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The Changing Faces of Populism in Turkey: From "Inclusionary Populism" to "Exclusionary Populism"?

Türkiye'de Popülizmin Değişen Yüzü: Kapsayıcı Popülizmden Dışlayıcı Popülizme?

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Abstract

This study examines the evolving populist policies of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi or JDP) since it gained power in 2002. Although populism was embedded in the JDP's policies from the outset, this paper argues that the dominant form of the JDP's populism has transformed from "inclusionary" to "exclusionary." Specifically, in its early years, the JDP leadership implemented inclusive populist policies to overcome the threat of party closure and expand its voter base. This policy worked well in the first two terms, and the JDP's vote share increased to 49% in the 2011 legislative elections. However, as the economic indicators deteriorated and the clientelist resources shrunk from the end of the second term onwards, the JDP gradually shifted towards exclusionary populism, which relied on deepening polarisation along religious and ethnic lines to consolidate its voter base. However, this strategy backfired and consolidated the opposition voters under the umbrella of the Republican Peoples Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi or CHP). Overall, the populist transformation of the JDP's policies overlapped with the tightening of authoritarianism in the country.

Keywords: JDP, authoritarianism, clientelism, exclusionary populism, inclusionary populism

Öz

Bu çalışma Justice and Development Party'nin (JDP) 2002 yılında iktidara geldikten sonra dönüşüme uğrayan popülist politikalarını analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Makalenin temel argümanı JDP'nin popülist politikalarının "kapsayıcılıktan", "dışlayıcılığa" evrildiğidir. JDP'nin ilk dönemindeki kapsayıcı popülist politikalarının temel amacı parti kapatma tehdidinden kurtulma ve oy tabanını genişletme kaygısıdır. Ekonomik göstergelerdeki kötüleşme ve klientalist kaynakların azalmasıyla birlikte JDP yönetimi, dini ve etnik kutuplaşmanın derinleşmesine dayanan dışlayıcı popülizme kaymıştır. Son tahlilde, JDP'nin popülist dönüşümü ve ülkenin otoriter rejime sürüklenmesi paralellikler barındırmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: JDP, dışlayıcı popülizm, kliyentalizm, kapsayıcı popülizm, otoriterlik)

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Introduction

Recent scholarship has shown remarkable interest in the rise of populist-right parties. Despite their growing appeal, many of the populist-right parties, such as the Front Nationalé and Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), are excluded from the government because they are perceived as a threat to political regime stability (Arslantaş & Arslantaş, 2020a; Arslantaş & Arslantaş, 2020b). Additionally, electoral systems and strategic voting effectively weaken the chances of the populists being a part of the governing coalition.

In contrast to these cases, the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi or JDP), as a populist-right party, has maintained its electoral dominance since 2002.[1] Scholars have attempted to read the JDP's electoral success through various lenses, including its "Islamic,"[2] "neoliberal,"[3] or "leader-mediated"[4] populism. However, these studies often focus on a single aspect of JDP's populism—such as neoliberal populism—and do not consider the interaction with other dimensions of the populist rule (Baykan, 2024). Similarly, recent studies largely ignore the effect of the institutional elements on the JDP's populism after the transition to a la Turca presidential system in 2018. Given the JDP's long tenure in government and its evolving policies across multiple fields, these aspects make it necessary to revisit this conceptualisation.

In this framework, this study sheds light on the changing characteristics of the JDP's populism. Additionally, it seeks to contextualise the JDP within the broader group of ruling populist-right parties, such as Hungary's Fidesz and Poland's Law and Justice Party, using Mudde & Kaltwasser's (2013) widely used taxonomy. The paper argues that the JDP initially adopted an "inclusionary" populism to counter the threat of party closure and expand its voter base.[5] However, from the end of the second term onwards, the JDP gradually shifted towards an "exclusionary" populism, leveraging ethnic and religious polarisation to consolidate its voter base amidst declining clientelist resources and a deepening economic downturn.

A clarification is in order. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013) convincingly demonstrate that inclusionary populism also includes exclusionary elements. In parallel, I propose that the JDP's policy agenda has incorporated exclusionary populism since its inception, albeit becoming more pronounced once it successfully weakened the secular civilian and

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1   The JDP enjoyed a series of resounding victories in legislative elections until the June 2015 elections, when it failed to secure a parliamentary majority due to the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) surpassing the world's highest electoral threshold of 10% (Arslantaş, Arslantaş & Kaiser, 2020; Aslan 2022a; Aslan, 2022b; Bölükbaşı, 2024). However, in the November 2015 snap elections, the JDP regained its dominant position in the midst of an unprecedented political turmoil. In the June 2018 elections, the JDP once again fell short of a legislative majority, but its electoral alliance with the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) enabled it to maintain its legislative dominance. It is worth noting that under "a la Turca" presidential system, the significance of the controlling legislative diminished, as most of the legislative powers were transferred to the executive branch, specifically the President (Tokatlı 2020).

2   See, for instance, Hadiz, 2014; Park, 2018.

3   See, for instance, Yıldırım, 2009; Arslantaş & Arslantaş, 2024a.

4   See, for instance, Türk, 2018; Jakobson et. al, 2023; Canveren & Kaiser, 2024.

5   A similar conceptual framework is used in at least three recently published studies. Gürsoy's paper (2021) argues that the JDP case does not align with any existing typologies inspired by the Latin American and European context. Erçetin and Boyraz's (2023) paper focuses exclusively on the JDP's exclusionary policies and examines the response of the CHP during the 2019 local elections. Finally, Ayan-Musil (2021)'s study shows how the JDP's inclusionary populism signalled the authoritarian transformation from the second term onwards.

military bureaucracy and consolidated its position within the political system through a series of resounding electoral victories.

This paper is structured as follows. The first section introduces the contested concept of populism in the context of right-wing politics. The second section highlights the shift in the JDP's policies from inclusionary to exclusionary populism. The last section concludes and summarises the major findings of this research.

Populism As a Contested Concept

The surge in populism studies can be attributed to the electoral success of populist parties and their appealing focus on specific issues.[6] The populist parties have gained substantial influence, exerting a "blackmail potential" (Sartori, [1976]2005) that affects the functioning and stability of the party system. A notable example is the UK's Independence Party, which mobilised mass support for the country's exit from the EU. However, its subsequent branding as the Brexit Party did not yield the same success in the 2019 snap elections. Nonetheless, this case exemplifies the extent of influence that populist parties may have on the future of politics (Freedon, 2017; Cox, 2017).

In contrast to the approaches that conceptualise populism as a "political strategy" (Weyland, 2001), "discourse" (Laclau, 2005), or "political communication style" (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007), this paper adopts an ideational approach that has at least two advantages over the alternatives. First, the ideational approach has more explanatory power in explaining the populist parties in highly polarised societies. Second, the ideational approach recognises the role of the clientelist distribution of public resources in favour of the political and economic elites as one of the sources of the populist uprising. Within this framework, the ideational approach defines populism as "an ideology that views society as fundamentally divided into two homogenous and antagonistic groups: 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite'." It argues that politics should be an expression of the general will (volonté générale) of the people" (Mudde, 2004, p. 543).

Populist parties are pragmatic and adapt to evolving political dynamics. This adaptability is sometimes driven by political failures, while at other times, it stems from elite divisions or changing international environments. For example, in Latin America, the dominant form of populism shifted from "classical" to "neoliberal" populism due to ineffective distributive policies and deteriorating macroeconomic indicators.[7]

Mudde and Kaltwasser's (2013) distinction between inclusionary and exclusionary populism provides an alternative framework to analyse populist transformations. By examining each category's material and political dimensions, this framework connects populist policies to the quality of democracy. While the material dimension pertains to the distribution of state resources and the provision of specific benefits to targeted groups, the political dimension refers to including or excluding particular groups from the political system.

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6 In comparison to the 1960s, the average vote share of populist parties increased from 5.4% to 12.4%; and their average seat rose from 4.0% to 12.2% (Norris & Inglehart, 2019).

7 In contrast to "classical" populist leaders like Peron in Argentina, Cardenas in Mexico, and Vargas in Brazil, who advocated for import substitution and redistributive politics, neoliberal populists such as Salinas in Mexico, Menem in Argentina, and Fujimori in Peru, embraced the policy of the deregulation of the market (Levitsky, 2003).

Inclusionary populism, which mainly fits into the cases in Latin America, is chiefly economic and targets the lower classes with the promise of redistributive politics. It also emphasises restoring the rule of the people representing the "heartland" (Taggart, 2004).[8] Inclusionary populists often form alliances that span different social classes, including some previously antagonistic elites. The JDP's forming of an informal alliance with the ultra-nationalist/secularist Patriotic Party (Vatan Partisi), whose members were imprisoned during the early 2010s (previously Workers Party) within the scope of Ergenekon operations against the secular establishment, on the eve of the 2023 presidential election illustrates this strategy.[9]

In contrast, exclusionary populism centres its strategy around excluding ethnic and religious minorities from the economic, political, and social spheres. To ensure that exclusionary populists enhance political polarisation, which is crucial for consolidating their voter base. Additionally, their discourse often targets political elites, portraying them as a corrupt group solely motivated by self-interest.

Although populism, with its inclusive rhetoric, may well address feelings of alienation resulting from politics (Canovan, 1999), the rise of populist leaders or parties often leads to an erosion of democratic norms and processes (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Figures like Orbán in Hungary, Kaczyński in Poland, and Maduro in Venezuela exemplify how populist rulers create conditions conducive to an authoritarian transition. Under Erdoğan's leadership, Turkey is another addition to this list.

Inclusionary Populism

Populist parties often emerge and gain strength during times of rapid mobilisation and economic and political crises (Knight, 1998; Laclau, 2005). In line with this pattern, the JDP came to power following Turkey's most severe financial crisis in 2001. The 2002 snap elections witnessed the highest electoral volatility in the post-1980 period, as former coalition partners, namely the Democratic Left Party (DSP), Nationalist Action Party (MHP), and Motherland Party (ANAP), failed to surpass the 10% electoral threshold.[10] While these parties were substantially weakened, if not completely dismantled, by the 2001 economic crisis, the elections presented a unique opportunity for parties like the JDP to thrive.

As a populist party, the JDP took important steps to address its existential crisis. Notably, Article 68 of the Turkish Constitution allowed for the dissolution of parties engaging in anti-secular activities, leading to the closure of the JDP's predecessors, such as the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) or the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi) (Arslantaş & Arslantaş, 2024b). Thus, adopting an inclusionary populist programme was more of a necessity rather than a choice. Within this framework, the JDP's implementation of a reformist agenda to become an EU member and its ability to attract moderate centre-right figures like Köksal Toptan

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8   For Taggart (2004, p. 274), the heartland "represents an idealised conception of the community they serve. It is from this territory of the imagination that populists construct the 'people' as the object of their politics."

9   Ergenekon operations started in 2007 with the finding of grenades and bombs in a house in Ümraniye. The organisation allegedly aimed to overthrow the JDP government with violence. As a result of the operations, hundreds of journalists, politicians and army personnel were arrested. After the retrial of the suspects, all detainees were released in 2019 (BBC, 2019).

10 Even more dramatically, the total vote share of these parties declined from 53.3% to 14.6%.

and Cemil Çiçek helped soften its image in the eyes of sceptical voters. As Öniş (2012) argues, this strategy enabled the government to implement a comprehensive neoliberal reform programme in a favourable international market context. The reform process also weakened the guardians of the old regime and constructed a new regime (Polat, 2016), which was then propagated under the "new Turkey" brand.

In broad terms, the JDP's early government programmes included strong political and material inclusion elements. Political inclusion involved enhancing representation channels for those who feel marginalised due to their beliefs or identities (Boyraz, 2018). Besides, the JDP aligned itself with loyal civil society organisations, particularly religious charities and religious women's organisations, to attract new members (e.g., Zencirci, 2015; Doyle, 2018). These policies strengthened the ties between the party leadership and conservative voters. Furthermore, the enactment of EU harmonisation packages garnered support from liberals and some social democrats.

Despite these attempts, the Kurdish issue was the most notable obstacle in executing an inclusionary populist strategy. The armed conflict between the state and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which had claimed tens of thousands of lives, has remained unresolved since the late 1980s. In its early years, the JDP's Kurdish policy aligned mainly with the status quo. The Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) operations, which resulted in the imprisonment of over 7.000 people, including high-ranking officials from the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) (Cumhuriyet, 2011), tend to verify this despite some reforms being enacted along the path to EU membership.

The JDP's approach to the Kurdish issue underwent a significant change after it successfully overcame the closure case in 2008 and began to neutralise the secular establishment. With the confidence of its parliamentary majority and loyal voter base, Erdoğan initiated a "Kurdish Opening Process" to disarm the PKK and negotiate a peaceful solution to the matter. While this move initially led to a ceasefire, the hope for a permanent solution quickly faded for both parties due to the escalation of the violence. As a pragmatic party, the JDP's major concern during the opening process was its fluctuating vote share. Public surveys indicated that the JDP lost votes to the nationalist MHP and the pro-Kurdish HDP due to the opening process. Since the HDP passing the electoral threshold (10%) would potentially prevent the JDP from forming a single-party government, the party leadership decided to end the reform process (Özpek & Mutluer, 2016; Grigoriadis & Mutluer, 2016; Yener-Roderburg, 2022).

On the other hand, the JDP's efforts for material inclusion aimed to expand its popularity among urban poor communities. In this regard, the government merged SGK (Social Security Institution) hospitals with Bağ-Kur (Social Security Organisation for Artisans and the Self-employed) hospitals, eliminating disparities in healthcare access among different socioeconomic groups.[11] Furthermore, the scope and amount of social assistance for vulnerable populations increased (Bezmez & Yardımcı, 2010). Conditional

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11 There are similarities with the early years of the administrations of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia in terms of the policies they implemented to improve the living conditions of the lower classes. These policies included healthcare reform, expansion of education facilities, housing initiatives, and pension programmes (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013).

Cash Transfer programmes[12] (Aytaç, 2014), the distribution of green cards (Çelik, 2010)[13], and the construction of affordable housing by the TOKI (Housing Development Administration of Turkey) (Marshall et al., 2016) all contributed to the party's popularity among voters. It is worth noting that these social benefits were often distributed through clientelistic means, which contradicts the principles of a social welfare state (Özdemir, 2020). Party and municipal officials in several field studies frequently emphasised that the continuation of social benefits was contingent upon supporting the JDP (Kılıçdaroğlu, 2020; Arslantaş & Arslantaş, 2022). This observation in the field aligns with data from the Democratic Accountability Linkage Project (DALP), which identifies the JDP as the most clientelist party in Turkey.

Excessive reliance on material resources to appeal to voters might also be counterproductive. During economic downturns, the availability of clientelist resources may shrink, leading to a loss of popularity for the incumbent party. This, for instance, occurred in Mexico during the early 1980s, when the shrinking clientelist resources contributed to the decline of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) (Magaloni, 2006).[14] This also happened in the aftermath of the financial setback in Turkey in 2008. The shrinking of public resources, which would otherwise be used to influence swing voters, played a role in losing local elections to the opposition candidates in key metropolitan municipalities in Turkey in 2019. This included metropolitan areas such as Istanbul, Ankara, Antalya, Adana, and Mersin.

The JDP's inclusionary populism included elements of exclusionary populism as well. This became particularly evident towards the end of the first term, as Erdoğan frequently expressed discontent with the Kemalist judges and ambassadors, labelling them as alienated "monşerler" (Habertürk, 2009). In response, the secular establishment's counter efforts further accelerated the exclusionary populist turn. Notably, the political turmoil surrounding the selection of the President prompted the military and civilian bureaucracy to post an e-memorandum on its website by the military, led by Yaşar Büyükanıt, accusing the JDP's presidential candidate Abdullah Gül of being anti-secular. Simultaneously, the Constitutional Court annulled the first round of the Presidential vote in the parliament. These institutional pressures left the JDP leadership with no choice but to call for snap elections in July 2007. As expected, this move increased the JDP's vote share to 46.0 % by capitalising on the perception of being a victim (Polat, 2009). While this electoral success strengthened the JDP, the secular bureaucracy made a final attempt by initiating a party closure case in March 2008. In July, the Constitutional Court ruled not to ban the JDP but

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12 Conditional Cash Transfers are a form of social welfare programmes that involve providing cash payments to individuals or families living in poverty, contingent upon meeting certain criteria related to health, nutrition, or education.

13 Green card holders, who are individuals with legal permanent residency in a country, often receive exemptions from paying for public health services due to their vulnerable situation. The number of green card holders significantly increased over time, indicating the clientelist nature of this policy. In 2019, the number of green card holders reached 8.6 million (T24, 2019; Tirgil et al., 2019).

14 During the 1970s, Mexico experienced a significant shift from an import-substitution model to neoliberalism, which had adverse effects on the economy, including exacerbating the economic downturn and initiating the privatisation of state-owned enterprises. This transition reduced public resources previously allocated for clientelist purposes. Despite the implementation of extensive social programmes such as PRONASOL, the PRI witnessed a decline in popularity throughout the 1990s. Ultimately, these factors contributed to the PRI's electoral defeat in the 2000 presidential elections (Magaloni, 2006; Greene, 2007).

reduced its treasury grant by half (Hürriyet, 2008). These developments empowered the proponents of revanchism within the JDP ranks.

The findings of this section are summarised in Table 1. As the next section will demonstrate, when these developments were combined with intensified internal and external constraints, the JDP's populism underwent significant changes from the end of the second term onwards.

Table 1

Summary of the findings (inclusionary populism)

Inclusionary Populism		Dynamics	Result
Political Inclusion	**Material Inclusion**		
• Enhancement of the representation channels for the excluded masses (mostly conservatives) • endorsement of loyal civil society organisations • EU reforms to persuade liberals and moderates • preparation of infrastructure for the Kurdish-Opening Process	• based on the redistributive strategy • mainly targeted the urban poor • unification of the health system • expansion of welfare provisions, especially for the most vulnerable classes • expansion of social housing	• absence of credible alternative parties • fear of party closure • favourable international economic environment • reformism • neoliberalism	• mixed results • The weakening of civilian and military bureaucracy • emergence of Turkey as a regional "model" country • counter-attack: the party closure case • playing the victimisation card • landslide electoral victories • preparation of psychological and legal grounds for exclusionary populism

Exclusionary Populism

The transition from inclusionary to exclusionary populism was a strategic response by the JDP governments to the deteriorating domestic and international conditions. One factor was the economic setback from 2008 onwards, which led to a decline in public resources available to finance and sustain the expanding clientelist network. In this context, the JDP resorted to boost ethnic and religious polarisation to maintain support from its voter base.

Another catalyst for the exclusionary populist turn was the eruption of the Gezi protests in June 2013, which highlighted public dissatisfaction and the revelation of corrupt relationships between the JDP leadership and loyal businessmen, as revealed by the 17-25 December 2013 operations. The dispersion of strategic voting among opposition voters, particularly a shift of some urban CHP voters to the HDP to surpass the electoral threshold, intensified the pressure on the JDP administration. As electoral polls at the time showed, the JDP lost its legislative majority in the June 2015 elections. However, since the coalition talks between the JDP and CHP failed, snap elections were called for November 2015. A series of deadly terrorist attacks between June and November 2015 popularised a security-focused approach among government circles and enhanced social and political polarisation, which reached new heights after the failed coup attempt in July 2016.

The state of emergency, implemented immediately after the coup attempt to punish the perpetrators (Gülenists), remained in force for two years. Despite initial claims that it was temporary, the JDP government used the state of emergency as a legal basis to suppress the legal opposition in both parliament and the streets. During this period, a number of decree laws were enacted, resulting in the expulsion of approximately one-fourth of the judiciary, one-tenth of the police force, and 7% of the military personnel. Seven hundred academics were also dismissed, including 400 who signed a declaration criticising the government for the situation in the Kurdish provinces. Furthermore, over 50 publishing houses and magazines and more than 60 TV and radio stations were shut down (Deutsche Welle, 2018; Cumhuriyet, 2018). The decree-laws also paved the way for a regime transition by transferring most legislative powers to the President (Qumar, 2017). The referendum on transitioning to a presidential system in April 2017 was contentious, with over 2 million unsealed votes counted as valid despite legal provisions against such practises (Taş, 2018).

The international context of the JDP's exclusionary populism is also worth noting. The suspension of Turkey's EU membership process, primarily due to barriers imposed by Sarkozy and Merkel over the Cyprus issue, weakened international leverage in the authoritarian transition (Müftüler-Baç, 2018). This led to increased public support for the EU membership process, as the narrative of foreign conspiracies found a receptive audience among the population. According to the Metropol survey, support for EU membership dropped from 75.9% in March 2005 to 43.0% in December 2012 (Diken, 2021).

The political turmoil following the Arab Spring destabilised domestic politics in Turkey and contributed to increased social and political polarisation. This, in turn, fuelled anti-immigration sentiments and xenophobia, particularly among the lower socioeconomic classes, as refugees often worked informally for low wages. The instances of physical attacks against refugees in urban slums exemplify this trend. For example, a KONDA survey showed a decline in the percentage of people willing to live with Syrians in the same apartment or neighbourhood, dropping from 41% to 21% between 2016 and 2019 (Euronews, 2019). Another survey conducted in Istanbul indicated weak interaction with Syrian refugees, with 78% of respondents stating that they had no contact with Syrians (Evrensel, 2020).

As stated, Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013) associate exclusionary populism with the radical-right ideology. While the JDP's exclusionary populism - coloured by Islamism and nationalism—was not as apparent in its first term due to the party's closure threat and favourable international conditions, it began to crystallise at the end of its second term. It became clear that the JDP's aim was not to prioritise a pluralistic representation of society but to bless the majority rule (Mudde, 2007).[15] From this perspective, the recently popularised discourse of "national will" (milli irade) refers more to "uniformity" than to "plurality." Such a narrow vision of democracy contradicts the basic principles of democratic representation that safeguard minority rights.

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15 The White Turks vs. The Black Turks dichotomy, as described in the literature (Demiralp, 2012; Ferguson, 2014; Ergin, 2016), provides a useful framework for understanding the notion of majority in the Turkish context. This framework differentiates between two groups: White Turks, who are typically associated with an urban, cosmopolitan background and a more liberal or secular outlook, and Black Turks, who have a provincial background and tend to hold more conservative views.

As a populist party, the JDP used mass rallies and referendums to consolidate power and discourage opposition political activism (Selçuk, 2016). These events have served as platforms for the party to rally its supporters and demonstrate its strength. During the Gezi Park protests in June 2013, President Erdoğan's warnings to mobilise his supporters against the protesters highlighted this approach. However, in the current phase of exclusionary populism, the JDP has become more cautious about relying on referendums.[16] The narrow passage of the 2007 Presidential referendum and Erdoğan's close victory in the 2018 Presidential elections raised concerns among JDP elites about the potential risks and uncertainties associated with the referendums. The party leadership recognises that holding referendums can be divisive and may not always produce the desired outcomes, posing potential challenges to the party and its leader.

The JDP's exclusionary populism relies on two main pillars, namely, religious and ethnic exclusion. With regard to religious exclusion, the JDP first attacked and undermined the power of the secular establishment. Most notably, hundreds of high-ranking military officials, journalists, and political figures were imprisoned through a series of judicial operations, including "Ergenekon" (2008) and "Balyoz" (2010). Based on fabricated pieces of evidence, the imprisoned figures were blamed for overthrowing the JDP government by force. On several occasions, Erdoğan also targeted secular industrialists, organised under the Turkish Industry & Business Association (TUSIAD), and expressed open support for the conservative Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD) (Yağcı, 2018). In addition to the steps that weakened the secular sectors, the JDP government heavily invested in Sunni religious organisations to make religion more visible in the public and private spheres. In this regard, the government increased the budget of the Diyanet (Directorate of Religious Affairs) and Imam-Hatip Schools (Adak, 2021) and endorsed religious waqfs such as Ensar and Türgev as well as the youth organisations (Yabancı, 2021).

In terms of ethnic exclusion, the JDP reversed its "Kurdish Opening Process," which was once a symbol of its inclusionary populism, leading to a resurgence of violent conflict and eroding prospects for peace. Additionally, the JDP formed a political alliance with the ultra-nationalist MHP, which signalled a return to the "national security state" of the 1990s.[17] This shift had electoral consequences for the JDP, as it weakened its ties with Kurdish voters, resulting in losses in metropolitan areas in the 2019 local elections.

Most recently, the JDP's exclusionary populism has been characterised by the motto of "native and national" (yerli ve milli). This rhetoric, which emphasises nativism, is a typical feature of exclusionary populism and excludes groups that are not considered "native" or "national." In addition to targeting the secular establishment, Alevis, secular Kurds, and religious minorities, the JDP's exclusionary rhetoric builds against the

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16 Up until now, the JDP has been successful in winning all the referendums. These referendums have played a significant role in shaping the country's political landscape. The 2007 referendum, for example, introduced a public vote procedure for the election of the President. The 2010 referendum resulted in the restructuring of judicial institutions and increased political control over them. The 2017 referendum marked a pivotal moment as it signalled the transition to a Turkish-style presidential system, altering the political system's dynamics.

17 The concept of the "national security state" (see, e.g., Cizre, 2003) provides a valuable framework for understanding the dynamics of Turkish foreign policy during the 1990s. However, in this context, I applied the concept to domestic politics.

Table 2
Summary of the findings (exclusionary populism)

Exclusionary Populism		Dynamics	Result
Political Exclusion	**Material Exclusion**		
• "native and national" discourse • Targeting of the secular bureaucracy ("monşerler" discourse and Ergenekon/Balyoz operations) • Repression of contenders (Gezi Park protests) • the halting of the reform process • Dismissing opponents from the public bureaucracy (after July 15) • prioritisation of the security agenda • reverting of the Kurdish-Opening Process • foreign conspiracy (dış güçler) discourse • rise in anti-immigration sentiments	• discrimination against secular capital • endorsement of loyal capital • maintenance of welfare provisions • the clientelist network became more exclusionary	• 2008 economic crises • Arab Spring • mounting polarisation • violent terrorist attacks between June-November 2015 elections • Failed coup attempt (July 2016) • state of emergency • The persistent economic downturn (currency shocks and soaring inflation) • refugee crises	• decreasing popularity of the JDP • strategic voting among oppositional voters • Splits within the JDP (e.g., DEVA and Gelecek) • dealignment of urban Kurdish voters • strengthening of control over the civilian and military bureaucracy • institutionalisation of one-man rule with the transition to a la Turca presidential system • forming an alliance with the nationalist MHP • the halting of the EU membership process • Loss of metropolitan municipalities to the CHP (2019)

external actors. The dissemination of conspiracy theories, influenced by the notion of "Sevres Syndrome,"[18] has found resonance among right-wing voters due to its promotion through formal and religious education.

The JDP's exclusionary populism appears less visible in its policy towards Syrian refugees. This can be attributed to several interconnected factors. First, the refugees are often exploited as a source of cheap labour in Turkey's developing economy, benefiting specific sectors such as textiles and construction (Yalçın, 2016; Öztürk, Serin & Altınöz, 2019). This policy also appeases the conservative classes, including tradespeople and artisans, who have been negatively affected by economic downturns since 2008. Furthermore, the refugee policy aligns with the culturalist view of the JDP that seeks to revive Ottomanism in the Middle East and position Erdoğan as a leader of the ummah (the global Muslim community). Lastly, the JDP instrumentalize the refugees as a means to deter European Union intervention in Turkey's internal affairs (Saatçioğlu, 2020).[19]

The JDP's exclusionary populism, as summarised in Table 2, has profoundly affected the properties of the party system and the political regime (Arslantaş & Arslantaş, 2020c).

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18 The Sevres Syndrome refers to a perceived sense of paranoia within the Turkish state tradition. It is characterised by the belief that Western powers and internal adversaries, including Islamists and Kurds, are constantly conspiring against Turkey's national interests. This syndrome revitalises the role of the security bureaucracy in politics.

19 The most recent studies on the subject include Polat (2018), Balkılıç & Teke (2021), and Tank (2021).

First, there has been an extended polarisation within Turkish society, as documented by various studies and surveys (See, e.g., Konda surveys since 2010; Esmer & Beek, 2019; Arbatlı & Rosenburg, 2021; Mete-Dokucu & Just, 2021). Second, the link between Erdoğan and the JDP's voter base has become more direct and less institutionalised, particularly after the transition to a presidential system. This has weakened the JDP as a party and reinforced the personalisation of politics recently (Baykan, 2018). Third, the civilian bureaucracy has come under the control of the JDP-led government, as illustrated by the trajectory of institutions like the Court of Accounts (Özbudun, 2015; Cengiz, 2020). Judges who exposed irregularities and corruption have faced exile, indicating the importance of institutional protection for sustaining a clientelist network.[20] Finally, the government has tightened its authoritarian control over the (centre) media, either through the sale of media outlets to loyal businesspeople or through financial and legal pressures on regulatory bodies such as RTUK (Yeşil, 2018; Yıldırım, Baruh & Çarkoğlu, 2021). Taken together, the regime has turned into electoral authoritarianism recently (Arslantaş & Kaiser, 2023).

Conclusion

This paper highlighted the JDP's changing faces of populism. It argues that the JDP initially pursued an inclusionary populist programme focused on redistributive policies but shifted towards exclusionary populism driven by Islamism and nationalism due to shrinking clientelist resources and worsening economic indicators.

The JDP's adoption of exclusionary populism adversely affected domestic and external politics. In domestic politics, it led to the unification of opposition parties from different backgrounds against the JDP, resulting in the defeat of the JDP-MHP alliance in metropolitan areas during the 2019 local elections. In foreign policy, Turkey's strained relations with neighbouring countries and the EU deterred foreign direct investment and deepened economic and financial crises. It also indirectly influenced the rise of the extreme-right populist parties in Europe, making Turkey's EU membership unlikely soon.

The persistence of populist rule in Turkey is a subject of ongoing debate. First, the deepening economic crises and increasing authoritarian control failed to bring alternation of power, although it led to more effective opposition coordination and divisions within the JDP ranks. Accordingly, Erdoğan maintained his role as the leading figure of the Islamist-nationalist alliance based on the results of the May 2023 elections. Second, the fact that the opposition candidate, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, left aside its liberal tone regarding refugees before the run-off elections in May 2023 increased the legitimacy of the JDP's exclusionary populist policies despite its destructive consequences on the future course of democracy.

Further research avenues can explore how the JDP's populism differed under parliamentary and presidential systems and investigate the shift from inclusionary to exclusionary populism in other populist governments. Comparative studies with similar

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20 Another institution adversely affected by the exclusionary populism turn was the Constitutional Court, whose jurisdictions have not been implemented by low-degree courts in several instances, particularly relating to the trials of prominent journalists, politicians, and businesspeople including Selahattin Demirtaş, Mehmet Altan, and Osman Kavala (See, e.g., Birgün, 2018).

cases in the Middle East, such as Morocco and Tunisia, would also contribute to a better understanding of the unique dynamics of populism in Turkey.

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