



REVISITING EU MIGRATION POLICY WITH POSTFUNCTIONALISM: SHIFTING FOCUS FROM SUSTAINABILITY

*CORRESPONDENCE

Sinem Abka

✉ sinem.eras@deu.edu.tr

Sinem ABKA*

Dokuz Eylül University, İzmir, Türkiye

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Zühal ÜNALP ÇEPEL

Dokuz Eylül University, İzmir, Türkiye

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Abstract

European integration has achieved its foundational goal of peace on the basis of the core values such as democracy, the protection of human rights and the rule of law. Apart from these values, the problem of democratic deficit in the European Union (EU) has been one of the main issues that scholars and Eurocrats have tried to solve. However, the various current crises in and around the EU have led to the question of democracy deficit no longer on the agenda and to the failing solidarity among member states that have been damaging those values in implementing its policies. This paper aims to analyze the politicized approaches of EU member states in the migration field. It firstly sheds light on the ineffectiveness of EU migration policy from a new theoretical perspective, postfunctionalism; and secondly shows that the EU has failed to reduce inequalities in a sensitive issue of migration, despite of its commitment to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The paper is based on qualitative methodology with international media analysis of the years between 2015 and 2024. It is argued that EU member states have followed democratic mass politics at the expense of ignoring the UN refugee regime and the goal of reducing inequalities, serving party ideologies rather than EU core values, and promoting identity issues as a tool to combat migration.

Keywords: EU migration policy, postfunctionalism, politicization, reducing inequalities, SDG10

Introduction

Prior to the middle of the 2000 s, the democratic deficit was a prominent issue in European studies. However, since the mid-2000s, the EU started to experience a continuous wave of crises, such as the Constitutional Treaty crisis, the Eurozone crisis, the rise of populism, the migration crisis, Brexit and COVID-19. Efforts to deal with these multiple crises have reduced the EU's ability to act as a superior authority over its member states. The EU's declining superiority has brought differentiated integration models in many fields and this new trend has become inexplicable with the first and second waves of European integration theories. To fill this gap in the literature, postfunctionalism is currently emerging as a grand theory which shows that the main assumptions of functionalism, intergovernmentalism and constructivism in particular are unable to explain today's politicised EU decision-making processes. Instead of

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spill-over effects, interest-based bargaining mechanisms and social learning processes, the theory argues that regional integration is directly linked to the mass politics of states in politicized areas.

According to Leuffen, Rittberger, and Schimmelfennig (2022), the politicized areas in the EU mainly consist of migration, social systems, and defense policy, which represent the central areas of the sovereignty of nation-states. Since 2015, however, migration, among other things, has been a central point of contention within the EU member states and is increasingly developing into a politicized foreign policy instrument for the Union. Although the EU Council finally reached an agreement on the 'Regulation on Asylum and Migration Management and Asylum Procedures' on June 8, 2023, this flexible system still shifts the burden under the externalization method mainly to EU border states and third countries in the context of the securitization of migration.

The EU, which promotes normative values such as human rights and the rule of law and at the same time deepens the integration process with the motto of creating unity in diversity, is violating the fundamental principles of international law, to which it has always referred, in its approach to migration. Although the EU emphasizes in the subheading on international partnerships on its official website that it will implement the UN's SDGs in all its policies and encourage EU countries to do the same, it seems that the migration policy pursued is diametrically opposed to the principle of reducing inequalities (SDG10). Against the background of these developments, this study attempts to analyze the EU migration policy and the politicization of the issue of migration at the EU level in the light of the basic assumptions of postfunctionalist theory such as party ideologies, mass democratic politics and the mobilization of national identities and so on show how member states both disrupt the integration process and violate international norms in politicized areas.

Methodologically the paper is based upon qualitative analysis by examining the international media sources on EU member states' migration policies to test the three assumptions of postfunctionalism. The time interval for media analysis is identified for the years between 2015 and 2024 since the high number of asylum seekers at the borders of Europe was considered 'migration crisis' by the EU.

The analytical framework of the article is based on the main assumptions of post-functionalism, which underlines the EU's failure to act in solidarity with member states in politicized areas. In this regard, the first part of the article explains the theory of postfunctionalism and its main approaches. The emergence and development processes of EU migration policy are then discussed in order to show how the policy has developed over time. Finally, in the analysis part, the considerations on political developments in the member states and their effects on the EU migration policy are evaluated within the scope the abovementioned three assumptions of postfunctionalism.

Postfunctionalism

Postfunctionalism is the most recent European integration theory criticizing both neofunctionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism. For those theories, European integration is an elite-driven process. Liberal intergovernmentalism asserts that domestic interests are primarily

protected and represented at the European level. On the other hand, neofunctionalism emphasizes the role of common European mechanisms like policies and institutions to achieve peace in the region. Therefore, interest groups and political elites at domestic and EU levels have determining roles within the integration. There is no specific role of the European public in these two theories (Börzel and Risse, 2008, 217).

Postfunctionalism gives an important place to the role of the public in policy-making processes. The theory can be explained with three assumptions. The first one assumes that democratic mass politics deeply influence regional integrations. This assumption challenges both neofunctionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism. As a second assumption of theory, the structure is shaped by culture and identity, as it is shared by sociological institutionalism (Leuffen, Rittberger and Schimmelfennig, 2022). Finally, the third assumption states that national identities are mobilized and self-determination demands of the public are promoted. The assumptions and their reflections on various policy fields are explained and discussed below.

Democratic mass politics

European integration theories stress the role of technocratic elites (neofunctionalism), national interests (intergovernmentalism), economic interests (liberal intergovernmentalism), or a top-down or bottom-up European identity construction process (sociological institutionalism). Differently from those integration approaches, postfunctionalism is centered upon democratic politics supported by the masses. Political or economic elites have no determining role in policy areas; however, they can be shaped by the masses' demands. The tools of this method have been using public opinion, political behavior, elections, and referendums (Leuffen, Rittberger and Schimmelfennig, 2022).

The states are different from the versions that existed twenty years ago. There have been reversals from democratization processes and democratic practices are used as tools for different goals or manipulated easily by the political elites. The public has learned to use democratic practices to the benefit of itself. However, the masses do not reflect any sensitivity to protect the rights of the disadvantaged groups and take care of the demands of the majority. This trend has considerable impacts on the EU such as confronting the politicization of migration, economic, security and health policies in member states (Leuffen, Rittberger and Schimmelfennig, 2022). The enlargement policy, migration flows, Brexit, COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war can be counted as developments triggering postfunctionalist approaches in the EU.

Hooghe and Marks (2008), Börzel and Risse (2008, 217), Leuffen, Rittberger and Schimmelfennig (2022) agree on the point that democratic mass politics and the politicization of European integration have begun with the Maastricht Treaty in 1993. They argue that the politicization process has been an important threat to the European integration project and the EU has insufficient initiatives to halt this process. Democratic mass politics has been directly influenced by national political parties and their ideologies, which are the subject of the second assumption of postfunctionalism.

Party Ideologies Matter

Hooghe and Marks (2008) argue that the politicization process in the EU has led to the fall of supranationalism and the rise of renationalization in the European continent. The authors claim that politicization created a 'gal/tan cleavage' in place of leftist/rightist cleavage in history. 'Gal' shows the new party initiatives of green/alternative/libertarian, and 'tan' shows the traditionalist/authoritarian/nationalist parties. On the other hand, Börzel and Risse (2008, 219) argue that populist parties have no clear ideology like leftist or rightist, and this fact should be taken into consideration.

The main problem in Europe does not seem to be the cleavages between the left and the right against the integration project. The new agenda is about the criticisms against migration, supranationalism, and elite-driven projects in many parts of the world. Hooghe and Marks (2018) state on this topic that a 'transnational cleavage' has been creating big gaps between the elites and the masses, the well-educated and the illiterate. These cleavages are politicized by the new political elites no matter what ideology they have or have not. It is because of that leftist or rightist or even green parties can develop populist discourses to be elected. Hudson and Puetter (2019) warn that the ruling parties in European countries are 'not constrained but circumvented' by the Eurosceptic parties since the 2010s. This trend has left no space for supranational attempts by the governments, overemphasizes the role of national identities and poses an existential threat to European integration.

Mobilization of national identities

Cosmopolitan and nationalist backgrounds have differentiated identity politics in Europe. Postfunctionalism argues that the cosmopolitans have only a limited chance to exist and that it has become difficult to realize this in the European integration process. Well-educated elites in Europe take a supranational view and try to pursue common policies, but mass politicization thwarts these efforts and the nationalist attitude is becoming more influential all over Europe. Therefore, the political parties need to change their programs and adapt themselves to the new politicization era (König, 2018).

Hooghe and Marks (2009) draw attention to the distorting role of self-determination over the European identity construction process. They emphasize that citizens watch and control the authority of the country and they demand 'self-rule'. Even though self-rule seems to be offering new freedoms to society, it has the power to ruin a regional integration like the EU (Hooghe and Marks 2009: 2). To diagnose the impact of politicization on European integration, this paper takes EU migration policy as a case study. The section below includes the historical background of the policy, the recent regulations, and developments in the field.

EU Migration Policy

EU migration policy is officially based on the UN refugee regime including the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol. It was first placed under the Justice and Home Affairs pillar with the 1993 Maastricht Treaty. With its emphasis on migration policy, the Treaty marked a turning point in the history of European integration. The

wars in the Balkans in the 1990s had a considerable impact on the EU and the Temporary Protection Directive was adopted by the Council of the EU in 2001. Refugees from the Balkans were granted temporary protection status in many European countries. As needs have changed, so have efforts to create a common asylum and migration system. However, the EU member states have not been following a common migration policy although the 2009 Lisbon Treaty abolished the pillar regime and offered a common asylum system. 27 Member States are signatories to the Refugee Convention, nevertheless the migration policy instruments are not in line with the principles of the Convention.

The Syrian civil war in 2011 has become another turning point in the EU asylum system. It played an important role in determining special quotas for each member state. However, this quota policy under the Dublin Regulation did not save the thousands of refugees fleeing war in their countries. The 1.3 million asylum-seekers at Europe's borders, as shown in Figure 1 below, was the main reason why then-German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced the 'EU Agenda for Migration' in 2015 to relocate refugees from Europe's hotspots (Toygür and Benvenuti, 2016). Populism and the rise of far-right politics in Europe have become great obstacles to the implementation of the Agenda. The European Commission acted directly under the impact of the domestic political environment of member states and started to work on a proposal for a New Pact on Asylum and Migration.

Number of asylum seekers in Europe surges to record 1.3 million in 2015

Annual number of asylum applications received by EU-28 countries, Norway and Switzerland, 1985 to 2015

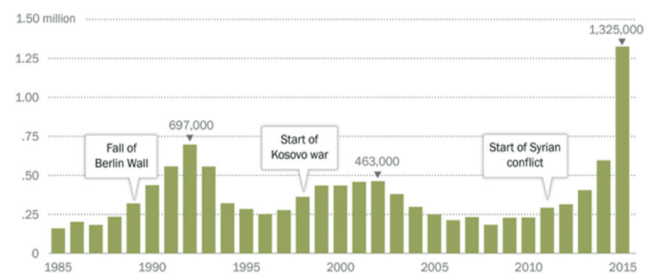


Figure 1: REFUGEES IN EUROPE UNTIL 2015 (Pew Research Center, 2016)

Eu Pact On Asylum and Migration (2023)

In September 2020, a draft law entitled 'New Pact on Asylum and Migration' was proposed as the basis for the EU Pact on Asylum and Migration. The fire and unknown number of deaths at the Moria camp in Lesbos, Greece, in 2020 prompted the EU to take more measures to protect the lives of refugees. The Pact introduced a reward system to encourage member states to accept refugees, especially unaccompanied children. As the Pact did not include rules on the resettlement and repatriation of refugees, it was not based on basic international refugee standards. Following this approach, the EU has focused on signing readmission agreements and implementing return policies since 2020 (Barthoma and Çetrez, 2021). The Pact also aimed to increase the budget of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, FRONTEX, because the EU has considered the migration phenomenon as a security threat.

Although it was expected that the draft law of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum would solve the crises in the aftermath of the migration influx, it has not happened. It took three years

for EU member states to agree on a limited number of common points, and the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum came into force in 2023. Despite the fact that the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights protects human rights, including the rights of refugees, the Pact has established a flexible system of migration management within EU countries. Readmission and return agreements with third countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Türkiye, Egypt and Tunisia have been on the agenda of migration policies since 2011. The results of these EU policies can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1: REFUGEES IN EUROPE 2015-2024 (Çebi, 2024)

Year	Number of migrant influx
2015	1.046.336
2016	373.643
2017	184.344
2018	137.080
2019	121.303
2020	97.170
2021	130.236
2022	180.686
2023	274.404
2024	27.770

The Pact stressed the ‘protection of the EU borders’ and decreasing the number of asylum-seekers rather than prioritizing their human rights. It brought new policies that can be explained under five mechanisms, such as the Screening Procedure for asylum seekers, a new Asylum Procedures Regulation, the appointment of a Return Coordinator, a new Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation and a Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism (European Commission, 2024).

The first mechanism, the Screening Procedure, will start after the arrival of non-EU irregular migrants. It is clear that this procedure will lead to more detentions or arrests. The second mechanism, the Asylum Procedures Regulation, will create a faster system than the refugee application procedure. However, this regulation will lead to a de-Europeanisation of the asylum system. The third mechanism, with the appointment of the EU Return Coordinator on 2 March 2022 to maintain a common European return system, will increase the number of returned migrants. The fourth mechanism, known as the Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation, will be used to change the rules governing asylum. EU member states have agreed that they can suspend international refugee standards in exceptional circumstances such as natural disasters, wars, and infrastructure failures like pipeline explosions. However, this approach can easily normalize the use of emergency measures and undermine the rights of refugees. Then it can result in disproportionate responses like denying people access to asylum. Finally, the fifth mechanism, the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism, agreed by 23 EU member states and associated countries, will support member states through the relocation of asylum seekers and financial contributions. Although around 1000 asylum seekers were relocated from Cyprus, Greece,

Italy, Malta, and Spain in 2023, this mechanism opened the way for opt-outs from the migration policy (European Commission, 2024).

The mechanisms described above have not contributed to following a common migration policy. Until recently, it has had the opposite effect, accelerating the politics of national identity and the nationalization of EU migration policy. The policy goals and instruments have no emphasis on the UN’s SDGs and do not serve specifically to SDG10, namely reducing inequalities. According to the data provided by Eurostat on SDG 10-Reduced Inequalities in 2024, the EU has been in progress in reducing inequalities within and among countries. This SDG goal is seeking progress in several areas such as income levels, poverty rates, urban-rural gaps, disparities in household income per capita, migration, asylum, and social inclusion. The 2024 report shows that the EU has been increasing its capacity to combat poverty and economic inequalities within and across the member states, but has no advancement in migration, asylum, and social inclusion policies over the five years (Eurostat SDG 10-Reduced Inequalities, 2024). In this vein, the section below discusses the ineffectiveness of EU migration policy as a product of the populist policies in the member states through postfunctionalist assumptions.

EU Migration Policy through the Lens of Postfunctionalism

In this section of the paper, the main assumptions of the postfunctionalist theory are applied to the populist and anti-immigrant policies of the EU member states. This application makes it possible to understand why there is a change in the policy-making capacity of the EU in the migration field. Besides, the main reasons why the EU has been turning back from its commitment to be loyal to the principles determined under the UN’s SDGs are discussed with several examples from the EU member states. This section will be divided into three parts examining the assumptions suggested by postfunctionalism. In the first part, the role of democratic mass politics in migration is analyzed using concrete examples of referendums in various EU member states. In the second part, the role of party ideologies on migration is illustrated using examples from EU member states, where it is observed that populist discourses undermine the role of ideologies in party politics. The final part uses political parties’ populist discourses about national sentiment in EU member states to illustrate how national identity mobilization affects migration.

The role of Democratic Mass Politics on Migration

The main focus of postfunctionalism theory is popularly supported democratic politics. According to the theory, economic or political factors do not determine policy areas, but they can be influenced by the demands of the masses. The primary instruments of this approach have been elections, referendums, political behavior, and public opinion. Additionally, the theory implies that the European states and their democratic practices changed in the 2000s. The recent failure of democratization has made it easy for political elites in Europe to manipulate or take advantage of democratic practices. The European citizens also are well-informed

about the democratic procedures and how to take advantage of them. Majoritarianism has been replacing plural democracy and the rights of disadvantaged groups cannot be protected, rather the needs of the vast majority are met.

In a similar vein, it is evident that some political parties back referendums on immigration laws and portray themselves as advocates of direct democracy. In addition to caring about public opinion, political leaders were motivated by this tendency to win the next elections and bolster their legitimacy for the following term. There are numerous historical examples of leaders holding referendums on migration-related issues in an attempt to legitimize their administration and win elections. For instance, Prime Minister Moraviecki of Poland intended to hold a referendum on moving asylum seekers within the EU on October 15, 2023, the same day as Poland's parliamentary elections (Hollander, 2023).

In the past, there have been other instances of EU member states holding referendums to affect EU-level immigration and asylum policies. Hungary, for example, voted in 2016 to end mandatory refugee distribution. In the referendum, the people were asked whether or not they wanted the EU to decide on the resettlement of non-Hungarian citizens in Hungary without the consent of the National Assembly. The referendum was declared invalid because the voter turnout requirement of at least 50% was not met. However, it was a significant attempt to influence EU policy on migration, with 98% of participants voting 'no' to the question (Yilmaz, AA, 2016).

Unexpected issues, though, might surface following the referendums. For instance, former British Prime Minister David Cameron negotiated new membership terms for his nation in anticipation of a vote to stay in the EU in 2016 by using the possibility of a referendum on the country's membership. It turned out, however, to be a poor decision with disastrous results of Brexit (Hollander, 2023). In this regard, Moraviecki's above-mentioned plan, which favored his Law and Justice (PiS) party, also failed. Despite winning just over 35% of the vote, PiS lost its parliamentary majority and was unable to hold on to power (Tilles, 2023).

Populist party leaders sharing power frequently use opinion polls to legitimize their positions or to give voice to the migration agenda, regardless of whether they are successful or receive the intended outcomes. The public nature of migration makes it challenging to represent disadvantaged groups at the EU level. Therefore, when it comes to pursuing a common migration policy or fostering a sense of solidarity among Member States in the field of migration, the EU poses a significant barrier to the realization of the principle of reducing inequalities outlined in the UN's SDG10.

The role of Party Ideologies on Migration

Party ideologies have played a decisive role in shaping migration policy in EU countries until 2010. While left-wing parties previously advocated a more inclusive migration policy that emphasized human rights and social integration, right-wing parties previously advocated for stricter border controls and limited immigration and portrayed migration as a threat to social cohesion (Zankina & Ivaldi, 2024). Currently, however, political leaders in Western democracies are more responsive to public opinion.

As post-functionalism suggests, the main problem in Europe is not the division between left and right against the integration project, but rather the criticism of migration, supranationalism, and elite projects. Hooghe and Marks (2018) define this new phenomenon as a 'transnational divide' that leads to major conflicts between opposing groups. All political parties, irrespective of their beliefs, now have a tendency to create populist rhetoric in order to win elections, which leads to these disputes.

As immigration has become a very sensitive issue in EU countries, parties of all ideological backgrounds, including mainstream parties, have begun to adapt their policies to voters' preferences. Therefore, when a significant portion of the electorate expresses concern about immigration, political parties today tend to incorporate tougher immigration policies into their agendas, manifestos, discourses, and/or propaganda in order to gain or retain support.

On the other hand, as suggested by Saylan and Aknur (2021) it would be an overstatement to claim that mainstream parties have undergone radicalization in every aspect and have become indistinguishable from populist radical parties. However, it is evident that populist radical right-wing parties have established themselves as significant players within the political party landscape in numerous countries, and their extreme policy suggestions have influenced various sectors considerably. These parties have effectively pressured mainstream parties to incorporate their rhetoric and policy ideas, which were previously deemed radical, particularly concerning migration.

For instance, then Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte started publicly embracing Party for Freedom (PVV) leader Geert Wilders' anti-immigrant views in his party's policies and speeches in order to stay competitive with Wilders, who was very close to him in the polls. He said before the 2017 election that immigrants who did not fit in with Dutch culture should either adapt appropriately or leave the country (BBC, 2017). Similarly, the compatibility of Islamic and Swedish cultures has been the subject of heated discussions in Sweden. By using populist rhetoric to link immigrants to the nation's rising crime rate, the center-left Swedish Democratic Party has risen to the third position in the Swedish parliament. The party made it clear in its manifesto that the country's borders should be better guarded, that only those who respect the law, Swedish culture, and society are welcome, and that they want more immigrants to go back to their home countries (Yağmurlu, 2022).

Putting aside debates over ideology, Hudson and Peter (2019) note that since the 2010s, Eurosceptic parties have not restricted but rather circumvented the ruling parties in European countries. This trend threatens European integration and deprives governments of space for supranational ambitions. This is evident in the allocation of seats in the European Parliament (EP), where a number of groups – particularly right-wing and far-right parties – can be categorized as populist. At the latest EP elections, the right-wing European Conservatives and Reformists group and the far-right Identity and Democracy group won the most seats and the highest share of seats almost equal to 18.2% (Göçmen, 2024).

As per Zankina and Ivaldi (2024), the results of the 2024 elections for the EP validated concerns about a right-wing political shift in the next five years and the rise of a right-wing populist group. The writers also stress that the radical right-wing populists

have made great strides and will continue to hold a majority in the new parliament alongside pro-European parties, despite the fact that their outcomes differed by nation and region.

The increase in Eurosceptic leaders and parties in both national parliaments and the EP will have an impact on the EU's decision-making process (van Rij, 2024). This also offers them the opportunity to weaken the EU's legislative and political decision-making powers for further integration and common policies, particularly in the area of migration. This role of party ideologies and tendencies will also negatively affect the EU's ability to act in line with its commitment to the UN's SDGs.

The role of Mobilization of National Identities on Migration

According to postfunctionalism, cosmopolitans have a limited chance of surviving, and European integration has made this difficult to accomplish. Elites with higher levels of education aim to implement common policies and have a supranational perspective. Mass politicization, however, thwarts these initiatives, and the nationalist mindset then prevails. As a result, political parties are modifying their platforms and adjusting to the new political landscape. In the current political climate, where populist parties are growing, this is taking place. As suggested by Hooghe and Marks (2009), citizens are now calling on the government to exercise 'self-rule'. However, the EU's regional authority and future integration are destroyed by the demand for self-rule.

The mobilization of national identities is actually being used as a defense against the EU's proposed migration policies. Currently, EU states are shifting away from cosmopolitanism and toward a stronger focus on their national identities. National identity and its fundamental components are deftly incorporated into the discourses and party platforms of populist parties in particular. Initially, populist parties portray themselves as the voice of the people, in contrast to the alleged elite who favor lax immigration laws. To establish a personal connection with voters, they frequently employ emotive language and anecdotes.

For example, Matteo Salvini, the leader of the Northern League refers to immigrants as 'misfits', while Le Pen, the leader of the National Rally calls them 'invaders' who are merely a burden. Some like Geert Wilders, the leader of the PVV, even go so far as to refer to them as 'scums' or 'Trojan wooden horse of terrorism', as Hungarian Civic Alliance leader Victor Orban puts it. According to Akbaba (2018), all of these leaders' word choices are meant to demonize and dehumanize the migrants.

As Pankowski (2010) notes, populist party leaders constantly use the strategy of 'weaponizing language' to portray migrants as a threat to national identity, culture, and security. Echoing the anti-migrant weaponizing language, the populist party leaders often invoke national identity in their discourses and propose migration policies to establish connections to the culture of the common and ordinary and to appear as ordinary citizens. These are especially evident in their election platforms and/or manifestos, which primarily contain references to and sentiments of nationalism. Before the general elections in the Netherlands, for example, PVV leader Geert Wilders systematically emphasized Dutch traditions

and culture by promising to change the country's broadcast language from English to Dutch, work more closely with Flemish people in Belgium, with whom they had close cultural ties in the past, implement a national anthem, and, last but not least, forbid wearing Islamic attire and customs in public (Abka, 2021).

Leaders of populist parties in several EU nations have made claims and made promises that follow the same pattern. Take the Alternative for Germany (AfD) in Germany, for instance. It focuses on the need for migrants to assimilate culturally and linguistically, the prohibition on the building of new mosques if they are funded by foreign nations, and the prohibition on the use of Islamic customs and attire in public areas (Söylemez, 2021). Similar assumptions are made by the Danish People's Party (DF), which holds that being Danish is inextricably linked to being a member of the monarchy, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the use of the Danish language—all of which are regarded as essential elements of democracy. The DF, like the AfD, places a strong emphasis on the value of immigrant integration (Aknur, 2021).

The emphasis on national identities has eventually led to increasing calls for stronger migration policies, such as more physical barriers and patrols to stop particularly illegal immigration. As demonstrated by the examples of Poland's detention of refugees (Euractiv, 2020) and Hungary's installation of barbed wire fences to prevent refugees from crossing the border from Serbia (BBC, 2016) populist rhetoric and discourse have ultimately resulted in the implementation of more stringent border controls and migration laws.

The leaders of populist parties, always presenting themselves as protectors of national sovereignty against alleged foreign invaders, have finally begun to criticize the EU's attempt to establish a common migration policy, saying it undermines not only the national but also the European values. Accordingly, they also began to portray themselves as defenders of European values, culture, and civilization with slogans such as 'Europe for Europeans', 'Pure Europe', and 'white bastion of civilization' in contrast to the idea of 'unity in diversity'. Akbaba (2018). As a result of this tendency to defend European culture, populist leaders redrew the borders not between EU member states, but between natives and immigrants. Both nationally and within the EU, the focus on identities has resulted in marginalization. Building an inclusive model that takes into account underprivileged groups and fosters a sense of solidarity is therefore getting harder at the EU level.

Conclusion

As postfunctionalism suggests, EU citizens and bureaucrats have learned from previous crises how to influence EU policymaking. This article noted that democratic procedures are now being used as a tool against the common policies of populist parties. As one of the most significant crises facing the EU, migration has become a politicized area of EU policy, especially given the political orientations of leaders at the national level.

It can be observed that both the global and regional crises have encouraged the rise of nationalism and the politicization of issues within the EU. One of the biggest problems facing the EU in the 1990s was the problem of democratic deficit in EU policy-

making. This problem was mainly due to the fact that EU citizens were not effectively represented by the EP, which led them to distance themselves from the EU policy-making mechanism. Today the problem of the democratic deficit has been reduced by the greater involvement of the EP in EU legislation. However, the more the democratic deficit is reduced, the more European integration and its ability to make collective decisions will be damaged as long as democracy is limited to the voices of the masses. This damage is visible in the EU migration policy, which has been politicized by the results of the political parties' discourses, the referendums and opinion polls of the populist parties opposed to elite projects, and finally by the opt-out systems used by EU member states where Euroscepticism and anti-immigrant sentiment prevail.

In summary, all these internal challenges make it impossible for the EU to manage migration flows from third countries in a normative and coherent manner with international migration management systems. The international migration management systems are essentially based on the principle of reducing inequalities, which the EU cannot take into account in these circumstances since the populist leaders are very successful in provoking the masses, but the masses only represent the majority, while leaving out the disadvantaged groups behind.

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The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

The authors confirm being the sole contributor of this work and have approved it for publication.

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