POPÜLİZM, HAKİKAT-SONRASI VE ULUSLARARASI SİYASET: İKLİM DEĞİŞİKLİĞİ, GÖÇ VE COVID-19

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Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı popülizm ve hakikat-sonrası siyaset arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemek ve bu ikisinin ilişkiselliğini uluslararası politikanın güncel sorunlarından iklim değişikliği, göç ve Covid-19 pandemisi ile birlikte değerlendirmektir. Çalışma iki birbirine bağlı sorunsal üzerine kuruludur. Popülizm ve hakikat-sonrası siyaset uluslararası politikanın güncel sorunları ile ilişkili midir ve eğer öyleyse, bunlar uluslararası siyasete ne ölçüde içkindirler. Makale önce popülizm kavramı üzerine son zamanlarda hızla gelişen literatür ile angaje olacak ve neden popülizmin bir küresel otoriter süreç olarak ele alınması gerektiğini gösterecektir. İkinci olarak makale hakikat-sonrası siyasetin popülizm ve otoriterlik kavramlarıyla olan diyalektik ilişkisini ortaya koyacaktır. Daha sonra makale uluslararası politikanın küresel etkileri olan güncel sorunlarından iklim değişikliği, göç ve Covid-19 pandemisini bu iki kavram üzerinden değerlendirerek, bu iki kavramın uluslararası politikaya çok yoğun bir biçimde içkin olduklarını ortaya koyacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Popülizm, Hakikat-Sonrası Siyaset, İklim Değişikliği, Göç, Covid-19.*

POPULISM AND POST-TRUTH IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS: CLIMATE CHANGE, MIGRATION, AND COVID-19

Abstract

This article aims to investigate the complex relationship between populism and post-truth politics and incorporate their relationality within the recent issues in international politics, namely climate change, migration, and Covid-19 pandemic. The study is based on these two inter-related research problematics: Whether or not populism and post-truth politics are relevant to the current issues in international politics, and if so, to what extent they are integral to the international politics. The article will first engage with the recent literature on populism and will demonstrate why it is vital to see populism as a global authoritarian process. Secondly, the article will demonstrate the concept of post-truth politics' dialectical relationship with populism and authoritarianism. Then the article will incorporate the recent issues in international politics with global impact within populism and post-truth politics and will establish that these concepts are highly integral to international politics.

Key Words: *Populism, Post-Truth Politics, Climate Change, Migration, Covid-19*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to compile the debates around the concept of populism and post-truth to evaluate their relationship with international politics. To do so, the article will incorporate populism and post-truth politics within the recent developments around migration, climate change, and the Covid-19 pandemic. This article questions whether populism/post-truth politics are relevant to the current issues in international politics, if so, to what extent are they integral to international politics?

Recently, populism has become a 'popular' concept and its use both in academic circles and in everyday language has increased. Although the concept of populism is developed mostly concerning political theory and political ideologies, the number of studies that carefully adapt and apply the concept to the field of international relations is now gradually increasing. However, possibly due to the prevalence of use, the concept has become to describe different things to different people at the same time. For example, populism today defines both far-right parties (Zhang, 2019) and all Eurosceptical movements along a similar line, such as Brexit, Le Pen, etc. (Ruzza, 2009), as well as the electoral successes of radical left parties, such as Syriza, Podemos, etc. (Ramiro & Gomez, 2017) and national-left movements in Latin America (Sagarzazu & Thies, 2019). This situation can be also observed even in the definition of opposing social and political movements within the same country. For example, both Trump (Torre, 2017) and Sanders (Cassidy, 2016) in the United States, Johnson (Freeden, 2017) and Corbyn (Watts & Bale, 2019) in the United Kingdom, or both Golden Dawn (Charalambous & Christoforou, 2019) and Syriza (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014) in Greece are defined as populist political movements. Turkey has a similar situation too; both Erdoğan (Baykan, 2018) and Demirtaş (Tekdemir, 2018) are defined as populist leaders, and for some authors, even one of the six principles of Kemalism has historically defined as populism (Cop, 2016). To give examples from social movements (Aslanidis, 2017), we can say that both the Arab Spring (Anderson, 2018) and the Occupy movement (Solty, 2013) and the Gezi Park Protests (Özen, 2015), which can be given as examples for both, are populist movements. We observed that the evaluations examining the global protest movements that have occupied the political agenda intensely towards the end of October 2019 (Wight, 2019), used the concept of populism too. Finally, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, the anti-lockdown and vaccine hesitation movements around the world have also been defined as populist ones (Goßner, 2020).

The term post-truth politics has come under scrutiny recently with the rise of populist and authoritarian regimes around the globe. Undoubtedly, the term post-truth politics has become increasingly popular globally following the success of the Leave campaign during the Brexit Referendum and Donald J. Trump's campaign during the US Presidential Elections in 2016. However, the concept requires more attention beyond the West to construct it onto a more 'global' foundation. Currently, the term is predominantly West-centric and the explanations around the term are limited to a few Western examples. Case studies around the globe need to be brought in. The current literature overwhelmingly focusses on the success of Brexit campaign and Trump administration. For example, one of the main pillars of the Brexit campaign was established upon the 'fact' that Turkey's imminent accession to the EU will cause an influx of immigrants to the union. On the other hand, these 'factual' politics were not only produced towards Turkey, they were also produced within Turkey. For instance, as well as the entire AKP staff, Erdogan himself blamed the CIA linked American officials for the failed coup attempt. This article will not only endeavour the politics of post-truth, it will also incorporate populism and authoritarianism as both of the concepts are key to understand post-truth politics.

This article will focus on the concept of populism first. A variety of approaches will be evaluated in the section. Second, an evaluation of post-truth politics will be given. Then, the article will assess the relevance of climate change, migration, and Covid-19 vis-à-vis populism and post-truth in international politics.

2. POPULISM

So, what is the common point that stems from all these very different political and socio-economic foundations but still causes us to define them all as 'populist'? If we exclude historical examples, it is plausible to argue that all of these movements emerged as a reaction to the national, international and even global effects of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. In revealing this reaction, we can simply assert that in the form of a 'strategy', 'us as the people' and 'them as the elites' are juxtaposed. However, even populism as a 'strategy' is handled differently in

the literature and is generally evaluated under four separate categories. The first one is often attributed to Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser and it is defined as an 'ideational' strategy. Here, populism eventually emerges as a "thin-centred" ideology based on the voice of the general will in the struggle between the "pure people" and the "corrupt elite" as two homogeneous opposing camps. Populism is a thin-centred ideology because it appears as an 'empty signifier', not as a unity of ideas like other 'thick centred' ideologies, such as fascism, socialism, liberalism. Thus, populism appears to be easily attached to, or even assimilated by, any other thick-centred ideology (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). The second category that is associated with Ernesto Laclau (2005a) and Chantal Mouffe (2019), the founders of post-Marxism, conceptualises populism as a 'discursive' strategy. Here, we see that the effort goes beyond the conceptual 'confusion' around populism and aims to give populism a place in political theory. Thus, the concept appears to be conceptualised as the 'political' (Peruzzotti, 2018). Because, according to Laclau, "populist mind" and "political mind" are synonymous (2005b). We even see that criticism of the post-politics phenomenon plays an important role in Mouffe's conceptualization of populism[1]. The third category is populism as a 'political' strategy. Here, populism is defined as a method used by some leaders to manage and direct the mass mobilization of their supporters to seize and retain political power. For example, making politics through polarization can be given as an example. Here we see that the role of the subject in the structure is emphasized and highlighted because, unlike the ideational and discursive strategies we have seen before, here we can say that populism has reduced to the behaviour of leaders and politicians (Weyland, 2017; Barr, 2018). We see a similar conceptualization in Müller's studies (Müller, 2017). Studies, which are the last category and that evaluate populism as a "socio-cultural" strategy, highlight social and cultural elements that are ignored in other approaches. Here, populism is defined not as a one-way and top-down 'demagoguery', but as a double-edged sword. This 'relational' situation thinks of populism in the context of both the leader and his supporters and points to the politico-cultural and socio-cultural relations between the two (Ostiguy, 2017).

Although these 'strategic' approaches have very important and beneficial points in terms of understanding populism, I argue that these 'strategic' approaches are problematic on three reasons and that populism should be evaluated as a global (Moffitt, 2016) and authoritarian (Hall, 1985; Poulantzas, 1978; Hart, 2019) 'process'. First, the 'global' dimension is important in terms of going beyond the methodological nationalism and internationalism (Yalvaç, 2013) in strategic approaches. In the literature, populism mostly understood at the national (Erdogan in Turkey, Le Pen in France, Chavez in Venezuela) or international (the Turkish Model in the Middle East and North Africa, Euroscepticism in Europe, Chavismo in Latin America) level. The reason behind this separation is because of the legacy of classical positivist sociology and realist international relations to the social sciences that are now manifested in methodological nationalism/internationalism. The pejorative meaning attributed to populism, that is, the understanding that all populisms, whether they are right or left-wing, are reactionary and anti-democratic, is a result of the positivist and realist understanding inherent in social sciences. However, although populism can be fed by nationalism, it is a global process that should be thought around the emphasis 'we, the people'. Populism, like any other social structures, needs to be considered together with historical and social contexts during social transformation, and its progressiveness or reactionary nature should be understood within these contexts. The second dimension, 'authoritarianism', can also be considered within this framework. We cannot think of populism outside of the global political economy. Populist processes that have increased globally as a result of the austerity policies after the Global Financial Crisis in 2008 and should be addressed within the framework of authoritarian neoliberalism discussions (Bruff, 2014; Tansel, 2018). Here, referring to Antonio Gramsci's concept of the 'integral state' (Gramsci, 1971), populism appears as a convergence of hegemony and authoritarianism (or dictatorship in Gramsci's own words). Thus, in the definition of populism, both the relations between the state and civil society and between the national and international are conceptualized without excluding each other and as global politics as integral. Defining the last dimension, populism, as a 'process' rather than a strategy, is also important at this point. Populism as a strategy attributes an autonomous meaning to the subjects, and as a result, populism appears as if it was a planned, programmed project. However, this understanding ignores the determination of the 'structure' (Althusser, 2014) and makes the spontaneity of populism as a phenomenon invisible. Populism is too, not predictable, such as in Poulantzas' conceptualization of fascism (1974). The understanding of populism as a process does not deny the merit of the

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1 It is worth mentioning Kıvrak Köroğlu's recent article on the difference between historicist and discourse approaches to populism (2020).

ideational, discursive, political and socio-cultural approaches that define populism as a strategy, but it defines what is stated in these approaches as a process of contingency with authoritarian tendencies of global political economy rather than purely predetermined strategies.

The application of the concept of populism in international relations discipline is not old and it usually appears within studies around foreign policy analysis. "Trump, Populism, and American Foreign Policy" (Wojczewski, 2019), "Making (Latin) America Great Again: Lessons from Populist Foreign Policies in the Americas" (Wajner, 2019), "Populism and Foreign Policy: The Case of India" (Plagemann & Destradi, 2018), "The nexus of populism and foreign policy: The case of Latin America" (Wehner & Thies, (2020), and "Foreign Policy Making in the Age of Populism: The Uses of Anti-Westernism in Turkish Politics" (Göksel, 2019) could be given as recent examples. In 2018, *Turkish Studies* compiled six articles under a special issue, "Islamism, Populism, and Turkish Foreign Policy" (Park, 2018) and it could be given an example in this regard. There are two studies that I will mention that blend comparative politics and the concept of populism. The first one is a book titled *Populism and World Politics: Exploring Inter- and Transnational Dimensions*, compiled in 2019 by Frank A. Stengel, David B. MacDonald and Dirk Nabers (2019). The other one is again a special issue and it was edited by Vedi R. Hadiz and Angelos Chryssogelos in 2017. This special issue, "Populism in world politics: A comparative cross-regional perspective" (Hadiz & Chryssogelos, 2017) is compiled for the journal *International Political Science Review*. In both studies, a comparative perspective for political science is applied to go beyond the conventional understanding of international relations. Also, it is worth mentioning the study called *Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East*, in which Vedi R. Hadiz, who feeds on both historical sociology and political economy disciplines, compares Islamist populism in Indonesia and the Middle East (Hadiz, 2016).

The discipline of international relations, which entered the centennial of its establishment as a formal discipline in 2019, now puts aside state-centred, Euro-centred, current time-centred and positivist traditional understandings, and brings more critical approaches to the fore. For example, Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan claim in their books published in 2019 that the discipline has to rethink itself within the framework of the understanding of global international relations (Acharya & Buzan, 2019). In fact, as a global and authoritarian process, populism is also important for interdisciplinary studies (Hart, 2013). I think the concept of populism as a global and authoritarian process will make a serious contribution to these critical approaches. Below, I will briefly mention three studies published in the year 2019 that contribute to critical international relations within the framework of the concept of populism.

The first one is Shabnam J. Holliday's work "Populism, the International and Methodological Nationalism: Global Order and the Iran–Israel Nexus" published in the journal *Political Studies* (Holliday, 2019). In this article, Holliday claims that the concept of 'international' is inherent to populism and invites populism studies to address internal-external relations globally and relationally. Thus, the gap between comparative politics and international relations will be filled. The author also states in the article that she has benefited from global historical sociology and global international relations. Second work is Sandra Destradi and Johannes Plagemann's articles published in *Review of International Studies*. Here, the authors evaluate the concept of populism in the context of global north and south relations and terms of foreign policy (Destradi & Plagemann, 2019). The last study, "Understanding Populist Politics in Turkey: A Hegemonic Depth Approach", is written by Faruk Yalvaç and Jonathan Joseph for *Review of International Studies*. Here, populism indicates the hegemony projects put forward for the power struggle between different social forces. In this study, which is based on critical realism approach, populism emerges as a triangular relation between structural conditions, the subject, and institutional framework, and as an element that unites national and international processes. Empirically, the authors here claim that the AKP in Turkey, as a process of hegemony, replaced the pluralist populism in its first years of power with neoliberal authoritarian populism in the following years (Yalvaç & Joseph, 2019). For the development of a neoliberal authoritarian populist regime in Turkey under the AKP government, it is also worth mentioning Umut Bozkurt's (2013) *Science & Society*, and Fikret Adaman, Murat Arsel and Bengi Akbulut's (2019) *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Yonca Özdemir's (2020) *Contemporary Politics*, Yaprak Gürsoy's (2019) *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, and Fikret Adaman and Bengi Akbulut's (2020) *Geoforum* articles.

To give examples from the Turkish literature, the first one is titled "Populism, the Bureaucratic-Authoritarian State and Turkey", published on the first volume of *11. Tez* by Galip L. Yalman in 1985. Here, Yalman argues that the concept of populism, which he studied within the underdevelopment and Latin American examples, should be rejected because it ignores class analysis in terms of understanding social integrity and does not present a meaningful social category (Yalman, 1985). Deniz Yıldırım's book chapter "The AKP and Neoliberal Populism" studies populism within Gramsci's theory of hegemony and common-sense to assess the convergence of neoliberalism and populism in Turkey by examining the AKP's policies on education, health, social welfare, and local governments (Yıldırım, 2009). Finally, *Ümit* Akçay's article, "Neoliberal Populism in Turkey: Authoritarianism and Crisis" argues that neoliberal populism in Turkey needs to be understood within the political economy of the AKP government on three critical points. First, the neo-liberal welfare regime and financialization; second, the conversion of politics into an area of inter-ruling-class struggle; and third, the becoming of the crisis of neoliberal accumulation regime as the crisis of neoliberal populism in the post-2013 era and the emergence of authoritarianism and one-man rule as a result (Akçay, 2019).

In sum, as a global and authoritarian process, populism offers us a new critical perspective in understanding social change and transformation while the world is experiencing an integrated crisis, in Gramsci's words, interregnum, in which the old dies but the new cannot be born (Gramsci, 1971). Today, when the nature of social sciences is reconsidered, this opens new windows for us. Now let us combine populism as a global and authoritarian process with post-truth politics.

3. POST-TRUTH POLITICS

This section aims to investigate the relationship between post-truth, populism, and authoritarianism in the context of global politics. On the other hand, the rise of populism in world politics is simply not a temporary nor West-centric phenomenon that is occurring through the recent political developments worldwide; it is rather a 'global' response to the demise of the liberal order that is manifested in the increasing authoritarianism. I argue that the growing relevance of post-truth, populism, and authoritarianism in global politics cannot be reduced to explanations based on 'methodological nationalism' or 'methodological inter-nationalism', it also requires a 'global' methodology that goes beyond the state and inter-state systems. Therefore, case studies from the rest of the world need to be involved in the analysis.

So, what is post-truth politics? Kalpokas defines post-truth as "the blurring of the distinction between truth and falsehood, which takes place within a collusive relationship between the communicators and the audience" (2019: 123). Therefore, post-truth does not simply indicate a single-dimensional relationship that replaces the truth with lies in the narrative of politicians, it is rather determined by a dialectical relationship in which the 'fiction' is co-created and "the distinction between truth and falsehood has become irrelevant, the latter being replaced by affective investment in aspirational narratives" (2019: 9). The truth is determined by the desire in here: "This is the truth because we want it to be".

Kalpokas also draws on 'guilt' in explaining the post-truth phenomenon. He claims "guilt and debt are the primary human relationships" (2018: 16) and "post-truth can be most appropriately understood … [in the ways that] … it is to be seen as an attempt to escape a guilt-ridden existence by refusing to acknowledge guilt itself and instead positing an escapist fantasy of completely redeemed existence whence one is not even absolved from debt and guilt— the latter are simply ignored as if they had never existed. Instead of favouring verifiable claims, the public rather falls for claims that reflect its own biases and predilections, shifting the guilt and the debt away from the listener" (2018: 16-17).

The Gramscian term, common sense would help explain this conceptualisation. Post-truth is defined by collective emotions and believes rather than 'nothing but the truth'. The post-truth reality does not require an objective view on the truth, it needs a collective and shared ground on that reality. The prefix 'post' does not necessarily mean 'after the truth' in this conceptualisation, it means 'beyond the truth'. The role of media and the politics of media is also crucial in understanding the post-truth politics. Without the support of mass media, post-truth becomes obsolete. Post-truth politics serve an agenda if mass media supports them. Post-truth politics

have become a tool to control the masses' opinion over social issues and canalise the voting behaviour towards a certain political mobilisation. Therefore, societies' have been led to premeditated political agendas.

The concept of fake news is highly important in understanding post-truth politics. So, how do fake news determine voting behaviour? Perhaps, there are two concepts to answer that: first the bubble, and second eco-chambers. The bubble defined the algorithm that brings up the same or similar content to your news-feed as you like and/or share content on your news-feed, and as your friends do the same. Therefore, a social media user sees similar content as they spend time on social media. Whereas eco-chambers work as you subscribe to and follow news providers. The more a social media user likes, follows, and subscribes to news pages, the more similar content they will be shown the next time. It is safe to argue that, recently, the people's means of communication and information have become increasingly digitalised and based on user-generated content. Fact-checking has become even more important as the information has become more dependent on user-generated content. In Turkey, there is teyit.org (*teyit* means confirmation in Turkish) which serves this mission. According to their website, *teyit.org* is an independent and non-profit organisation and it launched on 26th October 2016. "At a time when the trust in media is at an all-time low, our main aims are to prevent false information from spreading online, help media consumers develop their media literacy skills, and develop methods to promote critical thinking" (teyit.org, 2019).

Post-truth politics have a close relationship with populism and authoritarianism. Although all three of the concepts have an independent but also intertwined weight in the study of politics and international relations, their relationality signifies a nexus that is crucial in understanding current international politics. Capitalism or the current phase of it, neoliberalism is the overarching concept in here. As an economic model or a mode of production, neoliberalism needs ideological support. No mode of production can survive on its own, simply based on coercive forces of the state. The production of consent is always required to establish the mode of production on strong foundations. Consent and coercion are inseparably embedded into each other and they are not mutually exclusive. This embeddedness not only manifests the relationship between hegemony and authoritarianism, but it also indicates the actually-existing neoliberalism in which authoritarian exercises are employed despite the liberal principles. Post-truth politics is related to both authoritarianism and populism for the survival of neoliberalism.

Studies working around the concept of post-truth is increasing recently. Jonathan Mair's *Post-Truth Anthropology* is an important contribution (2017). A special issue of the journal *New Perspectives*, "Post-Truth-Telling in International Relations" was edited by Nicholas Michelsen and Benjamin Tallis in 2018 (Michelsen & Tallis, 2018). There are six articles in this volume evaluating postmodernism and alternative facts (Wight, 2018), democracy (Hyvönen, 2018), securitisation (Rychnovská & Kohú, 2018), international justice (Lohne, 2018), publicist and pluralism (Michelsen, 2018), and Brexit (Marshall & Drieschova, 2018). There are some studies highlighting television productions (Sirman & Akınerdem, 2019; Çelik, 2020), sustainable energy transformations (Fraune & Knodt, 2018), security studies (Crilley & Chatterje-Doody, 2018), neoliberalism (Mavelli, 2019), consensus theory (Bufacchi, 2020), diversity in unity (Dege, 2019), critical theory (Schindler, 2020), ecology (Hoyng & Es, 2020), disinformation (Romanova, Sokolov & Kolotaev, 2020), and the European Union (Kolotaev, 2020). There are also studies extensively focussing on Turkey and Turkish politics. For example, Hakki Tas' article uses the 15 July abortive coup to address post-truth politics in the post-2016 politics in Turkey (Tas, 2018). Yilmaz, on the other hand, studied the 2017 Euro-Turkish Crisis within the post-truth framework.

All in all, it is safe to argue that, the concept of post-truth, combined with populism and authoritarianism, provides a highly useful analytical tool to analyse international politics in the age of (dis)information. Now let us show, how these two concepts, populism and post-truth are used or could be used in explaining different phenomena in the areas of climate change, migration, and Covid-19 pandemic.

Global issues like climate change, migration, and pandemic politics are highly relevant to the conceptual combination of populism and post-truth. As explained above, both populism and post-truth are globally constructed. Their global nature overcomes the pitfalls of methodological nationalism. Climate change, migration, and global health issues (i.e. Covid-19 pandemic) are excellent examples for highlighting the contradictions

between the 'national' and the 'international' (and perhaps also, the 'global'). The problems themselves are globally articulated, yet, the solutions are expected to be made at the national level. The intermingling of populism and post-truth nexus with the issues of climate change, migration, and pandemic politics needs to understood as a challenge to the limits of methodological nationalism.

4. CLIMATE CHANGE

Boris Johnson, the former Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, who had been one of the frontrunners of '2016 Leave Campaign', became the latest Prime Minister of the UK on 24th July 2019. His predecessor Theresa May resigned from her post as the 'divorce' negotiations with the EU became a deadlock and left no choice but a 'no-deal Brexit'. The UK will leave the EU by 31st December 2020 'with or without' a deal means there is a great possibility that the future of issues like the regional/global trade, finance, security, and environmental sustainability will be left unaddressed before the deadline. Currently, the negotiation talks are still in place and there is still a chance of failure of negotiations which leaves only a no-deal break-up. Along with Trump administration's unwillingness to make commitments to environmental issues, the recent developments around the Brexit deal bring the impact of populism on environmental issues under scrutiny.

Recently, there has been a significant increase in the number of studies about populism and its impact on international relations, foreign policy, and global governance. However, environmental sustainability and its regional/global governance are more likely to be affected by populism and there is a considerably greater risk of climate change and global warming challenging global policy-makers. Today, there is so much human influence on the environment that the 'Anthropocene' is proposed as an epoch to emphasise the human impact on Earth's geology and ecosystems. There are serious political, economic, social, and environmental challenges facing us which require future-proof responses to provide sustainable solutions. According to the UN, 68% of the world's population is projected to live in urban areas by 2050 (UN, 2018). Therefore, it is safe to argue that urban sustainability is a global priority area today for policy-making. It is highly crucial that we develop innovative ways to understand, measure, and improve urban sustainability to inform regional, national, and global policy-makers and help them with making our cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. It is equally important that we also understand the current challenges that the global governance of urban sustainability faces. Perhaps, populism which affects not only domestic policy-making but also foreign policies of world leaders represents one of the greatest challenges. For example, according to The Guardian "Trump officials are censoring warnings about the climate crisis, moving critical agencies out of Washington and enacting far-reaching changes in what facts regulators can consider when they choose between industry and the public good" (The Guardian, 2019).

How does forced migration affect urban sustainability? It is important to understand the impact of forced migration on the governance of urban sustainability and to evaluate the comparisons in multiple geopolitical contexts. Recently, there has been a significant increase in the number of studies on forced migration and its impact on domestic/international politics, foreign policy, and global governance. However, the governance of urban sustainability is more likely to be affected by forced migration and there is a considerably greater challenge of the influx of migrants in the making of urban politics today. Especially in the aftermath of the Civil War, more than 5.6 million people have fled Syria to seek shelter in the Middle East and beyond (UNHCR, 2019a). Currently, Turkey hosts more than 3.6 million Syrian refugees and 400,000 refugees from other nationalities (UNHCR Turkey, 2019). More than 1 million refugees arrived in Greece in 2015-2016, however, the number of arrivals declined after the European Union and Turkey implemented the readmission deal. The influx started to increase again in the second half of 2017 and in May 2018, the number of refugees in Greece reached more than 60,000, including about 14,000 on the islands (UNHCR, 2019b). Towards the end of 2019, the number of refugees on the islands has reached a record number of 31,000 (Al Jazeera, 2019).

Urban sustainability is a disputed concept. On the one hand, "[s]ustainability deals with the environmental impacts of the development" (Roosa, 2007), and on the other, sustainable development also creates "social injustices as unintended outcomes" (Pearsall et. al., 2012). Furthermore, the development is concentrated in urban areas today as cities are growing faster than ever. This brings the sustainability of urban areas, thus, the concept of *sustainable cities* under scrutiny. Cities are not only "the source of most of our pollution … [and] they

contain vast disparities between wealth and poverty", they are also the demonstrations of "the past achievements of humankind and its potential for the future" (Evans et. al., 2005). In a bibliometric approach, it also argued that the "'sustainable city' to be an overarching concept that comes in a wide range of variants according to temporal and spatial contexts, priorities of action and actors" (Hamman, 2017) which indicates a variegated nature in sustainable cities as a term. The concept of 'sustainable cities' could be established upon two principles, ecological and socio-economic (Haughton & Hunter, 2003); to address urban policy-making in two areas, climate change and community sustainability (James, 2015). The connectivity between ecological and socio-economic issues is highly crucial in conceptualising the governance of sustainable cities. In a recent study, it is argued that there are six visions of the city, (a) the green city, (b) the limited city, (c) the just city, (d) the ecologically modernised city, (e) socially responsible local economic development, and (f) the environmentally just city; and these six visions construct three dimensions of the sustainable city: environmental (b, d, f, g), economic (a, d, e, g), and social (c, e, f, g) gains (Rydin, 2014). Similarly, in Urban Sustainability Framework (USF), a document published in 2018 by the Global Platform for Sustainable Cities (GPSC) of the World Bank, it is asserted that there are enabling (governance and integrated urban planning, fiscal sustainability) and outcome dimensions (urban economies, inclusivity and quality of life, natural environment and resources, climate action and resilience) of sustainable cities (World Bank, 2018). There are five key focus areas in each ecological outcome dimension: (a) ecosystems & biodiversity, (b) air quality, (c) water resources management, (d) solid waste management, (e) consumption & production patterns for *natural environment and resources*; and (a) greenhouse gas inventory, (b) energy efficiency, (c) clean energy, (d) climate change adaptation, (e) disaster risk reduction for *climate action and resilience*. There are eight key focus areas in each socio-economic outcome dimension: (a) economic performance, (b) economic structure, (c) business climate innovation & entrepreneurship, (d) labour force, (e) livelihood opportunities, (f) income equality and shared prosperity, (g) global appeal, (h) connectivity and global links for *urban economies*; and (a) housing, (b) education, (c) poverty reduction, hunger reduction, and food security, (d) drink water & sanitation, (e) basic physical infrastructure, (f) health & wellbeing, (g) safety, (h) social cohesion for *inclusivity and quality of life* (World Bank, 2018).

Climate change is closely concerning sustainable cities framework. Also, both of them are together vulnerable to the impacts of populism and post-truth. Climate change is under the thread of populist leaders as they ignore the scientific indications that the earth requires immediate action to reduce to impact of global warming. Both post-truth and populism have an impact on the sustainable cities, as both populist leaders and disinformation affect both the ecological and socio-economic dimensions of the urban spaces with sustainable characteristics.

5. MIGRATION

This section aims to analyse the impact of populism and post-truth on the governance of migration in Turkey and the trade between Turkey and the EU. The Syrian civil war has torn apart the country and according to World Bank's data, more than half of its population, approximately thirteen and a half million people have required humanitarian assistance. Six million displaced internally and almost five million fled outside of Syria. Although only slightly more than 10% of refugees have fled to Europe, the flux of refugees has already changed the political climate in Europe and triggered the rise of populist-right politics. The EU agreed on granting visa-free travel for Turkish citizens in exchange for the Readmission Agreement that is signed to keep refugees in Turkey in 2016. Indeed, the number of refugees crossing Turkish borders rapidly decreased straight after the agreement came into force. Turkey already hosts more than three million refugees which is three times more than what the EU countries host in total (Kadıoğlu, 2020). The Syrian refugee crisis has also occupied an important part of the UK-Turkey relations in the last decade (Altınörs, 2020). It is argued in this article that the Syrian refugee crisis cannot be analysed by only focussing on identity-based political arguments such as the rise of populist-right in Europe. The refugee crisis is a multi-causal issue in which political concepts like populism and post-truth need to be incorporated in the relations of production and trade.

Migration is a contested concept in the study of politics too. The term could problematically establish false dichotomies between 'economic migrants', 'refugees', and 'asylum-seekers' (Isleyen, 2017). In this article, migration is defined as global human mobility for permanent or temporary settlement. The governance of migration, on the other hand, describes the global, regional, or national policy-making to regulate this mobility

and it varies geopolitically. There is also a close relationship between migration and sustainable development (Hall, 2015). Transit mobility, in particular, forced migration creates an unexpected and rapid rise in the urban population with highly precarious and vulnerable urban refugee population flows. For example, since 2011, there have been almost 440,000 Syrian refugees relocated in Hatay province of Turkey which equates to almost 27.5% of the province's population as of October 2019 (Mülteciler Derneği, 2019). The sudden change in the population undoubtedly affects the governance of urban sustainability as well, both ecologically and socio-economically. However, these impacts are yet to be researched especially vis-à-vis the impacts of the Syrian refugee crisis in Southeast Europe. There is a very close relationship between populism, post-truth, and migration. Migration is usually one of the main triggers of the rise of right-wing populism. As we can see in European and North American cases an increase in migration and more liberal policies towards immigration causes an increase in the vote share of right-wing populist leaders and parties.

6. COVID-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has unprecedently taken over the world in less than half a year in early 2020. As well as some global and international measures, countries have essentially relied on nation-wide lockdowns to contain and mitigate the pandemic, managed and administrated by national governments. These lockdowns have not only affected the social life they also severely crippled the economy. Politically, most governments have taken emergency measures to fight against the virus, which could be seen as authoritarianism under normal circumstances. Meanwhile, some anti-lockdown protests have erupted in countries such as the US, the UK, Brazil, Germany, Spain, Italy, Australia, Austria, South Africa, Poland, Ukraine, Brussels. Some of these demonstrations were organised by far-right groups and they also supported associated leaders like Trump and Bolsonaro. They were generally based on pre-existing structures such as nationalist, populist, anti-vaccine, anti-intellectual, and anti-institutional rhetoric and conspiracy theory-led anti-Semitism (US) and anti-Islamism (UK). The rise of global far-right politics (protectionism, anti-globalisation, opposition to migration) has already been in place since the Global Financial Crisis and 9/11.

In this section, given the economic and political outcomes of the pandemic, it is argued that 'the resilience of nationalism around the far-right politics' will be strengthened in the post-pandemic world. The resilience of nationalism and far-right politics will be studied under three subjects: (1) economic nationalism, (2) authoritarian populism, and (3) anti-institutional rhetoric. To do so, various examples from the US, the UK, Brazil, Germany, Spain, Italy, Australia, Austria, South Africa, Poland, Ukraine, and Brussels will be examined.

In Spain, the far-right Vox party supporters went on a protest and called the government to resign for their lockdown decisions. In the US, various examples show far-right militants are infiltrated in anti-lockdown protests. In Germany, right-wing extremists share the same hatred against the political elite and immigrants amid the pandemic. In the UK, one-fifth of the people believe Covid-19 is a Jewish conspiracy. In Brazil, Bolsonaro's populism resembles Trump's in the US and creates a hostile environment for containing and mitigating the pandemic.

In terms of anti-institutional rhetoric, the WHO introduced a new term, *infodemic*. An infodemic is an outbreak of misinformation that accompanies a virus outbreak. It happened in the 1300s and it is also happening currently. It can be varied by geography. For example, the myth that drinking methanol cures and prevents the coronavirus from killed more than 700 people in Iran. In the UK, a conspiracy theory that believes 5G transmitters are the reason for the Covid-19 pandemic led more than 90 attacks targeting cell phone towers. A film called 'Plandemic' has been watched more than eight million times since May 2020 (The Economist, 2020). Conspiracy theories and misinformation could also prevent herd immunity from happening because a majority of people mistrusts the health authorities and they will refuse to use the vaccine when available (Financial Times, 2020). Economic nationalism is also increasing around the world especially because the supply chains are severely disrupted during the pandemic.

The results of this study can be concluded in three points. First, economic nationalism is on the rise. International trade has affected severely and as a result, this gave a push to the economic nationalist discourse within the countries. Second, authoritarian populism did not take a hit from the pandemic, instead, it is safe

to argue that most authoritarian populist leaders/regimes will outlive the pandemic. Finally, third, one of the features of populism, anti-institutional rhetoric has strengthened during the pandemic and there is a rise in the anti-vaccine and anti-Semitic/Islamic rhetoric vis-à-vis the spread of the pandemic.

7. CONCLUSION

This article compiled the debates around the concept of populism and post-truth and evaluated their relationship with international politics. To do so, the article incorporated populism and post-truth politics within the recent developments around migration, climate change, and the Covid-19 pandemic in international politics. The article sought answers for the question of whether populism/post-truth politics are relevant to the current issues in international politics, if so, to what extent are they integral to international politics?

The relationship between populism and post-truth politics is highly complex. Populist leaders often use post-truth as a tool to consolidate their divisive and polarising politics. In return, post-truth is also strengthened by the spread of populist politics. The issues of migration, climate change, and Covid-19 pandemic made this symbiotic relationship even more visible.

It is safe to argue that both populism and post-truth politics are highly relevant to the issues of migration, climate change, and Covid-19 pandemic. Their relationship is not linear, rather the relationality between populism and post-truth politics, and migration, climate change, and Covid-19 pandemic are dialectical because not only populism and post-truth politics are the reactions and responses to these issues, they also in return become one of the determents of these issues. These issues are also dialectical with each other. Given the highly relevant relationality, it is plausible to argue that both populism and post-truth politics are integral to international politics.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND DISCLOSURE

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