Polarization, Populism, and the New Politics

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Media and Communication in a Changing World

Edited by

Banu Baybars Hawks
and Sarphan Uzunoğlu

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POLARIZATION, POPULISM, AND THE NEW POLITICS: MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION IN A CHANGING WORLD

BANU BAYBARS HAWKS AND SARPHAN UZUNOĞLU

In an age of constant flux, uncertainty, and ambivalence the claim is that a new style is dominating the political sphere: Populism. From politicians to journalists, many people in the media blame populist politics for polarization, and many academic studies have been published on the nature of new populisms and new populist movements. The brand new political parties are almost immediately identified as populists by commentators.

An overall analysis of the extant literature on populism points out that the role played by the media in the production, reproduction and dissemination of populist discourses is not being explored enough. Populist phenomena cannot be understood without taking the mediatization, sensationalization, and marketization of politics and political communication. In other words, among many other things, populism might be considered as a new (political) communication style, but it is not limited to being a communicational style.

Indeed, populism is a more complex term, and populist political debate is not limited to the use of misinformation and disinformation as political communication strategies. Especially when it comes to the mediatization of populism, limiting populism studies to the scale of post-truth debate, which in itself is problematic, seems to be the most prominent problem with recent populism studies because populism is based on much deeper and more complicated structures than disinformation and misinformation.

Media related, economic and social reasons that enforce populism are often overlooked.

In this book, we are bringing media studies on populism together with populism studies from other disciplines. We have brought together articles that address the conditions that serve the dominance of populism, from the new media to the traditional media, from the use of social networks by politicians to ordinary individuals.

Populism and polarization are not unique to western liberal democracies alone. Therefore, the articles in the book break the cliche of populism research, often focusing on the same countries with similar perspectives. Instead, different countries–which could provide alternative and more interesting case studies for this branch of study–are discussed in the context of media and populism in a detailed way. We believe that contemporary UK or US focused debates on populism are very limited in terms of their representative capability, while they also provide interesting literature for further studies.

Therefore, the chapters in this book do not limit their focus to the United States and the United Kingdom, unlike similar ones. The book offers a wide perspective for readers who want to understand the functioning of populism in countries like Turkey, in which people live in the shadow of populism and where political leaders often use populist communication and political techniques.

Not only those who are interested in classical populism and polarization studies, but also those who are interested in new media or post-truth studies will find much of interest in the book.

Chapter Contents

The book has two parts. The first section is called "Media and Politics in the Polarized World" because it brings together articles about the impact of populism and polarization on the media landscape and contemporary political communication practices and politics. Following this section, we have brought together a series of chapters focusing more on digitalization and populism. Consequently, we have named the second section "Polarized New Media Culture."

Part I

The first section starts with a chapter by Suncem Koçer, focusing on post-truth culture from an anthropological point of view. In the chapter, Koçer argues that even a short genealogy of anthropological theory sheds

light on today's somewhat uncanny, post-truth culture that is soaked globally by polarizing and populist political and media performances.

The following chapter by Fulya Şen, entitled "The Mediatization of Politics: The Construction of Populist Discourses in Turkish News Media," focuses on the relationship between populist discourses and the media in the context of the mediatization of politics, and how the media use populist rhetoric to consolidate right-wing populism. In this chapter, the news content from the mainstream and left-wing media is examined with respect to two categories–media logic and political logic–through qualitative content analysis to understand the construction of populist discourse.

Following these two chapters about the media, polarization and populist discourse, Özlem Doruk Şahin's chapter entitled "Media Populism in Turkey: Analyzing the Turkey-Netherlands Diplomatic Crisis and Populist Discourse in the News Media from a Discourse-Historical Perspective" attempts to explore populist discourse in the news media by using Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), which has developed from a main version of Critical Discourse Studies. Focusing on the diplomatic crisis between Turkey and the Netherlands, the front pages of five Turkish national newspapers with the highest circulation figures published between March 10 and 17, 2017 are examined using the discursive strategies of the Discourse-Historical Perspective.

Shifting the focus from the news media or media culture to political communication, the chapter entitled "Populist Leaders and International Organizations: A Comparative Analysis" is a comparative study by Banu Baybars Hawks and Sarphan Uzunoğlu of three heads of state–Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Turkey), Donald Trump (USA), and Theresa May (UK)–in terms of their approach towards international organizations such as the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with the objective of explaining variation among such discourses, and the observable differences among the discourses of these three leaders on anti-establishment discourse, understanding of representative democracy, and purely economical dimensions.

Positioning the media as a functional tool used by some actors as a significant force, especially in the process of nation formation, the chapter by Güliz Uluç and Bilal Süslü entitled "Shadow of Victimization" aims to draw attention to the issue of the shadow of victimization through the analysis of *Munich*, produced by Steven Spielberg in 2005.

The following chapter, by Sonat Bayram, entitled "After the Global Financial Crisis: Rising Unemployment and the Emergence of Populism in Europe," is the final chapter of the first section. The chapter focuses on the

reasons for changes in voting behavior and the effects of the deterioration in the financial structure on voting behavior, and questions how the economic crisis has been transformed into a crisis of political confidence.

Part II

The second section of this book, "Polarized New Media Culture," starts with Sarphan Uzunoğlu and Mine Bertan Yılmaz's article, "Political Use of Social Networks with Populist Tactics: The Self-Repositioning of Meral Akşener through Instagram." Uzunoğlu and Yılmaz focus on how the leader of a newly emerged right-populist party named the İyi Parti used instagram during her presidential election campaign, what were the most used patterns and symbols, and how these patterns and symbols could be related to populist politics.

The following chapter is written by Göktuğ Sönmez. In "Propaganda and Polarization Online: The Case of ISIS' Online Visibility and its Fall," the link between the internet and social media and their use by terrorist groups is analyzed, and figures and data are presented in order to show the demise of ISIS' online visibility.

Shifting the focus from the Middle East to Europe, in their chapter entitled "iMemes and Polarization: Twitter Users' Stances Regarding the Catalan Independence Referendum and Catalan Regional Elections, 2017," Cristina Algaba & Elena Bellido-Pérez identify anti-propagandistic critical discourse in the imemes about Catalan independence through a mixed quantitative–qualitative methodology.

The following chapter, by Bengi Ruken Cengiz & Koray Kaplıca, on the other hand, focuses on how fact-checking takes place in Turkey's highly polarized political sphere and media landscape. Entitled "Journalistic Practice or Citizen Activism? Fact-checking in a Polarized Political Climate in Turkey," the authors use Doğruluk Payı, Turkey's first fact-checking organization established in 2014, as a case study to analyze the role and function of fact-checking in unconsolidated and polarized democracies by focusing on institutional and contextual factors that impact on its operation.

Introducing a brief discussion of populism and its rise as experienced in the early 21st century, the following and final chapter by Itır Toksöz entitled "The Cost of Populism on Science in a Global World" examines how science and scientists have come under attack in populist politics by focusing on the example of the United States.

PART I.

MEDIA AND POLITICS
IN THE POLARIZED WORLD

CHAPTER TWO

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL VANTAGE POINT ON "POST-TRUTH" CULTURE

SUNCEM KOÇER

This chapter undertakes a preliminary conceptual discussion on "post-truth culture" from an anthropological perspective. According to the infamous definition by the Oxford Dictionary (2016), post-truth is "an adjective relating to circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than emotional appeals." Post-truth has been discussed extensively from diverse perspectives since the term became widely and globally popular in 2016. It seems that the conversation around the concept will not cease any time soon. In this chapter, I use the phrase "post-truth culture" to highlight the so-called post-truth era as a process. Contained within this process are three interrelated aspects. The first of these aspects refers to speech acts that cannot be easily characterized as truth or falsehood or as fiction or non-fiction. The second one is "populism," which is predominantly a political style to which performance and mediation is central (Moffitt 2016). Finally, "polarization," which is both the foundation and the political outcome of populist discourses, is a key aspect of the post-truth culture.

Thus far, the frameworks of communication and media studies have dominated the scholarly discourse around the post-truth concept. My main suggestion in this chapter is to bring anthropological theory and research traditions into the picture in order to shed critical light on the post-truth culture, a complex constellation of speech acts which are saturated by polarizing and populist political and media performances. Anthropology as a discipline deals with forms, functions, and constructions of social reality. I argue that the long-standing disciplinary conversations in anthropology help demystify the post-truth culture and point at a unique toolkit by which researchers can study its notions and dynamics. My argument builds on three premises: 1) objectivity is an ideological construction; 2) post-truth takes place between discourse and practice; and 3) ethnography

offers a unique toolkit to study post-truth culture. Below I detail these premises based on my earlier research as well as research by other scholars in the areas of discourse, culture, and political performance.¨

Objectivity is an ideological construction

The post-truth culture materializes especially when the influence of objective facts on public opinion is deprived, the tradition of scientific inquiry is trashed in both vernacular and institutional political utterances, and the cause and effect relationship is dismissed in general. It is natural to see objectivity as the natural life buoy under the conditions of the current global political regimes. However, the analytical starting point in understanding post-truth culture from a historical perspective should be to identify the ideals of "objectivity," "objective truth," or "ultimate truth" as ideological constructions. We can add to this list of ideals the dichotomy between emotional appeals and objective facts. The idea of objectivity, objective facts, or rationality as constructions is not novel in anthropological literature. This literature provides productive windows on the dynamics of post-truth culture for media, communication, and journalism scholarship. A generative moment in anthropological theory for objectivity to be analyzed as a construct was created by the publication of the Writing Culture collection (1986). Critical anthropological discussions on representing social realities which have built around Writing Culture during and following the 1980s revealed the complex historical processes by which the ethnographic Other, while being portrayed, was indeed invented as a category. Through unquestioned tools of knowledge making in especially the colonial contexts, ethnographic reality was constructed within texts. Once aligned rigorously with science and objectivity, ethnography in fact has always been a textual practice, one which entangled the poetic with the political and which entertained only a partial access to "truth." Moreover, in James Clifford's words, science has never been above the historical and linguistic processes; science always takes place within them (1986, 2). Once professed, this awareness unveiled social and cultural reality as accessed only by virtue of fiction. During the 1980s another seminal work was *Anthropology of Experience* (1986), a collection of essays that signaled a shift in the analytical focus in ethnography toward experience, pragmatics, practice, and performance. *Anthropology of Experience* noted a critical distinction between reality (what is really out there, whatever that may be), experience (how that reality presents itself to consciousness), and expressions (how individual experience is framed and articulated). As such, expressions are not

equivalent to reality, and there is a gap between experience and its symbolic manifestation. That gap is dynamic. Ethnography is also an expression of the researcher's experience of fieldwork. So while Writing Culture folks posit ethnography as textual practice, *Anthropology of Experience* folks consider ethnography a performance or, in Ed Bruner's words, "a processual activity, a verb form, an action rooted in social situation with real persons in a particular culture in a given historical era" (1986, 7). This formulation of reality, experience, and expression that blurs the boundary between emotions and facts and the theoretical lens that sees representing social reality through textual, fictitious performances proves useful in analyzing the post-truth culture.

Post-truth culture between discourse and practice

The concept of post-truth is increasingly in vernacular use. Post-truth has indeed become an extravagant phrase to illustrate populist political rhetoric or describe the fake news syndrome, which are both globally on the rise. Yet the critical question persists. Where does post-truth start and end? How can we locate the post-truth culture? How can we fix it, albeit momentarily, in order to study its dynamics in empirical terms? Post-truth culture takes place somewhere between (journalistic, political, and popular) discourse and (the masses') actions/practice. With this coin, speech acts are the real constituents of post-truth culture as speech acts are performances that not only establish significant windows on culture but they also construct social reality (cf. Bauman and Briggs 1990; Bauman 1992). A semantic approach to discourse, which is informed by cultural and performance-based approaches, is critical to dissect the planes of post-truth culture as it sparkles between discourse and practice. Here linguistic anthropology and ethnography of political communication offer generative entry points and analytical tools to analyze the constructions of social reality and its semantic contexts.

A few studies from the political communication field help illustrate this. The first one, by Gerry Philipsen, came out in 1986. In his article, "Mayor Daley's Council Speech: A Cultural Analysis," Philipsen focuses on a controversial moment in Chicago politics, when the late Chicago mayor Richard Daley was accused of nepotism. Mayor Daley had appointed the relatively inexperienced son of a friend to a significant government post. Many harshly criticized him, most loudly a newly elected alderman who was also a professor of political science at the University of Illinois. Philipsen notes that, despite the existence of such intellectual critics, popular support for Daley did not falter at all. Philipsen

analyzes a speech Daley delivered to address the accusations and concludes that what seems politically inappropriate to Daley's critics, in fact, resonates well with the folks of Teamsterville, the Chicago neighborhood where Philipsen conducted his ethnography and where Daley is also from. Daley skillfully transposes onto his speech the symbolism that is deeply embedded in the local culture. Philipsen identifies the ways in which Daley performs the neighborhood speech patterns and utilizes the local semantics in which, for instance, taking care of sons is a sacred task. So, in Daley's view, this reflects on his speech act, and in the view of the Teamsterville community, a man had helped a friend by appointing his son to a government post. This is not just an appropriate act but indeed preferable within the local code of honor, Philipsen concludes.

In an earlier piece of research, I looked at Turkish political rhetoric about social media from a similar angle to Philipsen's. I analyzed several political propaganda speeches by president Erdoğan from late 2013 and 2014 to note numerous speech acts discrediting the Internet and especially social media (Koçer 2014). There, I employed a semantic take in examining these speech acts in their own terms. An understanding of the local coherence through an analysis of the interconnections between the immediate and the macrostructural contexts of discourse was key (van Dijk 1985). Particular rhetorical mechanisms, I noted, critically bridged the particular utterances about the Internet with the global context of the relevant political discourse at the time.

One of these mechanisms is the linguistic and rhetorical projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level. This is a mechanism that linguistic anthropologists Judith Irvine and Susan Gall call fractal recursivity (2000). Fractal recursivity helps multiply binary oppositions in discourse. To maintain these binaries, rhetoricians tap into another semiotic process, iconization, which brings linguistic features that index social groups or activities which appear to be iconic representations of them.

The skillful use of these unique techniques helps create a partisan polarization between supporters and opponents and, more importantly, transposes this polarization onto other areas. For instance, the rhetorical utilization of the government as an icon of the national will (milli irade) frames criticisms posed to the government actions as denigration of the nation itself. By virtue of this formulation, social media websites like Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook, which constituted a public sphere for political debate at the time, appear to be the means of deprecating the government and, by default, the national will. An analysis of political

discourse against a backdrop of the local semantic structure shows that assertions like "Twitter is the worst menace to societies" or "we will not leave this nation at the mercy of Youtube and Facebook" are not peculiar but sit on a coherent world of social meaning.

Ethnography as a unique toolkit to study the post-truth culture

The question of "how come the post-truth culture persists?" is a political one with an analytical dead end. An ethnographic approach turns such questions as "how do the masses buy fake news without questioning it?" into operational questions like "what agents do with fake news, what social ends do they accomplish with those pieces of information, how do they both enact and become subjects of polarizing, populist discourses, and what do these performances tell us about values, identity, power, and truth itself?" Ethnographic methodology, as much as it may seem ponderous to study today's ever changing popular and political contexts, offers a unique toolkit to see the post-truth culture from the participants' point of view (cf. Mair 2017).

A recent, influential piece of research published in the journal *Science* triggers key questions. The researchers, Soroush Vosoughi, Deb Roy and Sinan Aral (2018), analyzed the diffusion of all of the major true and false stories that spread on Twitter from its inception in 2006 to 2017. Their data included about 126,000 Twitter "cascades" (unbroken chains of retweets with a common, singular origin) involving stories spread by three million people more than four and a half million times. They cross checked these stories with six independent fact-checking institutions, and they concluded that false stories spread significantly more than did true ones; falsehood is 70 per cent more likely to circulate on Twitter.

This research documents a few things in bare, concrete terms. One of them is well known: social media is the bed of post-truth culture. Another is that falsity is spread by actual people not by bots. Also people who re-tweet false news have relatively less followers. But the critical question is still open. Why, to what end, do twitter users spread false news? It is, probably, not to spread falsity in and of itself. Is it perhaps to perform identities, or to declare political belonging, or to pose critical commentary on news culture? Only through an ethnographic perspective can we answer this question: that is, by being immersed in the lives of the actual people.

In an article reviewing the research on news sharing in social media, Kümpel et al. (2010) note a general lack of context in the literature. They review over a hundred articles and find that only 4% of the articles rely on

qualitative research. This finding highlights the limited attendance by researchers to the situational, contextual, and historical factors that circumscribe news sharing. An ethnographic approach to news sharing would help situate media users' engagement with news discourse on social media within these contexts. Earlier research of mine (Koçer 2018) illustrates this point. As part of a larger project entitled "News Culture in Turkey: Production and Reception Discourses in the Era of New Media," I looked at the critical discussions about Turkish news on Twitter and Facebook.

Based on semi-structured interviews and focus groups with several interlocutors in addition to participant observation in news production sites, I explored the social business aims of these social media users in their online news circulation. Social business, a term I borrow from anthropologist Jane Goodman, refers to the ends achieved in and through communication against a backdrop of larger questions of values, identity, or power that inform and emerge from particular interactions. That is to say, agents often gear their news discourse in social media towards actualizing certain objectives that are situated within and are informed by the immediate social and political contexts. Such ends or objectives in the case of critical social media discourse on Turkish news include generating awareness about social issues and posing criticism to the mainstream news language. Following a careful reading of their target audiences, even if they are limited, the interlocutors strategize their news sharing in diverse ways to create a space of awareness, to make certain news visible, or to "poke" their friends. One of the ways to accomplish the listed social ends through online news discourse is a detour around media the interlocutors labeled as untrustworthy and false. They, regardless, follow and share news from media outlets that they do not trust as part of their strategies of calibrating commentary on the news in social media.

Conclusion

The general tendency is to see post-truth as an epochal shift. Such a perception assumes an era of truth existed and ceased before the current one. This handy yet deceptive assumption reveals the limits of the term post-truth. As Philip Schlesinger notes, the rise of post-truth as a contemporary slogan should be taken as a signal for "a perception of change both in how the public domain is constituted and in the conduct of major protagonists in the media-political sphere" (2017, 603). What does this perception of change indicate? Focusing rather on the continuities between classical propaganda and false speech, for instance, rather than on

the perceived novelties of a new era, offers a more productive vantage point on the dynamics of the current media-political context.

   Situated ethnographic investigation helps demystify this seemingly uncanny post-truth culture. The question of how is a legitimate one. How to go beyond conducting interviews, for instance? After all, holistic employment of ethnographic methodology, which includes participant observation as its core technique, is tedious to unpack in today's fast changing popular and political contexts. Yet it certainly is worth contemplating because ethnography, a methodological and theoretical take on social reality, offers unique windows to see the post-truth culture from the participants' point of view.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE MEDIATIZATION OF POLITICS:
THE CONSTRUCTION OF POPULIST
DISCOURSES IN TURKISH NEWS MEDIA

A. FULYA ŞEN

Populist political parties have gained momentum all over the world. For example, in Europe, especially in the midst of the financial and refugee crises, populist movements have been successful in many countries (Hameleers et al. 2017). Nowadays, it is claimed that populism is set to gain strength in Europe, and populist parties have taken over the government in many countries. According to a report from The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (2017), Europe's political landscape is undergoing the most significant transformation since the end of the Cold War. Over the past two decades, populist parties have steadily increased their support, entering most national parliaments across the continent. The rise of the populists has begun to put pressure on democratic institutions in a variety of countries that had once been seen as consolidated democracies. The report says it draws a "sharp distinction between friend and enemy", with supporters portrayed as "legitimate" and opponents "illegitimate."

The popularity of Donald Trump in the 2016 U.S. elections has given rise to discussions about the links between the electoral advance of populist actors and communicating politics on everyday media. Despite differences in backgrounds and political positions, all the populist leaders who are associated with right- or left-wing forms of populism have been recognized for their savvy use of media communication (Block and Negrine, 2017). Populism is often seen as implicitly authoritarian and the enemy of pluralist democracy (Heywood, 2012; Krämer, 2014). Heywood (2012, 291) notes that "[p]opulism reflects the belief that the instincts and wishes of the people provide the principle legitimate guide to political action." In this sense, populist politicians appeal to the people and claim to represent their deepest hopes and fears.

Krämer (2014) also indicates that populism refers to charismatic leadership with a direct relationship with the people, bypassing political institutions. Mueller (2016) argues that populist regimes attempt to bring into existence a homogeneous "people," and this leads to the tendency of these governments to crack down on civil society and restrict media freedom. Pasquino (2008) also points out that populism has flourished in the absence of democracy or it has challenged existing, though weak, democratic regimes. Mazzoleni (2008) draws attention to the contribution of the media to the rise of populism. In this sense, the media have contributed to the legitimization of the issues by keywords and communication styles typical of populist leaders. Krämer (2014) also points out that the concept of media populism refers to the construction of and favoritism towards in-groups, hostility toward, and circumvention of the elites and institutions of representative democracy, reliance on charisma and (group-related) common-sense, emotionalizing, and personalizing.

This chapter discusses the relationship between populist discourses and the media in the context of the mediatization of politics and how the media uses populist rhetoric to consolidate right-wing populism. It will also deal with how the media logic determines the public sphere. In order to reveal the populist discourses, the news content of the mainstream and left-wing media is examined in terms of two categories—media logic and political logic—through qualitative content analysis. While media logic consists of polemic, polarization, and personalization, political logic refers to components such as expressing opinions, rationale, and background. Political logic also looks for the response to the questions "who gets what, when and how?"

This chapter also deals with two aspects of the relationship between populist discourses and the media: the process of the mediatization of politics and the link between media and populism. This chapter attempts to understand the role of the media in diffusing populist discourses and examines how the media contribute to the rise of populism by focusing on how news websites have covered populist themes, how journalistic routines and narratives have been operated by media logic, and how the news coverage of leaders and their populist rhetorics have been framed.

The Mediatization of Politics

The political realm around the globe has long been affected by a general process of "mediatization" of politics. The media have increasingly become the centre of the political process through the

constraints of news production. The mediatization of political communication is often characterized by the marketization of the public representation of politics and, increasingly, the distraction of people from politics. Furthermore, the personalization of political leadership is a further implication of the mediatization of politics (Mazzoleni 2008). According to mediatization theories, media narratives place more focus on the political players and their temperaments, idiosyncrasies, ideas, outlooks, and capabilities of sparking controversy than the party policies (*Encyclopedia of Political Communication* 2008). Strömbäck and Esser (2014) argue that mediatization refers to the increasing influence of the media, and that it affects all parts of politics, including the processes as well as the political institutions, organizations and actors.

The growing influence of the media within the political domain in many countries has increased concerns about the approach of the "media-driven republic." Mediatization means that political institutions are both increasingly dependent on the mass media and are shaped by the mass media (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999). Moreover, the process of mediatization is moderated by other major transformations of political life. A depoliticization hypothesis is derived from theories on how neo-liberal politics (deregulation, privatisation) and new modes of governance (networks, new public management, market-based solutions in the public sector) have diminished the domain of politics and increased the market's influence on the public's everyday lives (Djerf-Pierre et al. 2014).

Strömbäck and Esser (2014) point out that mediatization has four essential features: First, it is a long-term and dynamic process. Second, the essence of mediatization is in the increasing importance and influence of the media. Third, mediatization affects all parts of politics. Fourth, many of the media-related influences may be indirect, rather than direct, and result from how political institutions, organizations and actors more or less reactively or proactively adapt to the media and their needs to communicate through the media. Hjarvard (2008) puts forward a theory of the influence the media exert on society and culture. Accordingly, mediatization is a double-sided process of high modernity. The media emerges both as an independent institution with a logic of its own and, simultaneously, it becomes an integrated part of other institutions like politics, work, family, and religion. In Hjarvard's approach (2008), the term "media logic" points to the institutional and technological aspect of the media, including how the media distributes material and symbolic resources and operates with the help of formal and informal rules.

Hjarvard (2011) defines the term media logic as a uniform logic that resides behind every kind of media activity. Media logic refers to the

institutional, aesthetic and technological modus operandi of the media, including the ways in which the media distributes material and symbolic resources and operates with the help of formal and informal rules. According to Hjarvard (2011), mediatization theory differs from two major paradigms of media research—theories of media effects and the use of media for various purposes—occupying, instead, a third position that is sceptical of these paradigms. Mediatization theory argues that the media are not outside society, but part of its very social fabric. On one hand, the media has developed into a more autonomous, independent institution in society. On the other hand, at the same time, as an independent institution in society, it has become integrated into the workings of other social institutions.

The Concept of Populism

Populism is defined as an ideology which considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups. While characterizing "virtuous people" positively, it connotates "corrupt elite" negatively (Manucci and Weber, 2017, p.314). "Populism" is commonly used in political discourse with negative connotations. The accusation of "populism" implies demagogy. The uses of "populism" identify its binary opposite, which is "elitism" (McGuigan, 1992). Mişcoiu (2013) reviews the characteristics of "advanced populism" or "neo-populism" and points out its striking features. Accordingly, advanced populism aims at the removal of the elitist establishment. The new populists are usually "common people" (or those who try to leave this impression); they are close to the ordinary people. Populists need to make themselves known and visible in the media. The political leaders' rhetorical qualities are weak, and the new populists do not look for any consensus; they will, therefore, choose rupture, which they hope to keep under control and turn to their advantage. People are organized around a charismatic leader and anti-elitism. Gherghina and Soare (2013) also draw attention to the affinity with religion and a nostalgic outlook on the past as another feature of populism.

Houser (2018) has reviewed Müller's book, *What is Populism*?, and noted that populism includes two primary elements: anti-elitism and anti-pluralism. Accordingly, first, populism divides people into two parts, that is those who are morally pure and fully unified and the corrupt elites. Second, the populist believes that only one person can represent the authentic will of the people and that there is a single common good. The problem that is argued by Müller is that these beliefs might lead to

increasingly authoritarian tendencies. Pasquino (2008) argues that there is both a connection and tension between democracy and populism. The strong relationship between democracy and populism can be established on the basis of valuing the people. The power of the people provides an increase in the quality of democracy if the power of the people is defined concerning the degree of information and participation of the citizens/voters and structures of accountability characterizing the political sphere. However, while people are described through democratic citizenship rights and duties, at the same time, they are also defined by their tradition and history on the basis of the nation. Thus, the people are not only demos but also ethnos. Hence, this view creates populism because of being exclusionary, and it is incompatible with a democratic perspective.

Tarchi (2013) points out how "the people" is categorized in different ways by populists. The first is a "united people" or the nation. It aims to discard ideological and class divisions. A second populist version references the "common people," such as the poor or the humble workers. The third is that ethnic people represent "our people," characterised by identity and a tradition that shares particular cultural, linguistic, religious and racial roots. It is used to create a barrier against strangers, foreigners and immigrants, who can never be fully assimilated. Similarly, another classification distinguishes three definitions of the people: first, the sovereign people as the foundation of the governments' political legitimacy; second, the "ordinary people," or the "common people," refers to those who are neglected and unemployed or from a lower social class; and third, the notion of a nation-people is directly connected to the cultural connotations of an ethnos in that it refers to a group whose cohesion is ensured by geographical, historical and biological bonds. It is acknowledged that this community constitutes a real body and fights the "threats" of the multi-ethnic society (Tarchi 2013, 124-125). Populism uses these categories as the ideal image of the fundamentally homogeneous totality. In this perspective, people feel a sense of belonging to a social group not because of a particular social or professional status, but because of a shared destiny which can be traced back to tradition and historical circumstances, and they accept an identity based on a sentiment of brotherhood (Tarchi, 2013).

Populism and Media

The media cannot be separated from other structural factors such as the nature of the political system and the specific features of the social and

cultural-political climates. Populist ideas disseminate through the mass media and are led by politicians who are also news makers (Mazzoleni, 2008). Mazzoleni (2008) posits a connection between the existence of a "media populism" and the practices of commercial media outlets such as the tabloid press, talk radio and infotainment TV shows. While the media covers the sensational stories, populist leaders use the media to enhance the effectiveness of their messages and build the broadest possible public support. At this point, Mazzoleni (2008, 64) states that the media are not "independent variables," but rather are "intervening variables" in cultural, social and political processes that have more "structural" origins.

Hameleers et al. (2017) propose three types of media populism that journalists can use to cover news events: people centrality, anti-elite, and monocultural media populism. They also categorize the populist attitudes in two dimensions: anti-establishment and exclusionism. While anti-establishment refers to constructing reality through the other political elites and political distrust or cynicism, exclusionism also contains an opposition between the good people and the evil others. Block and Negrine (2017) deal with the advance and allure of populism and the populist communication style in the era of mediatization and propose a critical framework to assess the relevant features of the communicative forms of specific populist actors of the right and left. The authors analyze the populist communication style over three categories—identity, rhetoric, and use of the media—and indicate that the specific form of discourse used by the populists involves adversarial, emotional, patriotic, and abrasive speech. Block and Negrine (2017) also note that populist leaders use belligerent, direct, and simple language to connect with a disenchanted public and to present themselves as those with a solution to existing and continuing problems.

Manucci and Weber (2017) try to answer what the role of the media is in diffusing populist discourses through a content analysis measuring the presence of populist discourses in five Western European countries (Austria, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom) from the 1970s to the 2010s. The authors conclude that populism is not a new phenomenon, that there is no linear increase over the decades, and that populism in newspaper articles remains rather stable at a low level, suggesting that the media curbs rather than fosters populist discourses. Higgins (2017) portrays the features of populist discourse as angry and oppositional rather than constructive, and he proposes a media discourse engaged in an alternative to populism which reconsiders formal commitments to objectivity and balance and presumes to select and accentuate the critical principles of democratic belonging.

Populist Discourses in Turkish News Media Method

Turkey's ruling party (AKP) introduced a constitutional reform bill that would shift the governing system from parliamentary to presidential. In the wake of this, a constitutional referendum was held throughout Turkey on 16 April 2017. This constitutional reform has led to a polarization in political and civic arenas because primary democratic elements such as checks and balances were not involved in the scope. Also, it has created concerns about regime change which might result in authoritarianism. During the referendum campaign, the public debates about the proposed constitutional changes were weak and not related to the contents of the package. In particular, the political conversations and discussions were limited to polemics and slogans accusing each other, and they did not allow talk about the content of the amendment. To sum up, a mediated public sphere shaped public opinion.

In order to reveal the populist media discourses and the mediatization of politics, I have categorized the news coverage of the referendum according to the dimensions of populism: "polarization," "personalization," "people-centrism," "united people," "anti-elitism," "anti-pluralism," and "national sovereignty." This study analyzes the populist discourses in terms of the use and reinvention of cultural symbols, the defining of the enemy, and the causal and moral divide between "us" and "them." The data was obtained from online newspaper articles and processed through qualitative content analysis.

To facilitate this study, I have chosen the following four daily newspapers according to the differences in their editorial policy: *Hürriyet*, *Sabah*, *Cumhuriyet* and *Birgün*. *Hürriyet*, one of the giant media corporations, represents the centre-right. *Birgün* represents a small fraction of the left political spectrum. *Cumhuriyet* is one of the most influential secular and centre-left newspapers, both politically and historically. Finally, *Sabah* is a pro-government and liberal -Islamist newspaper. This research covered a five-month period up to 16 April 2017, on which date the constitutional referendum was held. A summary of the findings is shown in Table 1.