

THE RIGHT-WING POPULISM AND THE DISCOURSE OF NOSTALGIA: THE
CASE OF THE ALTERNATIVE FOR GERMANY (AfD)

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ABSTRACT

THE RIGHT-WING POPULISM AND THE DISCOURSE OF NOSTALGIA: THE CASE OF THE ALTERNATIVE FOR GERMANY (AfD)

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Right-wing populism has achieved electoral success all around the globe in recent decades. The rise of right-wing populism has been widely discussed in academic literature, but the relationship between populism and nostalgia has not been debated enough, especially in Germany. This thesis aims to analyze the relationship between right-wing populism and the discourse of nostalgia in the context of the Alternative for Germany (AfD). Right-wing populist parties exploit nostalgia by referring to the ‘glorious past’ of their country. However, the AfD is an extraordinary case among other European right-wing populist parties as its discourse of nostalgia is not based on the ‘glorious past’ of Germany but on a diversified regional approach. The AfD’s rhetoric of nostalgia has different dimensions at federal and regional levels. While the AfD presents the past as ‘normal’ at the federal level, the AfD exploits the negative collective nostalgia of the GDR in the former GDR territories. In this thesis, the different dimensions of exploitation of nostalgia are analyzed in detail by using

qualitative research methods. Furthermore, the thesis argues that the AfD exploits the discourse of nostalgia as a tool for social identity construction, political mobilization, and legitimization of its radical right-wing agenda. In order to find out the connection between nostalgia and right-wing populism and to provide a better understanding of AfD, this thesis introduces a comprehensive and critical analysis of literature on populism, nostalgia, and the AfD.

Keywords: right-wing populism, nostalgia, Alternative for Germany (AfD), German Politics.

ÖZ

SAĞ POPÜLİZM VE NOSTALJİ SÖYLEMİ: ALMANYA İÇİN ALTERNATİF (AfD) ÖRNEĞİ

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Sağ popülist partiler son yıllarda küresel olarak seçim başarıları elde etmiştir. Sağ popülist partilerin yükselişi akademik literatürde kapsamlı bir şekilde tartışılmaktadır. Fakat nostalji ve popülizm arasındaki ilişki özellikle Almanya bağlamında yeterince tartışılmamıştır. Bu tez Almanya için Alternatif (AfD) bağlamında sağ popülizm ve nostalji söylemi ilişkisini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Sağ popülistler ülkelerinin tarihinin şanlı zamanlarını kullanarak nostaljiyi sömürmektedirler. Fakat bu noktada AfD diğer sağ popülist partilerden farklılaşmaktadır. AfD ‘geçmiş şanlı günlere’ atıf yapmaktansa geçmişi ‘normal’ olarak tanımlamaktadır. Ayrıca, AfD federal ve eyalet düzeyinde nostaljiyi farklı şekillerde kullanmaktadır. Federal seçimlerde ‘görekemli tarihe’ referans vermeden sadece ‘normal’ olana yönelik restoratif nostalji kullanılırken eski Doğu Almanya eyaletlerinde negatif kolektif nostalji söylemini kullanmaktadır. Ayrıca, bu tez AfD’nin nostalji söylemini sosyal kimlik inşası, siyasi mobilizasyon ve radikal sağ gündemini meşrulaştırmak için araçsal olarak kullandığını savunmaktadır. Bu tez AfD’nin farklılık gösteren nostalji söylemini daha iyi

analiz etmek için nitel araştırma yöntemlerini kullanarak literatürü kapsamlı, sistematik ve eleştirel bir şekilde analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: sağ popülizm, nostalji, Almanya için Alternatif (AfD), Alman Siyaseti.

To my love

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AfD: Alternative for Germany

AKP: Justice and Development Party

CAP: European Common Agricultural Policy

CDU: Christian Democratic Union

CETA: Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement

CSU: Christian Social Union

DF: Danish People's Party

DRP: German Reich Party

DVU: German People's Union

EU: European Union

FDP: Free Democratic Party

Fidesz: Hungarian Civic Alliance

FN: National Front

FPÖ: Freedom Party of Austria

FRG: Federal Republic of Germany

FW: Free Voters

GDR: German Democratic Republic

LN: Northern League

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NPD: National Democratic Party of Germany

NSDAP: National Socialist German Workers' Party

OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

PDS: Party of Democratic Socialism

PEGIDA: Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamicisation of the Occident

PS: Finns Party

PVV: Party for Freedom

REP: Republicans

SED: Socialist Unity Party of Germany

SME: Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

SPD: Social Democratic Party of Germany

SRP: Socialist Reich Party

UK: United Kingdom

UKIP: United Kingdom Independence Party

USA: United States of America

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century, which started with a universal euphoria, has been witnessing surprising political and social developments. The 9/11 terrorist attacks in Washington D. C. and New York, the global counter-terrorism policies, and the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan by the United States, the 2008 financial crisis, and the Eurozone crisis, social upheavals and regime changes in the Middle East, international migration influx and the refugee crisis, and rise of the extremist far-right parties in Europe can be considered as signs that “the end of history” has not come yet. Among these are also the serious challenges faced by liberal democratic regimes, which posed by right-wing populist parties. Since the end of the Cold War, liberal democratic regimes have never been this much vulnerable against illiberal actors.

The rise of populist parties has become the primary focus of European politics lately. It would not be too assertive to say that ‘a specter has been haunting world- the specter of populism.’ In the recent decade, radical right-wing parties surprisingly gained power in liberal democracies all over the globe. They started to gain seats in local and national parliaments, became partners in coalition governments, and even came to power in countries with strong democratic traditions. Many scholars expected populism to be a temporary phenomenon – which was proved wrong by recent political developments. The election of Donald J. Trump as the 45th President of the United States in 2016, the Brexit referendum, Marine Le Pen’s success in both the 2017 and the 2022 French presidential elections, Victor Orban’s re-election in 2022, and the Alternative for Germany (AfD) gaining a foothold in Germany showed that right-wing populism would be permanent in the Western politics. The AfD has a special place in

the academic literature due to Germany's historical experiences with the radical far-right parties and its unique political development (*Sonderweg*). Moreover, Germany, as the leading economic and political power in the European Union (EU), is a country where nostalgic deprivation can be multidimensional because of the Nazi experience, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) legacy, and its multicultural society due to the immigration from all around the World.

Thus, populism is a trending concept in academic literature. Especially after the electoral success of the right-wing populism in the Western countries, studies on populism are booming. According to Mudde and Kaltwasser, "Populism is one of the main buzzwords of the 21st century" (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 1). Furthermore, the Cambridge Dictionary declared the concept of populism the word of the year in 2017 (Cambridge Dictionary, 2017). One of the major newspapers in the United Kingdom, the Guardian, published more than 2000 articles discussing the concept of populism at the end of 2016, whereas it was less than 300 before the 2000s (Rooduijn, 2018; cited in Stathi & Guerra, 2021, p. 50). The media's attention and studies on populism are growing. In the European context, the average votes of populist parties have increased from 7 percent to 25 percent since the early 2000s (Grindheim, 2019, p. 758). All of these developments point to the pressing need for an immediate response to understand what populism is.

Although the concept of populism is a prevalent topic in political science literature, there is no consensus on the definition of the term. Due to the complexity of the concept of populism, scholars fail to exceed the theoretical and practical limits in defining the term. Populism is also far from being a full-fledged philosophy since it does not yet have an internationally agreed and homogeneously defined set of principles and ideals, unlike socialism, communism, environmentalism, feminism, social democracy, or fascism (Kaya, 2016, p. 7). In the literature, populism is analyzed as an ideology (Mudde, 2004; Canovan, 1999; Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008), a discourse (Laclau, 2005; Hawkins, 2009; Mouffe, 2018), and a political strategy (Moffitt, 2016; Reinemann et al., 2017). However, none of these approaches give us an exact definition of the concept and is inadequate to cover different forms of populist parties in particular regions. Regardless of which definition of populism we follow,

populism is deeply afflicting democratic politics in many ways. Populism in every form focuses on the division of the people and the elite in an antagonistic structure. This division builds the discourse of right-wing populism and convergences all their suggestions.

This thesis aims to investigate the relationship between the right-wing populism and the discourse of nostalgia in the context of the AfD. The research question of this thesis is: “What is the role of rhetoric of nostalgia in increasing the support for the AfD, and how does the AfD exploit nostalgia in its party discourse?” The AfD is selected as a case study since it perfectly fits the description of right-wing populist parties, as Cas Mudde defines; populist radical right-wing parties are populist, nativist, and authoritarian (Mudde, 2007, p. 22). Moreover, right-wing populist parties are fed by authoritarian and nativist tendencies and in this respect, the GDR and Nazi experience in Germany makes the AfD an interesting case in terms of right-wing populism. This thesis employs an explanatory research that aims to present deep analysis of the relationship between the AfD and discourse of nostalgia by analyzing party programs, official documents, election campaigns, social media entries, and speeches of the party representatives. Thus, this study is a qualitative research that mostly based on the secondary literature.

Although there is no consensus on the meaning of populism, there are various scholars who refer to the nostalgic dimension of right-wing populist rhetoric. Betz and Johnson claim that populism is “a backward-looking reactionary ideology, reflecting a deep sense of nostalgia for the good old days” (Betz & Johnson, 2004, p. 311). Moreover, Paul Taggart’s concept of the heartland is highly useful in analyzing right-wing populist rhetoric. Taggart argues that the heartland is not a utopia that can be achieved in the future; instead, it existed in the past and we need to restore it. The heartland is not a realistic version of the past; in contrast, the indicated time period is an imaginary and exaggerated vision (Taggart, 2004, p. 278). Taggart’s heartland concept is in a similar vein to the concept of restorative nostalgia, which was theorized by Svetlana Boym.

Populism is a global phenomenon, which exists in many countries around the world in different forms. The Alternative for Germany (AfD) in Germany, the National Front (FN) and Eric Zemmour in France, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) in Austria, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in the United Kingdom, the Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands, the Northern League (LN) in Italy, Danish People's Party (DF) in Denmark, Finns Party (PS) in Finland, Donald Trump in the United States, Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz) in Hungary are some examples of the right-wing populist parties all around the globe. Furthermore, classifying these parties and movements is crucial to an accurate analysis. Even though they have connections to and continuities from old extremist far-right parties, the right-wing populist parties should be analyzed as a new family of political parties due to their unique aspects differentiating them from other extremist far-right parties.

In this respect, studying populism remains essential in the social sciences literature. Understanding the recent success of right-wing populist parties requires a comprehensive consideration in a deep analysis of both the supply and demand sides. The demand side of populism can be explained by the persisting structural problems, such as poverty, inequality, and de-industrialization of the West, which stem from neoliberal globalization process, causing social, economic, and political discontent. Meanwhile, the supply side of populism is linked with the political rhetoric and the political communication strategy of right-wing populism. The charismatic leadership, mediatization, and the referencing to the problems that have not been solved by mainstream parties can be examined as the supply side of populism. In the academic literature, a lot of study analyzes nostalgic discourses of different right-wing populist parties, but there is not enough study on the AfD. This thesis aims to contribute to the academic literature with an understanding of AfD's discourse of nostalgia. I claim that the most distinguishable element of the supply side of right-wing populism is the use of past and nostalgic rhetoric of right-wing populism. Starting from ancient times, politics had always been future-oriented by nature; however, today it is stuck in the past at the discourse level. Although populism can take different forms and use various practices, the common feature of right-wing populism is the nostalgic rhetoric. It is

visible in their campaign slogans such as the most famous ones ‘Make America Great Again’ in Donald Trump's presidential campaign, ‘Take Back Control of Our Country’ UKIP's slogan in the Brexit referendum, and ‘*Remettre la France en ordre*’ (Restore order in France) Marine Le Pen's National Rally slogan and ‘*Deutschland, Aber Normal*’ (Germany, But Normal) was the slogan of the AfD in the 2021 federal elections. These campaign slogans give a clear message that focuses on an idealized past and promise to return to the times when things were ‘great’, ‘under control,’ and ‘normal.’

In this respect, Germany, as economic and political locomotive of the European Union, is struggling with the rise of the AfD, which became the first party to receive enough votes to exceed the federal threshold and enter the Bundestag since the reunification of Germany (Arzheimer & Berning, 2019, p. 1). Right-wing populism finds a special place in Germany due to the legacy of extreme right parties, especially the Nazi experience, which needs an exclusive consideration. The party's insistent achievements in the old East German territories also give a particular place to the AfD in social sciences literature. The AfD was founded in 2013 in the aftermath of the Eurozone crisis and swiftly grew at regional, national, and European levels. Although the party was established as a neoliberal Eurosceptic party, it transformed into a radical right-wing populist party after the internal conflicts and refugee crisis in 2015 (Kaya, 2021; Arzheimer, 2015). During its foundation process, “the AfD attracted a broad coalition of right-wingers as members” (Arzheimer & Berning 2019, p. 2) from economists who belong to ordoliberalism to the ultra-nationalists. Although the AfD emerged as a single-issue party that stresses anti-Euro, the party adopted a xenophobic language prohibited in German politics. Anti-immigration, anti-refugee and anti-Islamist discourse combined nativism in the AfD's manifestos and campaigns. Moreover, the AfD embraced nostalgic rhetoric in its campaigns as the chief strategy that brought the party success in elections. Nostalgic discourse of the AfD especially abused the East German citizens' collective memories about the 1989 peaceful revolution and resisting against the GDR (Kenny, 2017; Pesthy et al., 2020).

Nostalgia has not been studied enough in the political science literature. The concept is generally studied in the sociology and psychology literature. Nostalgia comes from

the combination of two Greek words; '*nostos*' (home) and '*algia*' (pain) (Smeeke & Jetten, 2019, p. 132). Firstly, it is believed that nostalgia is a medical disease that is mainly characterized by mourning as a result of being far from home. Subsequently, the understanding of nostalgia shifted into a concept associated with 'yearning for happy old times' (Smeeke & Jetten, 2019, p. 132). Nostalgia can be considered as a type of personal emotion that can be shared by a social group or even a nation (Göpffarth, 2021). Families, generations, neighborhoods, and nations can gather past events, memories, and images, which were not necessarily experienced first-hand (Verovsek, 2016). These gatherings on a collective level can construct social identity and a feeling of connection between the past, present, and even future. For example, the 1989 peaceful revolution in GDR can be considered as a collective memory of the native people and it has already transformed to collective nostalgia which the AfD tries to exploit (Serrano et al., 2019; Rosenfeld, 2021; Kenny, 2017).

This function of collective nostalgia is open to manipulation. A well-designed political communication strategy could easily create a social identity by abusing collective nostalgia and lead people to request to return to the past when things were simple, people were homogenous, and everything was more stable. Consequently, the collective nostalgia translates into nostalgia at the national level, which is observed in the confrontations between the native people and the immigrants. Encountering a social group that has a fragile connection to the past of a society triggers both sides' nostalgic feelings (Smeeke & Jetten, 2019, p. 133; Steenvoorden & Hartevelde, 2018). Along this vein, this thesis claims that the right-wing populist parties use collective nostalgia as a tool to mobilize people and create a new social identity.

1.1. Methodology and Outline

In order to analyze the relationship between right-wing populism and the discourse of nostalgia, this thesis adopts a qualitative research methodology. The thesis critically reviews and analyzes the academic literature to give a broad answer to questions of what is the relationship between right-wing populism and the discourse of nostalgia and how the right-wing populist parties exploit nostalgia in their communication strategies. The AfD is selected as a case study because while the relationship between

nostalgia and right-wing populism has been investigated in academic literature with different cases, there are not enough studies on the AfD. Moreover, this study focuses on the last elections in Germany, which are the 2019 East German State Elections (Brandenburg, Thuringia, and Saxony), and the 2021 German Federal Elections. Furthermore, the thesis is tried to show different dimensions of the AfD's discourse of nostalgia at regional and federal levels.

German politics is also a unique field for political science because the Nazi legacy and the GDR experience make Germany an interesting case for studying the relationship between the discourse of nostalgia and right-wing populism. Moreover, the AfD has several common characteristics of the other right-wing populist parties, but also, the AfD has a unique internal democratic structure which means there is no leadership cult, and the party has a well-functioned collective decision-making process. So, this thesis aims to contribute to the academic literature by a critical evaluation of the existing literature and further it as an analysis of the AfD's discourse of nostalgia.

As already argued, this thesis employs explanatory research that presents a deep analysis of the relationship between the AfD and the discourse of nostalgia and aims to find out the nostalgic rhetoric of the AfD by analyzing party programs, official documents, election campaigns, social media activities, and speeches of the party representatives. In addition to the primary sources, the secondary literature is systematically and critically analyzed to contribute to the main argument of the thesis.

After the Introduction, the second chapter discusses, in order to find out the reasons what is the relationship between right-wing populist parties and nostalgic rhetoric and provide a theoretical background, the second chapter discusses the concept of populism from a comparative perspective and asks the following questions: What is populism, and why is it on the rise? The chapter illustrates the current discussions on the definition of populism in the academic literature. Most popular approaches, such as the ideational, discursive, and political communication strategy, are thoroughly analyzed. Furthermore, the strengths and weaknesses of each approach are compared, and the definition of populism is investigated. Afterward, the main causes of the rise of populism are provided in order to present why nostalgia is attractive to the voters

of right-wing populist parties. The economic, socio-cultural, and political grievances are examined in this regard. Lastly, the chapter presents and discusses recent studies to answer the question of who are the voters of right-wing populism in order to demonstrate 'the losers of globalization,' who suffer from the present and despair of the future.

The third chapter investigates the concepts of nostalgia, collective nostalgia, and societal pessimism in order to have a better understating of the political communication strategy of right-wing populist parties. This chapter begins with definitions of these concepts and explains their relationship with right-wing populist discourse, and also examines the relationship between nostalgia and populism. Societal pessimism and collective nostalgia are the distinguishing characteristics of right-wing populist voters (Steenvoorden & Hartevelt, 2018). Nostalgic discourse matches the societal pessimist people since nostalgic discourse offers a basic solution to people, promising to return to the past. Subsequently, the chapter answers the questions of what are nostalgia, collective nostalgia, and societal pessimism and how these concepts are related to right-wing populism.

The fourth chapter discusses why people are attached to the nostalgic rhetoric of right-wing populist parties. The main argument is that the catastrophic effects of neoliberal transformation are destroying people's hopes for the future, and citizens want to go back. This chapter argues that neoliberalism has failed to fulfill its promises of prosperity for all, and contradictions of the neoliberal system have driven people to despair. The failure of neoliberalism is the key to evaluating the recent rise of nostalgia. Next, the below-mentioned concepts, which are almost equally important to understanding right-wing populism, are investigated to provide a broad discussion on neoliberalism and globalization. Then, the chapter provides an analysis of the decline of social democracy and the decline of future-oriented politics for a better understanding of why populists use nostalgic discourse. Furthermore, the issue of mass migration and the complicated and neoliberal structure of the EU is analyzed to support the argument that people want to go back to the past because they think that politics, economy, and society were much simpler in the past. The issue of mass migration faced by Europe in the last decade is also analyzed in this chapter because the

migration of Muslims to the European continent is analyzed as the primary accelerator of right-wing populism. Finally, the chapter concludes with the concept of post-truth, which is crucial to understand right-wing populist political communication strategy. Post-truth is decisive in realizing the populist discourses, which are not always relevant to the truth. It should be highlighted that populists' nostalgic rhetoric is based on 'alternative facts'. To grasp the 'populist zeitgeist' this chapter gives a comprehensive understanding of the sources of the right-wing populist parties.

The fifth chapter starts with a short history of extremist right-wing parties of Germany to understand their connections to the AfD and also provides a background for the AfD's ideological features. Then, the chapter focuses on AfD's core features, such as populism, nativism, ordoliberalism, Euro-scepticism, and Islamophobia. Next, the chapter gives a broad analysis of AfD's political communication strategy and searches for nostalgic discourse. The last chapter summarizes the main results and synthesis of the dissertation. Then, the chapter presents the shortcomings of the thesis and gives ideas for future studies.

CHAPTER 2

POPULISM

2.1. Introduction

As highlighted before, populism is a complex concept that needs to be analyzed comparatively. This chapter gives a comparative discussion of the current literature of populism. Since the main aim of the thesis is analyzing the AfD's nostalgic discourse, firstly concept of the populism should be understood. In this chapter, the most popular approaches to define the concept of populism are demonstrated in order to provide background for the analysis of the discourse of nostalgia of the AfD. The chapter reviews the three main approaches to populism in the academic literature, which are *ideational*, *discursive*, and *political style* approaches to subsequently examine the AfD's nostalgic discourse. Then, the chapter gives a background on the reasons why populism is on the rise due to the acquire a deeper knowledge on the further analysis of the AfD. The political, social, and economic grievances of the citizens need to be visited to shed a light possible explanation for right-wing populist parties' nostalgic discourse. Lastly, the chapter concludes with the literature review of the profile of populist citizens. Recognizing who the voters of right-wing populist parties are fundamental in furtherance of the role of nostalgic discourse.

2.2. The Main Approaches to Define Populism

The concept of "populism" is an ambiguous term that still one of the central debates in the academic literature of social sciences. Despite the wide discussions on the definition of populism, there is no consensus on its meaning. As Ionescu and Gellner pointed, "no one is quite clear just what it is. As a doctrine or as a movement, it is

elusive and protean” (Ionescu & Gellner, 1969, p. 1; cited in Kaya, 2016, p. 3). Some authors claim that populism is a problematic issue, for instance, Deze said “cacophonous field research” (Deze, 2004, p. 14; cited in Hube & Truan, 2017, p. 181) and Rioux said populism is a “pseudo-concept” (Rioux, 2007, p. 14; cited in Hube & Truan, 2017, p. 181). The very first attempt to define populism was hosted by The London School of Economics in 1967 with the participation of great scholars including Isaiah Berlin, Alain Touraine, Ernest Gellner, Franco Venturi, Kenneth Minogue, Peter Worsley (Kaya, 2019, p. 2). In the conference, Sir Isaiah Berlin said that

I think we are all probably agreed that a single formula to cover all populisms everywhere will not be very helpful. The more embracing the formula, the less descriptive. The more richly descriptive the formula, the more it will exclude. The greater the intention, the smaller the extension. The greater the connotation, the smaller the denotation. This appears to me to be an almost a priori truth in historical writing (Berlin, 1967; cited in Kaya, 2016, p. 3).

It is clear that academic literature is still not able to describe populism as well as in the 1960s scientifically. “Populism is one of the most widely used but poorly understood political concepts of our time” (Taggart, 2002, p. 62).

The literature widely accepted that there are three main approaches to defining populism; the ideational, (Mudde, 2004; Canovan, 1999; Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008), discursive (Laclau, 2005; Hawkins, 2009; Mouffe, 2018), and political style (Moffitt, 2016; Reinemann et al., 2017) approaches. These three essential approaches need to be investigated together due to the concept of populism’s complex structure. In order to understand the nostalgic rhetoric of the right-wing populist parties, it should not be negligible that populism can be varied depending on the geographical, historical, social and economic infrastructure of the host country. Despite the fact that populism emerged in different forms, populist parties have similar aspects as the chapter will represent.

2.2.1. The Ideational Approach: Populism as an Ideology

The ideational approach is one of the most famous approaches to define populism. The ideational approach has become more and more popular within the literature (Moffitt

& Tormey, 2014). For the ideational approach, populism is about ideas. Cas Mudde defines populism as a thin centered ideology (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). In his words,

Populism is a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people (Mudde, 2004, p. 543).

According to the ideational approach, populism sees politics in a dualistic or Manichean sense that can be summarized as a struggle between virtuous good and diabolic evil (Hawkins & Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 514). Mudde's definition of populism, a thin-centered ideology, assumes that populism combines its thin-centered features with other ideologies such as socialism, conservatism, nationalism, and ecologism (Mudde, 2004). This is why many leaders from left-wing to right-wing can be labeled as populist. For instance, Marine Le Pen, Donald Trump, Hugo Chavez and Bernie Sanders are considered as populist leaders even they have been located very different positions in the political spectrum. Populists can attach various ideologies due to its flexibility. However, its thin-centered core which is pure-people against corrupt elite can be found in their discourses. For example, right-wing populist parties take nativist and nationalist ideologies whereas left-wing populists have socialist and social democrat discourses (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013). Mudde and Kaltwasser's definition of ideology is a worldview rather than a false consciousness (Abromeit, 2017, p. 180). In contrast to the Marx's ideology definition that can be called false consciousness, Mudde and Kaltwasser analyze the term of ideology as a perspective, a mentality, and worldview.

Also, Jan-Werner Müller's assertive theory on populism can be classify in the ideational approach. He defines populism as not a codified doctrine but a bunch of claims and political arguments with an inner logic that is very similar to Mudde's definition (Müller, 2016, p. 10). Müller especially focusing on the threat of populism to liberal democracy. He concerns that populism can damage to the democratic culture. In his theory, populism should not be only analyzed as an anti-establishment movement but it has serious anti-pluralist feature that make populists very dangerous (Müller, 2016, p. 20).

2.2.2. Populism as a Discourse

Another approach to defining populism asserts that populism is a discourse rather than an ideology, based on the rhetoric of a distinction between the elite and the people (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013, p. 7). Ernesto Laclau, who has made enormous contributions to the discursive approach, highlights that the symbolic interaction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ constitutes populism's very core discourse. “In his book *On Populist Reason*, Laclau defines populism as a discursive strategy of constructing a political frontier dividing society into two camps and calling for the mobilization of the ‘underdog’ against ‘those in power’” (Mouffe, 2018, p. 3). In Mouffe and Laclau’s discourse theory, politics should be understood as a struggle for hegemony of discourse. They borrow the concept of hegemony from Antonio Gramsci. They describe hegemony as “[...] a political type of relation, a form, if one wishes, of politics [...]” in their notable study *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 139). Also, Laclau and Mouffe were highly inspired by Carl Schmitt’s theory on the concept of politics. Especially, Mouffe attempted to reconsider Schmitt’s enemy and friend distinction. According to Carl Schmitt the nature of politics has an antagonistic structure, whereas Mouffe suggests that politics should be transformed into an agonistic pluralism (Mouffe, 2005). Moreover, Schmitt believes that “a norm is only valid in a normal situation, and the sovereign is whoever makes the decision about whether to call for a state of exception to restore it when compromised” (Schmitt, 1988, p. 13; cited in Arditì, 2022, p. 53). Politics is about the domination of meaning, and every political subject tries to fix the meaning and make their views dominant (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017, p. 301-302). For Laclau, the people are not a reflection of social structure but a political construction (Arditì, 2022, p. 52). In this context, articulation of existing discourses constructs the structure of meaning. Each political actor tries to replace the structure of meaning by taking hegemony (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017, p. 301-302).

Ernesto Laclau develops his theory of populism in six steps.

These are: (1) when a series of social demands cannot be absorbed differentially by institutional channels (2) they become unsatisfied demands that enter into a relationship of solidarity or equivalence with one another and (3) crystallize around common symbols that (4) can be capitalized by leaders who interpellate the frustrated masses and thus begin to incarnate a process of popular identification that (5) constructs the people as a collective actor to confront the existing regime with the purpose of (6) demanding regime change (Arditi, 2022, p. 50).

The most advantageous aspect of the discursive approach against the *ideational approach* is that political actors can change their political expression characteristics in a way that their ideology may remain the same while populist rhetoric persists in their texts, discourses, and speeches, which can increase or decrease in density. This is why the discursive approach gives a broad perspective to understand the rise of right-wing populism. However, the weakest point of the discursive approach lies its very essence. Laclau asserts in his latest works on populism that “there is no political intervention which is not populist to some extent” (Laclau, 2005, p. 154). This means that politics and populism are synonyms. For the discursive approach, every political actor is slightly populist due to the nature of politics. Furthermore, Mouffe claimed that neoliberalism weakened the politics, which is now being revived by populist movements. She suggests that the antidote of right-wing populism can only be left-wing populism (Mouffe, 2005; Mouffe, 2018).

2.2.3. Populism as a Political Style

Some scholars claim that populism is not an ideology but a political style or strategic communication. Benjamin Moffitt claims that analyzing populism as a thin-centered ideology creates problems in measuring the level of populist discourse (Moffitt, 2016). Then, Benjamin Moffitt argues that considering populism as a political style make the concept more understandable and scientific. The political style approach focuses on the performative dimension of populist leaders and movements in terms of both rhetorically and aesthetically (Moffitt, 2016). According to him, defining populism as an ideology creates huge difficulties in determining who the populists are. Furthermore, the ideational approach can miss the most exceptional dimension of populist parties and leaders, which is their performative discourse and rhetoric.

Political style can be understood as the repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performance made to audiences that are used to create and navigate the fields of power that comprise the political, stretching from the domain of government through to everyday life (Moffitt, 2016, p. 38).

Due to the medialization of politics since the neoliberal turn from the 1980s, politics became stylized and performative aspects increased. According to this approach, the level of populism can be measured with three features: the elite and the people distinction in discourse, bad manners, and indication of crisis, breakdown, and threat (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014, p. 390-391). Moffitt's emphasis on medialization of politics and performance of the leader is clearly a reference to Guy Debord's Society of the Spectacle. Debord illustrates that in the advanced capitalist society, all aspects of everyday life started to become a commodity (Abromeit, 2017, p. 180).

As Reinemann et al. claims "populism is mostly reflected in the oral, written, and visual communication of individual politicians, parties, social movements" (Reinemann et al., 2017, p. 13). Although the role of populist communication is crucial to achievements of right-wing populist parties, populist communication is particularly less studied in the literature than other approaches. Populists' performative and communicative success should not be ignored.

Populism as a political style or *a communication strategy* is different from other approaches in terms of its instrumentality. Unlike other approaches, the political style approach gives us a broad view of the populist strategy to take power and keep it by using the populist communication strategy summarized by Moffitt.

2.3. The Definition of Populism

All of the approaches to define "populism" is somehow clarifying the concept of populism but choosing one approach would not be enough to understand what populism really is about. It is obvious that the notion "populism" could not be understood without its emergence of historical and geographical conditions. The three approaches have similarities and differences in the definition, unit of analysis and methodology. The ideational approach does not exclude populism's performative and discursive dimensions. Moreover, the discursive and ideational approaches match the

core feature of populism which is the Manichean distinction between the elite and the people. Also, the political style approach adopts this distinction as a core feature of the populist subject. The nature of politics for populist parties and movements is driven by an antagonistic view which based on the political theory of Carl Schmitt. Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau adopt Schmitt's theory and combine it into Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). For them, the nature of politics is based on enemy-friend opposition. So, unlike Mudde, Müller and Moffitt; Laclau and Mouffe believe that populism is a threat to liberal democracy and an opportunity for transforming the current hegemonic neoliberal political-economic structure into a radical and advanced democracy (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001; Laclau, 2005; Mouffe, 2018). Rather than focusing on the positive or negative aspects of the concept of populism, we should consider populism as an indicator of problems that could not be solved in the liberal democratic system. Above all, populism as a symptom of the current problematic situation of globalized neoliberalism is common to all the approaches.

In a nutshell, an eclectic use of them and focusing on similarities would be helpful to analyze populism. In Mansbridge and Macedo words, "In this article, we attempt the impossible. We give populism a definition that we hope will stick" (Mansbridge & Macedo, 2019, p. 60). Firstly, the core elements of populism are listed; "The four core elements of populism are (1) the people (2) in a morally charged (3) battle against (4) the elites" (Mansbridge & Macedo, 2019, p. 61).

Secondly, non-core elements of populism discussed a homogeneous people, an exclusive people, greater direct popular rule, and nationalism (Mansbridge & Macedo, 2019, p. 65). Similar to this research, Spruyt and his colleagues claim that there are four main ideas which made a political party populist;

- (1) the existence of two homogenous groups that is the people and the established elites;
- (2) between which an antagonistic relationship exists
- (3) whereby the people are portrayed as virtuous, and the elite are denigrated and
- (4) the will of the people is considered the ultimate source of legitimacy (popular sovereignty) (Spruyt et al., 2016, p. 336).

The combination of these two preconditions of populism gives us the definition of who the populists are.

Any given definition of populism is an oversimplification of fundamental problems in current society. The most acknowledged feature of populism is that it divides society into two homogeneous groups. In practice, populism is a kind of phenomenon that “you know it when you see it,” as Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart’s famous definition of pornography (Oswald et al., 2022, p. 5).

2.4. Causes of the Rise of Populism

The rise of populism became one of the central topics in the literature that needs an urgent comprehension of why it is on the rise. The rise of the AfD in Germany is neither a coincidence nor a predictable development. However, the circumstances that construct the basis of right-wing populism can be understood. The most recent developments in politics may assemble causes of the rise of populism. There are various approaches to explain why populist parties are rising. Three of them are dominant in the literature: socio-economic grievances (the losers of globalization), cultural grievances (discontent with immigration and multiculturalism), and political discontent (especially opposition to supranational organizations and liberal democracy). These three approaches help to explain both the demand and supply side of populism and also give us a background for the demand for nostalgia among the people.

2.4.1. Socio-Economic Grievances

According to the socio-economic approach, populist attitudes emerge as symptoms of the harmful effects of neoliberalism and globalization that trap economically vulnerable groups to unemployment, social exclusion, and feeling of abandonment through neoliberal and post-industrial policies (Betz, 1994; Betz & Meret, 2012). People reject mainstream politics in response to their exclusion. In this theory, populist voters can be named as ‘the losers of globalization.’ The paradigm shift from the welfare state to the social investment state is also highly influential on economically

vulnerable people. “Social investment” is a new type of welfare regime that is future-oriented. According to Jenson and Saint-Martin, the social investment state is a kind of neoliberal tool which is coherent with the free market (Jenson & Saint-Martin, 2003). Unlike the welfare state, the social investment state aims to 'invest' more profitable groups like children and youth. These kinds of policies cause enormous inequality and injustice in society. Right-wing populist parties use welfare state nostalgia to gain support from low-income and middle-class people (Schreurs, 2021, p. 127-132). The decline of the welfare state undoubtedly resulted in feelings of insecurity and uncertainty among economically vulnerable people. According to a study conducted by Ennsner-Jedenastik and Köppl-Turyna on the relationship between the decline of the welfare state and the rise of right-wing populism in Europe, citizens of countries that have strong redistribution policies have a lower tendency to vote for the right-wing populist parties (Ennsner-Jedenastik & Köppl-Turyna, 2019, p. 23).

The neoliberal economic policies caused huge inequalities between the rich and the poor. The growing gap between low and high income households, which was worsened by the financial crises in the late 2000s intensified the feeling of vulnerability and abandonment among those with lower education levels and those living in the rural areas. Increasing migration, unemployment and inequality made people nervous about their financial future. “This insecurity has made citizens more uncertain about their futures and those of their children” (Berman, 2021, p. 73). In Martin Wolf’s words, “something has gone very wrong with Western capitalism. The real problem is that capitalism has become rigged” (Wolf, 2019, cited by Berman, 2021, p. 74). Though current economic situation is not that terrible, some scholars argue that economic grievances are about fear of the future. In other words, neoliberal capitalism lost its legitimacy and failed to provide hope to people.

2.4.2. Cultural Grievances

The explanations based on the cultural grievances are another main approach to understanding the demand side of the right-wing populist parties. According to the cultural grievance approach, the right-wing populist parties uses nationalistic discourse based on myths about the distant past. According to this approach, the right-

wing populist parties argue that the only way to face the challenges and threats of external enemies such as globalization, Islam, the European Union, or refugees is to emphasize a homogeneous ethnicity and strengthen the nation by returning to traditional values (Rydgren, 2007). The retrospective and the nostalgic dimension of the right-wing populist strategy is the main reason for gaining support from citizens without representing clear policies on recent economic, social and political issues. Migration triggers nativist reactions in societies. Right-wing populist parties are adopting strategies that exaggerate differences between immigrants and native people in terms of traditions, norms, and cultural values to gain electoral support (Shehaj et al., 2021, p. 284).

The main argument of the cultural grievances is that the decline of traditional values due to mass immigration, globalization, feminist and LGBT activism caused a huge counter reaction (Berman, 2021, p. 75.). Cultural grievances for populist voting can be related to rapid change in the equality of gender and acceptance of different lifestyles, including LGBT. Increasing immigration from non-Christian countries to the west triggers unrealistic anxieties about the future. Mainly, low-income groups in society perceive immigration not only as economic competition but also as a cultural threat (Aiginger, 2020, p. 40). Many researchers who study populism see migration as the primary accelerator of voting for populist parties (Bischi et al., 2022). Migration creates economic opportunities to host countries, but it also increases competition in low-income and low-skill jobs. Twenty-first century witnessed mass migrations to Western countries due to economic crises, wars, and destabilization of the political system. The combination of confronting immigrants with different cultural backgrounds and diminished emphasis on traditional values have caused the scapegoating of immigrants. Due to globalization and developments in technology, the speed of change has increased. The simplicity of past times became a myth, and the feeling of uncertainty became a core aspect of life. The economic and cultural backlash arguments are often combined in the discourse of right-wing populist parties.

2.4.3. The Political Discontent

The political discontent approach focuses on the negative attitudes of populist citizens against the liberal democracy. According to many studies, there is a positive correlation between the rise of the populist parties and political discontent (Rooduijn et al., 2016, p. 33).

According to Rooduijn and his colleagues, populism should be analyzed as a thin-centered ideology that considers liberal democracy as a tool that only protects ‘the corrupt elite’ (Rooduijn et al., 2016, p. 38). When the liberal democratic system is charged by people, the discontent of people should be analyzed as an indicator of the necessity of ideological and economic reformation. The discontent of the people directs them to distrust and protest the establishment. Neoliberal consensus between the conservative and the social democrat parties in European politics caused the feeling of abandonment and uncertainty in the people. The immigration, globalization, and long-term effects of neoliberal economic policies affect confidence in mainstream political parties in Europe. Especially people who live in rural areas and are less educated tend to support right-wing populist parties more than people who live in cosmopolitan cities and are higher educated (Spruyt et al., 2016, p. 336). In this context, right-wing populist parties absorb the discontent of the people who distrust mainstream politics.

Paul Taggart claims that populism should be analyzed as a reaction to the representative politics (Taggart, 2002, p. 71). The contradiction between liberalism and democracy, indicated by Carl Schmitt and further by Chantal Mouffe, causes fundamental issues in political representation, decision-making processes, and the very nature of politics (Mouffe, 2005). Also, Taggart argues that there is a tension between constitutionalism and representative politics, due to the fact that constitutionalism focuses on institutions, which primarily protect and maintain existed liberal democratic system, whereas representative politics allow the illiberal forces to reject what liberal democracy currently offers them (Taggart, 2002). Consequently, Taggart highlighted that populist parties are protest parties and partly a critique of contemporary politics (Taggart, 2002, p. 74). The reactions against representative

politics extend itself into supranational organizations as a form of conflict between the will of the people and the interests of multinational elites. As Müller said, when populist parties come to power, they ‘colonize’ the state, engage in mass clientelism, and corrupt every aspect of liberal democratic institutions (Müller, 2016, p. 44-49). Populist parties degenerate liberal democracies – but why do people vote for these parties? Müller’s answer is that liberal democracy could not fulfill its promises to the people (Müller, 2016, p. 44-49).

2.5. Who are the Populist Citizens and Why They Vote for Right-Wing Populist Parties?

In order to understand who attaches the nostalgic discourse, the right-wing populist voters need to be identified clearly. As highlighted above, political, socio-cultural, and economic grievances are considered as primary causes of the rise of populism. Thus, knowing the people who have these grievances are fundamental for a comprehensive study on populism. Although the great attention to populist parties in the academic literature, the studies have found limited knowledge of populist citizens. The main reason for our limited knowledge is that populist responses of citizens are flexible due to the historical, social, and economic infrastructure of the given country. However, in the European case, populist citizens have very similar socio-economic status and the same expectations. The reasons for the electoral success of the right-wing populist parties can be varied, but the voters of these parties are similar regardless of time and space. Recent studies showed that people who vote for populist parties are discontented for some reasons (as mentioned above) supporters of populist discourses in society have an average type.

The research on the voter base of right-wing populism showed that a discursively constructed ‘the people’ who suffered from being disoriented by societal changes, who were placed economically vulnerable, and, most importantly, those who feel abandoned and ignored try to find a social identity (Spruyt et al., 2016, p. 336).

These people find in populism (1) a sharp group distinction that allows them to attribute responsibility for their own feelings of uncertainty and uneasiness to factors that lie beyond their control and responsibility to that they maintain

their self-respect and (2) the hope to overcome these troubles through the action of the sovereign people (Spruyt, et al., 2016, p. 336).

These people easily attach to right-wing populism because populists give them a simplistic explanation of why they suffer in today's world and who is responsible for the problems (the immigrants and the elite), and how to solve these issues. Personal problems transform into collective problems, and when social identity is constructed, mechanisms of collective action and other in-group attitudes accelerate. Right-wing populists are successful to unite very different social and economic issues. Economic, social, and political grievances converged by right-wing populists throughout the elites and out-groups.

“Populist citizens tend to be male, older, lower educated, not in the capital region, and unemployed” (Kaltwasser & Hauwaert, 2020, p. 10). Spruyt and his colleagues' study on populist voters illustrates that both gender and age are irrelevant to populist voting behavior (Spruyt et al., 2016, p. 342). Moreover, economically vulnerable groups more tend to support the right-wing populist parties. The material position strongly affects populist voting behavior. The education is another crucial indicator of populist voting behavior. Less educated people support populism more than higher education people. The most interesting finding of the study is that the support of right-wing populism is highly connected to diverse sorts of anomie, feeling of vulnerability, and deep discontent (Spruyt et al., 2016, p. 342).

The voters of right-wing populist parties are the most societally pessimistic and feel deep discontent with the current political, social, and economic situation (Steenvoorden & Harteveld, 2018). A survey research that applied to eight European countries demonstrated that right-wing populist voters have the highest level of societal pessimism (Steenvoorden & Harteveld, 2018). Moreover, societal pessimism has found only meaningful deterrent in the study. Lammers and Baldwin's study showed that “collective nostalgic emotion may be driving the rise of a new class of right-wing populist conservative voters” (Lammers & Baldwin, 2020, p. 951). As a result, right-wing populist voters tend to be male, old, less educated, living in rural areas, economically vulnerable and societally pessimistic. The voters of the AfD are not different from the average type of right-wing populist voters. The voters of the

AfD are tended to be male and low-educated. They locate themselves as the right-wing in the political spectrum. Furthermore, they are highly dissatisfied with the German democracy and its institutions (Schafer, 2020).

2.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, firstly, I provided a theoretical background of the concept of populism as well as core features of the concept have been summarized. The core aspects and common elements of populism in different examples have been analyzed. Afterward, the causes of populism have been listed and examined in order to gain a broad perspective to understand why right-wing populism has been rising. Then, the voters of right-wing populist parties have been investigated because without knowing the core voters of the right-wing populists, any study would not be able to accurately analyze the current political situation. The next chapter will focus on the literature review of nostalgia, collective nostalgia, and societal pessimism.

CHAPTER 3

NOSTALGIA

3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a theoretical background for concepts of nostalgia, collective nostalgia, and societal pessimism. The chapter presents a critical literature review of the concepts as mentioned above. In order to figure out the AfD's discourse of nostalgia, the chapter first covers the definition of nostalgia and its dimensions. Then, the chapter analyzes the relationship between nostalgia and right-wing populism. In this respect, theories on the recent rise of politics of nostalgia and widespread nostalgia among people are deeply examined.

3.2. Nostalgia, Collective Nostalgia, and Societal Pessimism

The term of nostalgia came from the combination of two ancient Greek words: *nostos* and *algia*. *Nostos* means "return home" and *algia* means "a painful condition" (Natali, 2004, p. 10). In 1688, Johannes Hofer, a Swiss medical student, invented the term of nostalgia by combining the ancient Greek words of *nostos* and *algia* (Kenny, 2017, p. 260). Hofer and his colleagues found that Swiss soldiers fighting in foreign lands suffered from despondency, depression, and suicidal intentions that conceptualized as nostalgia (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2019, p. 124). "Nostalgia is defined as the longing for a home that no longer exists, or never existed" (Boym, 2007 p. 7). Personal nostalgia is a kind of predominantly positive emotion for the autobiographical past that is remembered as happy, safe, warmth memories (Smeekes & Jetten, 2019). This remembering past involves joy and happiness,

however, it also triggers sadness because the feeling of loss and irreversibility of time cause negative emotions. According to Stauth and Turner, there are four features of nostalgia in social science literature. The first one is that the nostalgic view sees history as a decline and loss, going away from the golden age. Secondly, there is a feeling of loss of wholeness and moral certainty. Thirdly, historical progression is seen as a collapse of traditional values that make society as a whole. The last feature is a sense of loss of simplicity and authenticity (Stauth & Turner, 1988, p. 30-32; cited in Elçi, 2019, p. 25). Nostalgia predominantly studied in psychology and sociology, but studies in political science is recently increased due to the rise of nostalgic discourse in politics.

In the political science literature, nostalgia has not been discussed analytically yet. Recent studies on political discourse and nostalgia highlight that yearning for a reactionary utopia is the primary tool of the right-wing populist parties. In Zygmunt Bauman's words, "the 21st century began with a futuristic utopia ended with nostalgia" (Bauman, 2017, p. 2). For example, Elgenius and Rydgren's research showed that the usage of pastoral nostalgia and longing for simple times could mobilize people who are suffering from the current socio-economic structure (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019). Nostalgia and collective nostalgia are basic situations of discomfort. Indeed, it is a kind of dissatisfaction and discontent about current times. This is why nostalgia and political discontent is highly related concepts to understanding right-wing populist parties.

The collective nostalgia is a form of nostalgia that is a shared emotion and longing for the past by a group of people (Davis, 1979). When nostalgia is experienced by a social group, it can be called as collective nostalgia. According to Sedikides and Wildschut, nostalgia can be experienced collectively. For instance, groups, neighborhoods, cities, and nations that have shared memories and experiences could have similar emotions in the past (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2019, p. 149). A study on Hong Kong during the Umbrella Movement highlighted the powerful effect of collective nostalgia on the people. The response of the Hong Kong people to questions about their feelings on the past could be summarized as nostalgia for the values, people, and the society of Hong

Kong in the past, before 1997 (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2019, p. 154). This collective nostalgia pushed people to collaborate against what they thought was lost.

A great number of studies have argued that nostalgia is rising due to globalization and increasing mobility triggers the feeling of loss, the collapse of traditions and values, and a sense of loss of simplicity (Gaston & Hilhorst, 2018, p. 29). Furthermore, Nigel Rapport, a great anthropologist, claims that the global economy's unstable situation paves the way for a sense of nostalgia because people started to sense loss and not being home anymore (Gaston & Hilhorst, 2018, p. 29). The crucial part is that the 'remembered past' is safe and homogenous (Gaston & Hilhorst, 2018, p. 29). The most popular studies on collective nostalgia, not surprisingly, are about post-Soviet nostalgia. Post-Soviet nostalgia is a widespread feeling in Eastern Europe and post-Soviet countries. Due to the unique conditions of the Soviet Union, rapid changes in culture, economy, and politics provoked nostalgic feelings.

Collective nostalgia can increase in-group commitment and, indeed, construct a social identity (Wildschut et al., 2014). Collective nostalgia is a past-oriented memory predicated on being a member of a group that has shared a past (Wildschut et al., 2014). Nostalgia makes it easy to connect past and present. It is linked to self-continuity. At the collective level, this self-continuity with nostalgia can construct a social identity and a social group (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2019, p. 142). In this process of social identity construction, moral justification and connection with the past give legitimacy to the actions of the social in-group (Ditto & Rodriguez, 2021, p. 24).

“People often find comfort in the belief that their social group remains stable despite the changing times and generations” (Sani, 2010; cited in Wohl & Stefaniak, 2020, p. 292). Stability is the central theme of feeling belonging to a social group. When the sense of change in the belonging social group is increased, members of the social group suffer from distress (Jetten & Wohl, 2012). Experiencing collective nostalgia for a social group's past becomes inevitable when its structure is changing. Then, collective actions against the outgroups, outsiders, and especially immigrants start. The narrative of a social group's past is a construction, and usually, this construction is about self-continuity. “The group constructs an understanding of its past to inform members who

they are, where they come from, and where they are going...” (Wohl & Stefaniak, 2020, p. 294). This means that collective nostalgia is a romantic way of remembering the past and acting to return to this imagined past. For instance, right-wing populists always emphasize the homogenous and pure people, which are threatened and distorted by ‘others’ such as the immigrants and the elites. Their message was very explicit; we are your savior, and we are the only representation of the people.

According to Boym, in the contemporary Western cultures, nostalgia can be appeared as restorative and reflective (Boym, 2001). Restorative nostalgia refers to rebuilding what has been lost, and reflective nostalgia is just longing for the ‘good old days’ (Boym, 2001). Generally, the populist nostalgic discourse has restorative sentiments. As Elçi highlighted that “for restorative nostalgia, home is under siege and requiring defense against the plotting enemy” (Elçi, 2019, p. 27). This mindset is coherent with the main feature of right-wing populism, which is the ‘us’ and ‘them’ distinction. Therefore, restorative nostalgia has two dimensions that are returning to the origins and speculative and inculpatory thoughts and ideas about the devotion (Boym, 2001; cited in Gaston & Hilhort, 2018, p. 33).

According to Ange and Berliner, nostalgia can be experienced in two forms that are endo-nostalgia and exo-nostalgia (Ange & Berliner, 2016). Endo-nostalgia is a kind of personal experience that actually occurred in a person’s past. However, in contrast to endo-nostalgia, exo-nostalgia has not arisen from an experienced moment in a lifetime. Exo-nostalgia is an emotional situation felt by people who detach from the present (Ange & Berliner, 2016, p. 4). It is obvious that exo-nostalgia is embedded into the social, political, and economic conditions. When people start to feel detached from the current socio-economic situation, they hanker for an imagined and stylized past that never actually existed before.

In short, restorative nostalgia is a social construction and not based on actually existed past. This aim to imagined and purified past is clinched by antagonistic rhetoric of the right-wing populism.

Societal pessimism can be described “as a concern that society is in decline and there is a collective powerlessness to change things for the better” (Steenvoorden, 2015, p. 89). Societal pessimism is a feeling of the decline of everything in society. Steenvoorden and Harteveld outlined the five elements of societal pessimism and its relation to the right-wing populist parties. These five elements are that “the distrust of human capacity, a loss of ideology, the decline of political power, the decline of community and socioeconomic vulnerability” (Steenvoorden & Harteveld, 2018, p. 33). Therefore, all of these elements of societal pessimism can be paired with the features of right-wing populism. The distrust of human capacity is related to discontent about modernity and progress that right-wing populists instrumentalize. The loss of ideology can be interpreted as a loss of vision of the future of political elites. The decline of political power is matching discontent about international organizations like the EU. The decline of community is a concern that assumes homogenous people is corrupted by the immigrants. Socioeconomic vulnerability is the key motivation to vote for populist voting behavior (Steenvoorden & Harteveld, 2018). So, societal pessimism is an extremely influential concept in interpreting the present U-turn in the political spectrum.

3.2.1. Ostalgie

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the GDR legacy has not been forgotten. Remembering the GDR and its symbols has a crucial effect on the former East German citizens. This situation is common in the post-communist states in Eastern Europe, but in Germany, socialist nostalgia has a different structure due to the unique transformation process of reunification of Germany. The GDR nostalgia is named as *ostalgie* in the literature. The term was firstly used by Uwe Steimle in the early 1990s (Hyland, 2013, p. 101). Ostalgie is a combination of the two German words ‘*ost*’ (east) and ‘*nostalgie*’ (nostalgia). Ostalgie means that a “[...] reawakened interest in material objects that had been symbols of the communist past [...]” and refers to a positive or negative emotion of the GDR (Sierp, 2009, p. 46; Hyland, 2013).

Ostalgie plays a formative role in the construction of the social identity of the eastern Germans and former GDR citizens (Sierp, 2009). This strong connection between the

GDR legacy and the Germans who live in the east comes from various factors after the fall of the Berlin Wall (Önnerfors, 2020; Sierp, 2009, p. 46). Firstly, the difficult economic situation and high unemployment rates triggered a disappointment in the market economy after the reunification. The former citizens of the GDR expected quick prosperity and employment, but adapting to the liberal market economy did not produce good results in the first stage (Sierp, 2009; Yoder, 2020). Secondly, the social environment of the FRG was very different from the GDR, which would not be expected by the GDR citizens. They faced a very unfamiliar society that had a high level of social mobility, immigrants, and different languages and values. Eastern Germans felt like second-class citizens, and they felt colonized by the FRG (Martin et al., 2022). Ostalgie appeared as a defense mechanism for east Germans, and they supported the parties which are so-called representatives of East Germany, such as Die Linke and the AfD (Martin et al., 2022; Kenny, 2017). A surprising survey showed that six months before the reunification of Germany, 61 percent of people who lived in the GDR feel more German than east German. However, after almost three years since the reunification, the figures reserved to 35 percent (Brussig, 2003, p. 101; cited in Sierp, 2009, p. 50; Oswald, 2004, p. 77; cited in Sierp, 2009, p. 50). The AfD, as the case study of this dissertation, abuses ostalgie in their electoral campaigns that will be investigated in the chapter 5.

3.3. Populism and Nostalgia

In order to understand right-wing populist parties' electoral success, it is required to assess right-wing populist discourse's linkage to nostalgia. As mentioned before, cultural, economic and political grievances of the people direct them to vote for right-wing populist parties. Ditto and Rodriguez argued that right-wing populist parties is parties of grievance (Ditto & Rodriguez, 2021). Collective nostalgia and right-wing populism are linked. It is easy to see in slogans of right-wing populist parties: 'Make America Great Again' (USA), 'Restore Order in France' (France), and 'Take Back Control of Our Country' (UK). These slogans give a message to the citizens: Returning to the past when some things were better than the present. Right-wing populist communication strategy uses nostalgia as a tool for political mobilization and

strengthens the connection between the leader and the people by constructing an imagined or exaggerated past. Collective nostalgia can be related to nationhood and belonging to a social group that is generally imagined and not exactly existed.

Right-wing ideologies such as conservatism and nationalism fit well into the nostalgic discourse due to their respect and prolongation of traditions. This very essence of right-wing political philosophy can be characterized as the politics of nostalgia (Lammers & Baldwin, 2020, p. 944). The social identity construction requires some kind of narrative that includes a historical background. History can be instrumentalized to construct a new social identity as populist parties did by dividing society into two camps. Knowing who they are, where they came from, and most importantly, where they should be going is the major need for a strong social identity (Elçi, 2019).

Even Taggart did not use the term 'nostalgia'; instead, he coined the term “heartland,” which refers to “an ideal world constructed retrospectively from the past” (Taggart, 2004, p. 274). Populist communication strategy implicitly refers to the 'good old days' allegedly ruined by the elite. More specifically, populist communication depends on the conditions and circumstances that changed negatively from the 'good old days.' The discourse of the aforementioned conditions that are taken from the people by the ruling elite in favor of the elite's interest is the primary communication tool of the populists. Most of the empirical studies on the people who vote for the right-wing populist parties showed that collective nostalgia is the core motivation to support radical right-wing parties (Wohl & Stefaniak, 2020; Spruyt et al., 2016; Smeekes et al., 2021). For instance, 75 percent of voters of Donald Trump in the 2016 election have nostalgic feelings that their conditions were better in the past (Pew Research, 2016; cited in Lammers & Baldwin, 2020, p. 944).

According to Betz and Johnson, right-wing populism should be seen as “a backward-looking reactionary ideology, reflecting a deep nostalgia for the good old days” (Betz & Johnson, 2004, p. 327). Moreover, as Verovsek claimed, collective memories are instruments of the politicians (Verovsek, 2016, p. 1). “...Populist campaigns share rhetoric that connects out that to restorative nostalgia by dividing the world into a cherished past and a despised present” (Menke & Wulf, 2021, p. 238). This should be

highlighted again, the exploitation of nostalgic feelings is only one dimension of the right-wing populist discourse; the main idea behind the nostalgic discourse is to create nostalgic emotions (Menke & Wulf, 2021, p. 239). In Taggart's words on the heartland, "it is a diffuse vision, blurred around the edges but no less powerful for that. It is no doubt romanticized and a profoundly ahistorical conception but, again, no less powerful for that" (Taggart, 2004, p. 274). The in-group and out-group distinction is created by sharing memories, and the in-group is constructed around the common enemy whose responsible for the destruction of the heartland.

The right-wing populist rhetoric is profoundly based on restorative nostalgia. The ideational, discursive, and political communication approaches comprise as the common feature of right-wing populism, which is the people and the elite distinction. Moreover, according to Moffitt, who is a supporter of populism as a political communication strategy, populism has three specific aspects; the people and the elite distinction, bad manners, and anxiety of a near breakdown (Moffitt, 2016, p. 29). In the same line, restorative nostalgia stresses the decline of values and traditions. So, populist rhetoric and restorative nostalgia are often in the same feeling that is civilization and humanity going into a terrible disaster if we do not turn back and restore the past.

Nostalgia can become a yearning for a different era, and this feeling can push people to rebel against modern times. For example, Boym claims that "the fantasies of the past determined by needs of present, have a direct impact on the realities of the future" (Boym, 2007, p. 8). In this context, nostalgia is related to recent politics. Zygmunt Bauman's the term of "retrotopia" is highly explanatory to today's politics. Retrotopia refers that instead of building a better future, backing to an idealized past (Bauman, 2017). Bauman's retrotopia concept is almost identical to the concept of the heartland. Retrotopia is related to expectations of the future. When conditions worsen for a long time, dreaming of a retrospective utopia can be the easiest solution. The concept of retrotopia is about a negation of utopia that is future-oriented (Bauman, 2017).

Michael Kenny highlights that the main motivation of the "Brexiters" was a great nostalgia for the imperial nation and the fantasy of restoring the great empire (Kenny,

2017, p. 269). Similar to the process of the Brexit, Donald Trump's 2016 campaign was based on nostalgia with the promise of "Make America Great Again." Moreover, the AfD's 'Germany, But Normal' slogan in the 2021 Federal Election campaign is another great example of the restorative nostalgia in the politics. The AfD aims to trigger feelings of anomie and nostalgia with the slogan. Cas Mudde has explained why nostalgic rhetoric is so much attractive to the people; "When established politicians no longer offer attractive visions of the future, people look for solace in the past" (Mudde, 2016).

The 'us' and 'them' distinction in populist rhetoric needs a historical baseline for legitimacy. This baseline is constructed by populists with imagined pasts, which can be called Taggart's term heartland. It makes it easy to address that before 'they' ruined everything, 'our society' and 'our state' were perfect. For example, the AfD always indicates a united enemy that as a threat to 'the people'. The enemy for the AfD is generally immigrants, left-wing environmentalists, and the political elites. The cultural backlash theory is coherent with the arguments of Taggart's heartland. Inglehart and Norris have a lot of contributions to the academic literature on right-wing populism, especially in the United States case. They argue that right-wing populists' main argument in the 2016 presidential election in the US was that the elites kidnaped the white people's privileges by accepting more immigrants from different countries and giving way to the LGBT lifestyle (Inglehart & Norris, 2017). In populist discourse, the elites disgraced the native people and stole their will. Therefore, this process resulted as a cultural backlash, and the native people developed an instinct to embrace traditions, values, past, and other in-group norms (Elçi, 2019).

The narrative of right-wing populism is summarized above. This narrative is fueled by the other elements of populist discourse. Nostalgia represents a discontent with current circumstances. Hence, when nostalgia becomes a tool of political parties and movements, it turns into a reactionary longing. Eventually, right-wing populist parties try to restore old, happier past as the AfD aimed in the 2021 Federal Elections (Szabo & Kiss, 2022, p. 153).

What is the cause of such nostalgic feelings in society? The answer can be found in neoliberal transformation. Privatization and neoliberal rationality were accelerated in the early 1980s. The ideas of freedom and progress bring with a more market-oriented mentality and a decline in social protection and services which provided by the state. The uncertainty and untrustworthiness wreaked the confidence and hope about the future. Neoliberal transformation triggered nostalgia for the past when the times of stability (Bauman, 2017). Such feelings catalyzed a snowball effect. Thinking about the future is associated with anxiety of losing a job, economic uncertainty, cannot protect social status, and more migration. The decline of future-oriented ideologies such as social democracy and socialism have a crucial effect on the retrospective thinking that will be explained in the next chapter.

As highlighted in the second chapter, populist rhetoric always indicates a diabolic evil that aims to harm the people and also warn people of a near breakdown. For example, representatives of the AfD always warn the people about new left-wing totalitarianism (Göpffarth, 2021). Nostalgia can function as a tool for revenge of the people, revenge against the elite who stole the glorious times. Collective nostalgia's dimension of revenge is fueling the discourse of right-wing populism.

All in all, nostalgia is highly associated with right-wing populism. Although nostalgic discourse is widespread in right-wing populist discourse, it is not a core feature of populism. If we follow Mudde's definition of populism which is populism as a thin-centered ideology, it is not an essential feature of populism. Moreover, in populism as a discourse approach, nostalgic resonance is not also a prerequisite for populist discourse. However, populism as a strategy approach explains why right-wing populists generally have nostalgic rhetoric.

3.4. Conclusion

As highlighted before, I follow Boym's definition of nostalgia as "the longing for a home that no longer exists, or never existed" (Boym, 2001, p. 1). Then, I combine nostalgia with Taggart's heartland, and Bauman's retrotopia to understand the right-wing populist strategy. Populists' usage of the distinction between the people and the

elite in their discourse is related to constructing a social identity. In this way, collective nostalgia is becoming an instrument for the right-wing populists due to the role of collective nostalgia in sharing a past and a common future. The people attach the discourse of nostalgia because they do not feel satisfied with the existing circumstances. Populism and nostalgia are not necessarily linked concepts, but the current situation in Western politics made these two concepts connected to each other. The rise of nostalgia arises from various economic, social, and political developments, which will be examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE REASONS BEHIND THE RISE OF RIGHT-WING POPULISM AND NOSTALGIA

4.1. Introduction

Right-wing populist parties in Europe are not a new issue; their origins are as far back as the 1950s (Taggart, 2017). However, right-wing populist parties' current form began to appear in the late 1980s and the early 1990s because neoliberal policies had accelerated and consensus between conservative and social democratic parties on neoliberalism started to affect 'losers of globalization'. As highlighted before in this chapter, the populist parties in Western Europe have core features such as nativism, authoritarianism, anti-immigration, anti-elitism, Euroscepticism, and regionalism. The motivation for these features stems from historical milestones; neoliberal transformation, globalization, the enlargements of the European Union in 2004 and 2007, the Eurozone Crisis, mass migration from non-Christian countries, and terrorist attacks in the capitals of Europe. Concomitantly, the ultimate result can be argued that right-wing populist parties increase electoral support from people who grievance about socio-cultural, economic, and political issues. It can be claimed that mainstream political parties give their adherence to neoliberalism make populist parties' work easier. The rise of right-wing populist parties is linked to some historical events and transformations on the social, political, and economic levels. This chapter firstly covers the definition of right-wing populist parties and their differences from other extremist far-right parties. Then, the main cause of the rise of right-wing populism, which is neoliberalism, is investigated and connected to neoliberalism, and the decline of social democratic parties is analyzed. Afterward, neoliberal globalization, which

right-wing populist parties reacted to as the main problem, was analyzed for a broad perspective of why right-wing populist parties promised to return to the past when globalization did not reach that level. Next, the issue of migration is analyzed because right-wing populist parties' primary agenda is opposition to the immigrants. Nostalgia is also used as a reference to the times when the low level of population mobility and immigration.

All these historical events and concepts need to be analyzed because the AfD and other right-wing populist parties across the world were born in a scene of times of neoliberalism and globalization, a high level of international migration and the decline of social democratic values. Post-truth is required to be understood properly in a study of the discourse of nostalgia because the discourse of nostalgia is not necessarily based on historical facts. On the contrary, the current nostalgic zeitgeist and discourse of right-wing populist parties are not positioned in accurate history. As Taggart mentioned, the heartland is a retrospective utopia that never existed (Taggart, 2004). In this respect, the chapter investigates these events and concepts for a more proper analysis of the AfD's discourse of nostalgia.

4.2. The Right-wing Populist Parties as a New Party Family

Although the right-wing populist parties are considered a new phenomenon in the academic literature, these parties emerged in the early 1980s. The right-wing populist parties are considerably different from mainstream political parties; thus, they should be analyzed as a new party family (Arzheimer, 2015). Labeling these parties as 'neo-fascist' would not be appropriate due to their unique aspects. The 'old' extreme right was associated with an anti-democratic stance and ultra-nationalism (Eatwell, 2003; Cainani & Kröll, 2017, p. 1), but new right-wing populist parties merge anti-establishment with ethno-cultural nationalism, xenophobic and socio-cultural authoritarian tendencies (Mudde, 2007, p. 21; Rydgen, 2007; Loch & Norocel, 2015; cited in Cainani & Kröll, 2017, p. 1). I support that right-wing populist parties are a new party family, but there is a clear historical continuation from the far-right parties in Europe to right-wing populists. In my opinion, this new party family should be understood as a re-branding of far-right ideas.

Scholars who study populism try to differentiate right-wing populist parties from mainstream right-wing parties. Cas Mudde developed the term populist radical right-wing in his brilliant book: *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. According to Mudde, these parties have three essential features: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde, 2007, p. 22). Mudde argues that radical right parties are nativists with the perception of non-native elements as a threat to the nation-state and homogenous people (Mudde, 2007, p. 21-25). The response of radical right parties to the so-called non-native threats and other issues is authoritarian. Also, Mudde explains why they are radical: they have opposite tendencies to liberal democratic values such as pluralism, the rule of law, protection of minorities, and freedom of speech (Mudde, 2007, p. 23-25).

For Mudde, nativism is a kind of prioritization of native people that can be named as the nation. From a nativist perspective, the state should protect the so-called homogenous nation by prioritizing them over those considered “foreign”, and prevent potential threats from foreigners (Mudde, 2007, p. 22-23). In addition, the concept of xenophobia and nationalism are crucial to understanding the nativist feature of right-wing populist parties. Xenophobic convergence to the non-native people in the society is a significant baseline for the nativist discourse.

Authoritarianism is a core feature of populist radical right-wing parties. Their understanding of democracy is solely based on gaining the support of the majority of the people and crushing the opposite view in any way possible, which is the opposite of pluralism as a liberal democratic value (Mudde, 2007, p. 23). Many academics categorized right-wing populist parties as fascist parties. Some scholars primarily focus on stylistic similarities between fascism and populism, such as paranoid style, anti-elitist and anti-establishment attitude, and less believing in liberal democratic values (Eatwell, 2017). However, as explained above in the second chapter in detail, populism could be a style, discourse, and thin-centered ideology. All approaches to defining populism argue that populism can attach to any fully-fledged ideologies with its core features. So, populists can also be fascists, communists, feminists, nationalists, as well as conservatives. Unlike fascists, populists do not reject democracy completely.

Instead, they reject liberal democratic values, especially pluralism. The rejection of pluralism makes populists authoritarian.

One quote from Federico Finchelstein actually summarizes the difference between fascism and populism: “populism combines low-level actual violence with high-level rhetorical violence” (Merelli, 2016). Finchelstein’s approach also indicates that the populist radical right is more about communication, not on the policy level.

In the ideational approach, populism is a thin-centered ideology that can combine with nativism and authoritarianism. This argument provides us with the formulation of radical right-wing populist parties. Moreover, even if populism is not an ideology but a political style or discourse, these core features highlighted by Mudde, give us a clear distinction between mainstream right-wing parties and populist right-wing parties.

According to Taggart, the right-wing populist parties in Western Europe focus on four issues: anti-immigration, regionalism, corrupted elites, and Euroscepticism (Taggart, 2017). Although the anti-immigration attitude of right-wing populist parties can be a common feature with mainstream parties, the anti-immigration rhetoric is at the very heart of right-wing populist party discourses. For example, the French National Front mobilized the people with anti-immigration slogans for decades. The AfD is also using anti-immigration as an identity. Opposing multiculturalism can also be associated with anti-immigration (Taggart, 2017; Mudde; 2007). Regionalism, related to nativism, makes it easy to construct a national identity to support the Manichean distinction between the elite and the people. For Taggart, some parties, such as the Northern Leagues in Italy and the Flemish Block in Belgium, use regionalism to promote sub-national identities (Taggart, 2017). Another important focus point of populist parties is the corrupted nature of politics. It is possible to claim that the anti-elitist attitude of populist parties and their criticism of corruption are subsidiary elements to understand populism’s essence. Opposition to corruption as one of the central elements of right-wing populist parties is also combined with being morally enhanced and virtuous. Their worldview, which is based on the Manichean distinction of good and evil, also fits into their anti-elite discourse. The last feature, according to Taggart, is Euroscepticism. In western Europe, Euroscepticism is not a new issue but it has

increased year by year due to the increasing popularity of populist parties. The Eurozone Crisis and the elite-driven integration process of Europe have accelerated the Eurosceptic arguments of the populist parties.

All of four issues are not enough to label a political party as populist, but these four issues give us a comprehensive view to what arguments populists use to mobilize the people. Discontent regarding mass migration, regional and national anxieties, and identity issues, as well as nostalgic feelings, drive the right-wing populist discourse.

Another classification belongs to Swank and Betz; “[...] The character of these parties is fundamentally shaped by the socio-economic and political environments of the post-World War II era. [...] We label these new parties’ radical right-wing populist’ parties” (Swank & Betz, 2002, p. 218). Furthermore, they define ‘radical right-wing populist’ parties as supporters of social inequality, rejecting constitutional democracy, and the voice of the ‘silent majority’. These parties have xenophobic, anti-establishment, and neoliberal positions (Swank & Betz, 2003, p. 218). In my opinion, Swank and Betz’s conceptualization of right-wing populism is not accurate as Mudde and Taggart’s because Swank and Betz are focused on the differences between old far-right and right-wing populism. What makes the right-wing populist parties exceptional is not explained in Swank and Betz’s definition. The giving definition of right-wing populist parties by Swank and Betz is not enough to cover different aspects of right-wing populist parties.

To sum up, in this thesis, Mudde and Taggart’s definitions of right-wing populism are combined. Right-wing populist parties are nativist (regionalist), xenophobic, authoritarian, Eurosceptic, and use populist rhetoric. The AfD is a great example of the right-wing populist parties, which will be analyzed in the chapter 5.

4.3. Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is one of the main causes of the rise of right-wing populist parties across the World. However, the relationship between neoliberalism and right-wing populism is not simple as immigration or globalization. Firstly, the experience of neoliberal

transformation is varied by geography and historical background. For instance, in Latin America, neoliberal transformation is sharper than in Western Europe (Weyland, 1999). Also, the devastating results of neoliberalism in Eastern Europe should be considered as the main accelerator of right-wing populism (Binev, 2022). Almost every academic debate has to deal with neoliberalism. Neoliberalism has penetrated all dimensions of politics and economics without exception. For many scholars, the recent surge of populism is related to neoliberalism (Mamonova & Franquesa, 2020; Brown, 2019; Roberts; 1995; Weyland; 1999). Especially the Latin American and the Eastern European cases are associated with the problematic neoliberal transformation.

According to David Harvey,

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that purposes that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free market and free trade (Harvey, 2005, p. 2).

This decline of state-intervention in the market caused a decayed welfare state and also citizens faced a ruthless market alone. For Wendy Brown,

Neoliberalism is commonly understood as a set of economic policies promoting unrestricted actions, flows, and accumulations of capital by means of low tariffs and taxes, de-regulation of industries, privatization of formerly public goods and services, stripped out welfare states, and the breakup of organized labor (Brown, 2019, p. 61).

These neoliberal policies were firstly applied to Chile in 1973 by the dictator Augusto Pinochet.

Today's understanding of neoliberalism was defined in the 1980s with the rise of neoliberal governments across the globe. Neoliberalism has involved all aspects of life in the last four decades (Mamonova & Franquesa, 2020, p. 715). The crisis experienced after 2008 is essential in that it clearly showed the hegemony of neoliberalism, which was started in the 1980s, involved not only financial and economic reforms but also the social and political transformation that deeply penetrated society. Neoliberalism is not just a collection of monetary and fiscal policies but, as mentioned above, it is a political attitude and ideology that goes beyond

the economic and financial sphere and transforms the cultural and political structures and relations of society. The 2008 crisis has shown this comprehensive content of neoliberalism built in the field of international politics and economy since the 1980s. For this reason, the crisis of the 30 years of neoliberal accumulation regime has been widely described as the crisis of neoliberalism in the 2008 crisis. When we talk about the crisis of neoliberalism, it is necessary to see not only economic and financial policies but also the broad social and political framework in which these policies are placed. In this regard, without analyzing neoliberalism, the recent rise of right-wing populism cannot be fully understood.

Michel Foucault and other scholars who were inspired by post-structuralism have argued that neoliberalism is governing rationality that produces new kind of subjects that totally changes social order and values (Brown, 2019, p. 61). Neoliberal rationality does not appear only in the economic and governmental sphere; in contrast, it drives every aspect of human desires and decisions (Brown, 2019, p. 62). The neoliberal transformation should not be underestimated. Neoliberalism, which not only transforms society and politics but also changes human rationality, is a phenomenon that confronts us in every aspect of everyday life. The ideological aspect of neoliberalism can be found in Margaret Thatcher's remarks on the society; "There is no such thing!" (Brown, 2019, p. 28). Obviously, Thatcher's view on the society was not her original ideas. Her ideas were inspired by Friedrich Hayek who was one of the most famous neoliberal philosophers.

Wendy Brown argues that neoliberalism is the primary accelerator of the rise of anti-democratic populist movements in Western countries (Brown, 2019). She claims that neoliberalism did not directly cause authoritarian movements, but neoliberal rationality penetrated every dimension of everyday life that do the groundwork for anti-democratic movements in the West (Brown, 2019, p. 7-9). This is not mean that neoliberal philosophers such as Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek developed their neoliberal thought to construct current economic and political catastrophe. In short, neoliberal governmentality and its fundamental principles, practices, and policies are the cause of today's political and economic crisis and paved the way for the rise of anti-democratic movements. However, this does not mean that neoliberalism directly

targets the current situation. In fact, it can be said that the contradictions created by neoliberalism feed the existing racist, anti-democratic and populist movements.

According to the brilliant work of Wendy Brown, neoliberalism's attack on society and political power created a counter-reaction that is right-wing populism. (Brown, 2019, p. 14) Furthermore, neoliberal rationality brings with the expansion of traditional moralism and conservative values. That rationality generated contradictions and resulted in fatalism, nihilism, and resentment (Brown, 2019).

The relationship between neoliberalism and right-wing populism is complicated. The puzzle of the complex relations between right-wing populism and neoliberalism can be solved with the concept of ordoliberalism. There is one theory that argues right-wing populist parties, especially the AfD, converge ordoliberalism. Ordoliberalism is an authoritarian kind of neoliberalism that was developed by the Freiburg School in the 1920s. As Ralf Havertz highlights, "The puzzle of the ordoliberals in the AfD is that they [...] do not want to break with the neoliberal agenda of the incumbent government; actually, they want to radicalize it" (Havertz, 2019, p. 386). For example, in the party program, the AfD described itself as a supporter of the "social market economy" (AfD 2016, p. 21). The concept of social market economy denotes a kind of capitalism that was adopted by West Germany before 1990. The term is also related with the ordoliberalism that was theorized by the Freiburg School with its famous members such as Wilhelm Röpke, Alexander Rüstow, Alfred Müller-Armack, and Walter Eucken (Havertz, 2019, p. 386). Ralf Havertz claims that "When talking about social market economy, the AfD is neither referring to Keynesian nor Bismarckian approaches to economics but to the ideas of the Freiburg School in their pure form" (Havertz, 2019, p. 391). He also highlighted that the party program of the AfD was mentioned to the leading members of the Freiburg School, such as Röpke and Eucken (Havertz, 2019, p. 386).

Mamonova and Franquesa asserted that there is a crucial relationship between agrarian movements and populism that highly connected with the crisis of neoliberalism (Mamonova & Franquesa, 2020). For Mamonova and Fraquesa, "the root cause of right-wing populism in Europe is the fundamental crisis of globalized neoliberal

capitalism” (Mamonova & Franquesa, 2020, p. 715). They claim that right-wing populism is gaining power due to the economic impoverishment, social segmentation and political dissatisfaction that caused by neoliberal policies and the destruction of the welfare state (Mamonova & Franquesa, 2020, p. 715). In this regard, the crisis of neoliberalism affected mostly people who live in the rural areas of Europe. The process of de-agrarianisation and deindustrialization in rural areas caused huge unemployment and economic vulnerability of local people. The withdrawal of the state from many sectors due to privatization triggered feelings of abandonment and “left behind” in the rural areas. In the last decade, over 100,000 small farms abolished in Germany, 600,000 in Poland, 300.000 in Bulgaria and 900.000 in Romania (European Commission, 2018; cited in Mamonova & Franquesa, 2020, p. 716). Because of the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) small-scale agriculture disappeared in Europe. These neoliberal organizations and policies resulted as discontent and poverty among the agrarian people (Mamonova & Franquesa, 2020, p. 716).

The decline of the welfare state due to the neoliberal economic policies also has a crucial effect on fueling discontent against the establishment and mainstream parties. The decline of the welfare state triggered welfare nostalgia in the European countries (Donoghue & Kuisma, 2022, p. 178). Recent studies demonstrated that voters of right-wing populist parties are not only the economically disadvantaged groups but the middle-class people who “fear of falling” (Schreurs, 2020, p. 128). Fenger claims that welfare nostalgia and right-wing populism are interrelated concepts that should be investigated together. Welfare chauvinism is a rising trend in many right-wing populist discourses, especially in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Austria (Fenger, 2018). This should be analyzed as a protest against the neoliberal anti-welfare state policies. As highlighted before, the most outstanding disposition of right-wing populist parties is that they combine different political, social, and economic issues in their simplistic discourse.

The crisis of neoliberalism has also been linked with the political representation, as argued by Chantal Mouffe. For Mouffe, neoliberal consensus between mainstream

left-wing and right-wing parties caused the post-political situation that made citizens alternativeless (Mouffe, 2018). Mouffe calls our times as “populist moment”. “This populist moment signals the crisis of the neoliberal hegemonic formation that was progressively implemented in Western Europe through the 1980s” (Mouffe, 2018, p. 4). In her view, the Keynesian welfare state replaced to neoliberal hegemony that is in crisis today. The neoliberal hegemonic order did not challenge by any alternative hegemonic system until the 2008 economic crisis. As Mouffe demonstrated, we can follow the AfD’s efforts to re-politicization of politics in Mouffe’s terms. The AfD illustrates the other political parties in Germany as united and cooperating for the failure of the AfD (Arzheimer & Berning, 2019; Serrano et al., 2019).

To sum up, neoliberalism is one of the main reasons for the rise of right-wing populist parties. Even neoliberalism does not aim to construct recent political, economic, and social crises, but it builds the ground for the problems.

4.4. Globalization

Globalization has been a prevalent concept since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. Globalization has been deeply discussed in all social and communication sciences literature, such as political science, economics, sociology, and communication studies (Flew, 2020, p. 21). The globalization process has been accelerated by international investments, the rise of the internet, increasing level of international trade and cultural interactions. As Flew highlighted with references to other scholars;

At its core, however, are propositions that globalization “refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (Robertson, 1992, p. 8; cited in Flew, 2020, p. 21) involves “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities” (Giddens, 1990, p. 64; cited in Flew, 2020, p. 21) and “refers to the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-time and world-space. (Steger, 2009, p. 15; cited in Flew 2020, p. 21).

These arguments can be supported by the empirical studies which made by international organizations. For example, The World Bank’s global trade measurements showed that international trade has been on the rise from 1973 to today.

Global trade increased almost 71 percent from 1973 to 2018 (World Bank, 2019; cited in Flew, 2020, p. 22). Moreover, foreign investments increased 337.5 percent from 1990 to 2015 (Flew, 2018, p. 109; cited in Flew, 2020, p. 22).

Although neoliberalism and globalization appear to be co-existing concepts, they do not have to be connected. However, today we are living in a neoliberal globalized world. These concepts have to be analyzed together because current international institutions such as World Bank and the IMF are ideological tools of neoliberalism. At the basic level, “neoliberalism was understood to refer to the process of opening up national economies to global actors such as multinational corporations and to global institutions such as the IMF and World Bank” (Larner, 2003, p. 509).

The current situation of globalization has two sides. While globalization helped to accelerate the growth of the global economy, it deepens insecurity, uncertainty, and inequality. While multinational companies are investing in far-eastern countries for cheap labor and gaining huge profits, it resulted in poverty, increasing inequality at the economic level, and people started to suffer from de-industrialization in developed countries. Obviously, the voices against globalization are raised by the system’s losers and left-behinds by neoliberal globalization. The discontent of the people who feel left-behind identify themselves with the nationalist, nativist, and protectionist discourse of populist parties. Inglehart and Norris claim that cultural and economic backlash theories are driving forces of right-wing populism that are mostly affiliated with neoliberal globalization (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Another important point is that the fundamental aspects of globalization have become significant problems in Western countries. The core components of globalization are that foreign direct investment, migration, international trade, and technology (Bajo-Rubio & Yan, 2019, p. 232-236). In this respect, this can be claimed that these four aspects of globalization provide the major tone of right-wing populist discourse.

The effects of globalization should be examined in the economic and cultural dimensions. Today, the financial system has already reached the top level of globalization more than at any time in history. Globalization has increased due to the developments in technology and transportation. Thanks to the developing

opportunities in labor mobility, immigration to the developed countries in the West has reached the top level. On the other hand, the cultural dimension of globalization should not be ignored. As Giddens said, “globalization is influenced above all by developments in systems of communication” (Giddens, 2002, p. 37). The internet, media, and “global Hollywood” shaped today’s global society. The questions about the future of the nation-state were discussed by famous scholars such as Ulrich Beck and Jurgen Habermas. However, it is obvious that scholars generally underestimated the nation-state.

The right-wing populist parties appeared as great opponents of globalization. An empirical study illustrated that economically globalized countries have stronger populist parties (Bergh & Karna, 2021, p. 66). The ‘us’ and ‘them’ distinction in the discourse of the right-wing populist parties is shaped by global institutions. The right-wing populist parties assume that when they refer to the elites, they mean mostly international elites, and the people are the local people who suffer from the global financial system. The right-wing populists are benefiting from the devastating results of neoliberal globalization, and they instrumentalize it. As mentioned before, these parties’ most successful dimension is uniting very different structural problems and proposing very simple solutions. Globalization and its institutions are blamed for the mass migration, cultural erosion, and economic inequality by right-wing populists. The important point is that they refer to problems but do not suggest any reasonable alternative.

For instance, the AfD has advocated globalization as a threat to the national sovereignty and German interests. They do not oppose to international trade, but they are against the international institutions when they limit Germany’s sovereignty. In the 2021 Federal Elections, the AfD used a poster in their campaign which illustrated “Local beats global” (AfD Frankenthal, 2021). The party tries to find a balance between national interests and international trade. As mentioned before, the party strictly opposes the CETA for the protection of small-scale farmers against giant corporations.

The premise of the globalization paradigm is the declining situation of the nation-state (Flew, 2020, p. 25). However, the decline of the sovereignty of the nation-state and its economic size is overstated, and the economic size of the nation-state is not in decline but slowing down. OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) reports that the average spending of the nation-states rose from 1980 to 2009 (Flew, 2014). The actual substantial effect of globalization occurs in the cultural dimension. Globalization paved the way for non-territorial forms of identities that directly conflicted with territorial identities. Sexual orientation, class, age, common consumption behavioral people, disability, and most importantly, race can be defined as non-territorial cultural identities. The internet and new culture industry have fueled the common sense of these identities, and also transnational identities demand integrity, recognition, and regulation that force the limits of the nation-state. The contradiction between right-wing populism and globalization appears in the conflict between local and cosmopolitan identities.

As a result, globalization is seen as the fundamental reason why the problems in the European society by right-wing populist parties. Immigration, supranational organizations, the decline of the welfare state, and multiculturalism associated with the globalization process that is instrumentalized in the right-wing populist discourse.

4.5. The Decline of Social Democratic Values

It is obvious that social democratic parties in Western Europe are in a fundamental crisis which can be seen in the national and local elections. In the 2017 German federal elections, the SPD received only 20.5 percent of the votes, which was the lowest vote share since the collapse of the Weimar Republic. Even though the SPD became the first party in the 2021 German Federal Elections, the party only got 25.7 percent of the vote share. The French, Greek, and Dutch cases are similar to Germany (Bandau, 2022, p. 2). In Scandinavia, which is considered the fortress of social democracy, social democratic parties are in an alarming decline. The British Labor Party suffered a historic defeat against right-wing populist Boris Johnson in the 2019 elections. The situation in the eastern Europe is even worst (Abau-Chadi et al., 2021). While the social democratic parties are declining, the right-wing populist parties gained more

power. The correlation between the decline of the social democratic parties and the rise of right-wing populist parties is not a new phenomenon in political science literature. For instance, the tragic fall of the Weimar Republic has been explained by some scholars as the failure of social democracy and the rise of the extreme right-wing party. Today, the breakdown of the social democratic parties should be analyzed with the rise of right-wing populist parties (Abau-Chadi et al., 2021).

The decline of social democratic parties is a hot topic in the literature. There are four different but interconnected explanations to understand the crisis of social democratic parties (Bandau, 2022, p. 3). These explanations can be listed as changing the social structure of society, changing economic conditions due to globalization, ideological change into neoliberalism, and organizational failure of the social democratic parties (Bandau, 2022). If we choose one of these four approaches, it would not be enough to explain why social democracy is in a considerable decline but the combination of materialist, ideational, institutional, and sociological approaches can be helpful in constituting a broad perspective to understand the dynamics behind the decline of social democrats.

The change in the social structure of society is that in the post-industrial societies, due to the de-industrialization of the west and changing social structure of the western countries resulted in a shrinking working class. Therefore, social democratic parties tried to reach different groups in society (Bandau, 2022, p. 7). According to the sociological explanation, the working class, the traditional core of the social democratic parties, is shrinking in the post-industrial society, which is one of the leading causes of the decline in elections (Abau-Chadi et al., 2021; Bandau, 2022, p. 4). The structural transformation to post-industrial society has three essential features: expanding education, de-proletarianization due to globalization, digitalization and technology, and changing gender roles (Beramendi et al., 2015). It would not be wrong to claim that traditional working class have been transformed and fragmented into more diverse and cosmopolitan structure. However, these sociological changes occurred due to the macro level factors such as globalization and the collapse of Keynesian economics and Fordism. For Frank Bandau, by reason of globalization and neoliberal economics, the social democratic parties were unable to maintain their

social-democratic goals, such as strengthening the welfare state and fighting against inequality (Bandau, 2022, p. 5). At the same time, the industry of the West shifted to Far-Eastern countries, and social democrats could not assort with post-industrial society. The traditional working-class unions weakened, and expectations of the new precariat people were unregarded.

The social and economic conjecture mentioned above is highly related with the neoliberal transformation of politics, society and economics. As discussed in the previous chapter, neoliberalism has a crucial effect on many aspects of politics as well as social democratic parties. In the 1990s, the leader of the UK's Labour Party, Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder, who was the leader of the SPD, shifted their parties' political position to the center. While the social democratic values were abandoned, neoliberal economic and social policies were adopted among these parties. With the trend of the Third Way policies theorized by Antony Giddens in the 1990s, the structure of values and class politics have changed. The third way was not presented as a social-democratic variant of neoliberalism, but it was obviously the neoliberalized social democracy. Chantal Mouffe, who rigidly criticized third-way politics, claims that social democracy became an apparatus of neoliberal hegemony with the acceptance of neoliberal values. In Mouffe's words, "Social Democratic values were being challenged by the neoliberal offensive [...]" (Mouffe, 2018, p. 3). She furthers her arguments, that neoliberalization of politics gave a golden opportunity to the populist parties with neutralization of the left (Mouffe, 2018). The alternativelessness of the voters caused a protest voting behavior against mainstream parties. In the very first period of the third way, social democratic parties became successful in the national elections. However, in long term, they lost their ideological core and identity. When the social democratic parties accepted neoliberal reforms, they also withdrawal from the welfare state, regulation of business sector and social policies that protects economically vulnerable citizens (Berman & Snegovaya, 2019, p. 6).

Meanwhile, post-materialist values such as sexual freedom, gender equality, environmentalism, and multiculturalism are embraced by the educated and urban people (Abau-Chadi et al., 2021; Berman & Snegovaya, 2019). These new values are affiliated with the left-wing parties, as expected. However, cultural issues such as

immigration, gender equality, and green policies could not meet the expectations of the working class, who are exploited under neoliberal economics. The social-democratic way of identity politics that focuses on these values rather than economic issues has strengthened individualism which is the heart of neoliberalism. This ideological loss of social democracy should be considered as the main problem of these parties. Sigmar Gabriel, the former SPD leader and German Minister of Foreign Affairs, said that “If you lose workers in the Rust Belt, the hipsters in California won’t be able to help you” (Abau-Chadi et al., 2021, p. 4; Müller, 2022). The core voters of social democrats uncomfortable with these changes, and they feel abandoned. The social democrats have no story to tell for the new post-industrial society. As a consequence of substantial transformation to the post-industrial society, post-material values became prominent and economic issues fell behind.

As Berman and Snegovaya claimed,

There is indeed a common factor underlying the decline of the left in Europe and other parts of the world: namely, the left’s shift to the center on economic issues, and in particular its acceptance of ‘neoliberal’ reforms such as privatization of parts of the public sector, cuts to taxes and the welfare state, and deregulation of the business and financial sectors (Berman & Snegovaya, 2019, p. 6).

I argue that neoliberalism is in a crisis on both ideological and economic levels. The shift of social democrats to neoliberalism made them unable to take advantage of the discontent of the masses in post-industrial society and made them narrativeless. While social democrats lost power, a new party family emerged: the right-wing populist parties.

The right-wing populist parties successfully used the discontent of the losers of globalization thanks to keeping their distance from neoliberalism. The change of the Front National in France is a good example; Under Jean-Marie Le Pen's leadership, the FN adopted neoliberal economic policies, however, Marine Le Pen, who is the daughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen, transformed the FN into a supporter of protectionist, the interventionist state with strong social policies. The right-wing populist parties’ discourses and promises are based on what the Western society has lost due to the neoliberal transformation.

In my opinion, all of the approaches highlighted above are symptoms of the neoliberal transformation of politics. The social democratic parties dissolved into neoliberal politics, and they could not produce alternative policies to solve current problems at the economic, political, and sociological levels. The decline of social democracy has been fatal consequences over the political spectrum in Western Europe. The left-wing parties are no longer capable of taking advantage of ongoing economic, political, and sociological situations. This paved the way to right-wing populist parties.

4.6. The Post-Truth

The concept of “post-truth” was declared word of the year in November 2016 by the Oxford Dictionary. Therefore, post-truth draws great attention from the academic community and the people (McIntyre, 2018, p. 1). The dictionary defines post-truth as “relation to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief” (Oxford Languages, 2016). The term refers to a situation where feelings became more important than facts which means if something feels true, it can be true without being backed up by the facts. It is an observable situation in right-wing populist campaigns. For example, in the Brexit referendum, a lot of incorrect news was provided by supporters of Brexit, such as “the UK was sending 350 million euros a week to the EU” (McIntyre, 2018, p. 5). This also does not mean that the facts do totally denied; rather, the facts are selected and interpenetrated to manipulate the truth. During an interview, Donald Trump’s surrogate, Kellyanne Conway, used the term “alternative facts” (McIntyre, 2018, p. 6). The term itself, alternative facts, seems like just lying to gain popularity and manipulate the masses.

The danger of post-truth is rooted in its selectiveness and its relation to the conspiracy theories. For instance, Donald Trump claimed that climate change is not real. For Trump, climate change is a hoax of the enemies of the USA to attack the US economy. Obviously, this is a very dangerous discourse because millions of people in the long term can die if the climate change deniers would increase. The conspiracy theories are manipulating the scientific method. For instance, they are picking statistics and arguments that support their theory, such as illustrating that, in the last decades,

temperature statistics show global temperature has not gone up (McIntyre, 2018, p. 11). When scientific method corrupted, the facts which are fit the argument can be selected. In this regard, post-truth is dangerous for the people who cannot follow the scientific method and decide what this scientific or not.

Post-truth fundamentally results from a lack of knowledge on how science works, how scientific knowledge and personal opinion differ and how can trustworthy information be obtained in the internet age. In my opinion, this lack of knowledge is rooted in the inability to comprehend the epistemological aspect of science. This lack of knowledge can be considered as a form of rebellion against the reign of rationalism and science brought by the Enlightenment. Post-truth has been on the rise in the last decade thanks to the mass media, the internet, and especially social media.

The decline of the traditional media paved the way for to spread of baseless news by the new media. The decline of traditional media is highly related to the widespread usage of the internet. For example, the average circulation of printed newspapers in the United States in the 1950s was approximately 53.8 million (McIntyre, 2018, p. 63). The decline is evident in the 2010s; the average circulation declined to 43.3 million, which should be analyzed with the enormous increase of the population of the United States (McIntyre, 2018, p. 64). The problem with the new social media platforms is that the lines between opinion, objectivity, and news are tarnished. As mentioned above, the average citizen has difficulties deciding what is true in the fake news age. This rapid transformation process due to the opportunities created by the internet resulted in the fake news problem, which is a major issue in recent times. The people tend to “click” the news that what they want to hear that, creating echo chambers. The echo chambers are not avoidable because the social media allows the specialization of the flow of new according to preferences of the users. If the people tend to choose the news which they want to hear, the social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook give them what they want. The studies show that almost 62 percent of the people in the United States follow news from the social media (McIntyre, 2018, p. 94). The result is not surprising, increasing social polarization, spreading conspiracy theories and fake news. Definitely, fake news did not a new phenomenon, but today it is a huge problem ever before.

The right-wing populist parties, leaders, and movements are manipulating the truth by using social media, attacking scientific facts, and scapegoating disadvantaged groups. Their nostalgic discourse is not based on the truths; on the contrary, it is a kind of re-writing the history. So, the age of post-truth is giving the best conditions to the right-wing populists to spread their ideas to the people. For example, the relationship between the post-truth and the AfD is not complicated. The AfD supplies fake news about Muslim-origin immigrants, such as stories about the millions of migrants coming for the great replacement. The AfD's social media accounts are spreading fake news about the immigrants raping the German women and some German neighborhoods invaded by the Muslim immigrant gangs (Hannan, 2018, p. 222-223; Serrano et al., 2019). Moreover, in the Eastern Germany, the AfD is manipulating people toward a "secret" totalitarian regime that was supported by Greens and ANTIFA (Göpffarth, 2021).

4.7. The European Union

The European Union is confronting challenges posed by right-wing populism. Mainly the Maastricht Treaty and the EU's enlargements to the eastern Europe have become the target of the right-wing populists. The European integration aimed to end the conflict between the European countries and increase economic cooperation among the member states. The story of the EU started as the European Coal and Steel Community, which intended to increase cooperation and coordination of the production of steel and coal in 1951. The community grew and developed throughout the decades and transformed into an expanded economic and political cooperation that aims to integrate European nations. The Maastricht Treaty was the next step toward the European integration; however, the treaty caused much harder Euroscepticism among the right-wing populist parties. For example, the AfD claims that "with the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, and especially its amendment in Lisbon in 2007, the political elites have taken steps to permanently transform the EU into a centralised state" (AfD, 2016, p. 16). The AfD believes that the sovereignty of the nations of Europe is in danger due to the political elites of the EU. The party strongly rejects the idea of "the United States of Europe" and demands the withdrawal of the Maastricht

Treaty. Another example is the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) which was founded in 1993 as a reaction to the Maastricht Treaty and the leading supporter of Brexit in 2016.

The 2004 enlargement of the EU, as the largest expansion, caused discontent about the future of the Union among many right-wing populist parties. In the 2004 enlargement, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus became a member of the EU, and then Romania and Bulgaria joined the Union in 2007. Drago argues that there were not enough public debates and discussions on the 2004 and 2007 enlargements of the EU. Since the consensus on the European integration between mainstream parties of Europe, there is an opportunity emerged as Euroscepticism with radical ideas (Drago, 2018, p. 8). In this regard, for the right-wing populist parties, the elites are trying to illustrate as the EU is a depoliticized supranational entity, but, in fact, it has restricted the sovereignty of nations.

The situation of the current structure of the EU can be considered with a nostalgic deprivation. As Javier Solana claimed,

The European Union has a dangerous case of nostalgia. Not only is a yearning for the ‘good old days’ – before the EU supposedly impinged on national sovereignty – fuelling the rise of nationalist political parties; European leaders continue to try to apply yesterday’s solutions to today’s problems (Solana, 2016).

The European integration has become one of the most significant issues in the discourse of the right-wing populist parties. The AfD was founded as a single-issue party that aimed to overthrow the Euro and Eurozone. Euroscepticism is one of the core aspects of the AfD, as other right-wing parties. The AfD does not support the idea of the dissolution of the EU, but the party proposes the pre-Maastricht EU as economic cooperation. The problems of the EU beyond the aim of this dissertation, but this section can be concluded with the words of Hellström and his colleagues “the Europe as an idea, as an identity and as a political project seems incapable of practices of solidarity, in other words, Europe is suffering from a crisis of solidarity” (Hellström, et al., 2020, p. 2).

4.8. Mass Immigration

The issue of immigration has become one of the most fundamental reasons why the success of the right-wing populist parties in Europe, as many scholars argued (Arzheimer, 2009; Kaufman, 2017; cited in Shehaj et al., 2021, p. 282). Immigration is not new to European countries. However, the paradigm on immigration has been shifted into a cultural and xenophobic structure. According to Yılmaz, the immigration issue transformed from the immigrant worker to the Muslim immigrant (Yılmaz, 2012, p. 370). Moreover, the culturalization of the issue of immigration became a political debate that rapidly turned into a discussion on citizenship, identity, and security in Europe.

The mass migration to the European countries from the third world countries almost doubled between 2010 and 2018 (Bischi et al., 2022, p. 350). The reaction against immigration has economic and cultural dimensions. The economic grievances can be summarized as immigrants increasing competition for low-skill jobs that results in unemployment among natives and benefit from the social security programs that are mainly financed from the taxes of the natives (Shehaj et al., 2021, p. 284). Despite the fact that immigration has no negative or positive effect on the income of the natives, many people feel ontological insecurity about immigration (Swank and Betz, 2003; Shehaj et al., 2021, p. 285). The perception of the immigrants steals the jobs and social welfare benefits from the natives can be considered as one of the main causes of the rise of right-wing populist parties. Mainly confrontations with the low-educated immigrants increase the nationalist and nativist attitudes and voting behaviors (Bischi et al., 2022, p. 356). Studies have showed the cultural dimension is based on biased Islamophobia and religious anxieties about changes in society (Bischi et al., 2022, p. 354). The 2015 refugee crisis was the turning point for the right-wing populist parties. For example, the AfD has changed its primary focus from Euroscepticism to nativist anti-immigration direction. There is strong evidence of the positive correlation between the rise of right-wing populist parties and anxiety about immigrants.

4.9. Conclusion

This chapter provides a background for analysis of nostalgic discourse of the AfD. The concepts which are creating the best conditions to the rise of right-wing populist parties examined. In this chapter, the literature on the definition of the right-wing populist parties reviewed. Then, neoliberalism and globalization investigated deeply. Related with the neoliberal transformation, the decline of social democratic values analyzed because the reaction against the neoliberal situation could not be absorbed by the social democratic parties in recent decades. Mass migration and the European Union investigated because these issues have a solid place in the discourses of the right-wing populist parties. Lastly, the concept of post-truth analyzed due to understand why nonsense arguments of the right-wing populist parties become 'normal'. The forthcoming chapter presents historical development of right-wing populist parties to the AfD in Germany.

CHAPTER 5

THE AfD AND THE DISCOURSE OF NOSTALGIA

5.1. Introduction

The AfD's entrance into the Bundestag and becoming a mainstream political party in German politics are considered as a warning of rising antisemitism, Islamophobia, and neo-Nazism due to the collective memories of the far-right extremism of German people as well as Europeans (Adaire, 2019, p. 43-44). In order to understand the AfD's political position in German politics and role of nostalgic discourse, firstly, the historical development of radical right-wing parties in Germany will be examined in this chapter. From the Nazis to the REP will be investigated and their connections to the AfD will be demonstrated. Then, short history of the AfD will be represented because despite the fact that the AfD is a new party, the party has political transformation process since its establishment. Next, the AfD's core aspects which are populism, nativism, ordoliberalism, Euroscepticism, Islamophobia and anti-immigration analyzed. Afterwards, the discourse of nostalgia of the AfD analyzed.

5.2. A Short History of German Radical Right-Wing Parties

Since Adolf Hitler's the National Socialist German Workers' Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, NSDAP), German politics has always had a problem with the extremist right-wing parties. The tragic fall of the Weimar Republic and its catastrophic effects forced scholars and intellectuals of European society to design institutions and constitutions for prevent extremist politics. It has been widely accepted that the collapse of the Weimar Republic has shown that

liberal democracy can be miserable against extremists when the constitution, institutions, and political culture of citizens do not embrace the liberal democratic values. The economic, political, and democratic turbulence of the interwar period and the second world war caused a paradigm shift in the balance of international order, empowering mainstream political parties and restraining radicalistic movements. Devastating results of the two world wars led allies to stop German aggression by demilitarization, denazification, and construction of a democratic system (Mudde, 2000, p. 25). After the experience of Nazi totalitarianism, the West German constitution was designed to prevent any other authoritarian or totalitarian political party. For example, The Federal Constitutional Court can ban anti-democratic parties according to Article 21, and The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, established in 1950, pursue the anti-democratic and unconstitutional movement for security intelligence (McGowan, 2002, p. 152-155). As a result, the post-WW-2 German institutions had the power to inhibit both right-wing and left-wing anti-democratic movements in contrast to the Weimar Republic. Hence, many founded far-right and neo-Nazi parties, in a short period, were banned by the Federal Constitutional Court, and these far-right parties never got significant support from citizens (McGowan, 2002, p. 149).

West Germany, or the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), faced three far-right extremist threats from 1945 to 1990. The first party was the Socialist Reich Party (*Sozialistische Reichspartei*, SRP). As McGowan said, “The difference between NSDAP and SRP lies only in the time period” (McGowan, 2002, p. 152). The SRP, which was founded in 1949, was banned in 1952 by the Federal Constitutional Court of the FRG. This means that the new political system of Germany would not allow any far-right activity similar to Nazism. However, a wide range of members of the SRP joined the German Reich Party (*Deutsche Reichspartei*, DRP), which was established in 1950. The DRP was an irresolute party due to the new political conjecture at both international and national levels. The FRG’s uncompromising position against NSDAP’s so-called successors made the DRP’s leadership wary about policies and the party’s political positions (McGowan, 2002, p. 152-155). Until the “guest workers,” far-right parties did not develop influential discourse to gain support from the citizens.

Therefore, the DRP got electoral returns of approximately 1% in the federal elections. In this regard, it is obvious that DRP had never gained electoral ground in the West German political system.

In 1964, the DRP merged with other far-right and neo-Nazi organizations to establish the National Democratic Party of Germany (*Nationaldemokratische Partei*, NPD). Labor migration, which was regulated by agreements between Germany and the labor-sending country, from the Mediterranean countries such as Turkey, Greece, Italy, and the North African countries, was a core element of NPD's political discourse, and NPD was warning the German people: that cultural and economic threat would come from these foreign workers, mainly single male people (McGowan, 2002; Mudde; 2007). Even though the NPD never published a full-fledged party program, the party was gaining support in local and federal elections (McGowan, 2002). Behind the FDP's back, the NPD became the fourth party in the 1969 federal elections by receiving 4.3 percent votes. It is noteworthy to state that the NPD's importance to the far-right parties was that the NPD changed itself from a replica of the NSDAP to accommodate contemporary political conjecture. While the NPD did not develop a consistent political alternative and solution, the party successfully took the attention of the German people with the so-called issues of foreign workers, cultural backlash, and American and Soviet influence. Moreover, the NPD's political discourse included a moral emphasis against the 1968 student movements, the hippies, and the multicultural tendency of the FRG. In this sense, the NPD was a similar case to the AfD. However, the party lost its popularity in the 1970s due to the spectacular success of the SPD government and also the CDU's significant boost of nationalistic discourse in the major opposition (McGowan, 2002, p. 156-158).

In the 1980s, radical right-wing parties began to flourish in most of western European countries. It can be argued that the far right is finally able to find its spirit. The comeback of the far-right into western politics in the 1980s was not a coincidence. The neoliberal transformation at both political and economic levels gave a golden opportunity for the radical right-wing parties. The establishment of the Republicans (*Die Republikaner*, REP) in Germany and the rise of the National Front in France should be analyzed together because the return of the radical right into the parliaments

and the streets with the new political strategy in the 1980s demonstrated the connection between neoliberalism and radical right-wing support.

The REP was founded in 1983 by dissatisfied members of the Union parties (CDU and CSU). The three founders of the REP were former members of the CSU: Ekkehard Voigt, Franz Handlos and a right-wing journalist Franz Schönhuber (Mudde, 2007, p. 42). It is also possible to argue that the REP separated from Bavarian conservatives. As Mudde highlighted that the REP was inspired by the great electoral success of the Front National in France (Mudde, 2007, p. 31). The slogan of the party was “Germany for the Germans” (*Deutschland den Deutschen*) which was a clear message of the party’s position on multiculturalism, diversity, and immigration (Mudde, 2007, p. 139; Taggart, 1995). As mentioned above, Taggart and Mudde argued that these parties should be named “new populist parties” instead of neo-fascists. These new populist parties appeared in the early 1980s should be analyzed as a new party family even they have organic ties with the old far-right and fascist movements (Mudde, 2007; Taggart, 1995; 2019). The REP have a lot of similarities with the current right-wing populist parties.

The ideology of the REP is based on actually nationalistic enthusiasm through the legitimization of German history, especially the Nazi period. In this respect, the REP’s political discourse was based on the demand that pre-Second World War Reich’s borders, which included Austria, the Czech Republic, parts of Switzerland, Poland, and the Baltic Republics as Figure 3 demonstrates (Mudde, 2000, p. 42). The party believed that the Allies overly accused Germany for the Nazi period. In this regard, for the REP, Germany should be free from the influence of NATO and the Warsaw Pact (Mudde, 2007, p. 53). The party’s heart of discourse is pursuing Germany’s interests at the international level by removing so-called the chains imposed by the USSR and the USA (McGowan, 2002). As emphasized in the 1985 program, “We Germans can safeguard our right of life only when we think of ourselves again on the principles of the protection of national interests” (REP 1985, p. 1; cited by Mudde, 2000, p. 48). This is also the reason why the party leaned toward the German unification, but the unification of the FRG and the GDR would not be enough for the

REP, as their propaganda poster expressed that “the whole Germany is what it should be” (see Figure 3).

Surprisingly, the REP was supporting to European integration until the Maastricht Treaty. The party labeled the Maastricht Treaty as “Versailles without weapons” (Mudde, 2000, p. 48; Mudde, 2007, p. 160). Anti-European Union discourses became the REP’s one of the main themes, as well as most of the right-wing populist parties in Europe. As stated above, Euroscepticism has always been a central point for the right-wing populists across Europe.

The REP also desires a homogenous society by limiting asylum. The remarkable slogan of the REP’s anti-immigrant position was that “The boat is full. Stop the asylum fraud” (Mudde, 2007, p. 70). This feature of the REP properly fits into the nativist aspect of the populist radical right highlighted by Cas Mudde. The REP’s party program of 1985 highlighted that “Germany is not allowed to become an immigration country,” (Mudde, 2000, p. 43) which means “guest workers” and other immigrants should not be permanent; they should stay in Germany for a limited time period (Mudde, 2000, p. 43).

Despite the intense media attention, the REP never got the expected results in the federal elections. The first federal election after the Reunification of Germany was in 1990, which was also the REP's first participation in the Bundestag election. The party got only 2.1 percent of the votes which was a huge disappointment to the REP because, in the European Parliament election, that held in 1989, the REP had got 7.1 percent of the votes (Mudde, 2007, p. 42-44; McGowan, 2002, p. 160-168).

The REP has been the most successful far-right populist party until the establishment of the AfD. Furthermore, the REP was essential in measuring populist discourse and communication strategy even though the party did not get electoral success. Also, the experience of the REP was an opportunity for the German political system because, as a protest party, the REP indicated the weak points of the Federal Republic, such as increasing discontent of the immigration issue and German foreign policy regarding the European integration and the relations with the USA.



“The Boat is Full. Stop the Asylum Fraud!”

Figure 1: A poster of the REP

Through the 1990s, the REP step by step lost its popularity which can be seen in the party's performance in the federal elections. The reunification of Germany transformed issues of German society into a more global and complex level. The REP could not regenerate and could not integrate itself into modern German politics. The REP was a great example of the right-wing populist parties because the party had all aspects of right-wing populist parties, as argued by Taggart and Mudde. The AfD has risen from the radical right-wing tradition of Germany, but the form of the extremist ideas changed.

5.3. Short History of the AfD

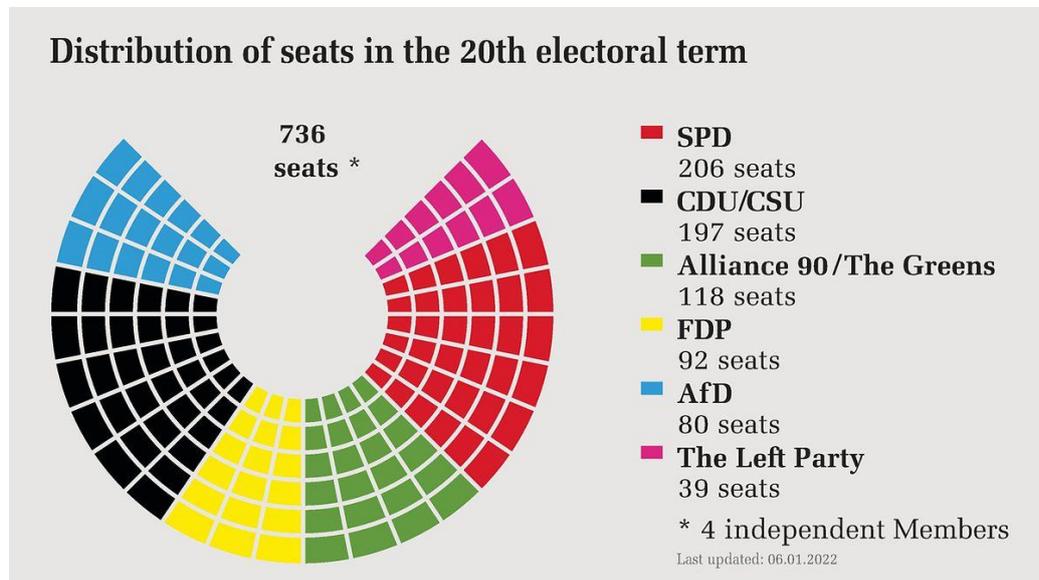


Figure 2: Distribution of the Seats of the Bundestag in 20th Electoral Term (Bundestag, 2022)

The AfD is the fifth biggest party in Bundestag after the 2021 German Federal Elections. Other parties in Bundestag are the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), the Christian Democratic Union and the Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), Alliance '90/the Greens (*Bündnis '90/die Grünen*), Free Democratic Party (FDP) and The Left (*Die Linke*) (Bundestag, 2022). The AfD has no good relations with the other five parties in the Bundestag but has a tides with other right-wing populist parties such as the FPÖ and the FN. The AfD did not even discuss the possible coalition potentials in the 2017 Party Conference (Arzheimer & Berning, 2019, p. 3).

The claim of the being an “alternative” to the establishment and mainstream politics is the core feature of the AfD (Kim, 2018). Moreover, the name of the AfD is also giving a reference to Angele Merkel’s famous word for the Eurozone crisis that “without alternative”. The party published a 4-page manifesto for the 2013 German Federal Elections that mainly focusing on the dissolution of the Euro and sovereignty of the people (Kim, 2018, p. 14). The 2013 Manifesto was a soft-populist text that gives references to ‘the people’, the ‘Brussel elite’ and the ‘German political elites.’

Although the political science literature has great attention to the AfD, the internal organization of the party is mostly ignored and neglected. The internal structure and leadership of the AfD are more peculiar than other right-wing populist parties. Generally, right-wing populist parties have a charismatic leadership and undemocratic process of decision-making. However, the AfD does not have a centralized decision-making and have a collective leadership that usually associated with left-wing and green movements. This made the AfD a unique case (Heinze & Weisskircher, 2021, p. 263). The lack of a charismatic leader indicates that no faction dominates the party. In the 2013 statute, the AfD criticize mainstream parties as non-transparent, remote, and undemocratic ‘old parties’ (Heinze & Weisskircher, 2021, p. 270). Surprisingly, the AfD has a well-functioning internal democracy and collective decision-making processes at the federal level.

In 2013, the AfD was founded by mostly the former CDU/CSU and FDP members who are mainly opposed to Germany’s policies on the Eurozone crisis which Angela Merkel claimed as being “without alternative”, and open-door immigration (Heinze & Weisskircher, 2021, p. 264). Until the foundation of AfD, Germany was an exceptional European country because, in German politics, there was no party that fully dissented the European integration (Arzheimer, 2015, p. 535). The Left Party may be considered a soft Eurosceptical; however, the Left rejected the neoliberal single market, budget, and monetary policies of the EU. The Left never declared itself unwilling to the European integration (Wagner, 2021).

When the AfD was founded in 2013, the party focused on economic issues that were based on soft-Euroscepticism. Initially, the party’s position was not associated with radical right and populism. On the contrary, the AfD was perceived as a new neoliberal party and a kind of criticism of the CDU/CSU and the FDP. There were a lot of economists in the foundation of the party; some of them were former members of other right-wing parties such as the CDU and the FDP. The founders of the AfD criticized the FDP for pro-European positions in economic policies of the EU and the CDU for socio-cultural issues such as pro-immigration and multiculturalism (Havertz, 2019).

The 2013 Federal Election was the first test of the AfD, and the party missed the electoral threshold by 0.3 percent and gained 4.7 percent of the votes. However, the result should not be analyzed as a failure. On the contrary, the AfD was established just seven months before the 2013 German Federal Election, and the party could not be able to prepare for elections due to lack of staff, infrastructure, and media attention. Besides, the party showed that the discontent of the people of Germany against the European Union and Eurozone because the party was established only a few months before the 2013 federal elections. Then, the AfD performed well in the 2014 European Parliament election, and the party became the fifth party in Germany with 7.1 percent of the votes (Arzheimer, 2015). In the 2014 European Parliament Elections, the AfD also gained surprising results in the eastern parts of Germany. At the regional level, the AfD's appearance and success rapidly spread in the eastern territories of Germany. The AfD has taken an average quarter of the seats in the local parliaments in Saxony, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, and Thuringia (Radel, 2019, p. 30).

In 2017, the AfD performed well and gained 12.6 percent of the votes. The result made the AfD the third strongest party in the Bundestag. This election success of the AfD shocked the whole world, especially in Germany, because the AfD was the first new party to enter the Bundestag after 1990 (Arzheimer & Berning, 2019, p. 1). This surprising development in German politics can be understood in two main factors. Firstly, as mentioned before, in the foundation of the AfD, there were economy professors, doctors, lawyers, and former mainstream right-wing journalists and politicians (Arzheimer & Berning, 2019). The leadership of the AfD was conscious that if the party had been perceived as a new extreme right-wing party, they would have no chance to have a place in German politics. So, the AfD's economy-focused and Eurosceptic position engaged the party a golden opportunity to achieve electoral success in the first place. After the resignation of the leader of the party and many other founders in 2015, the AfD has shifted into a more radical, populist, and authoritarian stance (Arzheimer & Berning, 2019).

The second reason for the AfD's success in the 2017 federal elections has been analyzed as a reflection of the refugee crisis in Germany between 2015 and 2016. The AfD, as a 'single issue' party that aims to overthrow Eurozone, step by step

transformed into a xenophobic, Islamophobic, and radical right party after 2015 (Kaya, 2021, p. 5). The internal struggle in the AfD intensified and some founders left the party that changed the direction of political strategy and stance of the AfD (Schafer, 2021). In 2015, Angela Merkel, who was the chancellor of Germany and the leader of the CDU, made a historic decision. She declared the temporary suspension of the Dublin Regulation to accept asylum seekers to Germany. This decision shook not only Germany but also the other members of the European Union. Due to the decision of Angela Merkel, millions of immigrants came to Germany and the territories of the EU. Almost 1.3 million refugees arrived to the territories of the EU in 2015 (Marx & Naumann, 2018, p. 112; Bischli et al., 2022; Berman, 2021). This mass migration has never seen since the second world war (Marx & Naumann, 2018, p. 112). Many right-wing populist parties in Europe blamed Angela Merkel, and Euroscepticism has increased among the members of the EU. Meanwhile, the AfD shifted its discourse to a more anti-Islamist, nativist, and nationalist tone after the 2015 refugee crisis. Consequently, the discontent of the people absorbed by the AfD in the 2017 federal elections. The votes of the mainstream political parties, the SPD and the CDU/CSU fell dramatically in 2017, and this process forced the German chancellor Angela Merkel to relinquish the leadership of the CDU. The SPD gained lowest votes ever since the collapse of the Weimar Republic. The AfD reconfigured the stable and consolidated structure of the German political system (Wurthmann et al., 2021). The most notable thing in the 2017 Federal Election was not only the becoming third strongest party in the Bundestag for the AfD; groundbreaking success was that the AfD was positioning itself on the right side of the CDU in the political spectrum. No right-wing party has achieved this success since 1949 (Wurthmann et al., 2021, p. 871). Moreover, the rise of the AfD continued in the 2019 European Parliament elections. The party increased its votes by almost double with 4,104,453 votes (Bundeswahlleiter, 2022).

In the 2021 Federal Elections, the AfD re-entered the Bundestag with 10,3 percent of votes, but the party lost 2,3 percent compared to the 2017 German Federal Election. However, the party protected its electoral base mainly in Saxony and Thuringia in the eastern parts of Germany. In both states, the AfD came up as the first party. The AfD's

campaign slogan in the 2021 election was ‘Germany, But Normal,’ which is a clear response to the Covid-19 lockdowns, and also this slogan contains a nostalgic manner that refers to returning to when Germany was ‘normal.’ Furthermore, the slogan can be considered as a reaction to socio-cultural, economic, and political problems of Germany and an assertion to ‘normalize’ Germany. The results may not be satisfying for the AfD but as Arzheimer said that “the result was not any appreciable increase, but it was not a disaster for the AfD” (Schultheis, 2021).

5.3.1. The AfD’s success on the East Germany

The 2017 and 2021 German federal elections also showed that the AfD is sharply stronger in east than west Germany. However, it is important to highlight that the AfD is not regional party, the AfD gained significant support from West Germany too. For instance, in 2017, the AfD received 11 percent of the total votes in western parts of Germany, but the party gained 22 percent in east (Der Bundeswahlleiter, 2018; cited in Peshy et al., p. 70). The main reason for the difference between east and west could be understood with historical and economical background of these areas. This difference between East and West rooted in the problematic reunification process of Germany.

As highlighted before, the West German political system successfully prevented any extreme threat from both right-wing and left-wing. The reunification of Germany was one of the most important social and political events of the century for the reason that the reunification triggered the dissolution of the socialist bloc. The fall of the Berlin Wall became the symbol of the end of the Cold War. The reunification of Germany in 1990 was not only a turning point for German politics, but also it was a crucial historic moment for the international order in terms of the collapse of existing socialism in the eastern bloc. It is obvious that the unification was not only merging of two countries, but it was also the FRG’s extension to the GDR. The unification is also means that introducing capitalism, free market, and liberal democracy into the Eastern Germany. It can be argued that the East and West divide in economic and social terms has not been fixed yet. The impact of the economic underdevelopment in view of capitalism of the East Germany could not be underestimated and also economic integration

between capitalist west and socialist east did not be easy for both sides. “Average income and wealth are still substantially lower in the east. Net wealth is four times higher in the west...” (Weisskircher, 2020, p. 618). Therefore, economic difficulties caused decline of population in the east. The statistics shows that eastern Germany’s population has shrunk to the early 1900s level while the west Germany reached the peak level of population (Weisskircher, 2020).



“The Whole Germany is What It Should be!

“Human Social Patriotic”

Figure 3: A Poster of the REP

As mentioned in the previous section, the reunification of Germany was a significant moment for the extreme right-wing activists, intellectuals, and movements in Germany. For instance, the REP responded to the reunification as a beginning of the extension of Germany to the Second Reich's territories, as can be seen in the Figure 3.

The nationalist dreams on the past territories of Germany is still an agenda of the far-right movements.

It can be claimed that the 2017 and 2021 elections in Germany prove that the success of the AfD seems to be related to the party's claim to be representative and voice of the East Germans (Pickel & Pickel, 2022, p. 1). Claiming to be representative of the East Germans is not only affiliated with the AfD. The Left (Die Linke) was associated with East German people due to its organic connections to the SED (Pickel & Pickel, 2022). Both parties had solid political positions in the former GDR territories, and they are trying to use east German identity, which can also be socially constructed. According to Weiskircher, the AfD is still struggling to become the main representative of east Germany (Weiskircher, 2020, p. 617). The primary determinant to choosing between the AfD and the Left in east Germany is laying on to answers of these questions; how to remember the GDR, in other words, how people experience the nostalgia of the GDR. However, the AfD seems to successfully create a social identity based on collective nostalgia for resisting the GDR regime.

Political scientists, historians, and sociologists have been searching for an answer to the question of why East Germans tend to vote for radical right-wing parties. Firstly, this should be highlighted that the extreme right-wing tradition of Germany always stresses the 'guilt-free' celebration of German history. This means that the collective memory of the Germans should not be focused on Holocaust. GDR's 'guilt-free' and socialist past create a different collective memory of Germany's past that sharply contrasts with the FRG (Göpffarth, 2021, p. 62-64). The 'guilt' of the Nazi past and the Holocaust was more on the agenda of FRG. The AfD's image is more acceptable in east Germany than in the west for the former GDR citizens due to the different collective memories of the past. The rhetorical use of anti-left totalitarianism is the key to the understanding of the East Germans' attitude to the radical right. The GDR and other Eastern European socialist countries have not experienced the burdens of the Nazi past and Holocaust at the individual, social and political level because the socialist bloc located themselves as always against the Nazi regime (Adaire, 2019, p. 44).

In the GDR, the Nazi era was interpreted with a Marxist perspective that analyzes fascism and Nazism as class consciousness and economic relations, which is blaming capitalism for giving way to fascism rather than cultural aspects such as antisemitism and racism. So, the official narrative of the GDR celebrated the communist victory against fascism without confrontation with racism, antisemitism, and totalitarianism (Adaire, 2019, p. 46). The ‘guilt’ of Nazism is seen as totally belonging to the FRG.

Apart from problems arising from the economic integration, the attitudes on the issue of migration are slightly divided between Germany as the east and the west (Weisskircher, 2020, p. 619). The GDR belonged to the socialist bloc, which meant limited access to any interaction between different cultures and nations except the other Warsaw Pact countries. However, the FRG experienced a massive labor migration from the Mediterranean countries, especially from Turkey. So, the former GDR citizens have particularly less experience of interaction between different cultures and interaction with Muslims (Adaire, 2019; Pesthy et al., 2020). The anti-immigrant attitudes are decisive in voting for the AfD, and in the east, these tendencies higher than in the west.

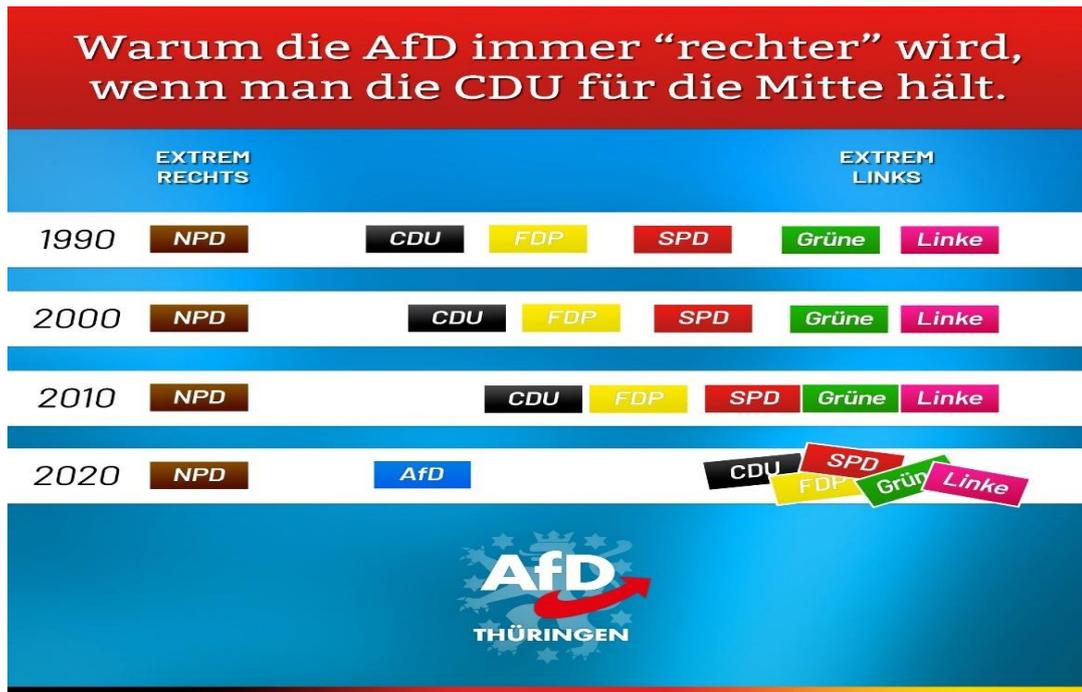
The other significant factor that explains why the AfD is stronger in the east than the west is the representation and status issue of the old GDR territories. Research has shown that Eastern Germans are sharply more dissatisfied with the political system of Germany than Western Germans (Pickel & Pickel, 2022). The AfD and the Left are focusing on these issues in their campaigns and official documents. The East Germans still feel as second-class citizens (Weisskircher, 2020, p. 615). The feeling of being second-class citizens is rooted in the myth of economic, political, and social disadvantages. In this regard, the reunification process under neoliberalism, social and economic inequality between the west and east, and different collective memories created major problems and had a crucial effect on the rise of the AfD in the old GDR territories. These factors also make the East Germany a useful place for the nostalgic rhetoric that will be investigated later in this chapter.

5.4. The AfD as a Radical Right-wing Populist Party

In the academic literature, the AfD has been analyzed with its anti-immigrant, Eurosceptic, anti-Islamist, authoritarian, nativist, and ordoliberal aspects. As mentioned before, Cas Mudde argues that radical right-wing populist parties in Europe have three prominent features, which are populism, authoritarianism, and nativism (Mudde, 2007, p. 65). Paul Taggart lists the common aspects of the right-wing populist parties in Europe as four issues: anti-immigration, regionalism, corrupted elites, and Euroscepticism (Taggart, 2017). The AfD is a great example of radical right-wing populism due to its total anti-EU, anti-immigration, anti-elite, and nativist tendencies (Lewandosky et al., 2016). I will discuss these core aspects of the AfD in order to further analysis of the discourse of nostalgia of the AfD.

5.4.1. Populism of the AfD

The AfD, step by step, shifted into a typical right-wing populist party since its foundation (Kim, 2018, p. 14). As explained before, populism divides society into two camps which can be the people and the elite, friend and enemy; in short, the division can be simplified as us and them. Populist parties instrumentalize the division of society in their discourse because when they become the only voice of the people, legitimizing their ideas of them becomes more effortless. The AfD always gives reference to the people, whatever the context can be.



Why the AfD is becoming more and more "right-wing" when you consider the CDU to be in the middle.

Figure 4: A Poster of the AfD Posted in AfD Thüringen Facebook Account

In the 2017 Program of the AfD, the concept of the people is defined in the very first section, which has the title "Courage to stand up for Germany, we are not subjects, but free citizens" (AfD, 2016, p. 5). The people are defined as homogeneous, united, and virtuous who are oppressed by the others, which did not clearly define them (Breeze, 2019, p. 92-93; AfD, 2016). For example, The AfD positions itself as against the elites of the German establishment, Eurocrats in Brussels, and the global financial elite (Berbair, et al., 2015). It can be followed in speeches of the representatives of the party, official documents, and campaigns. For instance, the Figure 4, which was posted on AfD's Thuringia Facebook page, shows that how the party positioned itself in the political spectrum (AfD Thüringen, 2022). The party advocates itself as the only different party in the German politics, and it fuels the discourse of anti-elite and anti-establishment. Furthermore, in the 2017 Manifesto, the AfD directly indicates the gap between the people and the political elite.

The trend amongst politicians to view politics as a career has led to a monopolization of power and widening of the gap between the people and the political class. This has resulted in nepotism, structures which are prone to corruption, and unethical lobbying (AfD, 2016, p. 12).



“Everyone can now choose their gender every year! What do you think?”

Figure 5: A Facebook Poster of the AfD

The criticism of the German establishment and political elite continues through the 2017 manifesto. The slogans of “We are the people!” (*Wir sind das Volk!*) and “Courage to Germany” (*Mut Zu Deutschland*) directly praises the people as homogeneous and significantly canalize them to resist the political elite and the others (Weisskircher, 2022, p. 93).

The others, what the AfD refers to, can be seen in their rhetoric. The LGBT community clearly does not belong to the people. The Figure 5 is an example of the AfD’s exclusionary rhetoric towards to the LGBT community (AfD, 2022). The party strongly emphasizes that the traditional family must be protected. In their manifesto, “Our children should not be the plaything to the sexual orientation of a noisy minority at school” (AfD, 2016, p. 53). The word ‘our’ supports the us and them distinction, and the LGBT community is excluded from the people. The populist rhetoric of the AfD is evidently against the Muslim community. The party clearly states that ‘Islam

does not belong to Germany’ (AfD, 2016, p. 48). The rhetorical distinction of the us and them constructs the AfD’s populist discourse at every level.

5.4.2. Nativism of the AfD



“Colorful Diversity? We have got Enough Already.”

Figure 6: Poster of the AfD in the 2017 Federal Elections

Nativism is a core ideological and discursive feature of the AfD. There are a lot of examples that the AfD’s nativist and nationalist discourse. For instance, in the 2017 Manifesto, “we maintain an open minded towards other cultures and nations, but wish to be and remain German at the heart [...] maintain German language and traditions [...]” (AfD, 2016, p. 5). Figure 6 is an example of nativist rhetoric the AfD which said “Colorful diversity? We have got enough already” (see Figure 6). The poster shows the opposition to the multiculturalism and promotes German culture’s diversity. Clearly the AfD wants to German people being proud their nationality and culture. As their party program commits that German culture as predominant.

The German far-right tradition always desires to celebrate German history without being shamed for the Nazi period. The AfD uses this rhetoric. For example, Höcke

said that “German people are the only people who plant a monument of shame in the capital” (Dearden, 2017). His rhetoric and terminology are similar to the old extreme right-wing parties of Germany. The discourse on the Holocaust Memorial is an obvious example of nativism and nationalism.



“Our Country, Our Homeland. You are my Germany.”

Figure 7: AfD's the 2017 Federal Elections Campaign Poster

The representatives of the party use term of ‘culture of guilt’ repeatedly in their speeches. As Theodor Adorno warned about the ‘normalization’ of the Holocaust and Nazism by the neo-Nazis, the AfD wants to ‘clear’ the Nazi guilt (Olick, 1998, p. 548). Nativism also appears in economic policies, which will be examined in the next section.

5.4.3. Ordoliberalism of the AfD

As mentioned above, the AfD was the party of economic issues and opposed the Euro as single currency and the European Union’s monetary institutions. Alternative for Germany appeared in the political scene as Electoral Alternative 2013 (*Wahlalternative 2013*) and the movement focused Euroscepticism on the economic issues engaged with Eurozone (Kaya, 2020a, p. 21). The cadre of the party was mostly experts and professors of economics. The party’s position can be called as ordoliberalism, which was theorized by the Freiburg School. Ordoliberalism is a kind of authoritarian neoliberalism (Grimm, 2015; cited in Havertz, 2019). There is a misunderstanding in the academic literature that radical right-wing populist parties are

opposed to the free market. On the contrary, they are faithful supporters of the free market but in a more authoritarian way. As Juho Kim argues, the AfD supports radical market-oriented economic policies (Kim, 2018, p.2). Ordoliberal economy policies are slightly different from neoliberal policies in terms of the state's position in the free market. "The role of the state is not regulate the economy but to organize the social environment of the economy to make sure it is conducive to economic activities" (Foucault 2004, p. 146; Eucken, 2004, p. 180; cited in Havertz, 2019, p. 391). The role of the state should be, for ordoliberals, the guarantee to the harmony of the free market against monopolies and oligopolies.

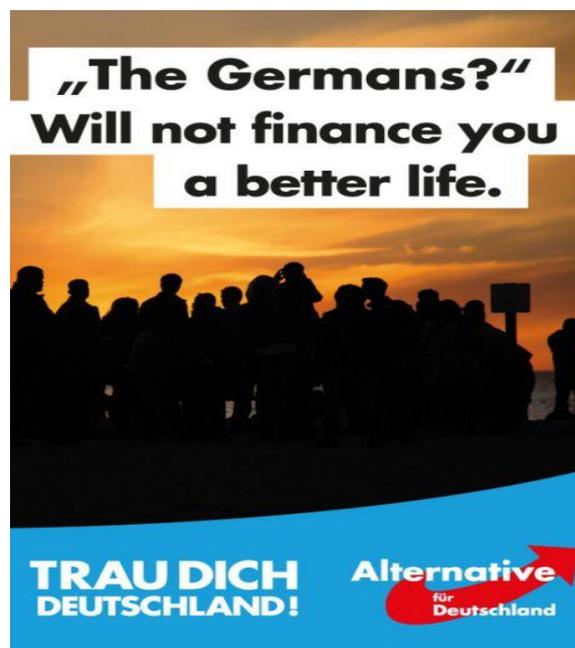
According to the manifestos of the AfD declared in 2013 and 2017, the party's position in economics is oriented in social market economy (AfD, 2016, p. 67). In the 2017 manifesto, the AfD expresses its economy policy at basic level as

Free market competition produces the best economic results. The unsubsidized supply of goods and services, which is most beneficial to buyers and sellers alike, is always set to win the day. Therefore, the AfD contends that the stronger the competition, and the lower the ratio of government expenditures to gross national product (state spending ratio), the better it is for everyone. Indeed, competition gives people the freedom to develop, to grow and to act self-reliant, to acquire private ownership of goods and means of production, to enter into contracts under their own responsibility for their own benefit and for the common good, to choose between different suppliers, products, services or jobs, and to take advantage of profitable opportunities, but also to take responsibility for potential failure (AfD, 2016, p. 65).

This statement is evidence of the clear support of the AfD's pure market-oriented economy policy that includes anti-interventionist and laissez-faire government and free market liberalism (Kim, 2018, p. 8). However, the difference between mainstream neoliberal parties and the AfD, appears in the issues of globalization and the European Union. Although the AfD is a faithful defender of the free market, the AfD supports the liberal capitalist economy from a nativist perspective. As Mudde argues that they believe the nativist economy program is based on the chauvinist welfare state and economic nationalism (Mudde, 2007, p. 136-137). The AfD does not totally reject international trade and globalization in all aspects, but the party promotes German interests and benefits in the first place, which sabotages global governance and

economics. Similar to the other right-wing populist parties, the AfD tries to find a protectionist solution for the international trade system without breaking it.

As the past far-right and fascist parties in Europe, small and medium size businesses or enterprises (SME) are seen as backbone for national economy (Mudde, 2007, p. 127). The AfD aims to support SME throughout “a new taxation policy, as well as a reduction of bureaucracy and termination of over-regulation” (AfD, 2016, p. 68). Especially in the rural areas, the AfD proposes an economy-based SME which would increase attractiveness of agrarian regions (AfD, 2016, p. 92). Moreover, the agricultural sector is vital for the AfD as other right-wing populist parties (Mudde, 2007, p. 127; AfD, 2016, p. 92). The party aims to re-establish appeal of the rural areas with strong agriculture and SME. The declined social cohesion of the rural areas, depopulation must be reserve for prosperity and sustainability for the AfD (AfD, 2016, p. 92).



“The Germans Will Not Finance You a Better Life”

Figure 8:AfD's Facebook Poster

The AfD's criticism of the Euro based on the nativist and nationalist economic program. The AfD strictly declares opposition to the Euro. "We call for an end to the Euro experiment and its orderly dissolution" (AfD, 2016, p. 16). As a matter of fact, rescue plan for the Greece has been analyzed by the Eurosceptic parties as a bright example of high-risk potential of the Eurozone. As in the 2017 Manifesto for Germany;

Rescue measures related to the Euro, some of which go as far as proposing an EU economic government, are illegitimate encroachments on the democratic decision processes of participating nations. The liability risks which have accumulated to date, and which amount to hundreds of billions of Euros, have never been debated in, and authorized by, the national parliaments. The Euro can be regarded as a large-scale experiment, which affects the entire continent. The legacy of Europe's history is the democratic rule of law and the peaceful co-existence of sovereign nation-states. The establishment of the Eurozone thus threatens to destroy this cultural heritage. In order to prevent this, the foolhardy Euro experiment should be instantly discontinued (AfD, 2016, p. 19).

The ordoliberal standpoint of the AfD correlates with the dissolution of the Eurozone because ordoliberalism admits the state's role in the free market and praises the supremacy of the free market. Any attempt to put on the line of free markets such as the Monetary Union and Eurozone would not be coherent with the ordoliberal worldview (Kim, 2018, p. 13; Havertz, 2019).

Ordoliberalism gives an opportunity to the right-wing populist parties to construct a protectionist national economy with an authoritarian and powerful state. This combination of authoritarianism and neoliberalism provides rationalization and systematization of the mechanism of dominance and exclusion (Havertz, 2019, p. 393). The AfD is an ordoliberal party since it's the foundation.

5.4.4. Euroscepticism of the AfD

As Kai Arzheimer said that "Euroscepticism broadly refers to a negative stance towards European integration" (Arzheimer, 2015, p. 537). Euroscepticism can be 'soft' and 'hard'. Hard Euroscepticism refers to ultimate opposition to the European integration that includes rejection of the EU membership, but soft Euroscepticism is a criticism to the current situation of the EU and also can be rejection of some aspects

of the European integration (Szczerbiak & Taggart 2008, p. 7-8; cited in Arzheimer, 2015, p. 537).

The AfD does not oppose or reject the membership to the EU. Since the establishment of the AfD, the party opposes to the idea of centralized federal state of Europe but approve the economic union of the European states with protection of the national sovereignty (AfD 2016, p. 15). Moreover, the AfD proposes restoration of the powers of the nation states by structural reforms to strengthen the international competitiveness of European states (AfD, 2016, p. 16). So, it can be claimed that the AfD is a soft Eurosceptic party that proposes reforms in the EU and the party suggests the returning the pre-Maastricht Europe.

The AfD always criticized the German government for the Greek Bailout packages. Furthermore, the party sees the Greek issue as a serious problem for the German prosperity. The AfD accused the EU of destroying the natural differences of the European countries and imposing them a standardized culture, politics, and economics without taking into consideration of the existing differences of the member states. The EU is seen as a threat to national sovereignty, and the AfD believes that the EU will ruin the cultural diversity of the European nations (Popivanov, 2022, p. 7-8).

Moreover, the AfD's Euroscepticism emphasizes the 'undemocratic construct' of the EU. The party believes that the current structure of the EU has not democratic but the lobby-based and elitist bureaucratic madness (Popivanov, 2022, p. 9). Then, the AfD separates the EU and Europe. The AfD's Eurosceptic discourse is based on the rhetoric unnaturalness structure of the EU, and they blame the EU for leaving the core tasks of the Union, which were spoiled in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992.

5.4.5. Issue of the Immigration and Islamophobia of the AfD

One of the core aspects of the AfD is Islamophobia and the anti-immigrant attitude. The AfD perceived the immigration as a threat to the German homogeneity as well as nation's purity. Immigration especially from the Muslim countries regarded as a threat to German culture, security and economics. The AfD tries to pressure the federal

government to reduce immigration and tries to create a public opinion about the immigration issue. Other mainstream parties of Germany such as CDU and SPD blamed for their pro-immigration policies and the AfD represent itself as only party to protect the German interests. Islamophobia has been growing in European countries from the 1970s to today (Kaya, 2021, p. 19). The fear of Islam has increased since the jihadist terrorist attacks in the capitals and big cities in Europe, such as Berlin, London, and Paris. Moreover, the unstable situation in the Middle East and North Africa has triggered a mass migration from these areas to Europe. Due to the ongoing civil wars and economic crisis in the Muslim majority countries, Europeans faced a rapid change in society. In contemporary academic literature, the concept of Islamophobia is analyzed as an ideology that is used by the right-wing populist movements to construct a European identity (Kaya, 2021, p 20). The term is referring a kind of unrealistic and exaggerated fear against Muslims, and this ‘phobia’ is considerably similar to the racist ideologies during the early 20th century (Kaya, 2015). According to Amir Saeed, Islamophobia should be understood as a form of cultural racism that is produce social and political exclusion of Muslim origin people (Saeed, 2007, p. 459). In Ayhan Kaya’s words,

One could thus argue that Islamophobia as an ideology is being constructed by ruling political groups to foster a kind of false consciousness, or delusion, within the majority of society as a way of covering up their own failure to manage social, political, economic, and legal forces and consequently the rise of inequality, injustice, poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and alienation (Kaya, 2021, p. 20).

I totally agree with Kaya’s argument on what Islamophobia is about. Furthermore, failure of neoliberalism is also covered by the political elites by ‘scapegoating’ the immigrants and Muslim origin people. As a result, Islamophobia is a useful tool to absorb discontent and anger of the people for the right-wing populist parties. The AfD is using this tool effectively in their discourses. In the 2017 Manifesto, there are clear Islamophobic arguments such as “Islam does not belong to Germany. Its expansion and the ever-increased number of Muslims in the country are viewed by the AfD as a danger to our state, our society, and our values” (AfD, 2016, p. 48).



“Islam? Does not Fit Our Kitchen.”

Figure 9: The AfD's Campaign Poster in the 2017 Federal Elections

The AfD is presenting the refugee issue as an invasion of Germany. Gauland said in an interview that “[...] we do not like Islamic invasion, but I think that the refugee welcome policy of Merkel was the main reason for our success” (Friedman, 2017). Moreover, leading figures of the AfD claim that politicians who belong to the left-wing ideology are doing a kind of social experiment on Germany that would be resulted in a catastrophe. This is also related to the feature of the right-wing populist parties’ discourse of emergency. They always refer to a near danger. When the AfD’s manifesto is analyzed, it is obvious that Islam and Muslim culture are seen as historical antagonists (Kaya, 2021, p. 22). The other for the AfD is undoubtedly Muslim-origin communities, and it is apparent that Muslim-origin people do not belong to the ‘us’. Höcke who is the leader of most extremist right-wing faction of the AfD, said that “there is only 64,5 million native-born without migration background” (Kim, 2017, p. 7) Moreover, he said that “in medium term half of the population will have Muslim background. We cannot allow this change” (Kim, 2017, p. 7; Alarian, 2020). As mentioned before, the AfD sees migration as an invasion and they further their arguments towards a ‘societal experiments’ (Kim, 2017, p. 7).

The AfD's deputy leader in 2016 said in an interview that "Islam is in itself a political ideology that is not compatible with the constitution" (Carrel, 2016) and she added that "we are in favor of banning on minarets, muezzins and on full veils" (Carrel, 2016). These arguments repeated by other leaders of the AfD. Islamophobia is exploited by the AfD's leadership to legitimize their radical right-wing agenda, and also increasing visibility of Islam in European countries provides a useful place for the discourse of nostalgia.

5.5. Discourse of Nostalgia of the AfD

Nostalgia, longing for a past that no longer exists or never existed (Boym, 2001), has become an increasing trend in popular culture. Nostalgia inspires movies, TV series, music, and fashion in an entertaining way. Due to the acceleration of technological and scientific developments, nostalgic deprivation among the different age groups has increased. The social and political differences between the decades enlarged. Therefore, yearning for the past is becoming a trend today.

As mentioned in the third chapter, Boym claimed the use of nostalgia in political discourse is an attempt to reconstruct a past that presented as a lost home (Boym, 2001). In the context of restorative nostalgia, the emotions arising from the nostalgia made it easy to define in-group and out-group, which is identical to the populist distinction of 'us' and 'them'. In this sense, right-wing populists instrumentalize the past and create a division between 'us' and 'them' in order to construct a social identity.

Nostalgia has reflections on politics, especially in the recent surge of right-wing populism. As mentioned before, many right-wing populist parties and movements have a nostalgic tone in their discourses. The discourse of nostalgia is mainly about the glorious past and the 'good old days'. However, in some cases, nostalgia can be used in a negative way which is observable in the AfD's campaigns in the former GDR territories. The AfD subtly uses the national past and collective memories of the people in order to gain support. The AfD's discourse of nostalgia has two dimensions that are basically based on the division of east and west Germany. In the former GDR

territories, the AfD gives references to the peaceful revolution in 1989 and tries to provoke a subsidiary revolution as a continuation of 1989. Being a second-class citizen, lack of representation and warning to new a totalitarian left-wing dictatorship based on anti-fascist, environmentalist, and immigrant threats provide a political discourse of the AfD in the eastern state elections. The AfD calls for resistance in the ballot box, similar to what former citizens of the GDR did in the 1989 peaceful revolution in the streets. However, the AfD's discourse in entire Germany is typical of right-wing, nostalgic restorative slogans and promises such as 'Germany, But Normal' which can be seen in Figure 10 (AfD, 2021).

As a new political party in Germany, the AfD could not have a place in mainstream media. The party mostly used internet-based campaigns to gain support and define itself (Yoder, 2020, p. 38). Using social media and other internet apparatuses to introduce itself has served the purpose of anti-status quo and anti-elitist allegations of the AfD. According to Olsen's study, Die Linke is not seen as a resistance party or representative of the former GDR citizens anymore (Olsen, 2018). The AfD's political communication strategy instrumentalizes the collective nostalgia of the eastern Germans and fills the gap that has been left behind by Die Linke. The AfD's political communication strategy in eastern Germany is based on the ostalgie that is related to the perception of the GDR in a negative or positive way. The AfD's usage of nostalgic images and discourses in East Germany is much higher than in the West due to the legacy of the GDR. It can be claimed that the AfD used the GDR nostalgia of the people to construct social identity and political mobilization in Eastern Germany. Ostalgie is different from other east European collective nostalgia experiences about the socialist past because it exists in a unified Germany that should be analyzed differently from other post-socialist states (Hyland, 2013, p. 103). The post-socialist states transformed into a market economy and liberal democracy with their own territory and people. However, the situation in Germany was different from other post-socialist states. As highlighted before in this dissertation, the reunification of Germany has resulted in the colonization of East Germany by the West that, obviously creating crucial reflections in politics in the long term. Even though ostalgie was inevitable, the economic and political problems of the former GDR territories can be experienced

much softer than today. The legacy of the GDR is a major social and political determiner in the East.

As highlighted above, ostalgie can be positive or negative. In positive sentiments, ostalgie can be considered as a desire to return to the socialist past (Hyland, 2013, p. 103). After the collapse of the GDR, as the successor of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED), the Party of Democratic Socialism (*Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus*, PDS) took the role of representative of the East. The PDS was merged with other socialist and left-wing parties and transformed into Die Linke, which is still one of the most popular parties in the East, in 2007. The vote for Die Linke in the East is associated with the positive ostalgie. However, negative remembering of the GDR can result in far-right tendencies that are connected with anxiety about a new left-wing totalitarian state (Göpffarth, 2021). Some scholars also analyze ostalgie as responsible for “helping to keep alive anti-democratic principles and a wish for returning the values of the past” (Cooke, 2003, p. 166; cited in Hyland, 2013, p. 103).



“Germany, But Normal.”

Figure 10: A Poster from AfD's Facebook Account

As highlighted above, the AfD is a unique case compared to other right-wing populist parties due to its different leadership structure. The internal conflicts and decentralized decision-making process create diverse views which have reflections on the political discourse of the AfD. Regional campaigns and national campaigns have a different levels of nostalgic tone. Nevertheless, the AfD uses the nostalgic discourse in electoral campaigns at regional, national, and Europe levels.

At the national level, the Alternative for Germany provoked the citizens with the slogans such as 'Germany, But Normal' (*Deutschland, Aber Normal*). The slogan is very simple as other right-wing populist slogans such as 'Make America Great Again,' 'Take Back Control,' and 'Restore Order in France'. The slogan was presented in April 2021 in the AfD's 12th party congress. The slogan should not be underestimated due to its simplicity because 'normal' in the slogan refers defiance to the Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions, but also it indicates the 'normality' in the past. In this context, the slogan has nostalgic dimensions. 'Germany, But Normal' appeared first time in a video, which is 80-second-long, that started describing normal as boring and stinking. Moreover, the video continued with a nostalgic emotion, the desire to return the normal. "Normal. What is it actually today? In the past, it was always normal, which was boring. Stinking normal and stuffy, but today is normal what we are missing" (AfD TV, 2021a). Obviously, this sentence is highly nostalgic, and matches with Taggart's the heartland concept and Bauman's retrotopia. The AfD presents today as not normal and madness. So, the suggestion is to return to the past. In the video, normal is not described clearly and when Germany was normal is also not explained. In this sense, the slogan is remarkably similar to Donald Trump's 'Make America Great Again' slogan. The slogan 'Make America Great Again' refers to a past the US was great and directs people to 'make' their country great again. The nostalgic rhetoric of the slogans of both the AfD's and Trump's created a baseline for their populist discourses such as nativism, anti-elite and anti-immigration. For example, if Germany is not normal today compared to the past, what factors changed the German system into this situation? The AfD's answer is obvious; the German political elite, immigrants, and left-wing environmentalists betrayed Germany, and they dragged the Germans into this not-normal situation. A similar process happened in the US. The

AfD uses an imaginary past and blames the elite and immigrants as scapegoats. The AfD tries to construct an idealized past to convince people that their suggestions are 'normal', and they present themselves as the only supporter of the people against these 'enemies'. The nostalgic sentiment in their discourse is a political strategy to legitimize their far-right ideas. As mentioned before, the right-wing populist communication strategy is a re-branding strategy of far-right ideas.

The arguments are supported with the visuals that resemble the unknown past. The video uses aesthetics of the so-called stereotype white German family representation as normal, peaceful, and in danger. The everyday life of the 'normal' white Germans is praised in the video that screenshots show. Then, anti-fascists and environmentalists appeared in the video. The voice changed and surprised when anti-fascist, left-wing, environmentalist, and Covid-19 lockdowns were represented in the video. They are represented as not normal in Germany. "That's what we really want because the world around us it's kind of become so crazy" (AfD TV, 2021a). The idealized normal presented as somehow existed in the past, and due to the establishment, left-wing and environmentalist movements, immigrants, and supranational organizations ruined and corrupted the normal. The AfD's suggestions and policies are conferred as normal and what was actual Germany before. It is apparent that 'Germany, But Normal' is a discourse of nostalgia that refers to an idealized past that never existed, and the AfD tries to mobilize people to return to the past when Germany was normal.

The AfD's 'normal' is an example of heartland which Taggart theorized. As examined in the third chapter, the heartland is a retrospective utopia which right-wing populist parties uses in their discourses (Taggart, 2004). In the AfD's discourse the normal is an imaginary, unclear and blurred version of the past that is promised to the people.

Boym's restorative nostalgia is highly explanatory concept to analyze the AfD's political communication strategy in the 2021 German Federal Election. As mentioned before, restorative nostalgia presents an idealized past that should be restored (Boym, 2001). The AfD employed an ordinary right-wing populist nostalgic scheme in the 2021 electoral campaign. The AfD undoubtedly presents Germany's past as 'normal' that what they promise to the people. Nostalgic sentiment appears in these discourses

because the video compares and contrast Germany's past and present. Taggart's the heartland is emerged as a useful concept to understand the AfD's discourse in the video. Beatrix von Storch, the deputy leader of the AfD, said that "What we just want is our country back the way it used to be [...] We want Germany to be normal again [...]" in an interview about the slogan of 'Germany, But Normal' (AfD TV, 2021b). According to her speech, Beatrix sees the current situation of Germany as not normal and she highlights that Germany was normal and the AfD want it back. She blames the Merkel and CDU for giving the way for left-wing 'not normal' policies to ruin Germany. The negative representation of migration, Islam, and the Greens serves a constructing a picture of Germany that has strict borders of identity and everyday life. She warns the Germans for 'more crazy and insane' possibility if the Greens, SPD and Die Linke establish a coalition government in the 2021 Federal Elections. Jörg Meuthen, former leader of the AfD, made a short speech on the presentation of the slogan, and he said that "when I talk with the people...this sentence coming up that everything is not normal here anymore, this country has gone crazy..." (Faz, 2021). Then, he describes the 'not normal' with the lockdowns and restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Faz, 2021).

The AfD's discourse highlights lost national sovereignty and identity. In Alexander Gauland's words, "...our people need a national identity in order to survival...." Then he continues, "Germany needs footing history, in traditions, in the native homeland. The sovereignty of the nation-state and identity provide humans with ontological security and connect them to the community" (Gauland, 2016; cited in Wojczewski, 2021, p. 114). Gauland's speech aimed to trigger German people's nostalgic feelings about an idealized past. Gauland and other politicians of the AfD indicate a ruined wholeness and unity of the German nation, society, and identity. Germany's past is pictured as a blurred golden era, but when this golden era existed is not answered clearly by the AfD. 19th century Germany and especially the Bismarckian era is represented as the ultimate cultural and national reference point. Gauland said that "the Bismarckian era was the era of innovators, the era of German unity and era of the great emergence of Germany" (Gauland, 2017; cited in Wojczewski, 2021, p. 114). The discourse of the AfD clamorously claim that a stolen German sovereignty and identity

by the elites and immigrants. The AfD promises a restoration of the people's sovereignty and German identity again. For the AfD, the German identity comes from the culture and language that, demonstrated in the AfD's manifesto, "the German language as focal point of our identity" (AfD, 2016, p. 46). The AfD rejects multiculturalism because the party believes that the German culture and language should be predominant. (Ziemer, 2017, p. 82). The AfD's campaigns were based on historical references to Germany that aimed to legitimize and normalize their discourse. In the 2019 Saxony state election, their campaign poster was "*Mut Zu Sachsen*" (Courage for Saxony) with the image of a historical figure of Augustus the Strong (Weisskircher, 2020, p. 96).

As mentioned before, the AfD proposes a heartland to the German people with promising to return to normal. In the video screenshots demonstrated in the Figure 11, the AfD is focusing on heartland that elicit the nostalgia for the past of Germany. The video starts with the reserve turned map of Germany and the AfD corrects Germany. The left-wing protesters and environmentalists presented as enemies of the heartland.

The AfD promised to remove all restrictions and limitations on low carbon emissions. The represented situation of Germany by the AfD is that the political elite betrayed the German people by allowing Antifa activists to influence German education, industry, and everyday life with the support of the Greens. The video concluded with the AfD's simplistic solution, which is back to the normal.

It is very observable that the AfD's narrative in the former GDR territories based on division of the west and east. For example, Saxony the AfD chairman Jörg Urban reacts against the annual report on the status of reunification of Germany which prepared by the Federal Government regularly. The report illustrates low adaptation of the liberal democratic values in the East Germany and Jörg Urban reacted this criticism as "The allegations against the East Germans are completely unfounded. People who live in Saxony just like other federal states want more democracy in form of referendums" (Urban, 2021). Then, he continues with references of the 1989 peaceful revolution "The East Germans managed to bring down the Stasi dictatorship

more than 30 years ago. Through this experience, they developed particularly good response to democracy and freedom [...]” (Urban, 2021).



Figure 11: Four Screenshots from the AfD’s video “The AfD program for the 2021 federal election!” (AfD TV, 2021c)

5.5.1. East German GDR Nostalgia (*Ostalgie*)

The term of *ostalgie* is a German word that is the combination of nostalgia and east, which refers to a negative or positive memory and nostalgia for the GDR. ‘*Good Bye, Lenin*’ is one of the most successful German movies that was released in 2003 and became very popular in both the west and east regions of Germany. Shortly, Alex, the main character of the movie, tries to hide the fall of the Berlin Wall from his mother because his mother fell into a coma due to a heart attack just before the fall of the Berlin Wall, and if his mother experiences a new shocking event that could trigger

another heart attack. *'Good Bye, Lenin'* is funny and entertaining, but it is also nostalgic. The movie is one of the best visual examples of ostalgie. The success of the movie can be considered as the power of nostalgia in Germany. As mentioned before, nostalgia provides a 'self-continuity' that creates a comfort zone for personal history (Martin et al., 2022; Steenvoorden & Haartevelde, 2018). At the collective level, nostalgia provides a self-continuity at the group level. In the Eastern German case, the GDR memories are highly useful for the creation of 'self-continuity.' The AfD aims to trigger that nostalgic sentiment by using collective memories of the Eastern German people to 'complete' what they did in the 1989 peaceful revolution. The AfD pushes the Eastern Germans to 'resist' again a so-called oppressive regime in the ballot box.

Alexander Gauland, who is co-founder of the AfD made a speech that draws a nostalgic use of the legacy of the GDR in 2018: "I currently feel reminded of the last few months in the GDR time and again. In no way do I want to play down the SED dictatorship" (Gauland, 2018; cited in Weisskircher, 2022, p. 94). The political communication strategy is just like Benjamin Moffitt's argument about right-wing populism, warning for a near breakdown. This indicates a breakdown is at the core of the discourse but as well as a nostalgia about the resistance against the GDR regime. The AfD designate a united enemy against the homogeneous people.

The autumn of 2019 had three East German state elections in Thuringia, Brandenburg and Saxony. The AfD were scored record level of support in all the regional elections in 2019. The campaigns of the AfD in these states were inspired by 30th anniversary of the 1989 peaceful revolution. The slogans and speeches of the representatives of the party were highly symbolic and they called the people for a second revolution in ballot.

Table 1: Results of the State Elections in the East Germany in 2019							
Land	AfD	Linke	Greens	SPD	CDU	FDP	FW
Brandenburg	23.5	10.7	10.8	26.2	15.6	4.1	5.0
Saxony	27.5	10.4	8.6	7.7	32.1	4.5	-
Thuringia	23.4	31.0	5.0	8.2	21.7	5.0	-

Table 1: Results of the State Elections in the East Germany in 2019 Source: (Bundeswahlleiter, 2022)



Figure 12: A Poster of the AfD in the 2019 Thuringia State Elections (“Turnaround_2.0, Complete the Turn”)

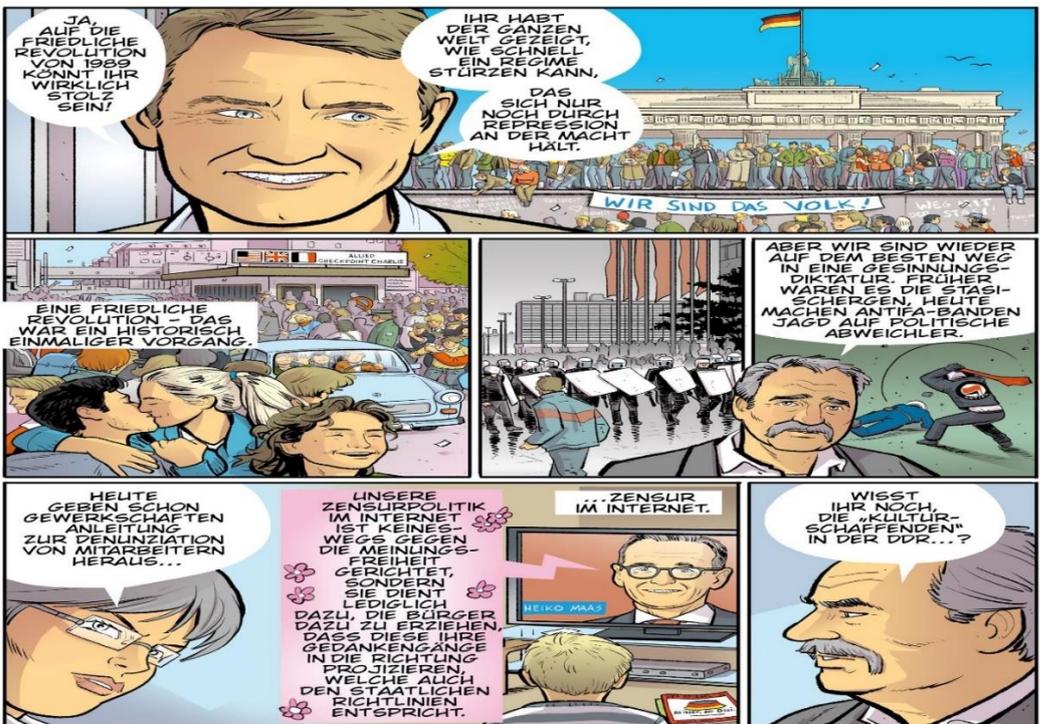
For example, in the 2019 Thuringia, Brandenburg and Saxony State Elections, the AfD’s narrative is based on the slogan of ‘Wende_2.0’ (turnaround_2.0) (see Figure 12). Wende is a German word that means ‘turn’ that refers to the 1989 revolution in the GDR. This is an apparent reference to the collapse of the GDR regime and a celebration. Moreover, the usage of the ‘2.0’ is not only a digital aesthetic but also the ‘2.0’ addresses a second-time revolution in Thuringia. The old GDR citizens who

played a role in the 1989 revolution were celebrated and called for another revolution in Thuringia by the AfD. The AfD's embrace of the old GDR citizens for a historical moment aims to trigger nostalgic feelings and try to mobilize them to be 'turnaround' again in the regional elections. It is clear that the AfD aimed to mobilize the people who experienced the events of 1989. The slogans such as "Accomplish the Wende" and "the east rises up" were also linked to a collective nostalgia and memory to reflect today (Weiskircher, 2022, p. 93; Menke & Wulf, 2021). Höcke, again, shared a post from his official Facebook account for call the people of Brandenburg, Saxony and Thuringia and said that "Every vote for the AfD is a small 'peaceful revolution' at the ballot box" (Höcke, 2019).

The nostalgic rhetoric of them appears in all official documents, posters and social media posts. In the AfD's Thuringia Facebook account, nostalgic theme can be seen in the videos and posts that shared during the 2019 State Elections. For example, as Menke and Wulf demonstrated, a video titled "Let us take our country back!" started with an image of protesting people during the 1989 revolution in Thuringia and continued with protesting citizens in 2019 (AfD Thuringia, 2019; cited Menke & Wulf, 2021, p. 242). The video tries to match the Eastern German identity with the AfD by resisting a left-wing dictatorship. Furthermore, the video emphasizes 'disappointed' former citizens of GDR and argues that current situation is worse than the GDR times with some statistics such as "41 percent of people say: Less freedom of speech than in GDR" and "worse protection from crime than GDR" (AfD Thuringia, 2019; cited in Wulf & Menke, 2020, p. 242).



SEITE 1 ▶▶▶



SEITE 2 ▶▶▶

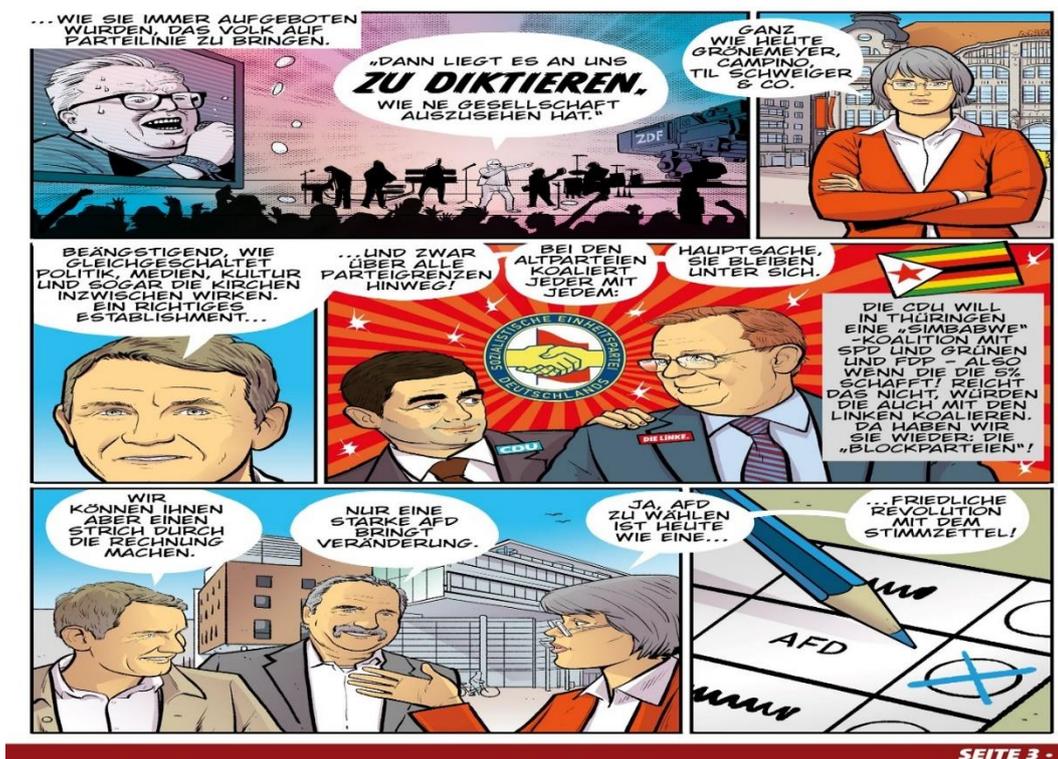


Figure 13: Screenshots of the "Fed Up With The Bloc Parties." (AfD Thuringia, 2019)

Another example is a comic named ‘Fed up with bloc parties’ (*Kein Bock Auf Block-Parteien.*) which was published in AfD’s Thuringia Facebook account (AfD Thuringia, 2019). The comic shows a dialogue between two characters who are complain about the recent developments in politics. Then a character says that “That is not we fight on the streets in 1989, so it is similar in the GDR over again” (AfD Thuringia, 2019; cited in Menke & Wulf, 2021, p. 242). Next, Björn Höcke appeared, and he said that “...Politics, media and culture, and the churches now seem. A real establishment across all party lines” (AfD Thuringia, 2019; cited in Menke & Wulf, 2021, p. 242). Höcke warns the people for a possible Zimbabwe coalition in Thuringia, which includes the CDU, SPD, FDP, and Greens (AfD Thüringen, 2019). If this coalition government will have established, Thuringia again has to deal with another dictatorship. Voting for the AfD is represented as the only way to sustain the free Eastern Germans as they fought in the 1989 peaceful revolution. Basically, the old

GDR memories aimed to trigger voting for the AfD in the comic that was published on AfD's Thuringia Facebook page.

Björn Höcke, who is the leader of Alternative for Germany in Thuringia, said before the elections that “feels like 1989 again” (Sally, 2019). Ironically, Höcke was not born in the GDR, and he was born in Bonn, which was the capital city of the FRG. Then, he said that “we did not push through the peaceful revolution for this” (Sally, 2019). In another party event, Höcke said that “We are taking back our democracy, our constitutional state. We are completing the revolution!” (Schultheis, 2019). Höcke emphasized the lost democracy and constitutional state which was taken in the 1989 revolution by the former GDR citizens. The stolen democracy and sovereignty of the people can only retake by the AfD. The use of ‘completing the revolution’ stresses the fragmentariness of the peaceful revolution which should be completed.

The far-right intellectuals, who are affiliated with the AfD and PEGIDA, supported the nostalgic discourse of the party in the Eastern Germany. Vera Lengsfeld, who was a civil rights activist in the GDR, said that “we live in a society, where the GDR has been resurrected in the shape of chimera and where you can earn a prize for civil courage when you carve a swastika into your hip and claim that it was done by right-wing extremists” (Göpffarth, 2021, p. 64). Her arguments obsessed to the resisting against the GDR and she tries to evoke the memory of activism against the GDR. She manipulates the people for anxiety of a new left-wing totalitarianism. Furthermore, she added that “today's situation is not far from 1989. Look at the denial of reality by the establishment. Their discourse reminds me of a wishful thinking of the GDR's leadership” (Göpffarth, 2021, p. 65). The same analogies have been made by the politicians of the AfD. Lengsfeld's analogy goes as far as an analogy between the STASI and ANTIFA. “We need another revolution to stop destruction of our beautiful country” Lengsfeld said. Göpffarth's brilliant words expressing the situation in the former GDR territories; “Activating the socialist past for a nativist future” (Göpffarth, 2021).

As I analyzed with the examples, the AfD uses a nostalgic narrative at both federal and regional levels. The AfD adopted the typical right-wing populist nostalgic

communication strategy, as Kenny (2017) and Elçi (2022) highlighted in different cases. The federal-level narrative of the AfD, which has a slogan of ‘Germany, But Normal’, emphasizes a kind of ‘back to the future’ narrative. The restorative nostalgia was exploited, and as Bauman and Taggart argued that rhetoric, which was founded on an unknown ‘good, old days,’ was employed for constructing a heartland or retrotopia. The AfD tried to construct a heartland that was established around the traditional values and the German identity. Therefore, with the help of populist discourses such as antagonistic division of ‘us’ and ‘them’, the AfD builds a narrative for a social identity based on nostalgic feelings aimed at constructing an in-group context. Nostalgia is used as a tool of social mobilization and a tool for support the AfD’s Eurosceptic, nativist, Islamophobic and authoritarian ideas. The Muslims, environmentalists, anti-fascist left-wing, and the political establishment of Germany portrayed as enemies of the heartland that presented by the AfD.

At the Eastern German level, the ‘Wende_2.0’ campaign was not a nostalgia that was based on the praise of the good old days. On the contrary, the memories of the 1989 peaceful revolution and the resistance against the GDR regime abused and aimed to mobilize people for a second revolution in the ballot box. Insisting comparisons between the GDR regime and today’s political establishment give a warning that a new dictatorship will be established if they do not vote for the AfD. Making history or being in a virtuous side of the political spectrum were one of the aims of the AfD in the former GDR territories. The AfD presents a heartland for the Eastern Germans focused on the East German identity, xenophobia, and anti-elitism.

5.6. Conclusion

History of radical right-wing parties in Germany up to the AfD is analyzed in this chapter. The core features of the AfD which are populism, nativism, Islamophobia and anti-immigration, Euroscepticism, ordoliberalism investigated deeply by giving examples from the campaigns, posters and speeches of the party representatives. Afterwards, the AfD’s discourse of nostalgia with recent examples from the campaigns of 2019 State Election of Brandenburg, Thuringia and Saxony and the 2021 Federal

Election are analyzed in this chapter. The AfD's multiple heartlands for the west and east Germany discussed.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Actually, nobody knows whether populism is a temporary situation or it will have some place in our future or it will be our future. Nonetheless, it would not be assertive to claim that populism has been one of the main issues in politics since the early 2000s. It is a global phenomenon that is visible in almost every country. Their impact on politics is increasing, and they are enhancing their political positions at every levels. Furthermore, they are participating in coalition governments at local and national levels. The AfD's rise is more frightening than other right-wing populist parties due to Germany's exceptional previous experiences with the radical right-wing movements, especially the Nazi legacy. The party was founded in 2013, but it gained extraordinary success in German politics at all the European Parliament, the Bundestag, and the regional levels.

As mentioned before, the AfD was not established as a far-right political party; the party was founded as a reaction to the Euro policies of the government as an 'alternative'. However, since the 2015 refugee crisis, the party has advocated an Islamophobic and anti-immigrant stance with escalated nativist, authoritarian and populist discourse. With the 2021 German Federal Election results, even though the party has lost some of its votes compared to the 2017 election, the party proved itself as a lasting agent in German politics.

The impressive political and electoral performance of the AfD has drawn the great attention of almost every social scientist. In this thesis, I aimed to analyze the

remarkable success of the AfD by examining the party's discourse of nostalgia. This thesis conducted an analysis of AfD's nostalgic communication strategy with a comprehensive discussion about right-wing populism. The dissertation argued that the AfD is using nostalgia as a tool for the construction of social identity and political mobilization. Nostalgia and right-wing populism are related to each other, and the AfD is not an exception. The AfD instrumentalize the collective memories of the German people to legitimize their ideas and policies. In order to support the main argument of the thesis, the speeches of the party representatives, official documents, official social media accounts, slogans, and posters were examined deeply. The leading causes of the right-wing populist parties are investigated in the Chapter 4 and reasons of the right-wing populist parties' usage of the nostalgic rhetoric are explained. Briefly, they aimed to reach the people who are dissatisfied with the recent situation in politics, society, and economics.

As Cas Mudde said, today's politics is influenced by a populist zeitgeist. (Mudde, 2004) In the same line with Elçi, I believe that the populist zeitgeist brings us the nostalgic zeitgeist (Elçi, 2019, p. 156). Nostalgia has always been a part of human beings, but today, nostalgic feelings have been more visible and influential in every aspect of life due to the recent developments in science and technology. The political scene is experiencing both nostalgic and populist zeitgeist. The rise of nostalgia is related to hopelessness about the future. When people do not satisfy with the current economic, social and political conditions, they demand a change and solution as Laclau and Mouffe claimed (Laclau, 2005; Mouffe, 2018). As explained in the Chapter 4, due to the conditions arising from the neoliberal transformation, people cannot feel confident about their future. As a matter of fact, the decline of future-oriented politics because of the neoliberal consensus between mainstream parties affects people's alienation from mainstream politics.

In my opinion, populists offer very simplistic solutions to complex issues that could not be fully understood by the average populist citizens, who are mostly low-educated and not living in a cosmopolitan city. As Taggart argued, right-wing populists propose a heartland based on an idealized past that never existed (Taggart, 2004). Heartland is a simplistic and unrealistic solution offered by the right-wing populist parties. As

analyzed in the Chapter 5, the AfD is offering a back to the normal, but the party does not explain what is the normal clearly and when this normality happened in the German history.

The AfD's journey in the German politics has witnessed surprising developments. It can be argued that the Eurozone and 2015 refugee crises have accelerated the AfD's popularity. In this regard, the AfD positioned itself as a right-wing populist party in the right place and time. The party successfully absorbed the people's anger towards the mainstream parties, refugees, and the Eurozone with a correct communication strategy. The AfD's success is neither predictable nor a coincidence. Germany has experienced a series of unique conditions which given way to a right-wing populist party. As explained in the Chapter 4, neoliberal consensus between the mainstream parties caused the decline of the social democratic values that can be seen in the 2017 Federal Elections. The AfD positioned itself very accurately in order to gain support from the people who were disappointed by the mainstream politics.

This thesis tried to show and analyze the nostalgic discourse of the AfD. The party uses multiple heartlands for east and west Germans, and also they use a different political communicant strategy. However, the nostalgic rhetoric is common. Nostalgia is used as a strategy and tool by the AfD for justifying ideas and actions. I claim that the right-wing populist parties are a new party family, but they are also re-branding the old radical right-wing ideas. The legitimization issue of the far-right can be solved with ultra-nationalism under the covering of nostalgia. Björn Höcke's statements on the Nazi past and the Holocaust Monument in Berlin should be considered with the AfD's radical right-wing agenda. The examples given in the Chapter 5 proves the instrumental use of nostalgia in the East Germany.

To sum up, the dissertation provided an overview of the concepts of populism, and nostalgia as well as how nostalgia exploited by the right-wing populist parties, specifically the case of AfD, are analyzed. The study has shown that the AfD uses a nostalgic rhetoric that differs from the Eastern and Western Germany. In the former GDR territories, the AfD abuses ostalgie in its campaigns, slogans, and posters.

Moreover, the thesis demonstrated that the AfD uses a nostalgic discourse in the 2021 Federal Elections by the slogan of ‘Germany, But Normal’.

The main shortcoming of the thesis is that this dissertation only analyzed a single case which is the AfD. Multiple cases from different countries can be more valid for the main argument of the dissertation. Nostalgia can be observable in different forms in countries due to unique historical backgrounds. Moreover, the collective memories of the people are diverging from the host country. For example, the post-Soviet nostalgia experiences in Russia and Estonia are not the same. The AfD’s nostalgic rhetoric in Eastern Germany is based on ostalgie and resisting memories against the GDR. It is not based on Germany’s ‘glorious past’. However, Marine Le Pen, the leader of the National Front of France, exploits the imperial past of France and aims to trigger a collective nostalgia based on the ‘glorious’ times. Another example from France is Eric Zemmour’s campaign in the 2022 French Presidential Elections. Zemmour declared his candidacy with a video that had an identical background to Charles De Gaulle’s. A comparison of different cases would be more explanatory.

Thus, a significant future study would be a comparative study with another case. For instance, a comparison of nostalgic discourses between the AfD and the FN or PVV would be a good test for the different uses of nostalgia for mobilizing people. Another future study would be a comparative study between Die Linke and the AfD to compare and contrast the exploitation of ostalgie in different ways. Both parties use nostalgic rhetoric to some extent, and due to their ideological positions, they interpreted the legacy of the GDR from different perspectives. Lastly, quantitative research can be conducted to measure the reactions of people to nostalgic discourses. A future study may combine quantitative data with discourse analysis.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKE ÖZET

21. yüzyıl siyasi, sosyal ve ekonomik açıdan şaşırtıcı gelişmelere sahne olmaktadır. Washington D. C. ve New York'u hedef alan 11 Eylül terör saldırıları, Irak ve Afganistan'ın işgali, 2008 finansal krizi, Arap Baharı sonucunda Orta Doğu'da yaşanan siyasi ve ekonomik istikrarsızlık ve rejim değişiklikleri, bunlarla bağlantılı olarak yaşanan kitlesel göç bize 'tarihin sonunun' henüz gelmediğini göstermiştir. Özellikle son on yılda siyasete etkileri ciddi şekilde artan sağ popülist partiler, liberal demokratik sistemin soğuk savaştan sonra karşılaştığı en ciddi tehdit olarak görülmektedir.

Sağ popülist partiler son dönemde özellikle Avrupa siyasetinin temel gündemi haline gelmiştir. Sağ popülist partiler yerel ve ulusal meclislerde kendilerine yer edinmekte ve hatta koalisyon hükümetlerine katılmaktadırlar. Çoğu siyaset bilimci tarafından popülizm geçici bir fenomen olarak değerlendirilmesine rağmen Donald Trump'ın 2016 seçimlerinde Başkan seçilmesi, 2016 Brexit referandumu, Marine Le Pen'in 2017 ve 2022 Fransa seçimlerindeki başarısı, Almanya'da AfD'nin ana akım partiler arasına girmesi ve Victor Orban'ın 2022'de yeniden seçilmesi popülizmin geçici bir mesele olmadığını göstermiştir.

Bu bağlamda popülizm akademik literatürde oldukça popüler bir konudur. Özellikle son yıllarda, bu konuda yapılan çalışmalar ciddi oranda artmıştır. Cas Mudde'nin belirttiği gibi "populist zeitgeist" yaşanmaktadır (Mudde, 2004). Bununla birlikte nostalji kavramının da popülerlik kazandığı ve hayatın her alanına nüfuz ettiği

söylenbilir. Nostaljinin sosyal ve ekonomik boyutları olduğu gibi siyasal alana da yansımaları vardır. Özellikle sağ popülist partilerin nostaljiyi siyasi kampanyalarında ve siyasal iletişim stratejilerinde araçsal olarak kullandıkları görülmektedir. Örneğin oldukça popüler olan Trump'ın 2016 seçimlerinde kullandığı 'Amerika'yı Yeniden Büyük Yap' (Make America Great Again), Almanya'da AfD'nin 'Almanya Ama Normal' (Germany, But Normal), Fransa'da 'Fransa'da 'Düzeni Yeniden Tahsis Et' ve Birleşik Krallık'ta 'Kontrolü Yeniden Eline Al,' (Take Back Control) sloganları sağ popülizmin nostaljik söylem ile olan ilişkisini ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

Bu tez, sağ popülizm ve nostalji söyleminin ilişkisini AfD bağlamında analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. AfD'nin örnek olarak seçilmesinin temel sebebi Almanya'nın Nazi geçmişi ve diğer radikal sağ partilerle olan geçmişi ve Doğu Almanya tecrübesi AfD'yi diğer sağ popülist partilerden daha ilginç kılmakta ve nostalji söylemi araştırması bağlamında önemli hale getirmektedir. Ayrıca, AfD'nin Alman siyasetinde İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra CDU'nun siyasi spektrumda sağ tarafından kalan en başarılı parti olması ve 1990'dan sonra seçim barajını aşır Bundestag'a girmeyi başarmış ilk parti olması yine AfD'yi araştırmaya değer yapmaktadır. Son olarak AfD, Mudde'nin radikal sağ popülist partilerin temel özellikleri olarak tanımladığı yerlici, otoriter ve popülist özelliklerine çok iyi bir örnek oluşturmaktadır (Mudde, 2007). Bu tez şu soruları incelemektedir: AfD'nin popülerliğinin artmasında nostaljik söylemin rolü nedir ve AfD bu nostaljik söylemi nasıl sömürmektedir? Bu sorulara cevap vermek için nitel araştırma yöntemleri kullanılmış olup AfD'nin parti programları, parti yetkilerinin medya demeçleri, sosyal medya paylaşımları ve diğer partiyi temsil eden dokümanlar analiz edilmiştir. Birincil kaynaklara ek olarak tezin argümanlarını desteklemek ve geniş bir literatür taraması sunmak için ikincil kaynaklar sistematik ve eleştirel bir şekilde analiz edilmiştir. 2019 Doğu Almanya Eyalet seçimleri ve 2021 Federal seçimlerine odaklanılmıştır. Bu seçimlere odaklanılmasının temel sebebi AfD'nin yerel ve ulusal düzeyde farklı nostaljik söylemlerini oraya çıkarmak ve karşılaştırmalı olarak analiz etmektir.

Popülizm kavramı, oldukça popüler olmasına rağmen kavramın kompleks yapıda olmasından ve bağlama göre değişik özellikler taşımasından dolayı olarak bilimsel olarak tanımlanması zor bir kavramdır. Akademik literatürde popülizmi tanımlamaya

çalışan baskın üç yaklaşım bulunmaktadır. Bunlar; popülizmi ideoloji (1), söylem (2), ve siyasi stil (3) olarak tanımlayan yaklaşımlardır (Mudde, 2017; Laclau, 2005; Moffitt, 2016).

Popülizm çalışmalarında en çok atıf yapılan çalışma Cas Mudde'nin popülizmi zayıf merkezli bir ideoloji olarak tanımlayan teorisidir. Mudde'ye göre popülizm toplumu homojen halk ve yozlaşmış elit olarak ayıran ve siyasetin mutlak halk iradesinin yansımaları olması gerektiğini savunan bir ideolojidir (Mudde, 2004, s. 543).

İkinci yaklaşım, ağırlıklı Ernesto Laclau ve Chantal Mouffe ve Essex Okulu tarafından geliştirilen, popülizmi bir söylem olarak analiz eden yaklaşımdır. Bu yaklaşıma göre popülizm siyasi hegemonya kurmak için söylemsel düzeyde 'biz' ve 'onlar' ayrımına dayanan, toplumu iki uzlaşmaz kamp olarak gösteren ve halkı mobilize etmeye çalışan bir söylemdir (Mouffe, 2018, s. 3).

Üçüncü yaklaşım ise, Benjamin Moffitt tarafından geliştirilen ve popülizmi bir siyasi stil veya bir siyasal iletişim stratejisi olarak tanımlayan yaklaşımdır. Moffitt'e göre popülizmin en ayırt edici özelliği performatif boyutudur (Moffitt, 2016). Moffitt popülist stilin üç temel özelliği olduğunu savunur. Bunlar: söylemde elit ve halk ayrımı, saygısızlık (bad manners) ve yakın bir çöküş, kriz ve tehdit vurgusudur (Moffitt ve Tormey, 2014, s. 390-391).

Bu üç yaklaşımdan hiçbiri popülizm kavramını tam anlamıyla açıklamaya yetmemektedir. Bunun temel sebebi popülizmin coğrafyaya, tarihsel bağlama ve siyasi konjonktüre göre şekillenmesidir. Fakat bu yaklaşımların eklektik bir şekilde kullanılması popülizmi anlamak açısından daha verimli olacaktır. Bu yaklaşımların ortak özelliklerini kullanarak Mansbridge ve Macedo popülizmin tanımlamaya çalışmıştır. Mansbridge ve Macedo'ya göre popülizmin en temel tanımı; 'ahlaki açıdan üstün halk, elitlere karşı mücadele ediyor' söylemidir (Mansbridge ve Macedo, 2019, s. 61).

Popülizmi tanımlamaya çalışmak kadar önemli bir diğer konu ise popülizmin neden yükselişte olduğunu anlamaktır. Bu bağlamda öncelikle sağ popülizmin talep tarafını anlamak gerekir. Sağ popülizmin yükselmesinin sebepleri literatürde üç başlıkta

incelenmektedir. Bunlar sosyo-ekonomik, kültürel ve siyasi memnuniyetsizliklerdir. Sosyo-ekonomik memnuniyetsizlikler kısaca neoliberal küreselleşmenin ortaya çıkardığı problemlerin sağ popülizmi doğurduğunu savunur (Betz, 1994). Refah devletinin gerilemesi ve gelir eşitsizliğinin artmasının toplumun bazı kesimlerinin sağ popülizme yönelmesinde etkili olduğu ortadadır. Kültürel sebepler ise küreselleşmeye bağlı olarak artan göç, farklı kültürlerle karşılaşma, yükselen feminizm ve LGBT görünürlüğünün bir karşı reaksiyon olarak sağ popülizmi beslediği iddia edilmektedir (Berman, 2021, s. 75). Siyasi memnuniyetsizlik ise liberal demokratik sistem ve liberal değerlere karşı duyulan memnuniyetsizlik olarak tanımlanabilir. Ana akım siyasi partilerin neoliberalizm ekseninden çıkmaması dolayısıyla özellikle toplumun alt gelir grubunun ana akım siyasetten kopmaya başladığı gözlemlenmektedir (Mouffe, 2005). Bu güvensizlik, seçimlerde protesto oy kullanımlarına ve alternatif, radikal partilere yönelimi hızlandırmaktadır (Taggart, 2002). Sağ popülist partilerin toplumun bu memnuniyetsizlikleri üzerinden yükseldiği söylenebilir.

Sağ popülizmin talep tarafını incelerken bu kitlenin kim olduğunu tanımak doğru bir analiz yapmak için önemlidir. Sağ popülist partilere oy veren insanlar ülkeden ülkeye değişkenlik göstermesinin yanında aynı ülkede de farklılıklar göstermektedir. En genel geçer haliyle sağ popülist seçmenleri tanımaya yönelik araştırmalar birbirinden farklı olsa da Kaltwasser ve Hauwaert'in yaptığı araştırma en kapsamlısı olarak gösterilebilir. Sağ popülist seçmen üzerine yapılan araştırmalara göre, sağ popülist partilere oy veren insanlar erkek, yaşlı, düşük eğitimli, şehir merkezinde yaşamayan ve işsiz olmaya eğilimlidir (Kaltwasser ve Hauwaert, 2020, s. 10).

Popülizm kavramı incelendikten sonra nostalji, kolektif nostalji ve toplumsal pesimizm kavramları analiz edilmiştir. Nostalji kavramı ilk olarak Johannes Hofer tarafından kullanılmıştır. Antik Yunan diline ait olan 'Nostos' (eve dönüş) ve 'algia' (acı verici durum) kelimelerinin birleşmesinden oluşan nostalji kavramı 1688 yılında ilk kez kullanılmıştır (Natali, 2004, s. 10). Fakat daha sonra kavramın anlamı değişmiş ve günümüzde geçmişte var olup artık olmayan veya hiç var olmamış bir şeye duyulan özlem olarak tanımlanmaktadır (Boym, 2007, s. 7). Nostalji kişisel bir duygu olmakla birlikte aslında kolektif olarak da tecrübe edilebilen bir duygudur. Bir grup, aile ve hatta bir toplum ve millet tarafından hissedilen nostaljiye kolektif nostalji denmektedir

(Davis, 1979; Sedikides ve Wildschut, 2019, s. 149). Nostalji kişisel olarak devamlılık hissini sağlaması ve kendi varoluşunu daha anlamlı hale getirmesi açısından önemli olmaktadır. Kolektif düzeyde yaşanan nostalji ise ait olunan gruba bağlılığı artırmakta ve daha sıkı bağlar kurulmasını sağlamaktadır (Sedikides ve Wildschut, 2019, s. 149). Ayrıca, nostaljinin sadece güzel, eski günlere özlem duymak olarak hissedildiği duruma reflektif nostalji denmekte fakat geçmiş güzel günleri geri getirmeye yönelik hissedilen nostaljiye restoratif nostalji denmektedir (Boym, 2001). Toplumsal karamsarlık kavramı ise tarihsel ilerleyişi ve toplumu genel olarak bir gerileme içerisinde görmek ve geleceğin her zaman beraberinde daha kötü şeyler getireceğini hissetmektir (Steenvoorden ve Hartevelde, 2017, s. 33). Bütün bu kavramlar günümüzde sağ popülist seçmenlerin yaşadığı veya yaşamaya daha eğilimli olduğu duygulardır.

Popülizm ve nostalji birbiri ile ilişkili kavramlardır. Özellikle sağ popülist partiler nostaljik söylemi sıklıkla kullanmaktadırlar. Daha önce belirtildiği gibi nostalji sağ popülist sloganlarda oldukça sade bir şekilde kendini göstermektedir. Bu çalışmada sağ popülist partilerin nostaljiyi araçsal olarak siyasal iletişim stratejilerinde kullandıklarını hatta nostaljiyi bir tür sosyal kimlik oluşturma aracı ve siyasi mobilizasyon için kullandıkları savunulmaktadır. Paul Taggart'ın 'heartland' kavramı sağ popülistlerin nostaljiyi nasıl kullandıklarını anlamak açısından oldukça önemli bir kavramdır. 'Heartland' retrospektif olarak geçmişten ilham alan kurgulanmış bir ideal dünyayı ifade etmektedir (Taggart, 2004, s. 274). Burada ilham alınan geçmiş, gerçekte var olmamış, abartılı ve idealize edilmiş bir geçmiştir. Betz ve Johnson sağ popülizmi nostaljiden beslenen gerici bir ideoloji olarak tanımlamıştır (Betz ve Johnson, 2004, s. 372). Zygmunt Bauman'ın 'retrotopya' (retrotopia) kavramı Taggart'ın heartland kavramıyla oldukça benzer bir şekilde günümüz ideolojilerinin ve siyasi argümanlarının daha iyi bir gelecek kurmaktansa geçmişi idealize edip yeniden inşa etmeye yönelik olduğunu belirtir (Bauman, 2017). Retrotopya ve heartland kavramları sağ popülist siyasetin nostaljik söylem ile olan ilişkisini anlamak için oldukça kullanışlı kavramlardır.

Daha önce bu tezde belirtildiği gibi nostalji ve popülizm yükselişte olan ve birbiriyle ilişkili iki kavramdır. Bu iki kavramın neden aynı zamanda ve birbirini besleyerek

güçlendiğini anlamak için bazı kavramları ve tarihsel olayları incelemek gerekmektedir. İlk olarak sağ popülist partileri tanımlamak gerekmektedir. Sağ popülist partiler, eski radikal sağ partilerden oldukça farklıdır. ‘Eski’ radikal sağ partiler aşırı milliyetçilikle ve demokratik değerlere bağlı olmamakla tanımlanırken yeni sağ popülist partiler etnik ve kültürel milliyetçilikle, yabancı düşmanlığıyla ve sosyo-kültürel otoriterlikle bağdaştırılmaktadır (Caini ve Kröll, 2017). Mudde’ye göre sağ popülist partilerin üç temel özelliği otoriterlik, yerlilik ve popülizmdir (Mudde, 2007, p. 22). Taggart ise sağ popülist partilerin odaklandığı dört temel konu olduğunu iddia eder. Bunlar, Avrupa-şüpheciliği, bölgecilik, göçmen düşmanlığı ve yozlaşmış elit söylemidir (Taggart, 2017). Mudde’nin ve Taggart’ın tanımlarının birleşimi bize sağ popülist partilerin tanımını vermektedir. Ayrıca, sağ popülist partiler yeni bir parti ailesi olarak tanımlansa dahi çoğu söylemleri ve politikaları aslında eski radikal sağ politikaların yeniden ‘markalaştırılmış’ yani günümüze uyarlanmış ve liberal demokratik sisteme uyarlanmış hali olduğu söylenebilir.

Popülizmin ve nostaljinin yükselmesini anlamak adına ilk olarak neoliberalizmin incelenmesi gerekmektedir. Neoliberalizm sadece devletin sahip olduğu işletmelerin özelleştirilmesi, serbest piyasaya devlet müdahalesinin kaldırılması ve vergilerin düşürülmesi olarak algılanmamalıdır. Neoliberalizm bunların yanında sosyal, kültürel ve siyasi alana yansıyan saf bireysellik, piyasa odaklı düşünmek ve devlet idaresinin şirketleştirilmesini de getirmektedir (Brown, 2019; Harvey, 2005). Bu neoliberal dönüşüm sonucunda ana akım siyasi partiler neoliberal değerlerde birleşmiş ve Mouffe’un ifadesiyle siyasi alanın içi boşaltılmıştır (Mouffe, 2005). Bu durum toplumun siyasete olan güvenini sarsmıştır ve alternatif siyasi partilere yönelmesine sebep olmuştur.

Küreselleşme, sağ popülist partilerin ana odak noktalarından birisidir. Özellikle kültürel etkileri açısından sağ popülist partiler küreselleşmenin karşısında yer almaktadır. Küresel ticaretin ve yatırımların artması beraberinde çeşitli kültürlerin birbiri ile olan etkileşimini artırmış ve nüfus hareketliliklerini hızlandırmıştır (Flew, 2020, s. 21). Buna tepki olarak sağ popülist partilerin yükseldiği söylenebilir. Fakat sağ popülist partiler küreselleşmeye tam anlamıyla karşı olmamakla birlikte küreselleşmenin kültürel etkilerini azaltmak istemektedirler.

Sosyal demokrasinin gerilemesi küreselleşme ve neoliberalizmin etkileriyle beraber hızlanmış ve özellikle 2000’li yıllarda kendisini göstermiştir. Sosyal demokratik partilerin gerilemesi ve radikal sağ partilerin yükselmesi sosyal bilimler literatürü için yeni bir olay değildir. Weimar Cumhuriyeti’nin trajik yıkılışı SPD’nin gerilemesi ve Nazilerin yükselmesiyle açıklanabilir. Bu bağlamda sosyal demokratik değerlerin gerilemesi mutlaka sağ popülizmin yükselmesiyle analiz edilmelidir. Küreselleşme ve neoliberalizm Batı ülkelerinde endüstrinin gerilemesine ve hizmet sektörünün yükselmesine sebep olmuştur. Bu bağlamda sosyal demokratik partilerin oy tabanı olan işçi sınıfı değişime uğramış ve geleneksel yapısı bozulmuştur. Bu değişim sosyal demokrat partilerin oy tabanında kayıplara yol açmış ve bu partilerin yeni stratejilere yönelmesine sebep olmuştur. Sosyal demokratik partilerin refah devletinden ve sosyal politikalarından vazgeçmesi, ekonomik olarak alt-gelir grubu insanlarda tepkilere neden olmuştur (Berman ve Snegovaya, 2019, s. 6). Kısaca sosyal demokratik değerlerin gerilemesi ve sağ popülizmin yükselmesi ilişkili süreçlerdir.

Hakikat-sonrası, 2016 yılında Oxford Sözlüğü tarafından yılın sözcüğü seçilmiştir. Hakikat-sonrası kısaca şu anlama gelir; hislerin gerçeklerden daha önemli olduğu durum. Donald Trump’ın danışmanı Kellyanne Conway Trump’ın açık bir şekilde bazı durumlarda yalan söylemesi durumu için ‘alternatif gerçekler’ ifadesini kullanmıştır (McIntyre, 2018, s. 6). Hakikat-sonrası durum sağ popülist partilerin nostaljik söylemlerinin aslında temelini oluşturmaktadır. Bunun en temel sebebi bu partilerin gerçekle ilişkisi düşük olan hislere dayalı bir geçmişe yönelik nostaljiyi kullanmalarıdır.

Avrupa Birliği’nin güncel durumu neredeyse bütün sağ popülist partilerin hedefi haline gelmiştir. Brexit Referandumu ile başlamış gibi görünen sağ popülist partilerin Avrupa entegrasyonuna yönelik şüpheleri ve karşıtlıkları aslında 1992 yılında imzalanan Maastricht Anlaşması’na dayanmaktadır. Çoğu sağ popülist parti Avrupa Birliği’nden ayrılmak istemese de mevcut AB’nin ulaşmaya çalıştığı hedeflerden hoşnut olmadıkları ortadadır. AB, özellikle şeffaf olmayan elitist yapısı nedeniyle eleştirilmektedir (Drago, 2018). AfD 2013 yılında kurulduğu zaman tamamen Avro Bölgesinin dağıtılması ve AB’nin tekrar Maastricht Anlaşması öncesi yapısına dönmesine odaklanan bir partiydi.

Arap Baharı ve Orta Doğu bölgesinde yaşanan siyasi ve ekonomik krizler geneli Müslüman kökenli insanların son on yılda Avrupa kıtasına göç etmesine sebep olmuştur. Geçtiğimiz on yılda Avrupa kıtası daha önce tecrübe etmediği şekilde yoğun bir göç dalgası ile karşı karşıya kalmıştır. 2010'dan 2018 yılına kadar göç neredeyse iki kat artmıştır (Bischi vd., 2022, s. 350). Kontrolsüz gelen göç dalgaları ve yetersiz sosyal entegrasyon politikaları sonucunda milliyetçi ve yerlici reflekslerin görülmesi kaçınılmaz olmuştur. Göçmen karşıtlığı ve ırkçılık Avrupa ülkelerinde zaten bulunan bir problemdir fakat bu son dönemde yaşanan göçmen karşıtlığı sağ popülist partilerin temel destek noktası haline gelmiştir.

Bu tezde popülizm ve nostalji kavramları detaylı şekilde incelendikten sonra bu kavramların neden günümüz dünyası için belirleyici olduğu ve neden yükseldiği analiz edilmiştir. Vaka analizi olarak Almanya için Alternatif (AfD) popülizm ve nostalji ilişkisini ortaya çıkarmak için analiz edilecektir. Öncelikle Almanya'da sağ radikalizm her zaman bir tehlike olarak Nazizim tecrübesinden sonra da varlığını sürdürmüştür. Bu partilerin kısa bir tarihi tezde anlatılmıştır. İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra Federal Almanya Cumhuriyeti tamamen sağ veya sol kanat partilerden gelebilecek yeni bir otoriter veya totaliter tehlikeyi önlemek için güçlü bir anayasa ve liberal kurumsal bir yapılanma inşa etmiştir (Mudde, 2000, s. 25; McGowan, 2002). McGowan'a göre Batı Almanya'nın 2000'lere kadar tecrübe ettiği üç sağ radikalizm dönemi olmuştur (McGowan, 2002). Bunlardan ilki İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın hemen sonrasında kurulan SRP ile başlar. SRP doğrudan NSDAP'ın devamı olarak kendini göstermiş ve bütün siyasetini onun üzerine kurmuştur. 1949'da kurulan parti 1952'de kapatılmıştır. SRP'nin üyelerinin büyük çoğunluğu parti kapatıldıktan sonra DRP'ye katılmıştır. DRP Alman siyasetinde kendisine bir yer bulamayan, seçimlerde etkisiz ve siyasi pozisyon olarak kararsız yapıda bir partidir. 1964'de DRP ve diğer radikal sağ oluşumlar NPD ile birleşmiştir ve bununla birlikte McGowan'a göre ikinci radikal sağ dönemi başlamıştır (McGowan, 2002, s. 152-160). NPD göçmen karşıtlığı üzerine bir siyaset yapmıştır. Özellikle yabancı göçmenleri ekonomik ve kültürel olarak tehdit unsuru olarak göstermeye çabalamıştır ve DRP'ye göre göreceli olarak daha başarılı olmuştur. Seçim barajını aşamamış olsa da 1969 seçimlerinde yüzde 4.3 oy alarak Almanya'nın dördüncü büyük partisi olmuştur (Mudde, 2007). NPD'nin akademik

olarak önemi ise NSDAP'ın bir kopyası olmayan ilk aşırı sağ parti olarak değerlendirilmesidir. Daha sonra 1970'lerden itibaren kurulan SPD hükümeti ve daha sonrasında CDU'nun daha milliyetçi bir zemine kayması sonucunda NPD etkisiz hale gelmiştir (McGowan, 2002, s. 156-158). 1983 yılında REP'in kurulmasıyla üçüncü dönem başlar. REP eski CSU ve CDU üyeleri tarafından kurulmuştur. Fransa'da Ulusal Cephe partisinin başarısı ve siyasi yöntemleri taklit edilerek kurulan parti Alman siyasetine damgasını vurmuştur. Göçmen karşıtı ve milliyetçi bir söyleme sahip olan REP aslında Alman siyasetinin problemlerine işaret etmesi açısından önemlidir. Maastricht Anlaşması'ndan sonra Avrupa şüpheciliği söylemi de baskın hale gelmeye başlamıştır. Seçim barajını geçmeyi başaramamış olsa da REP Alman siyasetinde etkili olmuş ve AfD için elverişli bir miras bırakmıştır. Batı ve Doğu Almanya'nın birleşmesi sonucunda siyasette kendisine yer bulmakta zorlanmış ve zaman içerisinde etkisizleşmiştir.

Alman siyasetinde radikal sağın dördüncü dönemi AfD'nin kurulmasıyla başladığı iddia edilebilir. AfD 2013 yılında eski CDU, CSU ve FDP üyeleri tarafından kurulmuştur. Kuruluşunda Avro bölgesine karşıtlığı temel olarak bir 'tek mesele odaklı' parti gibi görülmüştür. Partinin ismi dönemin Almanya Şansölyesi Angela Merkel'in Avro Bölgesi krizine yönelik politikasına verdiği 'alternatifsizlik' cevabından gelmektedir (Kim, 2018). 2013 Federal seçimlerinden çok kısa bir süre önce kurulmuş olmasına rağmen yüzde 4.7 oy alarak toplumun Merkel'in politikalarına olan tepkisini göstermiştir. AfD'nin seçim başarıları 2014 Avrupa Parlamentosu seçimlerinde devam etmiştir. Bu seçimlerde oyların 7.1'ini alarak beşinci parti olmuştur. AfD'nin en büyük seçim başarısı ise 2017 Federal seçimleridir. Seçimlerde olağanüstü bir başarı elde ederek Bundestag'da en büyük üçüncü parti olmuştur (Arzheimer ve Berning, 2019, s. 1). Bu başarı sadece Almanya'yı değil bütün Avrupa'yı şok etmiştir. AfD'nin bu başarısını 2015 yılında yaşadığı bir iç çekişme sonucunda daha yabancı karşıtlığı ve milliyetçi politikalara yönelmesine borçludur. Aynı zamanda 2015 mülteci krizinin yaşanması ve Almanya'nın tarihinde yaşadığı en büyük göç dalgasına maruz kalması sonucunda AfD'nin söylemi toplumda karşılık bulmuştur (Marx ve Naumann, 2018, s. 112; Berman, 2021). 2021 Federal

seimlerinde biraz oy kaybetmiř olsa da yeniden Bundestag'a girmeyi bařarmıř ve Alman siyasetinde kalıcı olduđunu gstermiřtir.

AfD'nin nostaljik sylemini analiz etmek iin ncelikle partinin ideolojik ynn incelemek gerekmektedir. Bunun sebebi AfD nostaljik sylemini bu ideolojik ynn meřrulařtırmak iin arasal olarak kullanmaktadır. İlk olarak AfD'nin klasik anlamda bir poplist sylem kullandıđını belirtmek gerekir. AfD'nin btn siyasi kampanyaları 'biz' ve 'onlar' ayırımına dayanır (Breeze, 2019, s. 92). Alman siyasetindeki diđer partileri neredeyse birleřmiř řekilde gsterir ve kendisini halkın tek sesi olarak tanıtır (Berbuir vd., 2015). AfD'nin yerliliciđi bir diđer nemli ideolojik zelliđidir. Gmen karřıtı sylemleri ařır milliyetilik yerine yerlilik olarak vcut bulmaktadır. Alman dilini ve kltrn en nemli kimlik olarak belirten AfD gmenlerin bunu tehlikeye attıđını savunmaktadır (AfD, 2016, s. 5). AfD zellikle kuruluş yıllarında sıkı bir ordoliberal ekonomi politikası nermektedir (Havertz, 2019). Partinin kurucuları arasında ordoliberal olmalarıyla nl isimler bulunmaktadır. Ayrıca partinin 2017 Manifestosunda ordoliberalizmin dođduđu Freiburg Okulunun kurucularına referanslar verilmektedir (Havertz, 2019). Parti kendini sosyal market ekonomisinin savunucusu olarak gstermektedir (AfD, 2016, s. 67). Daha nce belirtildiđi gibi AfD yumuřak Avrupa řpheciliđi ile ne ıkmaktadır (Arzheimer, 2015). Alman siyasetinde AfD'den nce AB'ye bu denli muhalif bir parti bulunmamaktadır. AfD AB'yi anti-demokratik, řeffaf olmayan ve ulusal egemenliđe tehdit olarak gstermektedir (Popivanov, 2022, s. 7-8). Son olarak AfD'nin İřlamofobik sylemi ideolojisinin temelini oluřturmaktadır. Ayhan Kaya'ya gre İřlamofobi Avrupa'da kimlik yaratmak iin arasal olarak kullanılan bir tr ideoloji haline gelmiřtir ve sađ poplist partilerin ođunlukla sahiplendiđi İřlamofobi Mslman kkenli mltecileri 'gnah keisi' ilan etmek iin kullanılmaktadır (Kaya, 2021). AfD birok posterinde ve siyasetilerinin konuřmalarında İřlam'a ve Mslmanlara ynelik sulamalara yer vermektedir. İřlam'ın Almanya'ya ait olmadıđını parti programında dahi belirten AfD ayrıca İřlam'ın sadece bir din deđil, bir ideoloji olduđunu ne srmektedir (Carrel, 2016).

Tezin son kısmı AfD'nin hem federal hem de blgesel dzeyde kullandıđı nostalji sylemini analiz etmektedir. Boym'un nostalji tanımını takip ederek AfD'nin federal

düzyeyde nostaljik söyleminin restoratif nostaljiye dayandıđı söylenebilir. AfD seçimler için ‘Almanya Ama Normal’ sloganını kullanmıřtır. Slogan son derece sade görünse bile aslında diđer sađ popülist sloganlar gibi çok katmanlıdır. Basit bir Covid-19 karantinaları ve kısıtlamalarına tepki gibi görünmekte olan slogan aslında Almanya’nın ‘normal’ olduđu zamanlara dönüş çağrısı olarak deđerlendirilmelidir. Bu bağlamda slogan restoratif nostaljik öğeler içermektedir. AfD’yi temsil eden siyasetçiler bu nostaljik sloganı tam anlamıyla geçmişteki normale dönüş olarak aktarmaktadırlar. Sloganın tanıtıldıđı YouTube videosunda normalin artık özlenen ve geri istenen bir şey olarak tanıtılmaktadır (AfD TV, 2021a). AfD’nin 2021 seçim programını tanıtan YouTube videosunda ise nostaljik söylemin yanında Taggart’ın heartland kavramı ile açıklanabilecek bir hiç var olmamış bir geçmişten ilham alan ve yeniden inşa etmek istenilen bir perspektif sunmaktadır (AfD TV, 2021b).

Eski Dođu Almanya eyaletleri seçimlerinde ise AfD, *ostalgie* olarak adlandırılan Dođu Almanya nostaljisi olarak tanımlanabilecek ve eski Dođu Almanya vatandaşları tarafından kolektif olarak tecrübe edilen duyguya odaklanmıřtır. Bu eyaletlerde Wende_2.0 sloganıyla seçim çalışmaları yapan AfD 1989 yılında Berlin Duvarı’nın yıkılması ve iki Almanya’nın birleşmesiyle sonuçlanmış Barışçıl Devrim’e referans vermeyi hedeflemiřtir. AfD’nin bu eyaletlerdeki neredeyse bütün seçim çalışmaları negatif nostaljiye dayanmaktadır. Özellikle AfD Thuringia eyaletinin lideri konumunda olan Björn Höcke’nin konuşmaları ve sosyal medya paylaşımları insanları yeni bir sol-kanat totalitarizmine karşı uyaran ve AfD’ye oy vermenin küçük çaplı bir ‘barışçıl devrim’ olacağını iddia eden bir yapıdadır (Höcke, 2019; Weisskircher, 2022; Wulf ve Menke, 2021). “Dođu Ayađa Kalkıyor!” ve “Dönüşümü Tamamla!” sloganları yine bu duruma örnek olarak verilebilir (Weisskircher, 2022).

Sonuç olarak bu tez AfD örneğinde nostalji söylemi ve sađ popülizm ilişkisini analiz etmiřtir. AfD’nin federal ve eyalet ölçeğinde farklı temelde nostaljik söylem kullandıđı ve bunu radikal sađ programını meşrulařtırmak için araçsal olarak kullandıđı iddia edilmiřtir. Ayrıca, bu tezde eski Dođu Almanya eyaletleri özelinde AfD’nin nostalji söylemini sosyal kimlik inřası ve siyasi mobilizasyon amacıyla yine araçsal olarak kullandıđı iddia edilmiřtir.

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