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FROM INDIFFERENCE TO ANXIETY: TWO ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY NARRATIVES

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Abstract

Ontological security has become a distinctive and dominant issue in European studies, partly due to the rise of illiberal and populist movements, and European pursuits and security dilemmas have permeated many political polemics and debates. Exploring this issue, the paper tackles the origins and transformations of ontological security in Europe to some extent. The study first broaches the theoretical repercussions of ontological security, with a view to examining its relation to anxiety, indifference and fear. The second section focuses on a particular chapter in Western European history that is characterized by indifference to politics and political institutions. The final chapter refers to unease and angst that certain segments of European societies have experienced following the economic recession, as well as culture and identity crises. In light of these discussions, the article aims to explore the nature of relationship between ontological concerns and certain movements labelled as populist, extremist or ultra-nationalist. In the study, the idea that there is a strong link between populist movements and ontological security is emphasized.

Keywords: Ontological Security, Ontological Indifference, Populism, Europe

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KAYITSIZLIKTAN KAYGIYA: İKİ ONTOLOJIK GÜVENLIK ANLATISI

Öz

Ontolojik güvenlik kısmen illiberal ve popülist hareketlerin yükselişinden dolayı Avrupa çalışmalarında ayırt edici ve baskın bir konu haline gelmiş bu konu pek çok siyasi polemik ve tartışmaya nüfuz etmiştir. Bu konuyu araştıran makale, Avrupa'da ontolojik güvenliğin kökenlerini ve dönüşümlerini belli bir ölçüde ele almaktadır. Çalışma kaygı, kayıtsızlık ve korkuyu incelemek amacıyla ilk olarak ontolojik güvenliğin teorik yansımalarını ele almaktadır. İkinci bölüm, Batı Avrupa tarihinde siyasete ve siyasi kurumlara kayıtsızlıkla karakterize edilen belirli bir bölüme odaklanmaktadır. Son bölüm, Avrupa toplumlarının belirli kesimlerinin ekonomik durgunluğun yanı sıra kültür ve kimlik krizlerinin ardından yaşadığı tedirginlik ve kaygıya değinmektedir. Bu tartışmalar ışığında makale, ontolojik kaygılar ile popülist, aşırılıkçı veya aşırı milliyetçi olarak görülen belirli hareketler arasındaki ilişkinin doğasını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmada populist hareketler ile ontolojik güvenlik arasında güçlü bir bağ olduğu fikri üzerinde durulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ontolojik Güvenlik, Ontolojik Kayıtsızlık, Popülizm, Avrupa

INTRODUCTION

Ontological security studies are becoming increasingly central to understanding politics and social changes in Europe. Concepts such as anxiety, deterioration of comfort zones, fear, and the need for security reshape the daily lives of citizens of many countries in Europe. Therefore, greater comfort, security, and the right to regain feelings of security once marked by indifference are demanded by many actors, particularly in Western European societies. In this sense, the focus of this article is the interaction between international relations (IR) and the sociological structures of some countries in Europe.

For a comprehensive understanding of ontological security studies, it is probably not sufficient to discuss IR theory alone; however, it may be meaningful to evaluate the impact of ontological security at the individual, societal, and state levels. The feeling of insecurity at these levels creates the anxiety that reshapes the immigration and foreign policies of most European countries. Ontological pursuits are profoundly founded in this anxiety. Social concerns also lead to social anomalies and problems. A consensus seems to be to assume that there is a close connection between populism and ontological anxiety. Besides, as fear and anxiety that lead to populist movements and feed far-right ideologies in some European countries affect more and more the social and political fields and the daily lives of European citizens, there is no shortage of discussions on this subject that can be considered new. Therefore, to understand the nature of some relatively new social classes, such as the precariat

and some new political actors, it may be important to understand the nature of ontological security needs.

Anxiety, fear, and a longing for change have always had an impact on sociopolitical events. In certain parts of Europe, there is a feeling of insecurity due to recurrent crises and social problems. Furthermore, many people seeking better living conditions in the Middle East and Africa today are causing problems for this generally "peaceful" and stable continent, spawning a slew of anti-systemic groups.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, especially Western European societies were able to control and manipulate predictable threats relatively more rationally due to their predictable threat perceptions. The authorities had risk at their disposal as a practical tool. State behavior was therefore regulated in such a way that it could eliminate anything that could pose a risk to society. But today, after the Cold War and in an age of asymmetric threats, risk assessment for states seems to be a difficult task. Both domestic and foreign policy is shaped by terror and the fear of anarchy. Accordingly, understanding ontological security at the individual, societal, and state levels requires understanding identity development through risk. Elements of change are sought to be discovered by any ontological security analysis. Individuals need time to acclimate in a transitional period to overcome the shock of change. Almost all societies are in the process of forming and evolving; these changes, on the other hand, are generally gradual, causing anxiety, terror, and numerous ontological questions.

In the first part of the study, these issues are focused on, and the effects of ontological security theories on various disciplines such as psychology, sociology, politics, and International Relations are discussed. In the second part, the focus is on a certain period in Western Europe, when indifference to difficult political problems and issues was preferred by "ordinary" people as a means of political attitude. In the third part of the study, the uneasiness experienced by most European societies is investigated. From this perspective, the close interaction between some concepts of ontological security studies and part of current European politics is investigated to a certain extent.

1. COLLECTIVE IDENTITY AND ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY

Most of the literature on ontological security refers to multidisciplinary approaches. Issues that intersect with ontological security studies are addressed by many disciplines, from philosophy to political science. Ontological and physical security are typically distinguished, and this separation may also be seen in Europe at times and at different levels. The first step

in analyzing ontological security needs and fear of change is about understanding the concerns in post-Cold War Western Europe. Fears, anxieties, and the need for change have crystallized in certain attitudes rooted in Western European thought. Anxiety is ontological rather than physical, as anxiety is ultimately linked to an oppressive sense of constriction (Gadamer, 2004, p. 153). Loss of feeling of trust pushes people to question their society and government. The desire to be safe permeates all relationships.

Know-it-all governments that are aware of almost everything that surrounds them, thanks to technology, seek greater security and more easily use security as an excuse to manipulate their citizens. In today's world, probably no one can fully understand the causes of anxiety (Heidegger, 1996, p. 233). This anxiety is tried to be built on an individual and social level to overcome the sense of finitude (Sen, 2010, p. 276). Accordingly, looking for a feeling of purpose might lead to skepticism. Doubt, a pervasive feature of the modern critical mind, permeates everyday life as well as philosophical consciousness and constitutes a general existential dimension of the contemporary social world (Giddens, 1991, p. 3). Suspicion also causes anxiety at the individual, social, and state levels. It may not be known what provoked it or what reaction it produced. States use a variety of tools to deal with concerns. The state is not the only entity capable of meeting common purposes but an essential asset, so the process of controlling it is vital. States are controlled through politics, but politics has been corrupted to some extent by the rise of individualism (Collier and Kay, 2020, p. 112). The traditional left-right distinction is no longer valid in the current political environment. The importance of traditional welfare policies and systems is dwindling.

A notable feature of recent general political discourse in the context of ontological security has been the proliferation of ideas underlining that those disasters and problems can occur any time. Hence, disaster preparedness, taking measures, and planning have all become necessary. Preparedness for emergencies and planning are carried out almost everywhere (Neocleus, 2017, p. 64). Being prepared to war, disaster planning, and the possibility of terrorist attacks affect security measures, and "states struggle to shape behavior towards a future event that is beyond our control but that we must be prepared to control" (Neocleus, 2017, p. 64).

Discourses about fear are common in both Western and Eastern cultures. Fear is a cultural element for interpreting life that is frequently reiterated (Furedi, 2011, p. 90). The normalization of fear probably serves to channel and express anger. At the same time, a useful

tool for manipulating societies in the hands of the authorities is the politics of fear. Fear is different from anxiety in this sense. Although from a Freudian point of view, they sometimes appear simultaneously, while fear is about known and tangible threats, anxiety is about threats that are not easily identifiable and unknown. Fear is, in a way, essential for states to formulate threats and achieve ideological goals. States require moral panic to benefit from dread and worry, which will cause societal reactions. The complex relations between political institutions and other actors of public life emerge with moral panic. In this sense, populism also feeds on uncertainty (Chernobov, 2016, p. 581).

IR readings on ontological security address social issues as well as State actions. New perspectives on political and social understandings can be formed in this way. At the societal level, fear and danger are central to identity construction theories and security studies (Chernobov, 2016, p. 590). As a matter of fact, states and individuals are frustrated with the idea that they can predict the future and ensure continuity. They try to survive when they fail to do so. Perhaps this is where the need for ontological security imposes itself. Therefore, the public's view of international challenges that arise in the context of collective identity demonstrates that ontological security theory is linked to psychology, sociology, and international relations. In terms of identity security, a psycho-social interpretation of conflicts concerns both state and society. Therefore, not all ontological security studies examine the decisions of states.

Ontological security is a way of thinking about well-being, linking psycho-social needs to power structures and political institutions (Mitzen, 2017, p. 3). To Laing and Giddens, the basic principles of ontological security studies are related to intersubjectivity (Croft & Williams, 2017, p. 12). Ontological security studies, therefore, also bear a conceptual ambiguity regarding ontological insecurity and anxiety (Gustafsson & Choi, 2020, p. 875). The concept of ontological security is a more useful notion for individuals. For this reason, it is often considered problematic to apply an individual-level concept such as ontological security to states. Ontological security literature in international relations has also tended to reduce ontological security to identity preservation concerns (Browning & Joenniemi, 2017, p. 31). As it is valid for many disciplines, ontological security is also related to many disciplines, so it is difficult to clearly define its boundaries. Within this interdisciplinary framework, ontological attitude, ontological indifference, populism, and social unrest related to a certain part of Europe have been examined in this study.

2. A POPULIST MOMENT AND ONTOLOGICAL INDIFFERENCE IN ITALY

Western Europe, after a devastating war and in a sharply demarcated bipolar world, seemed for a time indifferent to most world affairs. The working classes of Europe have also become indifferent to the working classes in other parts of the world. Europe has lost its internationalist character, and class solidarity has largely disappeared. A kind of ontological indifference has permeated European societies. In a sense, as in the Egyptian Suez Canal sovereignty crisis of 1956, the post-war international structure did not allow Western European states and societies to intervene actively and alone in international events and crises. The development of ontological indifference may be due to these and similar events. Feeling of political indifference can be found in an approach to post-war Italian politics: this approach is called qualunquismo (whateverism). This period is characterized by the welfare state, and ethnosocial policies were preferred at that time. It left its mark in the 1950s and 60s. It was also about being indifferent to global problems, other classes, and societies or having no choice but to act that way. The tendency to maintain the comfort zone becomes dominant when it is felt that it is impossible to change the world. Hence, lessons learned from the devastation of WWII and the sharp distinction between the capitalist and socialist worlds contributed to this sense of indifference.

Even today, some populist parties try to remain indifferent to other European countries within the EU. The dream of a more moderate and liberal world order seems to have disappeared. Anti-Systemic movements are insufficient in tackling most global problems. Consequently, the Italian notion of whateverism resonates in Europe, and now even in Eastern and Central Europe. So, who is this indifferent person?

> Who is the qualinquo? He is a man in the cafe, in the cinema, in the bedroom, in the dining room, in front of the tax office, everywhere … he is a character who is opposed to the hero, the boss, the duce, the king, the fuhrer, to the conductor, to Churchill, to Roosevelt, to Stalin and he says … that I want to live freely, without being disturbed by anyone, without getting involved in your fights (Costabile, 2019, p. 185).

Many societies are faced with the re-proliferation of a phenomenon similar to this kind of indifference. Although many masses dissatisfied with the political systems came together to challenge the political elite, it is hard to turn this collective action into a meaningful anti-political stance. Likewise, populist leaders have begun to replace traditional politicians as a

global manifestation of anti-politics, but they do so without providing citizens with the opportunity to make meaningful decisions. Although the political mentality has partially changed to fight the elites, ironically, elitism remains in place (Finchelstein, 2017, p. 255). In this populist context, the distinction between right and left is not clear. For example, the Five Star Movement (*Movimento 5 Stelle*), which is a mixture of right and left in Italy, has been subjected to criticism from traditional parties and populist movements of the right (Finchelstein, 2017, p. 255). Formerly fascist ideas have been transformed into populist forms of leadership in different contexts. As with many other political debates, the discussion of ontological indifference is also very Eurocentric in this respect and separating Europe from other parts of the world has always been a controversial issue. However, Europe's unique and distinctive character has also been challenged.

This new kind of indifference is tried to be integrated with democratic structures by anti-liberal politics from time to time with fascist overtones. Fascist movements in both European and non-European contexts are perhaps unconsciously reformulated by most populist parties. However, it seems necessary to go beyond national contexts and Eurocentric views to understand the relationship between populism and ontological security. There are, of course, national variants of ontological security, and one of them is ontological indifference towards politics. Anxiety is always being reformulated in populist, fascist, nationalist, and transnational contexts. As seen in the case of Italy and certain parts of Europe, the crystallization of fear and anxiety in populist and ontological security narratives also leads to the discussion of ontological indifference.

Populist parties in Europe have generally remained on the margins as multi-party systems in Europe tolerate smaller players:

> But like American populists, they have won success only under certain circumstances. Those circumstances are times when people see the prevailing political norms – put forward, preserved and defended by the leading segments in the country – as being at odds with their own hopes, fears, and concerns. The populists express these neglected concerns and frame them in a politics that pits the people against an intransigent elite. By doing so, they become a catalyst for political change (Judis, 2016, p. 16–7).

The traction of populism signals the failure of the dominant social-political ideology. Populist policies are shaped by socio-cultural and economic considerations. Indifference to global problems and the concerns of other societies dominates these discourses. It is an approach that permeates political thought, creates stress and tension for representative democracy, and

fosters a process of continuous renewal of the ruling class as voters lose their commitment to leadership (Barbaro, 2019, p. 168).

At the European and global levels, it is widely believed that hegemony of technology and innovation over culture and tradition constitutes an inevitable process of this paradigm.
Many aspects of politics that cannot be classed under particular liberal or Marxist historical-materialist derivations are brought together by a technological determinism. This is a perspective on various European societies, implying that as a natural byproduct of progress, human progress correlates with the spread of civil rights (Barbaro, 2019, p. 169-70). The European continent is once again affected by political fears and anxieties in search of a common identity. Certain formulations of the EU also have roots in the crisis of common identity. Fundamentally, the issue is perhaps not so much the EU itself, but rather the certain public policies that conservative European rulers have implemented in recent years, despite signals not only from member states but from EU institutions themselves. Many of these policies have failed to address globalization's problems. The Western elite's assumption that globalizing capitalism and the EU will bring democracy and prosperity has been somewhat unsuccessful. The best interpreters of globalization seem not to be liberal democracies or even European states, but, ironically, non-democratic countries like China, where the market is not a bottom-up mechanism but imposed from above by state-owned companies (Bruscino & Postiglione, 2019, p. 50).

Historically, this indifference is deeply associated with populist traditions in Europe, and although his narrative has lost its importance in a very short time, ontological indifference makes itself felt even after more than sixty years since its actual disappearance. It is this attitude of indifference that populism brought to Italian politics after the war. The form of the policy applied seemed to be pure populism, despite the unfavorable international and domestic factors in the country and many strategic mistakes. The movement founded and led by Guglielmo Giannini is also the first significant manifestation of the political appeal of the ideas and style of populism, now and immediately after the Second World War, to which part of Italian society, especially in the southern regions, has for several years attributed a leading role. This situation is developing at two interrelated levels, which has led to a study of the collective psychology of Italy. The unprecedented success of populism highlights the deep distrust of a section of the population towards the two major parties accused of prejudice and

indifference to national interests, and the parliament, which has been criticized for too much division and incompleteness. The discontent of the people can be felt when the fascist regime is attempting to nationalize the masses. Besides, although their partial failures, many "ordinary" Italians have inherited this populist tradition. On the other hand, it is also seen that an attack on the entire political class in the name of efficiency, integrity, and practical common sense can lead to a consensus on the left-right divide in Italy. The populist Giannini sought allies, from De Gasperi to Togliatti, to allow the votes to turn into effective political response and even allied with the Liberal Party in the 1948 election. Such an alliance can only be seen in times of severe crisis of the internal balances of the political system (Tarchi, 2015, p. 188-9).

Moreover, it was on this occasion that this composite "mass" (it is said so because the same term, reinforced by the addition of the adjective "popular," was adopted by communists and socialists in 1948 to emphasize electoral unity), which deliberately refused to be called a "party" in Italy, had the opportunity to express itself for the first time. In the history of united Italy, despite its anti-political radicalism, Gianni's movement, which was a protest against the ruling class, which only seeks to divide the stakes differently between the elites and the masses rather than breaking the rules of the democratic game, seemed to have adopted a political stance that sought to combine indifference with anxiety (Tarchi, 2015, p. 188-89).

The lack of a typical left-right divide is indicative of such apathy and reflects apolitical beliefs. Although the political sentiment is often implicit and untheorized, it is part of global political theories in general, not just in Italy or elsewhere in Europe. Therefore, attribution to the perceptions and preferences of others may depend on the pre-existing emotions of the actors and the emotional relationships between these actors (Crawford, 2000, p. 7). In terms of this politics of sentiment, the rise of new populism in Western Europe echoes the old populisms and, in this respect, reminds us from time to time the political environment of post-war Western Europe.

3. ORDER, DISORDER, AND ANXIETY

Fear and anxiety play a significant role in political decision-making at both the European and global levels. The transition from apathy to anxiety and discomfort can be attributed to many factors or actors, and some actors may display fear and anxiety, signaling that they are ready to do something irrational. Fear of violence and terrorism is therefore easily manipulated, which can make fear and anxiety important factors in decision-making at the European and

global level. In the same way, fear and anxiety can make it possible for the person to become more familiar with potential threats. It can be used in anything from party politics to leadership and attitude-building politics. At the same time, it reveals some understanding for the continuation and change of the EU foreign policy decision-making process. Populism and waves of globalization are frequently studied in this context. But the dominant thesis describing the connection between the rise of populism and attitudes of those negatively affected by globalization is probably able to partially address the issues. Hence, the thesis that the populist wave represents the vengeance of the "losers of globalization" presents only a partial explanation.

This thesis calls for basic thinking about conditions for liberal democracy to become possible, the impact of technology and geopolitics on the functioning of this democracy, and ways to resist multiple threats that seriously affect it (Cohen-Tanugi, 2018, p. 21). This seems to be a relatively novel understanding, and this novel and frightening "philosophy," which reminds us of the totalitarianism of the past, seems to be compatible with the culture of the digital age from a dual perspective (Cohen-Tanugi, 2018, p. 53). Generally, populism in the broadest sense is as old as politics itself, but what led to its current resurgence is debatable. It assumes a kind of self-awareness, and there is the claim that power is something attributed to its apparent owners, namely, people. However, "because they demand simple and uncomplicated answers, people prefer to compress enormously complex movements to 'a single type' or 'a single reason.'" (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018, p. 3).

Similarly, the classes that support the "new populist" parties are diverse, and more importantly, there is the idea that national populism is almost "supported only by the jobless and people on low incomes or in poverty." However, although there are differences from country to country, by collecting votes from full-time workers, middle-class conservatives, self-employed people, average or high-income people, and even the youth, they have managed to expand their network astonishingly throughout society (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018, p. 4). Far-right views naturally benefit from financial crises, and these crises mostly appeal to certain segments. In this sense, tracing the cycles of various populisms may result in the realization that what has been witnessed in terms of populism may not be new at all and may be a reminder that this can be a long-term political change. It is impossible to miss the potential to transform politics on a European and global level.

This phenomenon is also an issue brought about by different groups with common values, and because of the continuing strength of ethnic nationalism, many people have negative opinions about the way their nation has changed culturally and economically. In this respect, cultural concerns seem to be important. Concerns about the cultural incompatibility of foreign elements with local communities dictate some policies. Understanding how anxiety and irrational nationalism are related can be a guide to overcoming anxiety and populism. Besides, the development of this understanding was accelerated by the weakening of social democracy, and national populisms in Europe seem to have long-term effects on global politics as well.

This relatively new understanding has a language of its own. Within this scope, the difference between emotional language and technical language in the political realm manifests itself on many levels, and it may be necessary to understand that not all political languages are the same and not all politicians speak the same way. Nevertheless, the language of everyday politics is of two kinds. There is a kind of factual language. As its very name signifies, this is based on factual assumptions and facts and leaves no room for interpretation. The other type of language has emotional tones (Kohl, 2019, p. 41). To gain popularity and support, populist politicians often use emotional language. Nevertheless, technical language brings people closer to previously unknown subjects. But for politicians, emotional language plays an important role and serves to allow them to arouse emotions and manipulate voters.

Domestic politics encompasses multicultural identities, authentic communities, and artificial forces rather than the language used (Kazin, 2017, p. 287). The conflict between the strong and the weak arises at this point, and leading populists have found that collective anger, no matter how well expressed, is not enough for them. To build a truly national organization, social differences must be suppressed, and regional divisions must be overcome (Kazin, 2017, p. 37). Consequently, all the universal identities created during the Reformation and Enlightenment and renewed by liberals and socialists in the nineteenth century seem to be in decline (Kazin, 2017, p. 287).

As for the sociological structure of populism in Western Europe in general, it is clear that the support of the populist electorate is gained by those who can use the sense of social insecurity rather than professional status (Dubet, 2018, p. 60). Analysis of electoral behavior at the local level shows that in most cases, living with immigrants is less effective for the populist voter than fear of being “invaded” by immigrants: the FN (Front National) was voted more in elections in Alsace, where there were not many immigrants (Dubet, 2018, p. 60). Eventually, the final element of the crisis of modernity that feeds the dynamics of national populism is a

weakened democracy. Especially Western European national populisms are "examples of an anti-political, apolitical or pseudo-political orientation associated with an identity or nationalist commitment" (Perrineau, 2018, p. 71). People's demands for political activities being beneficial are ignored by new political practices. Those who feel or are forced to feel useless are primarily evaluated as useless in economic terms (Giraud, 2018, p. 16).

Ontological security is at the center of issues related to populist politics and national populism. In addition to its interest in ontological concerns, populism, in general, seems to have won spectacular victories in the public sphere with a reductionist and hysterical discourse. Irrationality appears to have exposed all its harmful forces in modern civilizations. It may also be about what politics can and should not be (Toledo, 2017, p. 311). The need for a totalitarian parallel between Nazism and Communism, as well as a clear commitment to freedom, is persistent. However, irrationality once again makes its weight felt, and it seems that globalization, the Brussels bureaucracy, the economic crisis, mass immigration, or various populisms are not the only reasons for the decline of the liberal democratic order (Toledo, 2017, p. 312). An existential attitude towards emotions affects the political structure in certain parts of Europe to a certain extent. The political disturbance in the region partially revokes the 1930s. A continent that is generally regarded as a "security exporter," "named with a caring Pax Europa, is becoming a region of volatility where terrorist violence and political disturbances are rapidly becoming commonplace itself" (Kirchick, 2018, p. 3).

All societies have differences. Exhibiting remarkable versatility, European societies differ in class and ethnic identities. It is understood from these multifaceted facts that the crisis in Europe is both political and economic. The EU consisted in devastating experiences of various nationalisms, whose legacies reappear in different forms from time to time. At the societal level, many nations in Europe suffer from a possible state of oblivion and loss of importance. Therefore, at this point, ontological security debates come down to the center of social, existential concerns (Browning, 2018, p. 7). When established belief systems are destroyed, existential concerns naturally arise, either due to external forces or internal processes, and alienation concerns may arise, and the feeling of doubt becomes stronger. As noted, people need to deal with existential concerns like destiny and death, emptiness and meaninglessness, guilt and conviction, so people need to create meaning and security. This can be achieved through a variety of interconnected and reinforcing mechanisms and practices

(Browning, 2017, p. 336). Eventually, individuals' desire to achieve ontological security by defining their understanding of home, other, nation, citizen and human concepts always remains valid.

Especially in Western Europe, ontological security practices at individual, societal and transnational levels are not exempt from this. The search for ontological security is a continuous process. "The attacks in Paris in January and November 2015 posed a significant challenge to the ontological (and physical) sense of security for many people and brought existential concerns to the fore, not only locally in Paris, but also nationally and transnationally" (Browning, 2017, p. 346). It was on this basis that those terrorists chose "soft targets" that were explicitly designed to enhance society's sense of vulnerability (Browning, 2017, p. 347). Disturbed established mechanisms of ontological security production are a result of such events, events that also disturb the established routines of everyday life, as is the case with current pandemics or forced migration (Güler and Yıldırım, 2022, p. 178).

The mindset and perceptions that emerged in certain parts of Europe after the September 11 attacks and many other terrorist attacks can be evaluated as echoes and reactions closely related to ontological concerns. Similar anxieties emerge during upheavals such as pandemics. As it is seen, in the context of existing existential concerns about threats, individuals tend to pursue and want to achieve an ontological sense of security. This is more evident against the background of discomfortable events such as terrorist attacks that cause stress; it surrounds questions regarding life, death, and meaning. Uncertainty that leads to the deterioration of security narratives and understandings in the world, and ultimately to the rise of ontological insecurities, is increasing not only in Europe but also elsewhere in the world.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, the nature of national populisms in certain European societies and their relations with ontological security, anxiety, indifference, and fear have been examined and investigated. Europe was not considered as a whole or a single entity but only Western European-oriented reactions such as Italy and France were mentioned, and the relationship between populism and ontological security was discussed to a limited extent. From this perspective, especially in the transition periods when the political systems are in serious turmoil, the opposition of the people and the elites periodically comes to the fore in European and global politics. The effects of the economic and political problems are exacerbated by the divisive attitudes of some European political actors. In this sense, ontological security needs

by some political movements and actors, many of whom are seen as populist, also appear to be being abused.

In some cases, the ontological need for security is seen as a tool for manipulating public opinion, in particular the rise of new or radical right politics. In post-Cold War Western Europe, many political parties needed to reshape their roles, and traditional right-left politics became somewhat irrelevant. Therefore, the influence of parties considered populist also seems to have determined the course of ontological security debates concretely. This study aims to better understand the interactions between various movements and actors, particularly in Western Europe. Likewise, the crisis of European social democracies forces mainstream parties to reconsider their policies on immigration, asymmetric threats, ontological concerns, and fears. Framed this way, this study sought to examine the connection between populist, anti-systemic attitudes, and particular ontological security notions in this context.

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