actor concept, migrants have been transformed into a threat and the phenomenon of migration has been constructed as a security issue.

In the securitization theory of the Copenhagen School, which is used to analyze the relationship between migration and security, migration also has a social dimension. The social dimension of migration is, on the one hand, the degeneration and weakening of national identity and cultural codes and the deterioration of national integrity, and on the other hand, the decrease in welfare and threat to economic integrity by being included in the share of national income (Alexseev, 2011). Migration as a securitized subject is both a threat to the survival of the state and can turn into social conflicts.

Right Wing and Territorial Populism

Xenophobia, which is one of the main elements of the far-right movement, is the enmification of individuals with different identities and ethnic origins other than the native in a society by turning them into subjects of fear. The far-right ideology, which states that foreigners threaten the foundations of the homogeneous nation-state as a figure of fear that undermines security, is characterized by Islamophobia, antisemitism, authoritarian tendencies and adherence to patriarchal traditions (Mudde, 2022, p. 37-43). Populism performs this state of crisis, in which fear and threat are involved, and they use their performance and style quite effectively (Moffitt, 2016). In order to address the perception of fear and threat against foreigners, it is necessary to go to their roots.

For proponents of authoritarian values, who see the world as unstable, uncertain and full of various threats, any security challenge must be responded to by militaristic means (Norris & Inglehart, 2019, s. 76-79). It emphasizes the defending of national interests and local culture from current global trends such as globalization, multiculturalism, new age and woke cultures. While far-right populism talks about the primacy of the native population and the indigenous, the concept of the border, which emphasizes the protection of the territory they live in, is in fact closely linked to populism.

The concept of territorial populism (Mazzoleni, 2024) in the literature can contribute to this study, which deals with the anti-migration and anti-immigrant nature of far-right populism. The existence of sovereignty over a particular territory is related to the borders of that territory (Williams, 2009). Although the concept of borders is discussed from different perspectives like political, sociological, geographical, cultural, anthropological and economical, it concretizes the existence of a land separated from the whole within the borders (Wilson & Donnan, 2012). The conceptual framework of populism actually tries to theorize by underlining the boundaries and the distinctions of two different political actors such as X and Y. Territorial populism, like rigt wing populism, emphasizes the need to preserve borders for the sustainability of national unity and global problems such as migration, which increase the permeability of borders, are a threat to national unity (Mazzoleni, 2024, p. 105-109). Far-right populist leaders claim that they created the practice of protecting national borders in order to protect national sovereignty. Typical examples are Donald Trump's recommendation to construct a wall on the border between the United States and Mexico, and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban constructing a wall against the influx of refugees from Serbia and Croatia. Brazil's ex-president Jair Bolsonaro's statement that the international community's warnings about the amazon forests in his country are an attempt to restrict his country's sovereignty reveals the relationship between sovereignty and border security (BBC News, 2019).

The Brexit process in the UK is a typical example of sovereignty and border security that can be characterized as territorial populism. The active role and populist discourse of the right-wing populist United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in this process led to the referendum process resulting in independence and the rise of Euroscepticism (Öner, 2021).

Border Security: As a Constitutive Part of Anti-Migration in Europe after Ukraine-Russia War

As the Ukraine-Russia war continues, right-wing populist actors in Europe have achieved electoral success (Temizer, 2022). In Hungary, Orban consolidated his power by winning the elections again while in France, Marine Le Pen and the National Front reached the highest vote share in its history. Le Pen's vote in the French presidential and parliamentary elections of 2022 was driven by

the anti-Brussels and independenceist emphasis of her political and economic theses (Üste & Mantoğlu, 2023). In Finland, which decided to join NATO after the war in Ukraine, the conservative National Coalition became the first party in the general elections. Social democratic Prime Minister Sanna Marin resigns as leader of her party. The Sweden Democrats, a far-right party with neo-Nazi roots, came second in Sweden's parliamentary elections. The Sweden Democrats, with their anti-immigrant rhetoric, have stated that they will implement measures to restrict immigration in order to make the country safe (Wertheimer, 2022; Sands, 2022).

An important victory for the far right in Europe was in Italy, where a right-wing alliance including the far-right Brothers of Italy party (Fdl) led by Giorgia Meloni won a majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Italy increased defense and military spending under Meloni's presidency (Bir, 2023). In Italy, there are measures to restrict migration with a territorial populist emphasis on border security. Emphasizing the mission of the European Union Border Protection Agency (Frontex) to protect the EU's external borders, Meloni called for a coordinated team effort to overcome the migrant crisis and instructed the army to rapidly build repatriation centers for migrants to be deported (T24, 2023). In addition, an agreement was signed between Italy and Albania. Under this agreement, migrants who are caught in Italian territorial waters will be sent to migration centers in Albania, where Italy will pay for the construction of these centers and Albania will provide law enforcement personnel (BBC Türkçe, 2023).

EU strengthened its border regime in Eastern Europe after the Ukraine-Russia war (Akkerman, Bhriain, & Valeske, 2023). The European Commission supports internal security and border management activities in Moldova after the Russian army entered the eastern territory of Ukraine, where the EU acts as a border guard (European Commission, 2022). EU member Poland, whose geopolitical importance has increased with the Ukraine-Russia war (Erol & Başaran, 2022), is increasing security measures on its border with Belarus (The Guardian, 2023).

II. CONCLUSIONS

In Europe, border security measures have been rapidly increased after the Ukraine-Russia war, while readmission agreements are aimed at restricting migration. In an attempt to prevent illegal migrants from Africa and the Middle East, the EU has opened its doors to millions of Ukrainian migrants. The architects of anti-migration policies, which are a product of the securitization process, far-right populists manipulated feelings of insecurity and uncertainty in the atmosphere of war and reconstructed migration as an element of fear and threat. Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia are an example of this situation. Right-wing and left-wing populists in Slovakia securitize Ukrainian refugees, seeing them as negative actors who can threaten domestic peace and affect economic prosperity (Stefancik, Bilikova, & Goloshchuk, 2023).

The conjuncture of the Ukraine-Russia war triggered far-right populism, which increased xenophobia and racism in Europe and created an alt-right culture. They define themselves as an alternative movement that defends traditional and established values, challenging globalization against the destructiveness of Western cultural codes (Hermansson, Lawrence, Mulhall, & Murdoch, 2023). With their confrontational and terrorizing style, alt-right groups play an active role in the securitization of migration, just like far-right populists.

The measures taken by European countries against migration can actually be seen as a contradiction to the founding values of the European Union. The building of walls and barbed wire to secure borders and the inclusion of surveillance and border technologies in this process raises many ethical questions (Özdemir, 2023, p. 170-173). In addition, the UK's plan to send migrants to Rwanda and the floating prison phenomenon are anti-humanitarian and unethical.

Since migration is a multi-dimensional and multi-actor phenomenon, it is necessary to thoroughly analyze the causes of migration. In cases of migration due to armed conflict, such as the Ukraine-Russia war, diplomacy and dialogue channels should be maintained to stop the conflict.

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