

## THE CONCEPT OF ‘US AND THEM’: COMMUNITARIANISM AND THE RISE OF POPULIST POLITICS

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### **Abstract**

This article mainly focuses on the existence and/or construction of “the others” as one of the main pillars of populist politics which have risen in various countries during recent years. Populist rhetoric gains its political power over the social groups or individuals who are identified as “the others” and who differ from the majority by their identities, beliefs, traditions etc. Populist discourse is also supported by the notion of communitarianism. In this sense, this article basically examines the social dynamics which reinforcing the populist discourse. Some structural factors, such as international migration and increasing global migration, global inequality created by neo-liberal policies and structural adjustment programs, and the changing nature of labor market, constitute the main topics to be discussed in this context.

Key Words: communitarianism; populism; otherness

*O conceito de “nós e eles”: comunitarismo e aumento das políticas populistas*

### **Resumo**

Este artigo aborda principalmente a existência e/ou construção de “os outros” como um dos principais pilares da política populista que surgiram em vários países nos últimos anos. A retórica populista ganhou seu poder político sobre os grupos sociais ou indivíduos identificados como “os outros” e que diferem da maioria por suas identidades, crenças e tradições. O discurso populista também é apoiado pela noção de comunitarismo. Nesse sentido, examinamos basicamente a dinâmica social que reforça o discurso populista. Alguns fatores estruturais, como a migração internacional e o aumento da migração global, a desigualdade global criada pelas políticas neoliberais e pelos programas de ajuste estrutural e a natureza mutável do mercado de trabalho, constituem os principais tópicos a serem discutidos nesse contexto.

Palavras-chave: comunitarismo; populismo; alteridade.

*Le concept «nous et eux»: communautarisme et politiques populistes accrues*

**Resumé**

Cet article traite principalement de l'existence et / ou de la construction des «autres» comme l'un des principaux piliers de la politique populiste qui a émergé dans plusieurs pays ces dernières années. La rhétorique populiste a gagné son pouvoir politique sur les groupes sociaux ou les individus identifiés comme «les autres» et qui diffèrent de la majorité en termes d'identité, de croyance et de tradition. Le discours populiste est également soutenu par la notion de communautarisme. En ce sens, nous examinons essentiellement les dynamiques sociales qui renforcent le discours populiste. Certains facteurs structurels, tels que les migrations internationales et l'augmentation des migrations mondiales, l'inégalité mondiale créée par les politiques néolibérales et les programmes d'ajustement structurel et la nature changeante du marché du travail, sont les principaux sujets à débattre dans ce contexte.

Mots-clés : le communautarisme; le populisme; altérité

*El concepto "nosotros y ellos": comunitarismo y crecientes políticas populistas*

**Resumen**

Este artículo aborda principalmente la existencia y/o construcción de "los otros" como uno de los principales pilares de la política populista que han surgido en varios países en los últimos años. La retórica populista ganó su poder político sobre grupos sociales o individuos identificados como "los otros" y que difieren de la mayoría en términos de sus identidades, creencias y tradiciones. El discurso populista también se apoya en la noción de comunitarismo. En este sentido, básicamente examinamos la dinámica social que refuerza el discurso populista. Algunos factores estructurales, como la migración internacional y el aumento de la migración global, la desigualdad global creada por las políticas neoliberales y los programas de ajuste estructural y la naturaleza cambiante del mercado laboral, son los principales temas a tratar en este contexto.

Palabras clave: comunitarismo; populismo; alteridad

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**INTRODUCTION**

One can state that in 2015 the mass flows of refugees whom are mostly Syrians and sailed from Turkey to Greece, then marched through Balkans towards the Western Europe, also migrants from Africa sailed toward shores of Italy and Spain constitute a turning point for irregular migration history. The arrival of one million people to Europe in 2015 has drawn the attention of the world's public attention to the issue of displaced people, migrants and refugees. The irregular migration phenomenon, which is generally considered as an issue to be discussed under the titles of

"immigrant problem" and "refugee crisis" has also inflamed debates on other issues such as the rise of populist politics, erection of far-right parties, the rise of suspicious about multiculturalism and integration problems, xenophobia, the spread of Islamophobia and radicalization and strengthening concern about border security.

It can be stated that some of the main topics studied in the academic level are based on the division of "us and them." Thanks to globalization, so the increase of people's mobilization, and at the same time, the increase of xenophobia rapidly in some countries in which host immigrants in general bring about such a question to mind in terms of Tönnies (2002) sociology; "is the communitarianist thinking arisen again in modern societies?" This question can also be directed as such; "or maybe modern societies actually have never moved away from such communitarian mentality?" It is possible to enrich this argument with different questions. However, it can be easily stated that there is an oblivious problem which needs to be examined, and the problem is -as Ulrich Beck (2006) pointed out; the world, which is already cosmopolitan by globalization and international migration, has not yet developed a cosmopolitan vision. According to Beck the national outlook opposes a structural transformation in favor of cosmopolitan vision. For this outlook nation-state creates and controls the 'container' of society, and thereby at the same time prescribes the limits of 'sociology'. However for Beck cosmopolitanism is a vital theme of European civilization and European consciousness and beyond that of global experience (Beck, 2006:2). A cosmopolite vision requires a man to see himself/herself as a part of the nature and an ordinary member of humanity family. In order to reach such a stage as "World's citizen" which an Anatolian philosopher Diogenes (Kleingeld e Brown, 2019) had already described himself two thousand years ago in that way, primarily urge us to deal with the distinction between "us" and "them".

## **THE OTHERNESS**

"The otherness" is assigned with multiple terms, such as 'them', 'foreigners', 'outsiders', and refers to an identity that is basically positioned against the 'us'. Therefore, in order to understand this concept well; first of all, it is necessary to look at the basis of the notion of 'us'. Bauman (2017) points out that the division of people as "us" and "them" (side by side and uncompromising) is an inseparable feature of man's being in the world throughout the history. In this sense, the most primitive form of the notion 'us' can be traced back to prehistoric times in which the

family/household institution emerged. In other words, one can assert that a parent and this parent's children and grandchildren are the oldest form of the notion of 'us'. The kinship institution developing along with the growing population lead to define larger groups as 'us' based on blood ties such as clans, tribes, tribes, and so on. Beyond development in civilization, affiliation has surpassed blood ties and has created a bigger sense of 'us', where huge populations connected with other social bonds and gathered around various factors such as common land, faith, leader etc.

Probably the most critical phase of this notion, as a turning point, was the development of nationalism in the 17th century and as one of its consequences the emergence of nation-states. By the nation-state conception, the notion of 'us' has gained its peak level for including and defining a huge number of masses. Nation-states, unlike the empires, redefined the term of citizenship and shaped its citizens according to national interests and donated them with both rights and duties; discipline them either by force or by means of persuasion while building national identity and affiliation of individuals with this new conception. The borders which are one of the trademarks of the nation states have become the main elements of solidifying the affiliation with the land. The nations, which are somehow can be described as imagined communities (Anderson, 2006), thus have ensured to be the most inclusive and common notion of 'us' of the modern era.

Ultimately, we should underline that each of description of 'us' also creates the notion of 'them' simultaneously. Therefore, while describing the history of 'us', we also describe the history of 'them'. In the twentieth century, when nation states arose as dominant political forms for nations, the world has then turned into a place where the distinction between 'us' and 'them' became clearer and contained huge masses under national identities. In the meantime, borders of countries which are drawn without considering socio-cultural aspects of societies living there, separated communities who share common identities, and emplaced a new sense of distinction as 'us' and 'them' by giving those communities new national identities. Moreover, and more importantly, there have been communities which differ from the majority and have distinctive ethnical, sectarian or other identities in every nation-state. Those social groups, some of which were known as minority groups and some of them were not recognized even as minorities described and treated as 'the others' within their countries.

*The otherness* within a nation-state has always been a difficult identity for communities to carry. For some countries, ethnic groups have been identified as the ones that need to be assimilated, and sometimes in other countries they have been described as not capable of being assimilated, and sometimes treated as "internal enemies". In some of the unfortunate events in

which national delusions were experienced, these communities were generally designated as scapegoats.

Frankfurt School scholars, in their research on average people who are intolerant of people whom carry identities unlike the majority's national identity and groups whom identified as "the others", have described such individuals as authoritarian personalities (Jay, 2006). Zygmunt Bauman (1999) expresses that such people are particularly prone to perceive the world according to sharp and irreconcilable opposites, and deeply bear a grudge against anyone who is or appears different. This kind of orientation manifests itself in racist attitudes and actions - or, more generally, in xenophobia, which means hostility to anyone who is "foreigner". In the meantime, people with high prejudices are fond of ambiguity and passionate for uniformity. They cannot tolerate any deviations from the strict code of conduct, and therefore, they are in favor of strong authority that aligns people. Bauman admits that the origin and source of intolerance must be sought in fear of the unknown, and the most prominent representative of 'the unknown' is "foreigners" or "others" (Bauman, 1999: 58-59). Definition of people as "the others" is based on the assumption of temporality. That is, despite the claim of the people who consist the nation and their ancestors have lived in that land for a certain period, "the others" are assumed as deprived of such experience. While the former are designated as the owner of the land, the latter described as guests or embedded, since they arrived there later. Such sentences as 'this is the land of my ancestors; this is my home,' remind foreigners that they are "the others".

## **SOCIAL DYNAMICS WHICH GIVE RISE TO POPULIST POLITICS**

The twenty-first century, also known as the millennium age, started with great hopes but also with some unexpected incidents in the political sphere. Terrorist attacks in cities where the first and the largest of which took place on September 11 in New York, following it the application of policies for global war against terrorism, occurrence of global economic crises, social unrests, and regime changes, civil wars, unstable governments, increasing international migration, immigration and refugee crisis, the rise of far-right parties in Europe and related with that strengthening of populist politics and nationalism, and such other phenomenon can be considered as facts that we haven't reached to "the end of history era." One can claim that the concern about the rise of the populist discourses is one of the most attentive issues in the Western countries, which are referred for liberal democracy. Nowadays, this issue is one of the main arguments discussed by social

scientists. This situation is defined by some as 'the great regression' (Geiselberger, 2017) while others define it as 'the age of populism' (Krastev, 2017). In his book 'What is Populism', Jan-Werner Müller (2017) states that populist discourse has a polarizing language and while legitimize its voters, the populist discourse illegitimate its non-voters. This distinction is based on a moral claim which cannot be falsified. Perhaps the most critical aspect of populist discourse is that it turns politics of identity into the most fundamental political sphere. Thus, it creates a clear distinction between 'us' and 'them' among social groups. Also Müller (2017) explains the question of why Europe remains vulnerable to populist actors since the mid-1970s and especially in recent years with three factors: shrinking the welfare state, immigration and, above all and the most influential, the European economic crisis.

What are the facts and dynamics that feed the far-right parties in Europe and making populist discourse one of the crucial topics in social sciences? These questions can be explained under some titles as follows:

#### 1. Backlash of Globalization and Neo-Liberalism

Globalization, which its basic dimension is economy and advocates the free movement of goods and capital, has generally worked in favor of industrialized Western countries that have strong financial institutions. Such process has been the case till the varieties between developed and undeveloped societies maintained obviously. With large market share and producing high value-added goods European countries and other advanced economies such as the United States have been the locomotives of globalization. Such benefits provided by global trade have allowed Western countries to develop strong social policies after the World War II and, thus they constructed societies with prosperities. However, this unilateral process has begun to operate on a double basis, correspondingly with the structural changes experienced in production process, after of which the economies of underdeveloped countries started to strengthen.

Ivan Krastev (2017) interprets the West's experience with globalization via the story that the notion of death has disappeared in Jose Saramago's (2009) novel *Death with Interruptions*. According to him, the West's experience with globalization resembles Saramago's imagined flirtation with immortality. It is a dream that suddenly turned into a nightmare. Just a few years ago, many in the West tended to view the opening up of the world as the end of all troubles. This enthusiasm has vanished. Instead, we are witnessing a worldwide insurgence against the progressive

post-1989 liberal order defined by the opening of borders for people, capital, goods and ideas, an insurgence that takes the form of democracy's revolt against liberalism (Bauman, 2017: 66)

The global economy has created a series of unrest and imbalances on the Western world as a result of some developments, such as in spite of all barriers accelerating labor and international migration and eroding borders, additionally facilitating the flows of goods, capital and information. This process, which can be expressed as a backlash of globalization has awakened a new stand opposing globalization in the Western world, and at the same time raised a fresh paradigm in favor of the invigorating the nation-state. It can be stated that this rising interest in the notion of the classic nation-state also has a backward sense of longing for the reintroduction of the opportunities provided by the powerful welfare state, which began after the Second World War and continued until the 1980s.

Such unfavorable developments of globalization on the Western societies cannot be explained by just some factors such as the flow of the capital from developed economies towards less-developed ones, where the cheap labor can be found, and by the fact of the weakening of competitiveness for the West. The structural changes that worked through this process and, which were led by Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in England, in the 1980's and then by the neo-liberal policies spreading to all European countries also played a major role. As a result of neo-liberal policies expressing structural changes in economic activities in favor big companies, deep social changes have taken place in industrialized societies. In sum, the privatization of state-owned enterprises and public services, thus letting almost all the economic activities to the initiative of the market, the shrinking and dissolution of the working class, the loss of trade union's activities, the financialization of daily life, the increase of inequality among the social classes, the dissolution of the middle classes, the deepening of poverty and the most general the regression of the welfare-state notion. All the transformations have made it easier for governments to achieve a certain level of stability in economic indicators by reducing their expenditures on public services. On the other hand, while neo-liberalism has allowed large companies to grow and operate in the global sphere, the middle and lower classes, which are directed towards precarious part-time jobs, struggle with unemployment and constitute the majority, have been the most negatively affected groups of this process. Increasing automation with emerging technologies has resulted in a production process that requires less manpower for production, and the growing service sector has created a labor market that allows the employment of more qualified personnel. This situation has inevitably led to negative consequences such as the decline of the

traditional industrial sector, hence the unemployment of workers in this sector and the creation of abandoned industrial zones in the US, called the rust belt.

Above all, neo-liberal policies mean giving the control of the market to big companies' initiative, and the withdrawal of the state from the economic sphere through the privatization of public institutions. Neo-liberalism applies such changes in underdeveloped or developing countries through some institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank. In return, those international organizations impose their economic policies on those countries as result of their loans to them. No need to explain even that these policies are formed in favor of big companies. The most well-known of such policies is *the Structural Adjustment Programs* that the IMF implemented since the mid-1980s. Within the framework of the Structural Adjustment Programs, some reforms have been carried out, for instance; cutting subsidies to local small farmers, reducing public expenditures and obligatory expenditure in health-education, minimizing food aids and shrinking the public sector. These policies hit mostly people who live in rural areas of Africa and Latin America. Millions of peasants living in countryside who earn their lives via agriculture and animal husbandry started to face difficulties for their livelihoods, and as result, people flowed to urban areas massively. Cities such as Kinshasa, Lahore, and Mexico City have been filled with millions of new comers who occupied peripheries and slum areas (see, Davis, 2006). Those people, who can be considered as urban poor class in staffed big cities, supplied their sheltering needs by building shanty towns, which made such cities more uninhabitable. For people who have become the new poor class of cities, the livelihood was transformed into an unrelenting battle. Beyond huge number of Africans who try to migrate to European countries, in 2018, thousands of people fled gang violence, poverty and political repression from the Central American countries, including Honduras, Ecuador, where almost no state authority exist, but the drug cartels are very strong, created a wave of migration into the USA in caravans<sup>1</sup>.

From this point of view, it can be argued that the immigration issue, which has become the main agenda of Europe and the USA today, is a backlash of neoliberal globalization that has served for the interests of developed countries. This can be assumed to be an inevitable consequence of the global injustice, which is created by neo-liberal policies. The gist of the matter is that; neo-liberal policies operated in favor of developed countries have caused great destruction in the undeveloped and developing countries. One of the imminent consequences of this situation was the migration

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-45951782>, acc. date. 23.12.2018.

flows towards rich countries. In the face of this, the US and European countries have increased their measures in order to stop the influx of migrants and have expressed this in a more effective way to the world agenda.

The migration flow is, in fact, a forced immigration process of villagers who became the new poor classes of urbans as a result of the Structural Adjustment Programs, which are implemented with justification of economic growth. This migration process is a forced migration occurs from the land where the bread is scarce, to the lands where the bread is abundant in the cost of their lives, and for people who manage to do it, to collect of the crumbs of the cake in societies with welfare.

## 2. Increased International Migration

As a result of developing transport technologies and facilities, the rapid increase of international migration in the last three decades is another dimension of globalization. The mobilization capability of men has reached a level that has never been seen before in the history and the growing airline sector has a big share in such level. Today, around 100,000 flights are carried on and on average 9 million people are transported per day ([www.greenclaim.com](http://www.greenclaim.com), 2019). According to the data of United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international tourist transportation continues to grow uninterrupted. In 1950, it increased from 20 million to 277 million in 1980, 435 million in 1990, 675 million in 2000 and 940 million in 2015 (Mahbubani, 2015: 90). Although a significant portion of these travels are made for business and tourist purposes, it can also be predicted that they are leading to permanent immigrations. In addition, labor force migration with millions occurs every year internationally.

Another important dimension of international migration is irregular migration. Every year, hundreds of thousands of people leave their home countries in illegal ways and immigrate to other countries. No doubt, one of the main motivations of irregular migration is economic causes. Judging by migration statistics, it is seen that international migrations are generally made from countries such as Africa, Asia and Latin America, to the developed ones, namely as West European countries, the USA, Canada and Australia (Castles and Miller, 2009).

One can argue that global inequality is the most important factor that creates human migration from poor countries to rich ones. This is undoubtedly one of the consequences of the global economy, especially the structural adjustment programs mentioned above. The factors such

as the destruction of agricultural areas by big corporations, the disappearance of forests, and the defeat of farmers in competition with big corporations, have largely eliminated traditional livelihoods in rural areas (Davis, 2006). For example, about ten thousands farmers in India commit suicide each year because they cannot pay the loans they received from the usurers (www.dw.com.tr, Acc Date: 10.10.2017). As a result of such tragedies in rural areas, intense migrations arise toward cities, thus increases poverty in urban areas. This kind of process ends up with decision of people to leave the country with such harsh conditions for the purpose of seeking better lives abroad.

In addition, beyond globalization, nowadays societies are aware of other societies' advantages and disadvantage they are experiencing thanks to development in mass and social media as result of increase in using mobile phone. That means, societies with low welfare standards ask for the similar quality of life that is practiced by the well-being societies.

Another factor that increases international migration is related with the growing of the middle-class globally. According to the OECD data (Kharas, 2010), the distribution of the global middle class which is more likely to be the subject of consuming society, projected to be increased particularly in Asia Pasific.

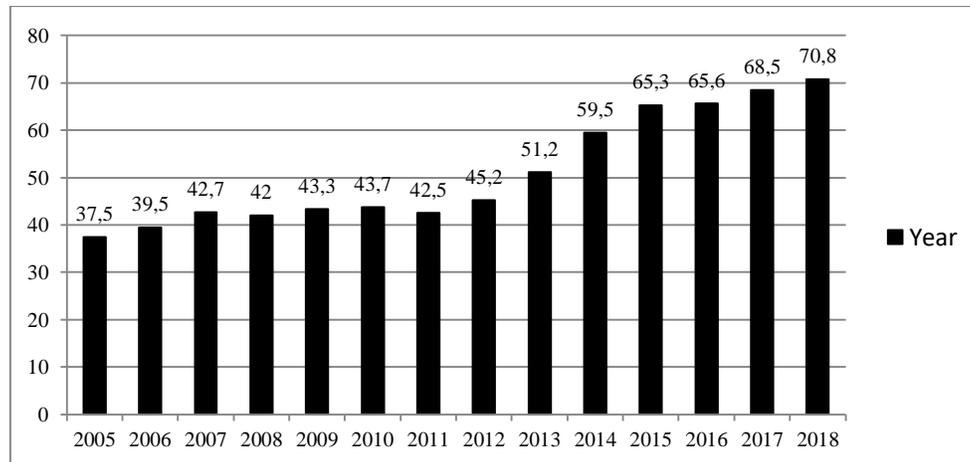
Today, the majority of societies know about the way of a modern middle class's standard of living, and almost everyone wants to reach such standards. Besides, the chance of mobility of the middle classes is higher than the individuals of the lower-income groups. In this context, one can state that the tendency of individuals from Asia, Africa and the Middle East, who have this ability to immigrate to Europe and North America, is increasing. One of the reasons for the fortification of more sheltered borders, where the boundary walls have risen in the Western world today, can be indicated as the growing of middle classes.

In short, we live in a more connected, but less integrated world, where on the one hand, the majority of the world's population currently has a desire to move to another country or plan to, but on the other hand, where the borders are more strictly guarded. As Krastev (2017) points out, globalization is breaking down the nets, as it links.

Another reason for the irregular migration is civil wars, unstable administrations and security concerns due to political turmoil. One can argue that those facts are the most influencing reasons for causing irregular migration for the last decades. According to United Nations' data, as of 2018, there were 70,8 million displaced people worldwide. Among these people, 25,9 million were refugees, and 3,5 million were asylum-seekers. Approximately 10 million people are also at

risk of being stateless or they were stateless (UNHCR, 2018). As it can be seen in the table below, the displaced population has almost doubled in ten years. The most dramatic increase has been seen since 2012. No doubt the ongoing civil war in Syria has a large share in this statistics.

Table 1: Number of Displaced Population Between 2005-2018 (million)



Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2018/> Acc. Date: 21.12.2019.

As Krastev points out, today the world is populated by many failed states; nobody wants to be a citizen of (2017: 72). According to UN figures, more than half (55%) of refugees worldwide came mainly from four countries. These countries are as follows: Syria is 6,7 million, Afghanistan is 2,7 million, South Sudan is 2,3 million and Myanmar is 1,1 million (UNHCR, 2018).

### 3. Cultural and Conservative Reaction

One can assert that the global economy, which is one of the phenomena that grays national borders, thus erodes the notion of nation-state in the most sense, has created a nationalist reaction. It appears that this reaction has emerged in developed countries and has a conservative nature that contains a desire to return to the past. Donald Trump's motto "Make America Great Again", in Brexit campaign led by UKIP's motto "We Want Our Country Back," slogan of the AFD in Germany as "Take Your Country Back" reveals such nationalist reactions. All slogans share a common sense of greeting the Past. It can be stated that the populist rhetoric derives its power from mobilizing people who are the victim of economic system and it uses their collective anger for

gaining more political support. The prescription that the populist discourse proposes by offering to return to so-called old "century of happiness" days resembles the way of Muslims' description for the times of Islam's rise called as "the century of happiness". In this respect such prescription can be described as conservative, but it is clearly visible that it has a regressional character.

What the leaders of the new authoritarian populism have in common: the recognition that none of them can truly control their national economies, which are hostages to foreign investors, global agreements, transnational finance, mobile labor and capital in general. All of them promise national cultural purification as a route to global political power (Appadurai, 2017: 5). This cultural purification refers to a situation in which politics of identity dominates the political sphere. This situation can sometimes gain a racist dimension. Castles and Miller (2008) argue that the reasons for this situation lie in deep-rooted economic and social changes that make the idea of optimistic progression to Western thought controversial. According to them, since the early 1970s, an important part of society experienced social and economic changes as a direct threat to their social conditions and identities. Simultaneously with these changes, the emergence of new ethnic minorities led to these groups being the subjects of the threat. Foreigners were seen as the causes of dangerous changes.

These debates around identities and cultural affiliation lead to the idea that social problems as if originated from cultural sphere, instead of economics. As stated by the Italian political scientist Piero Ignazi, the conflict on distribution of the resources is replaced by exchange of the values (Atikkan, 2014: 18).

Xenophobia is not seen in advanced industrial societies solely, but can be experienced in almost all societies which receive migration. South Africa which host millions of immigrants from neighboring countries is one of them. Xenophobia is also experienced in Russia (Mukomel, 2013) and Eastern Europe.

#### 4. Cultural Changes and Ungovernableness of Huge Masses

Demographic changes occur at global scale is one of key elements to take into consideration in analyzing topics, such as the problem of immigrants, the refugee crisis, the increase of foreign opposition and the rise of populist politics.

In order to understand the demographic effect of the world population which reached almost to 8 billion, one should look closely at the growth rate of it in the last century. 200 years ago, the world's population was around 1 billion; this figure reached 1.5 billion at the beginning of the 20th century, and increased to 6.1 billion over the century and up to 7.6 billion at the beginning of the 21st century.<sup>2</sup>

The growing population undoubtedly has a direct impact on reduction of the resources, on multiplication of the needs such as food, clothing and housing. Taking into consideration the increasing consumption of the middle classes around the world, one can understand better the demographic effect on social and economic changes.

Another consequence of the increased world population is related to the political sphere. In other words, it is connected with the difficulty of manageability of the growing population of countries. That is to say, the small populated nations can be easier managed and governed than the large ones. Especially such a situation is problem for the countries which contain large population and get immigrations. The political crisis and instabilities in governing of big masses whose needs are high and diverse in countries such as Venezuela, Brazil, Turkey, Egypt etc., prove such a statement.

##### 5. Fear of Terror and Anxiety for Security

For such a difficulty in management of big masses, the populist politics finds solution in the patterns of the past. Such politics enhances the ideas of individuals' responsibilities for their own countries, preservation of national values, reinforcement of segregation between citizens and immigrants/foreigners as 'us' and 'them'. It raises a discourse filled with simple and practical solutions.

Such a discourse is based on re-awaking of the nation-state notion, rather than a new political vision. This politics is constructed through the fears spread out over societies, upon the existence of the 'others/strangers'. Such fears can be produced in variety of ways, as follows: claiming foreigners for not being able to be integrated, accusing the immigrants for eroding the values of the host society, blaming them with bringing infectious diseases, or resembling them with the Greeks hidden in the Trojan horse.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.ourworldindata.org](http://www.ourworldindata.org), Acc. Date 19, 11.2017.

No doubt, the fear against foreigners in western societies has some concrete grounds. The terrorist attacks in various dates in Europe caused among societies the development of fear towards the migrants, especially Muslims. It was stated by different authorities that those attacks should not be attributed to Muslim communities living in the West. Even so, a partial bias against Islam among western societies could not be prevented. Zeynep Atikkan (2014) states that cultural affiliation targeted first the immigrants, particularly Muslims in Europe, who have got a bitter history for being in the status of 'the others'.

Nilüfer Göle (2015) relates such an attitude, which also can be named as anti-Islamism particularly with the increase of Muslims' visibility in public spheres. The increased participations of the second and the third generations of the migrant families in business, in education, in daily life, shortly in different areas of social life, invoked an idea for some Europeans, as if Muslims are taking away their places, their jobs etc. from them.

Securityist discourse is considered to be one of the main arguments of populist politics, which constantly stimulates the dangers and risks for societies and emphasizes on taking more measures, specifically against Muslims, but also it holds all foreigners responsible for such dangers. For instance, in Europe far-right parties and in the USA Donald Trump accuse immigrants for making their countries more dangerous places. From the support they receive, one can admit that anti-immigrants discourse provides populist leaders with many benefits for their election campaigns.

## 6. The Regression of Central Parties

Due to factors such as globalization, international migration, altered production processes, demographic changes, neo-liberal policies, deepening inequality, and increasing social movements and demonstrations thank to social media, the authorities often face difficulties in governing societies. The central parties, which are assumed to carry opinions from different backgrounds, are away from constructing policies compatible with those radical changes. Besides, the political approaches they follow reveal the distrusts against them in the perspectives of the masses. Considering some developments, such as Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece, and far-right parties in Europe, which have entered an upward trend, the rise of such parties from both sides left and right, is a result of such failure of the parties considered to be central.

## CONCLUSION

In thinking about the rise of populism against centrist politics today, it is interesting to remind ourselves that similar divisions occurred in Ancient Greek philosophy. Aristotle, who lived in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, and his mentors Socrates and Plato were questioning the concept of existence in different aspects on the base of logic. On the other hand, sophists would praise the relativity of knowledge, putting man’s perceptions at the center.

According to the sophists, it was not facts or observed phenomena that constituted reality, but rather what an individual perceives, thus making it essentially all about rhetoric. As great demagogues, sophists would make their living by selling the art of demagoguery to the people of Ancient Greece.

This time around, populist politics, whose actors favor demagoguery to target the masses with their convincing rhetoric, focus on what people want to hear rather than the facts. Modern-day populists are employing so-called post-truth politics as their method of choice to derail centrist approaches shaped by facts and logic.

Aristotle described man as a “political animal” —*zoon politicon*— referring to communitarian life and its inevitable result as a development of politics. Living in a collective also developed along with the distinction between “us and them.” This distinction has become a fundamental issue that gives a sense of solidarity, belonging and, ultimately, identity to a society. Each identity has developed at the same time or beyond other identities. The foreigner, the unknown and often the potential enemy is positioned as one of the main factors that represent the “other” in this sense. Communities have maintained their existence by establishing a social structure based on solidarity against those who are “the others.” German philosopher Ferdinand Tönnies (2002), who describes this social structure as *Gemeinschaft* (community), claims that it has disintegrated as a result of the Industrial Revolution and capitalism. A new social structure then developed in the modern age, which he describes as *Gesellschaft* (society), on the basis of individualization in European societies.

Emile Durkheim (2014), who conceptualized this distinction as mechanical and organic solidarity, emphasizes that collective consciousness is very strong in the former, while in the latter individual consciousness is more developed. This new social structure, fed by migrations from rural to urban areas, refers to a modern stage where diverse cultures and identities share a common ground, and thus the division of "us and them" begins to fade. This means that cosmopolitan thought and social structure, which are important features of modern societies, are widespread in the Western.

Nationalism, which developed in Europe during the early modern period and laid the foundations for the nation-state, designates a process of reconstruction of the "us and them" distinction around mass populations. Nations appear, on a very large scale, as constructions around the concept of "us." This process, in which centrist and homogenizing policies dominated at first, has followed a process of multiculturalism that advocated pluralism and diversity since the 1960s, followed by a process of globalization, which became evident in the 1980s and, finally, the development of liberal democracy at the end of the Cold War in 1989.

Such developments created optimism in the development of a civilization of mankind, but caused great disappointment soon after. One can put forward many reasons for this. However, the most prominent phenomena among them are ethnic awakenings, micro-nationalisms in different parts of the world, the emergence of new ethnic minorities as the result of global migration and, consequently, a rise of xenophobia and racism.

This new situation, where cultures are getting politicized and identity politics dominate the political sphere, makes us consider the ongoing process as the rebirth of the *Gemeinschaft*. According to Ulrich Beck (2006), "today's great problem is the jarring contradiction between our already-close-to-cosmopolitan *plight* and the virtual absence of a cosmopolitan *awareness*, mindset or attitude."

French sociologist Alain Touraine (2009) expresses his frustration about this new situation in such words: "We were convinced that we have been transitioned from the *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*; that is, instead of whom we are to what are we doing. However, we have acted in the opposite direction, and from every possible point of view, from the most negative aspect to the most disgusting point, the communitarian spirit emerges everywhere." The communitarian soul was, in fact, always present. Experiencing the *Gesellschaft* was maybe just a historical case in certain geographies and certain periods.

The misconception of Marxist theory, which defines the class as a fundamental subject of history and ethnicity as a transitory fact, has failed, along with many ideas, with the decline of the working class, the unions and the leftist politics defending them. In their work on ethnic awakening, Stephen Castles et al. (2009), remark that ethnic mobilization is replaced by class as the result of the decline of its influence in advanced industrial societies.

One can claim that ethnic or national communitarianism, which expresses a social organization where emotions predominate and are fed by nationalism, is providing nations with a new communitarian soul. It can be argued that this development, which reintegrates the "us and them" distinction, involving millions of people, is different from the process of early nation building. Unlike a republican or a multicultural model, this new communitarian process does not entail integrating varied ethnic or migrant groups and, therefore, it cannot be defined as an inclusive one.

Instead, it is exclusive, which creates an isolationist solidarity based on economic concerns against migrant or refugee groups for nations who belong to a dominant culture and identity. This can be described as a new communitarian soul around "being the host." This soul, based on the judgment that "this is my country," identifies itself as being different from the individuals belonging to other identities, and mostly against newcomers. This new communitarian mentality has emerged, in particular in the societies of migrant states with a conservative, reactionary and exclusionary discourse.

For example, US President Donald Trump's motto, "Make America Great Again," the UK Independence Party's Brexit campaign motto, "We Want Our Country Back," as well as the Alternative for Germany (AFD) slogan, "Take Your Country Back," reveal such reactionary discourses that glorify the past when the issue of immigration was perceived as being less acute. Ultimately, we are living in a world where millions of people are not satisfied with where they live. On the one hand, everyone is trying to migrate to another place or dreams of it, or at least of being globally interconnected. On the other hand, there exists a communitarian world where no one wants a stranger to be their neighbor.

In this sense, an emphasis on identity and values in order to foster a communitarian mentality is critical. Newcomers are generally accused of putting the "real" identity of the host society in danger as the result of new practices they bring, which are presumed to corrupt the values of the local society. Newcomers are described as a threat to the national culture. It can be argued

that such justifications are expressed mostly by populist politicians, and judging by the success of populist parties around the world, it works.

This success of populist politics, which has reached a position that can determine the political sphere today in terms of its achievements in many countries around the world, can be sought after using the distinction of “us and them” in a predominant way. Such rhetoric can easily gain the support of the masses because it shows the voters the “exact problem” in a concrete and simple way. The problem is obvious to a populist: people who have migrated to their countries en masse, who are on the news all the time, visible in almost every public space — people who are not same us, the others, foreigners.

In a debate about what gives rise to populist politics and the xenophobia that feeds it, a global migrant population of 65 million, driven by factors such as economic insecurity, conflict and climate change, is hard to ignore. Global social inequality and poverty, due to globalization and its component neoliberalism, which created the structural changes — the marketization of social relations and daily life, the dominance of finance capitalism, the fading of the welfare state, etc. — constitute some of the main causes of mass international migration.

As a result of the structural changes that neoliberalism has created in economic and social policies beyond the production process, migration occurs in the zones where poverty is widespread and the population is increasing, moving toward the zones where economic conditions are better. We see this in those migrating from African countries to Europe despite all the risks of crossing the Mediterranean Sea, and in the thousands who formed caravans and marched from Central America to the US border.

And of course, these newcomers are the first subjects to be blamed for problems such as decreases in incomes, rise of unemployment, increase of cost of living, etc., that occur in prosperous countries due to structural changes.

This analysis should also include the free circulation of capital and goods that make up some of the opportunities that the globalization process has created, thanks also to mass media and transportation technologies. The unrivaled superiority and economic prosperity of Western countries since the Industrial Revolution began to disappear with developmental successes in areas such as Asia and Latin America. It can be claimed that globalization, which has made the pioneer of the West and is advantageous for these societies at first, began to work against the West as a result of opportunities provided by the global economy to non-Western countries.

Policies aimed at preventing capital flight and efforts to increase border security support this claim. At this point, it can be said that terrorist attacks in the West often provide a justification for harsher border protections. These restrictions on free movement are among the main issues that populist leaders defend.

These factors can also be added to the fact that the world population is growing rapidly and that managing these vast masses of people has become very difficult. The population of over 7 billion needs to meet basic needs such as housing, education and health. Today’s world population does not have the characteristics of the mass society of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. But far beyond that, although today’s world benefits from more advanced technology, it still remains similar in a cultural sense. In other words, today’s global society has not overcome being a mass society — it still keeps its features, which is to say that one can hardly claim our global society has achieved ethical or cultural enlightenment.

In this sense, the criticism of the Spanish philosopher Ortega Gasset (1994) toward the early modern European society which was made up of the mass man — whom he describes as spiritually and culturally void, who doesn’t question and is one-dimensional — can be applied to the current global mass society. We have developed new technologies, and thus created a new form and complicated social structures. Gasset, in his book *The Revolt of the Masses*, describes the societies that are dominated by the masses as consisting of very similar people. “Ordinaryization,” in other words homogenization, brings about one of the important characteristics of these societies. People are tactful, and sometimes intolerant of differences. Because of their lack of historical conscience and cultural depth, masses can easily drag societies into conflict.

*Im Westen nichts Neues* — nothing new in the West, the German title of Erich Maria Remarque’s (2005) *All Quiet on the Western Front*. This phrase resonates in my mind while reading political news, particularly concerning the West, where enlightenment has been achieved, individual freedoms secured, modernity constructed. Not much has changed since Ancient Greece: Politicians are almost the same politicians; societies are almost the same societies.

It is tragic to observe that the cultural form of societies remains almost same through the ages, with people still readily manipulated and mobilized by a hollow rhetoric. We are witnessing the rise of populist politics in different parts of the world today, from Brazil to Hungary and the Philippines, because mass societies can be easily mobilized, open to manipulation, can easily support identity politics and, eventually, can easily slide into communitarianism, which stands awkwardly in contradiction to our highly interconnected global society.

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But let’s not sound too pessimistic and remember the existence of people and platforms that act for the general good, using the light of logic and common sense. The number of people who advocate for truth, peace, diversity, heterogeneity, ecology and so on may not be massive, but their voices give us hope to believe in the future despite regressions. As a matter of fact, when it comes to Greek philosophy, it is the ideas of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle’s ideas that we remember first, not of the sophists.

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