

Research Article | Araştırma Makalesi

The Politics Of Fear: Fear Of Migrants As An Instrument Shaping The Political Environment

Korku Siyaseti: Siyasi Ortamı Şekillendiren Bir Araç Olarak Göçmen Korkusu

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Başvuru Tarihi | Date Received: 29.08.2023
Yayına Kabul Tarihi | Date Accepted: 19.12.2023
Yayınlanma Tarihi | Date Published: 30.01.2024

Gündoğmuş, B., Mete, M. (2024). The Politics of Fear: Fear of Migrants as an Instrument Shaping the Political Environment. *Erciyes İletişim Dergisi*, 11(1), 61-80 <https://doi.org/10.17680/erciyesiletisim.1352206>

Abstract

Fear; throughout history, it has been a powerful tool used by authorities, governments and leaders to shape social reactions, manipulate public opinion, influence the masses and shape the political environment. Today, the common feature of the politics of fear on a global scale is that it is directed at immigrants. Leaders and political parties are instrumentalizing the fear of immigrants in order to gain legitimacy and support for their policies and to gain the support of the voters in the election processes. Fear on immigration is used in ways that reflect immigrants as a threat to economic stability, national security, nation-state and cultural identity through a process that emphasizes political communication methods. As a result of the manipulation of the public with the fear of immigrants, travel bans, border walls, mass deportation and restrictions that make citizenship processes difficult are accepted by the societies; political attitudes and preferences of individuals and masses are shaped. Therefore, fear as an effective emotion in political decision-making processes and politics towards this emotion can shape the political conjuncture of countries. In this study, the feeling of fear; it has been tried to determine the psychosocial factors in the channeling of immigrants to immigrants, and how it is instrumentalized in order to shape political policies and elections in a psychopolitical framework is embodied with examples. In this context, the study analyzes the effect of fear on political policy and elections by revealing the historical and current situation of fear of immigrants in the United States, European countries and Türkiye.

Keywords: Politics of Fear, Fear of Immigrants, Immigration Policies, Psychopolitical Analysis, Political Communication.

Öz

Korku; tarih boyunca otoriteler, iktidarlar ve liderler tarafından toplumsal tepkilere yön vermek, kamuoyunu manipüle etmek, kitleleri etkilemek ve politik iklimi şekillendirmek için başvurulan güçlü bir araç olmuştur. Günümüzde ise korku siyasetinin global ölçekte ortak özelliği, göçmenlere yöneltilmiş olmasıdır. Liderler ve siyasi partiler göçmen korkusunu iktidarlarına meşruiyet ve politikalarına destek sağlamak, seçim süreçlerinde seçmenlerin desteğini kazanmak gayeleri ile araçsallaştırmaktadır. Göç konusunda korkuya, siyasal iletişim yöntemlerine vurgu yapan bir süreç vasıtası ile göçmenleri ekonomik istikrar, ulusal güvenlik, ulus devlet ve kültürel kimlik açısından birer tehdit olarak yansıtırma biçimlerinde başvurulmaktadır. Kamuoyunun göçmen korkusu ile manipüle edilmesi sonucunda ise seyahat yasakları, sınır duvarları, toplu tehcir ve vatandaşlık süreçlerini meşakkatli hâle getiren kısıtlamalar toplumlar nezdinde kabul görmekte; birey ve kitlelerin siyasi tutum ve tercihleri şekillendirilmektedir. Dolayısıyla siyasi karar alma süreçlerinde etkili bir duygu olarak korku ve bu duyguya yönelik siyaset, ülkelerin politik konjonktürünü şekillendirebilmektedir. Bu çalışmada korku duygusunun; göçmenlere kanalize edilmesindeki psikososyal etkenler tespit edilmeye çalışılmış, psikopolitik bir çerçevede siyasi politikalar ve seçimleri biçimlendirmek amacıyla nasıl araçsallaştırıldığı örneklerle somutlaştırılmıştır. Çalışma bu bağlamda, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, Avrupa ülkeleri ve Türkiye’de göçmen korkusunun tarihsel ve güncel durumunu ortaya koyarak korkunun siyasi politika ve seçimler üzerindeki etkisini analiz etmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Korku Siyaseti, Göçmen Korkusu, Göç Politikaları, Psikopolitik Analiz, Siyasal İletişim.



Introduction

Fear is an emotion that has been instrumentalized throughout history as a powerful catalyst in directing societies through its effect on human psychology. Leaders, administrations, authorities, political parties, and governments are aware of the impact of fear on people and use it to gain legitimacy, find support for their policies, shape social reactions, manipulate public opinion, and shape the political environment. The common feature of today's politics of fear globally is that it is directed against migrants, which is a global topic of debate. Migration movements that take place for reasons such as political and social processes and geographical conditions are included in the politics of fear by presenting migrants in target countries as a threat to economic stability, national security, nation-state, and cultural identity. Fear of migrants feeds into people's concerns about the future and security and is reflected in the political preferences of attitudes toward migrants. As a result of the manipulation of the fear of migrants by the authorities through effective communication techniques, social support is created, policies are legitimized and the political attitudes of individuals and masses are directed. This effect is achieved through political communication. This is because actors try to bring about behavioral and thought changes in the target audience regarding the fear of migrants. By utilizing different methods of political communication such as propaganda, governments, political leaders and parties impose fear of migrants on the society and lead people to accept their policies and try to secure the support of the masses in the elections. Fear-based policies such as travel bans, border walls, mass deportation policies, and making citizenship processes more difficult are accepted as a result of the adoption of fear of migrants as political discourse and policy. Fear, and nowadays fear of migrants, is an active emotion in political decision-making processes and the politics of this emotion plays an active role in determining the political conjuncture of countries.

In this study, firstly, the biological and physiological basis of the emotion of fear is expressed, and the arguments for fear as a subject in social sciences are put forward by utilizing the literature. In the light of the above-mentioned propositions of the study, first of all, the psychosocial factors of fear that are channeled to migrants and shape the political situations of countries have been tried to be determined and the social factors of fear of migrants have been tried to be determined. In addition, the arguments of fear of immigrants in shaping political policies and elections are listed from a psychopolitical perspective. The study then starts with the United States of America, which has been a country of immigration throughout its history, to illustrate with concrete examples how fear of immigrants affects the political environment. The study continued with observations from the politics of the countries receiving intensive migration within the European continent, which is the target geography of migration movements today. The methods of providing support for the policies of various governments and political parties in the immigration-receiving states of Europe with the fear of immigrants and its reflection in the elections are given as a pillar to explain the argument of the study. Türkiye, as the country that is the most popular destination of mass migration from the Middle East due to its proximity to this geography, is another important example to understand the current state of fear of migrants and to analyze the impact of fear on political policies and elections. In this context, the limitations of the study are determined as the United States of America, which has been shaped by migration throughout the historical process, European countries, where immigrants are oriented due to their welfare level and living conditions, and the Republic of Türkiye, which has experienced a significant increase in the number of immigrants in recent years. The study aims to

contribute to the understanding of the political-social outcomes of fear of immigrants and how fear affects politics.

1. From Politics of Fear to Political Fear

The explanation for the origin of fear in the biological process is simple: A creature without fear cannot continue its species. Fear, as an emotion that prepares a person for any situation, increases the probability of survival by keeping its owner away from dangerous situations. All emotions, including fear, are shaped not only as physiological and biological outputs but also under the influence of the social (Svendsen, 2021). Therefore, it would not mislead us to say that emotions are the subject of social sciences because of the social impact they contain.

Although biochemically emotions have no significant difference in animal physiology, just as fear and anger have the same biochemical effects (Reddy, 2001), compared to other emotions, fear reduces the human mind's ability to develop counter-alternatives. So much so that Montaigne argues that even sages (philosophers), as the people who use their intellect the most, cannot escape it (Montaigne, 2018). The effects of fear, which "inhibits" the human mind, can be neutralized by various drugs that affect hormones. In such a case, the person loses the feeling that his or her life is in danger (Svendsen, 2021), which is often seen in acts of terrorism. Since the person who neutralizes the effect of fear also ignores the emotions and fears of the living beings he/she exposes to his/her action, many actions that normally appear violent can be carried out quite naturally thanks to (because of) a drug that focuses on the absence of fear. Therefore, it can be said that the presence (Mete & Gündoğmuş, 2021) and/or absence of the emotion of fear, which "controls" living beings in certain situations, is very useful in terms of being used as an effective element to manipulate individuals and masses.

From the perspective of biology, humans, like other creatures, are equipped to elicit the emotion of fear, but their symbolic, linguistic and cognitive abilities add a different quality to their fears. As Svendsen (Svendsen, 2021) exemplifies, a rabbit is not afraid of an unseen predator living on a different continent or whether the food it feeds on contains poison. The rabbit's fear is a result of what is happening around it, here and now. What makes human fear different from that experienced by animals is not primarily physiology, but rather what can evoke fear. Although Heidegger (Heidegger, 2008) in *Being and Time*, exaggerates fear into an exclusively human emotion, the passage in which Aristotle describes the nature of fear makes an important point: "It is clear that we fear frightening things, and these, as is usually said, are evil; hence fear is defined as the anticipation of evil. Indeed, we fear all evils, such as bad reputation, poverty, sickness, disease, friendlessness, death." (Aristoteles, 1997). Partly in line with Heidegger, it is clear that human beings have different elements of fear, as Aristotle more soberly expresses and Svendsen exemplifies. It is important to read Mannoni's (Mannoni, 1992) rhetorical account of the ubiquity of fear, which is close to Aristotle's, noting that animals undoubtedly recognize fear, but that what they see as fear falls short of what humans know as fear: "Fear arises or makes itself felt in situations that are in its favor. It is aroused by the near as well as the far, by the new as well as the old, it settles among the waves and in the clouds, haunts the forests, lives in the darkness and does not shrink from the light of day. Whether subtle or persistent, there is no period and no place without it. But beyond this general diffusion, fear finds its true home in the human heart, or rather in the human mind: it is here that its powers are fully appreciated."

There are countless studies and findings on fear (Bauman, 2006; Sartre, 1948). The limits of this study cover the politics of fear rather than discussing fear as an emotion. Indeed, the impact of fear on world civilizations is undeniably great. It is possible to build cities, houses, weapons and even laws on fear (Svendsen, 2021). It is not possible for an emotion that is so effective in the formation of society not to have a unique place in the political order. In Aristotle's metaphor of Politics (Aristoteles, 1975), the political order is a ship and society is the crew and passengers on board. Each member of society with different functions is responsible for ensuring the safety of the ship because their very existence depends on the safety of the ship. Politics is a ship management task that society tries to carry out through collective action. A ship requires a government to protect it from the danger of sinking and the fear of waves, and crews and passengers who follow the government and obey it. Therefore, it can be said that where there is politics, there is power, obedience and ultimately fear. In this metaphor, it is significant that fear is the power of the ship, holding the passengers and crew together. Although how society, especially the modern state, uses fear is a popular topic in social sciences, we know that fear is the most ancient instrument of power.

As is well known, political power needs legitimacy to constitute its existence and continuity. According to Çetin (2012), the legitimacy crisis is tried to be eliminated through fear. In this sense, the feeling of fear can be an element of legitimacy for political powers. Fear legitimizes the political relationship between "inequals" categorized as power and obedience. It would not take us too far to say that the process of determining "who rules and who must obey" is based on fear.

In human history, fear has continued to exist in all ages (Mannoni, 1992). During this existence, fear, which is the source of the ruler in the social and political sphere, has a common point of domination with power and tends to hate emptiness. Without exception, every power fills a void in society, which is where Berle (1980) explains in his book on power that power and fear have something in common. There is a power that is a candidate to fill every space between fear of chaos and power. Fear is a very useful tool for power to create chaos and for the spaces created by chaos. The first step in the formation of power relations is fear. Political power, in particular, creates and obscures elements of fear in order to legitimize the administration of society. This uncertainty opens up a space for power to create "others". In this way, the power has the power to decide who will be the other and who will be excluded from the category of the other by using fear and uncertainty (Çetin, 2012). Fear, which gives the rulers a lot of freedom for political actions, can become a refuge for the negativities in governance. For instance, the ruler can reflect his/her responsibility for his/her inadequacy in any issue by activating the instrument of fear. This situation is related to the aforementioned need for living beings to be amenable to different conditions in order to survive. To the extent that society is subjected to the fear imposed by the power, it is channeled to areas that are the opposite of the fear pointed out in order to "survive". Through this process, fear provides political space for political powers by shifting the focus of the society from the negativities in governance to fear.

Fear as a security alarm forces us to flee from danger; in other words, it creates a need for what is safe. Human beings have two options in the face of threats: to flee and to obey. The reason for both behaviors is the same: to seek refuge in an authority. Power takes advantage of the loss of rational abilities and attention to reality that fear creates in people. Society, which loses its reason and reasoning ability in the face of fear, falls into

irrational behavior and takes on a structure that can be manipulated quickly and easily (Çetin, 2012). At this point, fear can be thought to resemble society in primitive times. Society is now a “mass” rather than a rational community. The information that the mass is extremely open to indoctrination and manipulation can be obtained from the findings of Gustave Le Bon (Le Bon, 2009) as a primary source. In other words, fear has historically been seen as an effective “political emotion” by political powers to manage society. As today’s global current issue, migration and immigration have become one of the main issues that political parties, states and international organizations address while shaping their policies, thus becoming a determining feature of the internal and external relations of states.

2. Psychosocial and Psychopolitical Factors in the Production of Migrant Fear

According to Le Bon’s (Le Bon, 2009) conceptualization of the principle of contagion, ideas, emotions and reactions in the mass are contagious among individuals. The widespread spread of the feeling of fear in the mass, individuals act with emotions rather than reason and the situation that creates fear dominates the society. In Çakır’s (Çakır, 2007) words, “The one who scares is instrumentalizing the consciousness, values and judgments of the fearful by taking them under sovereignty”. Therefore, the functionality of the social and political factors of emotions, specifically fear, which can turn into a matter of sovereignty, is a phenomenon that has left its mark on the history of political thought thanks to its impact on these areas.

With the increase in mass human mobility, the “sense of uncertainty” towards the migrant, who is the “other” in the host society, can be identified as a factor that gives rise to fear of migrants. When expressed as doubt experienced in interpersonal relationships (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999), uncertainty eliminates clarity in communication and transforms uncertainty into fear as a social trigger. In the literature, the relationship between uncertainty and emotional states such as intolerance (Dugas et al., 1997), anxiety (Ladouceur et al., 2000) and stress (Greco & Roger, 2003) has been revealed. The effects of uncertainty as a psychosocial factor on society and its transformation into fear can be found in the literature on uncertainty. For example, according to Van den Bos and Lind’s (van den Bos & Lind, 2002) views on “uncertainty management”, the feeling of uncertainty is an emotion that threatens the meaning of existence. Indeed, McGregor et al.’s (McGregor et al., 2001) finding that uncertainty makes individuals more rigid and narrow-minded about different attitudes, values and identities is one of the important psychosocial outcomes of the issue. In addition, the Uncertainty Identity Theory claims that the individual chooses to identify with his/her group in order to eliminate the tension created by the uncertainty (Hogg, 2007). In the light of the theory’s assumption, it can be stated that uncertainty as a stressor in a society receiving migration causes tension and leads the host society and migrant individuals to bond more closely to their groups, which reinforces social polarization. The fact that the sense of uncertainty activates fear in the society leads to more rigid and sectarian attitudes towards the other, and when it is remembered that it is mostly migrants today who are under the lens of otherization, it causes fear of the effects of migration and the migrants themselves.

Being perceived as a threat to social identity makes migrants an element of fear and anxiety in the societies they migrate to. According to Henri Tajfel and John Turner’s Social Identity Theory, the individual positively distinguishes the group to which he/she belongs from other groups by making a social comparison between groups (Turner, 1975). According to some opinions (Demirtaş, 2003), this comparison between groups can lead

to antagonistic attitudes. When the assumptions of the Social Identity Theory are taken into the brackets of the subject of migration, it can be thought that social identities with different norms and cultural codes will be seen as a threat to the host society; the fear of the identity of the migrant who has the adjectives “unrecognized, unknown, foreign” in the social sphere will be built. Considering that mass migration will create an element of conflict in one way or another, migrants are a source of absolute fear for individuals and groups with concerns about social identity, cultural conflict and homogeneous society. Today, many of the topics discussed in societies with high levels of immigration stem from the fear that the cultural, national and/or religious values of the host society will be suppressed by the values of immigrants.

Another factor that causes fear of migrants in societies, which we believe can be analyzed under a social psychological heading, is related to the use and distribution of resources. This factor, which points to the relationship between migration and the economy, is based on the premise that migrants are the cause of inflation, unemployment, and rising rents, seeing the allocation of public resources to migrants as a usurpation of the rights of host citizens. In addition, security concerns, such as the idea that crime rates will rise with migrants and terrorism will escalate, are an echo of factors affecting social and psychological processes and explain that fear of migrants is a psychosocial phenomenon.

Political leaders’ extremist rhetoric on migration can lead to a negative transformation of thoughts and feelings towards migrants. Anti-migration political parties adopt policies to spread fear of migrants and manipulate public emotions. In addition, populist politics agitates nationalist emotions and identifies migrants as an object of fear for the nation-state (Yalçın, 2023). Populism affects voting behavior, especially in regions with high numbers of anxious people (Obschonka et al., 2018), and political leaders’ anti-immigration rhetoric promotes xenophobia and racism in their audiences. Assuming that the politics of fear is rooted in the image of the enemy, migrants can be seen as a useful enemy image. Consequently, populist politics and discourse and rhetorical strategies are psychopolitical factors that can determine the object of the politics of fear as migrants. By manipulating issues of security, economy, culture and stability, populist leaders have the power to make the masses accept migrants as a danger to be feared through propaganda based on anti-immigrant feelings. Therefore, propaganda, perception management and public opinion formation are included in the political and psychological elements of projecting migrants as a fear factor.

Media, with its influence on persuasion and political attitude change, falls within the field of study of political psychology (Cottam et al., 2015). Traditional and social media are highly sought-after tools for directing the public’s mental direction. These tools, which are frequently used by political and non-political organizations in perception management, are important in terms of ensuring that the messages desired to be delivered provide the intended attitude change in the targeted audience. When the impact of the media is evaluated in the context of this study, research (Öner, 2012) shows that migrants are portrayed in the popular media as a threat to national unity and integrity, as causing difficulties for states in the international arena, as increasing unemployment in the host society and even as terrorists. Undoubtedly, the fact that the news about migrants in the media is of this nature causes fear in the public opinion and influences political decision-making mechanisms.

From a social psychological perspective, the vast majority of the issues in the offspring of migrant fear are of an intrinsic nature. For instance, the processes of uncertainty, identity formation and perception of migrant identity as a threat are independent of the intervention of a will. What we have identified in the political psychological factors in the construction of migrant fear, on the other hand, is that they are often mobilized by a leader, state/government and/or organization.

3. Reflections of the Politics of Fear on Migration Policies and Elections

3.1. Fear of Immigrants as a Shaping Element of US Politics

It is possible to find traces of fear of immigrants in various laws implemented in the history of the United States of America, and these laws aimed to turn immigration into a deterrent or a burdensome process. Although the history of US immigration policies and the legal literature on them is extensive, for the purposes of this study, it is possible to start with the 1840s. At that time, the war between the US and Mexico had ended, and immigration, slavery and sectarian divisions occupied the political agenda of the country. Founded in 1949, the American Party, also known as The Know-Nothing Party, was characterized by a policy that strongly opposed the elevation of immigrants to political office. Party members urged against hiring immigrants (and Catholics), propagandizing that US employers should hire “real Americans”. The party found support in the North, where immigrants were more visible, and won control of the Massachusetts legislature in 1854. In 1856, the party’s presidential candidate Millard Fillmore received 900,000 of the 4 million votes total (Mulkern, 1990). Undoubtedly, the fact that most of its members came from middle class and proletarian families intensified the party’s fear of competition in the labor market from immigrant communities. Fear propaganda based on economic and ethnic concerns was directed against immigrants even then, making the American Party a political focus.

The 1875 “Page Act”, named after Horace F. Page who introduced the proposal to Congress, is referred to as the “Chinese Women’s Prohibition Act” because it was a barrier to the entry of female immigrants from China to the US. Although the law was intended to prevent migrant labor and women brought from China for prostitution, it is noteworthy in terms of forming the basis of subsequent immigration policies. Because this “oriental exclusion” targeting not only China or women, but also “any person from Japan or any Eastern country” seems to have laid the groundwork for the Chinese Immigration Act of 1882, known as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. One of the most controversial pieces of immigration legislation in US history, it was drafted with the aim of restricting Chinese immigration to the US to the extent of ending it altogether. This was the first immigration restriction law in the US based on a specific ethnic group (Lee, 2003). During this period, Chinese immigrants, who often took on the hardest and dirtiest jobs in cities such as San Francisco, caused Americans to fear for jobs and wages. This fear, which stimulated organized labor movements, made restricting Chinese entry into the United States one of its goals. Although the enactment of the law is attributed to “bottom-up” pressure, some scholars have found that exclusion was a “top-down” effect, explaining that national politicians manipulated white workers to gain electoral advantage (Chinese Exclusion Act, Britannica, t.y.). In any case, it can be argued that the law was, for certain reasons, a product of the fear in American society at the time and that politicians developed policies in response.

The use of fear of immigrants as a political tool in the US is not just a method of the past. In the 1940s and 50s, increased Mexican immigration provided a clear example of the use of immigrants in the politics of fear. Mexicans were taken into the country with the Bracero Program in 1943 in response to the need in the labor sector, which the US lacked during the Second World War, and they were employed especially in agriculture. In the aftermath, there were debates that this policy encouraged irregular migration (Castles & Miller, 2008). At the end of the program, the return of Mexicans did not occur at the expected rate and migrant workers continued to reside in the US. In this situation, in 1954, Operation Repatriation was launched in an attempt to metazoretically ensure repatriation. Eventually, over one million Mexican migrants were expelled from the US (Garip, 2017). Beyond 1965, Mexicans were mostly labeled as illegals, criminals and lawbreakers in the country, and the increase in illegal immigration paved the way for the politics of fear for politicians (Massey, 2015). A study from 1965 to 1979 (Massey & Pren, 2012) found that in the United States, threatened by Mexican immigration, immigration was described as “crisis, influx, and invasion” and that this conceptualization agitated anti-immigrant sentiment in public opinion; as a result, political decision-makers were pressured to restrict immigration. This process began with an article by Leonard F. Chapman (1976), a member of the Commission on Immigration and Naturalization Services, declaring that America was being subjected to a “silent invasion” by immigrants, and continued with Ronald Reagan’s declaration in 1985 that undocumented immigrants were a “threat to national security”. The most striking example of the fear of Mexican immigrants in the US, in our view, is the assumption that they are “part of Mexico’s plan to reclaim the lands they lost in 1848” (Massey, 2015). As can be seen, the allegations that immigrants are invaders, pose a threat to national identity and security, and the theory that there is a grand plan behind immigration that is unknown to the public has been a highly shaping factor in American politics as it has been in other parts of the world.

Among the American presidents, there are George W. Bush and Barack Obama who apply to the politics of fear (Khalifa, 2018), but among the American politicians who tried to achieve political success with the manipulation of the fear of immigrants, Donald Trump, a popular name at the time of this study, “make America great again”. within the framework of the slogan, he accused the immigrants, whom he considered “invaders” and hindering the realization of this slogan, of using America’s resources (Ariboğan, 2017). According to Trump’s statements (Taş, 2020: 66), the danger caused by immigrants invading the country should be eliminated without a judge or a lawsuit when necessary, and immigrants should be deported without activating the legal process. Trump ranks high among politicians who try to mobilize their masses through the “migrant threat”. Indeed, an analysis by the USA Today news website (*Trump used words like invasion, killer to discuss immigrants 500 times, t.y.*) revealed that Trump used the word “invasion” at least 19 times, “animal” 34 times and “murderer” 36 times when referring to immigration in 64 rallies he held between 2017 and 2019. The fact that more than half of these expressions were uttered in the two months before the 2018 midterm elections shows that Trump built his electoral policy on the fear and anxiety of migrants.

3.2. Europe and the Fear of Losing Welfare

The mass migration movements that Europe has undergone throughout its history have had a great impact on its current shape. From the Migration of Tribes to the discovery of the Americas, from the Industrial Revolution to the Second World War, the events that took place at different times caused massive population movements in Europe and its borders.

At the end of the historical process, the continent is today one of the most prosperous geographies and the target of migration movements. All this process has naturally progressed in line with the political environment and policies shaped by migration movements. The European Union, the world's largest economic community established to increase the welfare of the citizens of the member states within the continent, has been successful in its goal since its establishment in 1993. The Union accepted immigration between 1945 and 1970 to compensate for the loss of labor caused by the Second World War, and although it abandoned this policy in 1973 due to the effects of the oil crisis, it allowed immigrant families to enter the countries on the basis of family integrity. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Union faced a mass influx of migrants from Eastern Europe and developed new policies and institutions to prevent this. By the 2000s, the European Union was selectively accepting only qualified migrants, but the Arab Spring of 2010 and especially the Syrian War of 2011 made migration a topic of discussion for the European Union under the heading of "security" (Aykaç & Yertüm, 2017). Beyond this, it is worth noting that the September 11 attacks radically affected the migration policies of Europe and the United States, and more recently, the political turmoil in the Middle East has set Europe's agenda. In Europe today, the rise of far-right parties and the escalation of anti-immigrant emotions have become commonplace. Although governments' migration policies are sometimes the cause and sometimes the result of this determination, the common feature of all political environments is that they have processes inherent in the fear of migrants. In Europe, both as a union and as each single country, the political agenda and elections are heavily influenced by the fear of migrants.

Germany, the most populous country in the European Union, is one of the countries with the highest migration flows to the continent. In the post-Arab Spring period, the AfD, which was founded under the name Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and positioned on the far right, attracted attention with its political discourse on immigrants, and shortly after its establishment, it managed to become the third party with the highest number of votes in the 2017 German Federal Elections. The 12.6% of the votes it received is a rate that none of the far-right parties in Germany has reached since the Second World War (Çakı & Topbaş, 2018). The party, which increased its vote rate as immigration to Germany became more and more preoccupied with the public opinion, did not hesitate to express that refugees were a blessing for the AfD and attributed the rise in its vote rate to the refugee crisis (Özcan, 2018), even though it stated that it was against "unsystematic immigration to the welfare system" (Berbair et al., 2015). The atmosphere of anxiety and fear created by the terrorist attacks in France, Belgium and Germany increased the AfD's voting rate (Patton, 2017) and the party organization aimed to reach the masses with a more radical politics of fear. Indeed, throughout its rise, the party endeavored to combine the immigration issue with security considerations on the German agenda, thereby creating the environment of fear it needed and shaping its election campaigns. As Ciechanowicz states, the migration crisis and the threat of Islam are among the issues that ignite the most heated emotions of AfD voters (Ciechanowicz, 2017), and this fear of crisis/threat has shaped the political climate not only in Germany but also in Europe as a whole against immigrants.

In France, the second most populous country in the European Union after Germany, the issue of migration is also very much on the agenda and the situation of migrants has been the subject of debates, especially recently. Founded by Jean-Marie Le Pen in 1972, the National Front, or the National Unity Party (Rassemblement National - RN) as it has been

called since 2018, has since its establishment in France blamed the social and economic problems of the French on migration movements and has become the focus of anti-immigrant politics. In its political discourse, the National Unity Party often uses elements aimed at agitating the fears of the masses centered on immigrants. Considering mass immigration as a rape of French culture and traditions, the party makes statements that immigrants will bring about the end of the French nation state and civilization. Again, with the discourses that France is being invaded by immigrants and that its culture is in danger of being lost, immigration is expressed as an “apocalypse”, thus creating an atmosphere of fear and consolidating the French public in support of the party’s anti-immigration policies. In addition, the ethnic fear of white French people is fueled by the birth rate of North African immigrants in France, and immigrants are portrayed as unemployment, crime and national security threats as a result of the perceptions spread by politicians (Halhalli, 2021). In France, as in many countries around the world that are the target countries of migration movements, anti-immigrant sentiment has been defined as a policy by the National Unity Party, with similar metaphors and elements of fear. The party, whose leader Le Pen propagandizes immigration as “the threshold of civil war” (McGuinness, 2017) and associates it with concepts such as apocalypse, occupation and terrorism, presents its policies as an antidote to the insecure political/social environment that immigrants will cause and has been steering French politics for decades, including increasingly today. Indeed, Le Pen and her supporters, who made it to the second round of the elections held on April 10, 2022, increased their votes from 33.90% to 41.46%, approximately seven and a half points compared to the second round of the 2017 elections (l’Intérieur, 2022.).

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring and the Syrian War, Hungary has been one of the European countries facing intense waves of migration. This is because Hungary is one of the obligatory destinations for migrants trying to cross Europe through the Balkans. In the current situation in Hungary, it is now perceived as a normal situation that political parties such as the governing party Fidesz (Hungarian Civic Union) and Jobbik (For a Better Hungary), representing the extreme right, are now gaining politics and votes through migrants. The Jobbik Party can be positioned in a different place in terms of its influence on the governing party in Hungary with its discourses on immigrants, since the country’s government and Jobbik are largely united on an anti-immigrant line. Thus, while Marton Gyongyosi from Jobbik tried to attract public attention with discourses such as “every [refugee] child knows how to disassemble and assemble an AK-47, and I would not feel comfortable being close to someone with such skills” (Aras & Sağıroğlu, 2018), Prime Minister Viktor Orban, in particular, during the election campaign in 2014, he directly declared them as terrorists or sexual harassment offenders with the rhetoric he used against immigrants, and aimed to instill fear of immigrants in the Hungarian people with the propaganda that Hungary was under attack through the figure of “enemy immigrant” (Tahincioğlu, 2020). Both the governing Fidesz and the Jobbik Party in the opposition bloc constitute one of the clearest examples of how fear of immigrants can completely shape the political environment in a state.

Piotr Cap (2017), in his study on the politics of fear and immigration, has identified the ways in which refugees are also used as an element of fear in Poland. According to him, the migration of refugee groups from Syria, other Middle Eastern countries and East Africa to Europe has been consistently conceptualized as a growing threat to Poland’s national security; the threat involves a strategic interplay of immaterial and material appeals to

fear. The interpretation of the fear element and threat is based on the conceptualization of the destructive impact of seemingly distant entities (groups of migrants from external regions - a symbolic “them”) on the main entities (Poland and other European countries - a symbolic “us”). According to the analysis, the negatively charged characterizations and growth of migrants are linked to physically “disastrous” consequences for Polish citizens; recurring threat constructions are used to legitimize the anti-immigrant stance in the European arena as well as domestic anti-immigrant policies, i.e. the political climate is driven by fear of migrants. Through a skillful rhetorical campaign, the Polish government legitimizes not only its policies but also its own rule.

The immigration/immigrant-based fear policy in Europe, combined with the paranoia of Islamization of the anti-immigration populist approach (Erayman, 2022), creates its effectiveness and is promoted with similar propaganda and discourses within the framework of similar concerns. For example, in the United Kingdom, during the Brexit referendum, populist discourses targeted migrants and the migration “crisis” and threat perceptions were placed at the center of the discourses (Çolak & Bozkaya, 2018), while in Sweden, the fear of the “migrant threat” results in Swedes turning to far-right parties that address the “migration threat” at a satisfactory rate, on the grounds that mainstream parties are not sufficiently interested in the migration agenda and out of security concerns (Akarçay, 2021). Along with the countries detailed above, it is possible to increase the number of states that use immigration as an element of fear, anxiety and panic to influence the political conjuncture. This is because international migration is a global discussion agenda, especially in Europe.

3.3. The Impact of Fear of Migrants in Turkish Politics

Due to its geographical location, Anatolia has been the ancient route of migration between Asia, Europe and Africa. Therefore, the Republic of Türkiye, which was founded in a geography familiar with the effects of migration, has been a country where migration and immigration issues have been publicly debated at different periods throughout its history. The migration agenda, which started with the exchange processes at the time of its founding, maintains its vitality today with migration from the Middle East and Africa to or through the country (Gündoğmuş, 2019). The Arab Spring and the subsequent Syrian War, which started migration and immigration as a subject of intense debate in the world, naturally affected the neighboring countries the most, and Türkiye in particular. In Türkiye, which has been exposed to macro mass mobility in a short period, the social and political sphere has been surrounded by new situations shaped by migration. The migration phenomenon had an impact on political parties and governments in Türkiye, as well as on foreign policy. These developments have resulted in migrants becoming a policy issue in Türkiye, making migrants one of the main topics that political parties, leaders and the government have focused on.

The migration mobility that started with the Syrian War has directly affected the discourse, policies and election campaigns in Turkish politics. As supported by Tuncel and Ekici (Tuncel & Ekici, 2019), the increase in the number of migrants and the fact that Syrians, who were considered “guests” at the beginning of the migration process, have become “permanent” in the settled situation, has caused the political discourse to be positioned against Syrians and the host society to support parties with discourses and policies that agitate this idea with an exclusionary understanding of nationalism. At the level of discourse and action, these policies are legitimized by the host community’s

feelings of fear and anxiety. Thus, policies towards Syrians have turned into a field of struggle between parties.

The mass migration of Syrians to Türkiye is still a subject of debate between the government, which has implemented an open-door policy, and the opposition parties. The political alliance formed by the opposition seeks to secure the support of the masses who are uncomfortable with the social and economic conditions allegedly caused by the migrants allowed to enter the country by the government. This is reflected in the discourse with the argument that immigration is a threat to the interests and even the survival of the country. Refugees have been described by various politicians as a “social explosion, demographic bomb, imperialism, and civil war project, threat to Turkish identity” (Pınarbaşı, 2023). It is obvious that terms such as bomb, explosion, civil war, imperialism, project, threat, fugitive used in making statements about asylum-seekers will agitate the host society’s sense of fear. In this sense, it can be stated that the fear of migrants is used as a tool by anti-immigration politicians in Turkish politics and thus it is one of the shapers of the political conjuncture in Türkiye.

In Türkiye’s presidential election in May 2023, one of the most important topics of discussion was the situation of immigrants in the country. Sinan Oğan, who promised in his election propaganda speeches that the first decision he would sign if elected president would be about sending asylum seekers back to their countries (*Sinan Oğan TRT’de propaganda konuşmasını yaptı*, 2023), received more than 5% of the votes in the first round and was influential in shaping the course of the election. The Victory Party, a member of the ATA Alliance, which nominated Oğan as its presidential candidate, displays similar attitudes towards migrants. In its founding manifesto (*Kuruluş Manifestosu*, 2022), the party defines migration as an attack of imperialism, draws attention to the environment of “civil war, invasion and conflict” to be created with the subject of “asylum seekers, fugitives and mafias”, and asks for support from voters to prevent these negativities. As of the time of this study, one of the main determinants of the political climate in Türkiye is the “fear of asylum-seeker gangs, mafias and illegals”.

Conclusion

Fear is explained as an emotion that helps a creature to protect its species against dangers and adapt to different conditions in the biological process. Like other emotions, fear is shaped not only by physiological and biological elements but also by social life. This makes emotions the subject of social sciences, specifically political psychology. Because fear, which can be instrumentalized to achieve the goal of controlling the subject of social sciences, has been effectively used by political powers to manipulate individuals and masses throughout history. In the face of fear, individuals and society become susceptible to manipulation, and throughout history, authorities have been using fear for reasons such as consolidating their power, gaining legitimacy, and getting their policies accepted. To summarize, fear has historically been accepted as a functional “political emotion” by the authorities in order to rule societies. As this proposition shows, migration and immigration, as a topic on today’s global agenda, has been one of the topics that political parties, governments and international organizations pay attention to when formulating their policies, and thus has been an element that shapes the internal and external relations of these institutions and organizations.

Understanding the explanations for the fear of migration depends on the psychosocial and psychopolitical elements that constitute it. When analyzed from a social psychological

perspective, firstly, the fact that immigrants with different identities in the receiving society are in the position of “other, foreign, unknown” creates a sense of uncertainty towards them. Since the feeling of uncertainty and suspicion triggers fear of the “unknown stranger”, it can be identified as a factor that leads to fear of migrants. In addition, being perceived as a threat to social identity makes migrants an element of fear and anxiety in the societies they migrate to. Concerns such as social identity and cultural homogeneity cause a fear that cultural, national and religious identities will be suppressed in receiving societies. In addition to these psychosocial factors, debates on security, economy, terrorism, gangs and crime rates create favorable conditions for the manipulation of society and politics through fear of migrants. This favorable social environment is supported by policymakers through various political psychological factors. For example, political leaders’ incriminating rhetoric about migrants, an extreme anti-immigration policy, and a method of spreading fear of migrants and manipulating public sentiments. In addition, populist politics portrays migrants as a source of fear about the homogeneity of the nation-state, especially by fomenting national identity and nationalism. As a result, populism, with its discourse and rhetoric, puts immigrants against the politics of fear and conducts a politics on this ground. This is because populist leaders shape the political climate through the fear of immigrants with the assumption that immigrants are a threat to security, economy, culture and stability. In this study, propaganda, media and political communication, perception management and public opinion formation are identified as the political psychological elements of projecting migrants as an element of fear.

As a country of immigration, it is possible to see the impact of fear of immigrants in various periods and laws experienced in the history of the United States of America. As a result of the politics of fear, which was used when restrictions on immigration were needed, the state aimed to legitimize practices limiting immigration. The determination that the politics of fear, which we can trace back to the 1800s, shaped the political climate through immigrants is a phenomenon that we still see traces of in American society today for certain reasons. The politics of fear of immigrants, which we started to identify with The Know-Nothing Party, continues through Donald Trump and his supporters as of 2023. Claims that immigrants are “welfare scroungers” (Paxton & Mughan, 2006) and occupiers, that they pose a risk to national identity, economy, and security, and that there is a mystical and major project behind immigration movements have been highly shaping elements in American politics. Likewise, the situation is no different in Europe, where mass migration has been instrumental in shaping it into what it is today. Today, Europe, which consists of countries with high levels of prosperity, has become a target for migration as a result of political, economic, and natural crises in other geographies. This factor has deeply affected the political situation and policies in Europe. Looking at the present day, it can be stated that the September 11 attacks radically affected the migration policies of Europe and the United States, and the political turmoil in the Middle East set the agenda for Europe in particular. The interaction with this situation has fueled the rise of far-right parties and anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe. Although the policies of political parties and governments are sometimes the cause and sometimes the outcome of the fear of migrants, the common feature of the current political conjunctures is that they are based on processes shaped by the fear of migrants. In Europe today, public attention and elections are heavily influenced by fear of migrants. In Europe, as in the United States, the politics of fear based on immigration has been shaped by similar propaganda and discourses within the framework of similar fears. Political parties that develop policies in this direction generally seek electoral support and make policy promises as

an antidote to the fear of the “migrant threat” with the discourses of migration “crisis” and threat perceptions. This is also true for Türkiye, which has been subjected to intense mass migration mobility with the Syrian War. The permanentization of Syrians in Türkiye has become an issue of political discourse, and the host society’s feelings of fear and anxiety have been aroused against the danger of migrants. The mass migration of Syrians to Türkiye is still a popular topic in debates between the government and opposition parties. Anti-immigrant politicians choose discourses that stimulate voters’ sense of fear when referring to migrants and propose their own policies as a solution. In fact, one of the most important determinants of the political environment in Türkiye’s May 2023 general elections was the state of fear caused by migrants and migration in the society. In the continuation of this study, it is possible to investigate the politics of fear, anxiety and panic regarding migration mobility in the countries detailed above, as well as in different parts of the world, since international migration is a global discussion agenda that will continue to exist with the continuation of humanity.

In order to avoid societal polarization through the exposure to fear politics regarding immigrants, various recommendations can be proposed in accordance with academic principles. The initial step towards this goal is to accurately inform and raise awareness within the society about immigration issues. Misunderstandings that lead to the formation of prejudices can be eliminated through proper education. Schools, universities, and civil society organizations can significantly contribute to creating awareness to mitigate the potential harm caused by fear politics. However, actions against fear politics are not solely the responsibility of universities and civil society organizations. The media, which exerts considerable influence in guiding the masses, as well as political leaders and artists, can also prevent the use of a climate of fear against immigrants. The media should produce accurate and unbiased news on immigration, avoiding the neglect of positive news by focusing only on negative situations. Despite the short-term benefits that political leaders may perceive fear politics to bring them, they should not forget that in the long run, such politics may lead to societal fragmentation. Therefore, the language used should be unifying and solution-oriented to bring the society together.

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Korku Siyaseti: Siyasi Ortamı Şekillendiren Bir Araç Olarak Göçmen Korkusu

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Diğer insanî duygular gibi korku da yalnızca fizyolojik ve biyolojik öğelere değil, aynı zamanda toplumsal yaşama içkindir. Toplumsala değgin olması korkuyu sosyal bilimlerin, politik bir duygu olma potansiyeli ise politik psikolojinin konusu yapmaktadır. Zira sosyal bilimlerin öznesini kontrol etme amacına ulaşmak için araçsallaştırılabilen korku, insan psikolojine tesiri sayesinde tarih boyunca birey ve toplumları yönlendirmede güçlü bir katalizör olarak kullanılmıştır. Korku duygusunun insan üzerindeki etkisinin işlevselliğinin farkındaki liderler, yöneticiler, hükümet ve siyasi partiler bu bilinçle korku duygusundan; iktidarlarına meşruiyet sağlamak, kitleleri yönlendirmek, politikalarına destek bulmak, toplumsal tepkileri kontrol altında tutmak, kamuoyunu manipüle etmek, en genel anlamda siyasi iklimi şekillendirmek gayesi ile istifade etmişlerdir. Tarihin gelinen noktasında korkuya politik bir araç olarak başvurulmasının ortak paydasını, küresel güncel tartışma konusu olan göç ve göçmenler oluşturmaktadır. Günümüzde göç(men) konusu, politika yapıcılarının dikkatlerini celbeden başlıklardan olup kurum ve kuruluşların kararlarını biçimlendiren bir unsur hâline gelmiştir. Böylece coğrafya, iklim kaynaklı sorunların yanı sıra siyasi, ekonomik ve toplumsal süreçlerin bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkan göç hareketleri korku siyasetinin aracı haline gelmekte; göçmenler ev sahibi toplum tarafından ekonomik istikrara, ulusal güvenliğe, ulus devletlere ve kültürel kimliklere yönelik tehdit addedilemektedir. Göçmen korkusu, göçün hedef ülkesinde gelecek kaygıları ve güvenlik endişelerini besleyerek göçmenlere yönelik tutumların siyasi tercihlere yansımaları şeklinde cereyan etmektedir. Etkili bir siyasal iletişim, propaganda ve manipülasyon ile göçmen korkusu, otoritelere toplumsal destek ve hayata geçirmek istedikleri politikalarına meşruiyet kazandırmaktadır. Kitlelerin siyasi tutumlarının yönlendirilmesiyle ülkeler arası seyahat yasakları, sınır duvarları, kitlesel tehcir politikaları ve vatandaşlık süreçlerinin zorlaştırılması gibi korku temelli politikalar, göçmen korkusunun siyasi söylem ve politika olarak benimsenmesi sonucunda kabul görmektedir. Korku duygusu ve günümüzde spesifik olarak göçmen korkusu, siyasi karar alma süreçlerinde yönlendirici bir duygudur ve bu duyguya ilişkin siyaset, devletlerin siyasi konjonktürünü şekillendirmektedir. İfade edilen hususların ışığında bu çalışma korku duygusunun biyolojik ve fizyolojik temelini izahı ile başlamış, korkunun sosyal bilimlerde bir süje olmasına dair argümanlar literatürden faydalanılarak ortaya konmuştur. Ardından, toplumsal ve politik bir duygu olarak korkunun göçmenlere yönlendirilmesindeki sosyal psikolojik öğeler tespit edilmeye çalışılmış, bununla beraber göçmen korkusunun siyasi politikaların ve seçimlerin şekillendirilmesindeki etkisi politik psikolojik bir perspektifle ifade edilmiştir. Göçün ve göçmen korkusunun siyasi iklimi hangi yollarla etkilediğinin somut örnekleri, bir göçmen ülkesi olan ve tarihinde göç dalgalarına fazlasıyla şahitlik etmiş olan Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nden başlanmıştır. Amerika Birleşik Devletleri tarihinde siyasi alanda yapılan tartışmalar ve uygulamaya konan çeşitli kanunlarda göçmen korkusu izleklerine rastlamak mümkündür ve bu yasalar, göçü caydırıcı veya meşakkatli bir sürece dönüştürmeyi hedeflemiştir fakat Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde göçmen korkusunun siyasi bir araç olarak kullanımı

yalnızca geçmişte kalmış bir yöntem değildir. Göçmenlerin siyasi ortamdaki etkinliği konusunda güncel bir diğer coğrafya Avrupa kıtasıdır. Bu sebeple çalışma, günümüzde göç hareketlerinin hedef coğrafyası olan Avrupa içerisinde yoğun göç alan ülkelerin siyasetinden örneklerle devam etmiştir. Söz konusu devletlerde çeşitli iktidar ve siyasi partilerin bir enstrüman olarak göçmen korkusuna başvurma yöntemleri ve bunun seçimlere yansımaları, çalışmanın argümanını açıklama konusunda önemli bir sacayağı kabul edilmiştir. Avrupa ile Afrika-Orta Doğu coğrafyası arasında geçiş güzergahı olması nedeniyle söz konusu coğrafya kaynaklı kitlesel göçte transit ya da hedef ülke konumundaki Türkiye ise sınırları içerisindeki yüksek göçmen sayısı ile korkunun siyasi politikalar ve seçimler üzerindeki güncel etkisini analiz etmek için seçilmiş bir diğer örnektir. Bu bağlamda çalışmanın sınırlılıkları; göçün tarihsel süreç boyunca şekillendirdiği Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, göçmenlerin refah düzeyi ve yaşam koşulları sebebiyle yöneldiği Avrupa ülkeleri ile göçmen sayısında son yıllarda büyük bir artış yaşanan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti olarak belirlenmiştir. Seçilen ülkelerde göçmen korkusuna yönelik siyaset, ampirik ve teorik çalışmalardan derlenen sonuçlarla tespit edilmiş; siyasi partiler, liderler ve milletvekillerinin bir siyasal iletişim yöntemi olarak göçmen korkusunu manipüle etme metotlarına dair saptamalar yapılmıştır.

Amerika Birleşik Devletleri tarihinde 1800'lü yıllarda izlerine rastladığımız korku siyasetinin göçmenler üzerinden siyasi konjonktürü şekillendirdiği tespiti, hâlen geçerliliğini korumaktadır. Göçmen karşıtlığı ile temerküz etmiş olan The Know-Nothing Party'den başlattığımız göçmen korkusu siyasetinin 2023 itibari ile Donald Trump ve destekçileri üzerinden devam ettiğini söylemek mümkündür. Tarihsel sürecin farklı aşamalarında istilacı addedilen göçmenlerin kültüre, ulusal kimliğe, ekonomiye ve güvenliğe birer risk oluşturdukları, göç hareketlerinin ardında mistik ve majör bir proje olduğu iddiaları Amerikan toplumunda bir hayli popüler argümanlardır. Söz konusu sürecin akıbeti Avrupa için de çok farklı değildir. Refah seviyesi dünyanın geri kalanına kıyasla daha yüksek olan Avrupa, farklı coğrafyalardan çeşitli sebeplerle göç eden kitlelerin hedefi olmaktadır. Göçmen korkusu ile biçimlenen süreçlerin çıktısı olarak, kamuoyu dikkati büyük oranda göçmenlere yönelmekte, seçim çalışmaları göçmen korkusunun aktif olarak araçsallaştırıldığı süreçlere dönüşmektedir. Göçmen korkusunun bir siyasal iletişim tekniği olarak seçilmesi ve buna yönelik propaganda ile siyasi partiler, genellikle göç "krizi" ve tehdit algıları söylemleri ile "göçmen tehdidinden" korkunun panzehri olarak sundukları politikalarına seçimlerde destek aramakta, buna ilişkin çözüm vaatlerinde bulunmaktadır. Bu hususlar; Suriye, Afganistan ve Afrika'daki çeşitli krizler ile birlikte yoğun kitlesel göç hareketliliğine maruz kalan Türkiye için de son yıllarda artış sağlamıştır. Bilhassa Suriyeli göçmenlerin Türkiye'de kalıcı hale gelmeleri konusunda siyasi söylemler yükselmiş, ev sahibi toplumun korku ve endişe duyguları göçmen tehlikesine karşı uyarılmıştır. Kitlesel göç ve bu göçün şekli, bu çalışmanın gerçekleştirildiği tarihte hâlen Türkiye siyasetinin ana tartışma konularındandır. Nitekim Türkiye'nin 2023 Mayıs genel seçiminde siyasi iklimin en önemli belirleyicilerinden birisi göçmenler ve göçün toplumda yarattığı korku hâli olmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Korku Siyaseti, Göçmen Korkusu, Göç Politikaları, Psikopolitik Analiz, Siyasal İletişim.

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In this study, the rules stated in the “**Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive**” were followed.

Yazarların çalışmadaki **katkı oranları** eşittir.

The authors’ **contribution rates** in the study are equal.

Çalışma kapsamında herhangi bir kurum veya kişi ile **çıkar çatışması** bulunmamaktadır.

There is no **conflict of interest** with any institution or person within the scope of the study.