

**Right-wing Populist Governments' Rhetorical Framing of Economic Inequality:  
The Cases of BJP in India and AKP in Turkey**

By

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# **RIGHT-WING POPULIST GOVERNMENTS' RHETORICAL FRAMING OF ECONOMIC INEQUALITY**

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## **Thesis Abstract**

How do right-wing populist governments (RPGs) address and frame high levels of economic inequality? What role does right-wing populism play in the depiction of inequality? Which economic themes are focused on to divert the discussion from the issue? As populism studies usually associate concerns for economic distribution with left-wing versions of the phenomenon, the way RPGs address inequality has been mostly neglected. The literature on the framing of inequality also provides only limited anticipation regarding the possible effects of right-wing populist rhetoric on the issue. However, the intersection of RPGs and high levels of economic inequality has become a phenomenon that is difficult to overlook in the global South. This thesis provides an analysis of RPGs' framing of economic inequality. For this purpose, BJP in India and AKP in Turkey are utilized as the two cases of a 'Most Different Systems Design'. I examine Modi and Erdoğan's official statements as well as their respective political parties' election manifestos by adopting content analysis methodology to test the hypotheses of this thesis. Overall, I argue that RPGs utilize moral blaming, individualizing, and equality of opportunity frames; and they consistently emphasize their success in poverty alleviation while addressing economic inequality which they use as an umbrella term.

**Keywords:** Right-wing populism, Economic inequality, Rhetorical framing, India, Turkey

# SAĞ POPÜLİST HÜKÜMETLERİN EKONOMİK EŞİTSİZLİĞE DEĞİNME BİÇİMLERİ

## Hindistan’da BJP ve Türkiye’de AKP Vakaları

### Tez Özeti

Sağ popülist hükümetler (SPH’ler) artan ekonomik eşitsizliği ne şekilde ifade ederler? SPH’lerin eşitsizlik tasvirlerinde sağ popülizmin oynadığı rol nedir? Bu hükümetler tartışmayı ekonomik eşitsizlikten uzaklaştırıp, ekonomiyle ilgili hangi konulara odaklanırlar? Popülizm çalışmaları ekonomik eşitsizlikle alakalı kaygıları çoğunlukla sol popülizmle bağdaştırdıkları için, literatürde sağ popülizmin eşitsizliğe yaklaşım ve değinme biçimleri çoğunlukla göz ardı edilmiştir. Halbuki özellikle Küresel Güney’de, artan ekonomik eşitsizlik ve SPH’lerin yolları kesişmekte ve bu kesişimleri görmezden gelmek zorlaşmaktadır. Eşitsizliği tartışma ve ifade etme biçimlerini ele alan araştırmalar da sağ popülist söylemin ekonomik eşitsizliği anlamlandırma ve ifade etme üzerine muhtemel etkilerini incelemeye yetersiz kalmaktadır. Bu tez, SPH’lerin ekonomik eşitsizliğe değinme ve onu tartışma biçimlerini analiz ederek literatürdeki bu açığı doldurmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla, Hindistan’da BJP ile Türkiye’de AKP ‘En Farklı Sistemler Tasarımı’ vakaları olarak karşılaştırmalı şekilde incelemektedir. Tezin hipotezlerini test etmek üzere Modi ve Erdoğan’ın resmi açıklamaları ile BJP ve AKP’nin seçim beyannameleri içerik analizi metodu benimsenerek incelenmiştir. Sonuç olarak, SPH’lerin ekonomik eşitsizlikten bahsederken sıklıkla ahlaki suçlama ile bireyselleştirme ve fırsat eşitliği temalarını kullandıkları ve eşitsizlik terimini bir ‘şemsiye tabir’ şeklinde kullanarak yoksulluğu azaltmadaki başarılarını öne çıkardıkları tespit edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Sağ popülist hükümetler, ekonomik eşitsizlik, eşitsizliğe değinme biçimleri, Hindistan, Türkiye

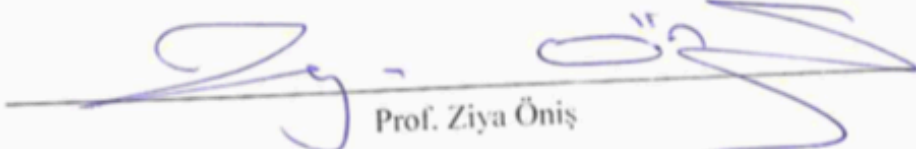
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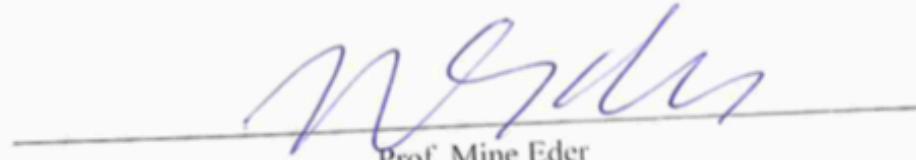
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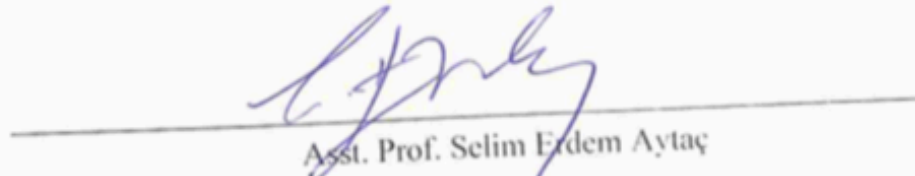
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and have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by the final  
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## ABBREVIATIONS

**AKP:** Justice and Development Party (Turkish abbreviation)

**BJP:** Bharatiya Janata Party

**INC:** Indian National Congress

**RPG:** Right-wing Populist Government

**RPP:** Republican People's Party

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## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Research Question**

Economic inequality has been increasing around the world regarding both income and wealth distribution. Emerging market economies have been experiencing significant and positive economic growth, which resulted in poverty alleviation but also exacerbated levels of economic inequality due to the unbalanced and deregulated distribution of the benefits of this expansion. Correlatively, the issue of economic distribution has drawn significant attention once again after the Global Financial Crisis which enabled discussions about the sustainability of the existing neoliberal economic system and fueled the search for mechanisms to mollify the consequences of possible future crises. In line with these developments, there has also been increasing scholarly attention paid to the discussions about the approaches to economic inequality as well as rhetorical framing of the issue. The relationship between variation in the interpretation of economic gap and other politically relevant variables such as democratization and nationalism has been relatively fertile and understudied subjects within academia.

Simultaneously, we are observing the revitalization of a political phenomenon called populism, which has been spreading around the world through very diverse regions and influencing the way politics is discussed, perceived, and conducted. It is an anti-elitist, anti-pluralist political perspective which suggests a Manichean worldview between allegedly corrupt establishment and dignified masses, and advocates handing the sovereignty to 'the people' by electing their real political and populist representatives. Populist political parties and leaders, especially their right-wing variants, have been dominating the internal politics of numerous countries sometimes by influencing and directing public discussions as extremist political parties outside of the establishment. Other times they win elections and not only influence discussions but also directly shape policies and alter political institutions.

Even though the literature on populism usually associates concerns about economic distribution and redistribution with the phenomenon's left-wing typology, some countries which are governed by right-wing populist parties and leaders have also been experiencing very high levels of economic inequality. In other words, there are geographical and contextual intersections between these two widespread phenomena. While acknowledging the more superior and organic link between left-wing populism and perturbation about the economic gap, this research aims to address the overlooked coexistence of the domination of right-wing populism with high levels of economic inequality in the literature with the following central and follow-up questions:

-How do right-wing populist governments (RPGs) address and frame high levels of economic inequality?

-What role does right-wing populism play in the depiction of unequal economic distribution?

In order to answer these questions, official statements of the leaders and election manifestos of RPGs are reviewed by utilizing content analysis as the research method to test the three hypotheses of this study about RPGs' framing of economic inequality. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India under the leadership of Narendra Modi and Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey with its popular leader Tayyip Erdoğan are selected as the two cases of this research to illuminate the above-mentioned questions.

The results of the analysis illustrate that RPGs mostly use moral blaming, equality of opportunity, and individualizing frames to address economic inequality. Findings of this research also demonstrate RPGs' utilization of inequality as an umbrella term to indicate not only unequal economic distribution but also social injustice and poverty. This strategy enables them to blur the distinction between equality of outcomes and opportunities and intermingle responsible actors as well as remedies to overcome the problems. Moreover, while this research confirms the current

understanding regarding RPGs' limited concern over inequality, it also shows the nuances in their approach concerning the unit-of-analysis. In other words, RPGs may abstain from referring to and problematizing the issue of inequality in general, but there also seems to be a pattern within their limited discussion of the issue in terms of problematizing global, regional, and historical types of inequality more than recent and national versions. Overall, this research provides an opportunity to revisit the relationship between RPGs and economic inequality with the questions it poses. While it confirms some of the existing expectations through the literature, it also challenges the veiled and unquestioned assumptions about right-wing populist political actors' approaches towards inequality by describing the way they address and frame economic distribution.

## **1.2. Purpose**

This study aims to determine the frames which are used by RPGs while addressing economic inequality and diverting discussions on this issue to other economy-related topics. The concept of framing is utilized to analyze RPGs discourse because it suits the purpose of this study to analyze the way right-wing populists' present the reality, its drivers, responsible actors, and remedies from a specific perspective. There are several reasons to pay attention to the way RPGs interpret and present the discrepancies within the economic distribution. First, economic inequality has been increasing around the world, both in the form of income and wealth. As the issue waits to be addressed, discussed, and problematized, a phenomenon called right-wing populism has returned and spread around the world influencing political procedures, discussions, and institutions of very different countries. Right-wing populist parties started to influence, direct, and even dominate public discussions and opinion. The issue of economic distribution cannot be exempt from such influence. However, this novel concomitant existence of these two rising phenomena has been studied enough neither by populism nor framing of economic inequality literature. This thesis aims to fill in this gap in the literature by examining the influence of right-wing governments' rhetorical presentation patterns on the issue of economic inequality.

In order to pursue that goal, two relevant but very diverse cases are selected, and the framing of economic inequality within these cases is analyzed. More specifically, the right-wing populist political governments and their leaders in India and Turkey are examined to illuminate RPGs' framing of economic inequality in times of widening income and wealth gap. These political parties' election manifestos and their leaders' official statements and speeches are reviewed to determine the patterns that constitute the frames which are utilized by them to address economic inequality or divert the issue through other rhetorical strategies. By analyzing the findings of this research process, this thesis aims to understand right-wing populist rhetoric's influence on addressing, describing, and problematizing economic inequality, especially in two emerging market economies which are ruled by such governments but geographically overlooked within populism literature.

### **Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis is composed of five chapters. After presenting the research question and the purpose of the thesis, this first chapter ends with the clarification of the main concepts used in this study such as framing, economic inequality, and populism with a specific focus on its right-wing version. First, the concept of framing is introduced and explained with references to previous conceptual discussions within communication studies. Framing is the most important concept for this study because it constitutes the core of the dependent variable of this research design. Then, the substance of economic inequality concept is elucidated for this thesis's purposes. This concept is only briefly mentioned without going into further details because generally there is consensus in the literature regarding its description and measurement, unlike the two other concepts of this research. Lastly, the discussions about the description and conceptualization of populism are introduced. It is the longest part of this chapter because populism has been such a contested term that is considered to be challenging to define and measure. Six different approaches towards populism are narrated in this part. The distinction between right-wing and left-wing populism is

also explained since this thesis deals with only the right-wing version of the phenomena. Towards the end of each part of this chapter, the adopted conceptualizations of the terms are clarified and justified while keeping the purpose of this thesis in mind.

The second chapter includes the theoretical discussions as well as the literature review of this thesis. This chapter consists of three sections, each of them focusing on different pieces of literature that are considered to be relevant for this study. First, theoretical discussions about the framing of and main approaches to inequality are reviewed. Then, the current relevance of economic inequality is presented to provide a contextual basis for these discussions. Later, empirical studies on framing inequality are reviewed not only to underscore the impact and relevance of the topic but also to introduce the popular focal points of research, assumptions, and disputes within the literature. Secondly, the chapter's focus shifts towards the relevance and power of framing within populist politics. It is crucial to understand the peculiarities of populist rhetoric and its distinctively compelling character to make sense of the framework of this thesis. Therefore, the drivers of the persuasiveness of populist communication are referred to one by one. Before starting the fourth chapter, several prominent research on the relationship between left- and right-wing versions of populism and economic distribution are reviewed to aptly hypothesize about the possible frames that right-wing populist governments utilize while addressing inequality.

The third chapter includes the explanation of hypotheses, the research design, justification of the selected cases, and the adopted methodology to conduct this study. It starts with the introduction of the hypotheses. Three main hypotheses of this thesis are explained in the first section with their assumptions. For each hypothesis, possible confirmation and rejection scenarios that may occur out of their relevant data and analysis are portrayed briefly. Then, the research design and the justification of case selection are put forward in the following section. For this purpose, the background of the Indian and Turkish cases regarding their economic distribution are summarized. This chapter ends with the methodology section in which two pillars of data

collection and analysis are presented in detail. Data universe, time horizon, selected keywords, number of reviewed documents, predetermined rules of the analysis, and unanticipated problems of the data collection and analysis processes are mentioned in this section as content analysis strategy is justified as the methodology of this thesis.

The findings of the research and the analysis of the data are presented in the fourth chapter. First, the general rhetorical approaches of BJP/Modi and AKP/Erdoğan are presented, respectively. The way they address the issue of economic inequality is reviewed both in general but also with specific references to the income inequality and the wealth gap within their countries or across the world. Their most frequently mentioned drivers of, responsible actors for, and remedies to economic inequality are reviewed in the findings section. The importance attributed to the alternative economy-related topics within their official statements and election manifestos is also underlined to understand how they divert the discussion away from unequal economic distribution. Temporal changes in their arguments about inequality are referred to if any. Then, the remaining of this chapter is allocated to the analysis of their populist rhetoric regarding inequality from the framing perspective. Starting with the demonstration of the blaming frame through which RPGs blame internal and external scapegoats for increasing inequality, the section then introduces the morality frame. This frame is used as an analytical tool to understand the way RPGs establish a moral hierarchy between rich and poor to sustain the Manichean worldview narrative, and also among rich to legitimize wealth accumulation of specific favored individuals or groups over others. Then, the individualizing frame is discussed with references to RPGs' rhetoric hand in hand with their consistent idealization of equality of opportunity rather than equality of outcomes. The analysis section concludes with the argument that RPGs in India and Turkey use their success in poverty alleviation and social services through their statements to sustain and compensate for the reflections of increasing inequality.

The last chapter of the thesis focuses on the discussions that emerge out of this research's findings and analysis in addition to the suggestions for further research on the populist framing of inequality. First, the commonalities and differences between the cases of BJP/Modi and AKP/Erdoğan are reviewed regarding their framing of economic inequality. Possible reflections and implications of convergences and divergences in their framing are discussed. Then, the contribution of the study to the relevant pieces of literature is examined. This study aims to fill the gap left by populism studies and framing of inequality literature through analyzing the influence of the former concept on the latter in times of high inequality. Lastly, the limitations of this thesis are pointed out, and the directions towards future research on this topic are suggested. Specifically, further studies can increase the external validity of this study's findings and arguments by integrating additional cases from both right and left ideological spectrum to this research design.

### **1.3. Conceptual Clarification**

In this section, three main concepts of this thesis are explained and elaborated for the analysis and arguments of this study are extensively based on them. Framing is the amorphous first concept to be held under scrutiny. The discussions on its conceptualization are briefly introduced, and the logic behind the selection of Entman's (1993) version of it is provided within this section. Then, economic inequality is the following concept that is explained. Again, the concept is presented briefly without going into detail concerning conceptual discussions since there are commonly accepted description and measurement strategies for the concept. The third and last section of this chapter reserved for the most contested topic of the thesis: populism. This popularity and contentious characteristic of this concept require a more detailed discussion and introduction of several approaches towards it. As the explanations for adopting a combination of ideological and discursive approaches are offered, the chapter finishes with the description of the distinction between right-wing and left-wing versions of the phenomenon.



### **1.3.1. Framing**

Conceptualizing framing is difficult for there is a plurality of interpretations of the term. The literature is still indecisive about the way to describe a frame. As the pioneer of framing research, Erving Goffman (1974) defines framing as a “schemata of interpretation” that people employ to make sense of reality. According to Goffman, people use frames to locate, identify, perceive, and label issues, events, and topic. He also pays attention to the context and underlines the vital role of existing beliefs and worldviews within frames. For Gamson and Modigliani (1989), frames underscore certain features of an issue with greater emphasis compared to an alternative frame through which these exact features may appear irrelevant.

Regarding these two descriptions, one can understand that the term intrinsically has a subjective characteristic that affects people’s perception. However, there is also a third conceptualization, which is commonly referred to and adopted by the communication literature. Entman (1993, p. 52) defines framing as “selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.” At first, this definition may seem vague or too broad. However, it captures all the dimensions that constitute framing and glimpses at the relevance and power of the concept by listing its possible workings.

Studies demonstrate the power of political messages as well as the way they are conveyed on the audience and show the relevance of framing for a broad range of issues in different contexts from morally contested topic such abortion (Gerrity, 2009) and death penalty (Baumgartner, Linn, & Boydston, 2010) to taxation (Schaffner & Atkinson, 2009). For this study, this concept is utilized to understand and analyze populist politicians' and political parties' rhetoric about economic inequality and the economy in general. Rather than just understanding the way inequality is addressed, this study also aims to illuminate when it is not mentioned and the alternative topics

that are emphasized more than inequality to a certain extent. Entman's description of framing is adopted throughout this thesis because the purpose is not merely analyzing the textual definitions and representations, but also examining suggestions to overcome and the implied drivers behind the issue as well as the ways it is emphasized or overlooked and morally assessed.

### **1.3.2. Economic Inequality**

Compared to framing or populism, it is relatively more comfortable to describe the concept of inequality for there are globally accepted standard measurements such as the Gini coefficient or the percentage of sources held by top percentile or decile employed to indicate the national and global distribution of economic sources. Income inequality is the disparity in money regularly received from employment and investments such as pensions, rent, or interest on savings. Meanwhile, wealth inequality means that the disparity in the total amount of assets in the form of property, bonds and stocks, personal valuables, savings, and alike. The concept also offers an advantage regarding the availability of the data. While data on income inequality has been consistent and available for decades, the absence of data concerning wealth distribution is also a thing of the past thanks to numerous reports published on the issue by the globally respected organization, primarily through the 2010s.

When using the term economic inequality, this study considers both the income and wealth gap, unlike most studies which reduce inequality to only unequal income distribution. By adopting this combination, this study aims to understand frames of income and wealth inequality together but also to illuminate if there are any differences between the frames which have been used to address these phenomena by right-wing populist governments.

### **1.3.3. Populism**

Populism is here to stay with us. As of 2019, populist politicians and politics are in full view and significantly influential on almost all continents. Europe has been experiencing the

incremental impact of populist politicians, such as Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders, Silvio Berlusconi, Viktor Orbán, on their politics. Latin America, the templet region for populist politics for many years, saw a reiteration of the phenomenon with Nicolás Maduro, Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales, and now with Jair Bolsonaro. When Donald Trump won the 2016 presidential election in the US, it took the world by surprise. However, populist politics' rising influence was reflected in the USA's politics even when the right-wing populist Tea Party caused the government shutdown of 2013. This global wave has echoed around Asia due to politicians like Thaksin Shinawatra, Rodrigo Duterte, and Narendra Modi while emerging populism is also sweeping Turkey with Tayyip Erdoğan and Russia via Vladimir Putin.

As globally famous populist leaders are spread around the world, one can argue that populism and populist politics transcend the popularity of individual politicians. Populism also revolves around established and institutionalized political parties and specific policies of non-populist political parties and politicians. Consequently, people enter the realm of uncertainty as soon as they mention the word 'populism'. By this concept, do we refer to just a discursive strategy, a political style, an ideology, a political leader, or a particular type of policies? There are several popular answers to this question in the literature, and they are addressed below. However, regardless of these perspectives' differences, they all agree on populism's two main distinct features compared to other forms of politics. When populism exists 'elites' are marginalized, portrayed as corrupt and immoral, and positioned against 'the people' who are assumed to be a homogeneous innocent group with better moral principles. What is more, populist actors and organizations claim to be the only voice of this homogeneous category called 'the people'. The creation of this moral dichotomy and the claim of being the only political actor representing the will of people is acknowledged across studies that have diverse approaches towards the topic.

The first approach this study examines defines populism as a political logic. The leader scholar of this paradigm, Ernesto Laclau (2005) addresses the issue of populism almost as if he

aims to blur the meaning of the concept. Unlike other paradigms, the one developed by Laclau refers to populism as a way (or logic) that leads to the construction of the political. As such, anything that is considered as political cannot escape being also populist from his perspective. He highlights the crucial role that the unsatisfied demand plays as the root of populism and the political. According to him, in every society, there is a tension between two antagonistic groups, and this tension inevitably evolves into the pressing expression of unsatisfied demand of the other group against 'the enemy'. Laclau (2005) does not define this demand by only referring to the dissatisfaction of the people, but the combination of mass demand and political enterprise. He ignores neither linguistic nor performative features of the phenomenon and considers it as a process. While this paradigm is in line with the other popular studies which also emphasize the dichotomous nature of populist societies, according to Laclau's perspective, anything and everything political is populist. Consequently, the concept itself starts to lose its meaning, analytical advantage, and empirical applicability to real-life cases.

There is a second approach which chooses to define populism as a political style. Benjamin Moffitt is the most prominent scholar of this paradigm. He conceptualizes populism as a political style. What Moffitt (2016) means by 'political style' is "the repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performance made to audiences that are used to create and navigate the fields of power that comprise the political, stretching from the domain of government through to everyday life" (2016, p. 38). As such, he draws the readers' attention to politicians' performances which embody both the rhetorical/linguistic dimension in written and spoken forms as well as at the general discursive level and the aesthetic/visual dimension that can include images or staging.

Consequently, understanding populism through the lens of Moffitt can provide the advantages discursive approach and move beyond them since it also takes what is beyond rhetoric into account. Besides, he also underlines the importance of these performances' target, domain, symbolic mediation, and points out the possibility of political exploitation of targets through these

performances. Moffitt claims a similarity between his approach towards populism as a political style and Laclau's (2005) as political logic for they both focus on the performative aspect of the concept. However, he also distinguishes these paradigms and criticizes the political logic approach for the yielding way it conceptualizes 'performance' that may undermine the concept itself as a valuable analytical tool (2016, p. 40-41).

Thirdly, the concept of populism is defined by some scholars as an ideology. Dutch political scientist Cas Mudde (2004, 2007) spearheads this approach. He defines populism as “a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people” (2004, p. 543). As one of the dominant approaches in the literature, this conceptualization of populism considered to be minimal which makes it advantageous for comparative research and leaves the door open for its combination with other ‘host ideologies’ such as nationalism or socialism. One thing peculiar to Mudde’s approach is the way he emphasizes the crucial role ‘morality’ plays in populist politics. This emphasis illuminates how populism operates by reminding us that the distinctions drawn between the people and the elite are not based on actual features but rather on moral perceptions. In line with this emphasis, the ideological approach aims to examine the issue by focusing on the ideas and norms of populism. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) and Kaltwasser (2018) also argue that populism is mainly comprised of a specific set of ideas which are established around the imaginary moral dichotomy between the elite and the people and the demand for popular sovereignty. While emphasizing the ideas creates an advantage for capturing the impact of populist political parties on mainstream political agenda, it also contains pitfalls due to casting its net wide by designating its unit of analysis as ideas and norms which can be complicated and confusing for empirical research.

Fourthly, there are scholars such as Weyland (2001; 2017) and Barr (2009) who conceptualize populism as a political strategy. Weyland shifts the attention towards the direct and unmediated nature and the personalization of power of populist appeal. The concept is evaluated by Weyland (2017) as a political strategy while he is pointing out the difficulty of appealing towards ‘the people’, which is composed of the masses that are not necessarily homogeneous, via mechanisms that are not institutionalized. He mentions the core elements of the concept through this lens and highlights populist mechanisms such as creating a common enemy, using new forms of media, claiming to represent the will of the people, all of which are utilized to consolidate and reinforce this direct and noninstitutionalized bond between the leader and the people. Barr (2009) also underlines the importance of the political leader and his attempts as the core elements of populism. Like Weyland, he assumes that the populist leader presents himself as an outsider to gain and maintain political power (2009, p. 38). In return, this assumption of intention leads to populism's conceptualization as a political strategy. Political-strategic paradigm has the advantage of determining a manageable, limited unit of analysis, which is the populist leader. Rather than looking for a consistent political ideology, logic, or style, this approach directly focuses on the assumedly opportunistic populist politician with his ideas and tactics to appeal to as many people as possible. However, the same top-down approach that Weyland and Barr also represent risks overlooking political organizations and ‘the people’ as agents of populism. Besides, this approach fails to depict populist politicians' seemingly counterintuitive, self-destructive, or inconsistent behavior. It is not clear how one should separate populist leaders' certain behaviors as populist political strategies and others as non-strategic actions.

The fifth approach to the conceptualization of populism is influenced by the discipline of sociology. Pierre Ostiguy (2007) interprets populism as a form of the political relationship between the populist politician and the public. Recognized as the socio-cultural approach, it underlines historical embeddedness of populism in different contexts by acknowledging the importance of

both socio-cultural and politico-cultural components of this phenomenon. In other words, this approach does not consider political leaders as the sole actors of populist politics, contrary to most other approaches, but takes the supporters also into account by analyzing their political affections. According to Ostiguy (2007), both ideological and political strategic approaches overlook populism's relational dimension and consequently neglect to examine its appeal. This approach suggests shifting the focus of analysis towards a two-dimensional political space defined through left-right and high-low axes. By high-low axis, he refers to the appropriacy of political manners and procedures. As such, the attention is drawn towards populism as an ordinal category which enables its comparison across different times and regions. Even though the socio-cultural approach attempts to explain populism by making sense of its appeals, it is not clear whether the axes or their combination provide a novel conceptualization of populism. Besides, its emphasis on the concept's relational aspect does not seem useful for analysis compared to the performative perspective of Moffitt's political style approach.

The latter approach in the literature prefers to study populism as a political discourse or a communication style. As such, this approach pays attention to the “contextually produced linguistic and discursive choices in populist rhetorical repertoires” (Ekström, Patrona, & Thornborrow, 2018). Jagers and Walgrave (2007, p. 322) describe the term as a “political communication style of political actors that refers to the people” and stresses the sovereignty of the people. Contrary to the definition of old populism which has been understood in terms of actual macroeconomic inflationary policies, new populism usually indicates a symbolic appeal to the masses, which is mostly mediated through language and discourse. Therefore, scholars have been focusing on populist political parties' and politicians' discursive strategies rather than their style, logic, or strategy in other realms to grasp the dynamics of this phenomenon (Wodak, 2015; Lisi & Borghetto, 2018; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Hawkins, 2009; de Vreese, Esser, Aalberg, Reinemann, & Stanyer, 2018).

After reviewing all existing popular paradigms in the populism literature, some of them are eliminated regarding their utilization for this research, either practical or theoretical reasons. Political logic paradigm has the disadvantage of operationalization due to the concept's broadness. The political style approach that focuses on the performative dimension is theoretically more suitable for operationalization but runs into the measurement problem for it is challenging to operationalize and measure populist political performances' every dimension that Moffitt lists within the boundaries of this research. Conceptualization of populism as a political strategy overlooks the role of political organizations and voters as core actors of the phenomenon. On the contrary, this study aims to include both individuals, organizational, and societal levels into the analysis. Lastly, the two-dimensional perspective suggested by the socio-cultural approach fails to devote enough attention to other possible core elements of populism by limiting its focus only to high-low and left-right dichotomy in advance.

It is important to note that these paradigms that are listed above are not separated from each other with clear-cut borders. Adopting the political style approach does not necessarily mean one cannot mention populism also as a political logic. Moreover, some scholars combine different approaches. For example, Ruth Wodak (2013; 2015) considers populism as a discursive strategy. Thus, she embraces both discursive and political strategic approaches in her empirical analyses. Based on the diversity of the existing paradigms, this research adopts the combination of ideological and discursive approaches. Conceptualized as a thin-centered ideology, which is usually combined with a host ideology, Mudde's approach suits this study's purpose to compare two regionally distant and seemingly incomparable cases of populism. Understanding populism as a set of ideas and norms renders this concept general enough to be applied to very different cases to be compared but also specific enough to be operationalized for empirical analysis. Also, ideological paradigm's strong emphasis on the formation of morality coincides with the perspective of this research which focuses on the perceptions of the populist leaders, parties, and public



alongside the link between real levels of inequality and populism. These perceptions both shape and are being shaped by the processes in which morality is continuously constructed and reconstructed. Determining who is acceptable or which behaviors are approved, whereas others are labeled as immoral is a core process of populist politics. Therefore, the ideological approach is utilized in this study in order to examine the set of ideas that populist politicians and organizations put forward while influencing moral distinctions in society. Meanwhile, the decision to simultaneously adopting the discursive approach has been made in line with the aim of this study. In line with the discursive approach this study also assumes that populism can be captured best within discourse and its most effective tool through which it influences people is language. As a result, while acknowledging that populism is a thin-centered ideology based on norms and ideas, this thesis also specifically underlines its discursive reflections as its most influential and reflective feature.

#### **1.3.4. Ideological Spectrum within Populism (Right- and Left-wing Distinction)**

Numerous studies demonstrated throughout the years that populism is not peculiar to one side of the ideological spectrum only. Both right- and left-wing populism are influenced by a Manichean worldview in which political actors present themselves as the sole authentic representative of ‘the people’, that is comprised of a homogeneous unity with common interests, against morally corrupt and self-serving elites. However, the right- and left-wing versions of the phenomenon; each also has several distinctive characteristics, and it is essential to clarify these differences because the scope of this thesis is limited to right-wing populism only.

According to Rodrik (2018), the two ideological variants of populism are different in terms of societal cleavages they highlight and present as important. The right-wing variant of the phenomenon is usually associated with cultural and ethnic backlash while left-wing populism is known for its demonization of the economic elite. In other words, right-wing populists portray

foreigners and minorities as ‘the enemy’ of ‘the people’ as left-wing populists are expected to target wealthy people and large corporations. Studies focusing on the former variant have mostly chosen European cases and the US as the exemplar of right-wing populism while research focusing on the latter examined the previous and recent populist cases in Latin America. However, today, both types of populism exist around the world, such as in Russia, Indonesia, India, Turkey, and Iran. Hence, studying them should not be limited to these regions only.

This thesis also adopts right- and left-wing descriptions that were used by Aytaç and Öniş (2014, p. 45). In line with them, this research also embraces Levitsky and Roberts’ (2011) definition of left-wing populism that is defined by its aim to reduce social and economic inequalities. Meanwhile, a right-wing variant of the phenomenon is introduced as underscoring physical security and economic stability as primary concerns. The adoption of this definition may seem to conflict with the purpose of this study since it analyzes the way right-wing populist governments address and frame economic inequality. However, this study does not claim that right-wing populism is defined by its aim to overcome inequality. While acknowledging right-wing populists' limited concern for the issue, still their approach to inequality can be essential to understand within its limitations, especially in times of high levels of economic inequality.

## CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter focuses on the theoretical discussions as well as the review of empirical studies that are relevant for this thesis. First, prominent theories of addressing and framing economic inequality are introduced. The literature review of the topic follows. Then, the second section mentions the current debates and findings among the studies that analyze the persuasiveness of populist framing. Lastly, the spotlight is shifted towards the literature that examines the relationship between right-wing and left-wing populism and economic distribution without references to the framing perspective. All in all, three different but related pieces of literature are reviewed in this chapter in order to have an analysis that is theory-informed and empirically grounded regarding the right-wing populist framing of inequality.

### 2.1. Framing Inequality

In one of his speeches in 2013, former president of the US, Barack Obama described inequality as the “defining issue of our time” and a “fundamental threat” to “our way of life”<sup>1</sup>. The concentration of income is growing steadily, and the wealthiest eight people in the world have as much wealth as the bottom 4 billion<sup>2</sup>. Extremely high economic inequality is an important issue due to its possible political, social, and macroeconomic effects. While there are scholars such as Frankfurt (2015) and Watson (2015) who insist that we should focus on eliminating poverty rather than achieving more equality, more and more people acknowledge the salience of the topic and admit the necessity to address it.

Moreover, scholars even suggest immediate and long-term institutional changes and policy proposals to limit the phenomenon (Atkinson, 2015; Stiglitz, 2013; Piketty, 2014). Thus, it is once

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/wp/2013/12/04/inequality-is-the-defining-issue-of-our-time/?utm\\_term=.74576cb73968](https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/wp/2013/12/04/inequality-is-the-defining-issue-of-our-time/?utm_term=.74576cb73968), Accessed on Dec 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Oxfam International, 2017, An Economy For the %1.; Bill Gates, Amancio Ortega Gaona, Warren E. Buffett, Carlos Slim Helú, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, Lawrence J. Ellison ve Michael R. Bloomberg.

again relevant to study the framing of inequality as of 2019, considering the topic's increasing publicity. In order to do this, one should first review the prominent approaches towards unequal economic distribution.

According to Eric Olin Wright (2016), there are two approaches to economic inequality, and these approaches also have their normative implications. The first approach considers inequality as a result of structural dynamics. As such, this structural approach focuses on institutions in which power is exercised and through which resources and rewards are distributed unequally among different groups. On the other hand, the second approach addresses inequality as a reflection of people's different individual attributes. Consequently, this approach emphasizes the drivers of variation in individual characteristics, capacities, and efforts. However, the individualist approach tends to study social conditions to illuminate the reasons for inequality, unlike the former approach, which underlines political-economic conditions that affect power relations for the same purpose.

The tension between individual attributes approach and structural approach may seem too theoretical and abstract. However, the adoption of one of these approaches towards economic inequality has very different results in real life due to their different normative concerns. While the individualist approach idealizes equal opportunity as a fair and right way to reduce inequalities, structuralists put forward an equal distribution of power over resource allocation. With the rise of neoliberalism, the influence of the individualist approach has outweighed the structuralist one. The attention has been paid to equality of opportunities to enhance individuals' economic capacity rather than of power distribution or equality of outcomes to limit inequality. Thus, the debate about inequality reduction has shifted towards expanding welfare and other social services towards people at the bottom of economic distribution.

Concomitantly, rhetorical framing of economic inequality is open to alteration with the changes in the dominant approach and its normative ideals. Anthony Atkinson (2015) describes the problem of recent economic distribution by resembling the system to a swimming competition in which the distribution of prizes (outcomes) are highly unequal and socially constructed. Therefore, the problems of inequality would remain to a certain extent due to highly unequal outcomes, even if we ensure that everybody can take part in the race. However, the gap between outcomes has been mostly overlooked since the late 1970s. Concerns about economic inequality have been relatively more limited around places where right-wing political mindset has been dominant. Most right-wing political parties try to refrain from interfering in the economy. Relatedly, they tend to evaluate inequality as an inevitable consequence of economic competition, which is praised for triggering productivity and growth. They do not mind the gap. Fight against inequality, and progressive redistribution have been associated with undermining incentives for entrepreneurship and innovation. Rather than following this path, most right-wing politicians prefer to deal with poverty and direct their policies towards poverty alleviation. Accordingly, this perception has reflected on their discourse in terms of mentioning inequality less as a problem to be addressed or referring to the issue superficially, without suggesting any concrete policies to overcome the gap.

Economic inequality has been marginalized as an issue within political discourse throughout years of close partnership of mainstream economy and right-wing politics. However, the issue is starting to draw a recent interest even in the field of economics following a period of rising intolerance for diverse views. As Atkinson (2015) claims, economists began to understand that it is not sufficient to focus only on macroeconomic aggregates to establish a sustainable economic structure. Once not problematized, today, inequality is not only addressed by the radical left. The trauma of the Great Recession, hand in hand with the mass movements such as Occupy

Wallstreet, which targeted the top 1%, led the discipline of economics and right-wing governments to try to understand the drivers and consequences of the issue and to find ways to monitor its level.

The 2018 version of the World Inequality Report demonstrates that income inequality has increased around the world in recent decades. The sensational book, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, of the famous French economist, also showed that the same claim is even more apparent and excessive for the recent trends in global wealth distribution. Scholars, intergovernmental economic organizations, and even multinational banks started to pay attention and they have published extensively about the issue since the emergence of this data which indicates the deteriorative trend in economic distribution that is difficult to ignore. Globally influential organizations such as Allianz, Credit Suisse, OECD, UNDP, and World Bank has started to publish annual reports on income and wealth inequality, especially increasingly since 2008. It is now a rediscovered subject in academia, also due to the pioneer scholarly labor of Stiglitz (2013), Piketty (2014), Atkinson (2015), Milanovic (2016) and others. All in all, economic inequality is once again in public discussion and addressed to varying degrees by political actors regardless of their ideological orientation.

There are two prominent reasons to care about the way politicians frame inequality. First, the framing of economic inequality inevitably affects public perception of the issue. There is an extensive literature which examines the relationship between politicians' behavior and public opinion. Whether the behavior and policymaking of politicians and political parties are based on public opinion, and to what extent the public's perceptions influence politicians have been essential questions that preoccupied researchers. While there are scholars such as Page and Shapiro (1983), Maestas (2003), Druckman and Jacobs (2006), and Lawrence (2016) who argue that governments tend to follow the preferences of the public while making decisions, there is also another side which underline responsiveness of public opinion to policies and political rhetoric. According to Zaller (1992), individuals construct their opinion with references to elite discourse. He argues that

values and awareness of people on specific issues are based on political leaders' rhetoric. Then, these values and knowledge affect their political attitudes. In other words, alternative phrasing of an issue has different influences on the way people understand this issue. Referring to a five-decade-long US election data, findings of Matsubayashi (2013) similarly demonstrate that incumbent representatives shift their constituents' opinions in a direction on political issues that are open to debate.

To avoid lingering on a 'chicken or the egg dilemma', it is possible to acknowledge the interacting influence between these two sides of the politics. Under certain circumstances, politicians can be more sensitive towards people's preferences and attitudes, while simultaneously public opinion can be open to change based on politicians' discourse. A similar discussion also exists in the populism literature, which is also relevant concerning the topic of this study. Two groups of populism scholars discuss whether populism exists as a response to people's demands, or it is the populist political leaders that affect people's attitudes towards a more Manichean worldview. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017, p. 98-99) aptly argue that a theory that tries to explain the success of populism should take both demand and supply side of the populist politics into account. They also correctly point out the ability of populist leaders to mobilize voters' sentiments and politicize issues in the eyes of the public. Populist or not, overall, the results of the above-mentioned existing studies reflect the significant influence of political parties and leaders on public opinion formation without denying the existence of any reverse effects between these two variables.

The second and related reason to bother about the framing of inequality is that policies which are offered and adopted by political parties and leaders are directly influenced by how inequality is described and presented in public. According to a study conducted by Chow and Galak (2012), when inequality is described as the rich making more than the poor, people become more willing to support redistributive policies. On the other hand, this support decreases when

inequality is described as the poor making less than the rich. As the language which is utilized to address inequality changes, people start to question whether the rich and the poor deserve their current positions. Unlike Chow and Galak (2012), Brückmüller et al. (2017) focused on framing's effect on legitimacy, and they found that people perceive higher inequality less legitimate when it is framed as poor having less.

Nonetheless, both studies demonstrated political language's influence over people's perception of inequality and such perception's consequences in terms of political behavior and attitudes. While discussing the impacts of political framing, Gandy Jr. (2014, p. 6) claims that if an issue is framed successfully, it can lead to policy change even in short periods. He gives examples from different policy areas by referring to several empirical studies. Framing also affects people's perception of their existing options of political attitude and support. Evans and Tilley (2012) explain the decline in class voting with the framing of redistribution by altering the perceived relevance of the subject and presenting limited options for dealing with the issue compared to past. Similarly, Brewer and Gross (2010) point out the crucial role frames play via mass media on the way public understand and react to particular policy controversies. All in all, feelings of people affect which policies they would support, and such feelings are open to the influence of politicians' rhetorical framing of an issue.

In the inequality framing literature, most studies focus on the media coverage of the issue. That is because channels of communication matter as much as the content of a political message while appealing to the public. One of these studies, which is conducted by López (2016) argues that framing of inequality and poverty by political and economic elites reflects their reaction to the negative externalities of inequality to them. Despite expectations, this study's results display a puzzling scenario in two South American cases where the framing of inequality does not correspond to elites' threat perceptions regarding the poor. Gandy and Baron (1998) focus on the effects of exposure to news about racial affirmative action on social attributions and they show



that the way media addresses racial disparities has an effect on different race groups' perceptions about their economic situation. Grisold and Theine (2017) aptly point out the previous lack of attention to the topic of inequality, and they analyze mass media's recent interest and their concomitant coverage of the issue by examining its underlying assumptions. Regarding mass media, they claim it to be an influential source of information on inequality topics through their selection, arrangement, and presentation of information (2017, p. 4268).

Besides inequality, other related concepts have also been analyzed through the lens of political. For example, Redden (2011) comparatively studies framing of poverty and immigration throughout the mass media of the UK and Canada, and she found that constructions of deservingness of poverty exist in mainstream media via rationalizing and individualizing frames. Other studies also focus on the changes and trends in poverty frames as well as the causes and solutions discussed in the media (Rose & Baumgartner, 2013; Kim, Carvalho, & Davis, 2010). Just like the discourse on inequality, the language utilized to address poverty influences people's perceptions, attitudes, and support for specific policies over others.

In line with the previous research, this study also focuses on the framing of inequality by politicians and political parties. Despite reviewing different media sources such as several ideologically diverse newspapers, online and textualized official statements of politicians and relevant political parties' election manifestos are instead utilized to capture the framing of inequality due to time limitations. While published official statements of politicians and election manifestos limit the diversity of sources, it is safe to assume that these texts have a tremendous determining influence on mass media sources, especially in countries such as Turkey where freedom of the press is extremely limited<sup>3</sup> and media coverage favor the discourse of the ruling party. Regardless of their effects on private mass media, these statements and manifestos also

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<sup>3</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/turkey>, Accessed on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

circulate in public and stimulate public discussions by themselves directly without additional interpretation. Therefore, this research analyzes the framing of economic distribution by politicians and political parties rather than mass media, unlike most of the previous studies in the field.

Even though there are plenty of studies on framing economy and inequality, the topic has not been analyzed much yet with populism, a recently rising global political phenomenon. This study aims to fill this gap in the literature by analyzing two right-wing populist governments' framing of inequality and examining right-wing populist ideology's influence on this framing. In the next section, the prominent characteristics of populist framing as well as this type of rhetoric's peculiar persuasiveness on the public are explained to illuminate the relevance of studying the phenomena of political framing of rising inequality and the rise of populist communication together.

## **2.2. Appeal and Persuasiveness of Populist Messages**

This study specifically focuses on the populist framing of economic inequality. While research on the drivers, consequences, and dynamics of inequality framing illuminates the role of description, problematization, and language, we know very little if anything about the links between right-wing populism and conceptualization of inequality. Populist discourse has idiosyncratic characteristics which distinguish the strength of its influence on both the demand and supply sides of politics. Today, we are in an exceptional period in which higher levels of economic inequality geographically and contextually intersect with rising right-wing populist politics. This intersection has not been explored yet. That is because, first, the simultaneous relevance of these phenomena is very recent. Secondly, such exploration requires to combine diverse works of literature from economic inequality and communication studies to right-wing populism. This research aims to fill this gap in the literature by underscoring the peculiarities of right-wing populism and its influence on the framing of an issue that demands urgent attention.

At first, the recent populist wave seemed like a temporary phase as a result of the grievances of victims who have been negatively affected by globalization, mass migration, and the outcomes of the 2008 financial crisis. However, this perception started to erode as time passed. Scholars have begun to ponder about the endurance of populist politics and the roots of such endurance. According to the empirical study conducted by Kyle and Mounk (2018), there is a significant and positive relationship between a political leader's time in office and populism. In other words, their study demonstrated that populist leaders and political parties are highly successful at staying in power once they win an election. One of the reasons for this success can be the way populists undermine democratic institutions, as Kyle and Mounk (2018) argue. However, damaging the institutions of democracy is not the sole explanation of populist parties' and leaders' success at the ballot box.

Scholars try to analyze the appeal of populist discourse to the voters. Certain studies explain this appeal to populism's emotional element (Bos, van der Brug, & de Vreese, 2010; Hameleers, Bos, & de Vreese, 2016; Magni, 2017). By relying less on rational, empirically grounded argumentations, populist discourse tends to utilize and exploit shared feelings of the masses instead. According to Arendt et al. (2015) and Schmuck and Matthes (2017), this aspect of populist language makes its appeals exceptionally persuasive. Wirz (2018) further compares the populist and non-populist presentations of the same message to clarify the effect of populism on persuasiveness, and his study supports the hypothesis that populist communication elicits more emotions than pluralist communication. Interestingly, his findings even suggest that populist discourse can be more persuasive by appealing to emotions, even for people who do not support a populist ideology.

Unlike non-populist political actors, populists portray a society where citizens form a homogeneous group with a shared desire that can be referred to as 'the people'. This idea of 'the people' comes into being in the image of the common man who is assumed to be morally incorrupt.

Populist politician implicitly and explicitly associates himself with ‘the people’ and positions himself within the group against the out-group that consists allegedly corrupt elites who represent the establishment. Even though appealing to voters by forming an identity is not new, the power and persuasiveness of populism's identity lie in its homogeneity, unity, simplicity, and vagueness. Within populist rhetoric, ‘the people’ becomes an empty signifier in Laclauian terms, and this characteristic enables this communication style to be easily molded and customized according to the context. The same homogeneity and elasticity also hold for the concept of ‘the elites’ or ‘the others’. According to Enria (2019) such vague and elastic collective identity, which has the power to transcend economic, ideological, and social differences, can be even more appealing for those people who do not strongly identify themselves with a collective identity. Thus, such identity formation can make populist rhetoric more persuasive and relatable for the masses.

While populists position themselves within moral ‘the people’, they extensively blame the elites for the past, current, and possibly future crises. According to Hameleers et al. (2017), populist messages are characterized by their assignment of blame to elites in an emotionalized way. The results of their study demonstrate the way emotionalized blame attributions affect people's political behavior and perceptions of blame. Moreover, they claim that as people's identity attachment gets weak, they become more likely to get affected by such attributions. The likelihood of accepting populist blame attributions also become higher as the populist discourse triggers fear more than anger. It shows us that it is not only the emotions but specific ones which render populist arguments even more persuasive than others. Recent studies by Hameleers et al. (2018) and Busby, Gubler, and Hawkins (2019) also underscore populist blaming's effects on voting behavior and expression of political support.

Another feature of populist language is the way it presents phenomena as a crisis, which requires immediate action to tackle. By creating a feeling of urgency and an apocalyptic presentation of situations, populist rhetoric triggers fear, which Hameleers et al. (2017) associated

with higher persuasion. In times of crisis, people give more credit to strong leaders who can make decisions faster. Populist leaders present themselves as the savior of ‘the people’ in times of such alleged crises. They display performances that are associated with ‘the common man’ or ‘the people’ to prove that they are coming from the humble, anti-establishment, non-elite background but they also present themselves as exceptional political figures who are stronger and ‘tougher’ than non-populist politicians that are blamed for being within the political establishment.

Lastly, the discourse that populist politicians utilize can be considered as overly simplified and generalized. Populist discourse can be more persuasive than its non-populist counterparts because simplicity is more appealing for people who have been overwhelmed by the bureaucratic complexities of liberal democracy, which makes them feel alienated from political processes. Either-or narratives of populism appeal voters when there is higher anxiety. Simplified and overgeneralized messages of populism become more accessible (Enria, 2019) and in this way likely to be more persuasive. In other words, if one describes a political actor, organization, or institution only as evil rather than discussing and distinguishing its positive and negative characteristics with their complexities, the description can be understood faster and more comfortable by more people. It becomes the advantage of populist discourse within the current political environment.

What does populism's success in persuasiveness mean for framing of economic inequality? This study seeks an answer to this question by analyzing two countries' right-wing populist governments' framing of economic inequality and other topics of the economy. The way framing of inequality, which is such a complex and contested issue, is affected by populist rhetoric's features is open to exploration. Whether populist framings simplify the dynamics of economic inequality, utilize emotions by overlooking the technicalities, blame corrupt elites for the existing levels of inequality, and present current levels of inequality as crisis to be urgently dealt by themselves as the sole representative of people, all these questions are waiting to be answered and

worthy of research. Moreover, the right-wing approach's turbulent and mostly distant association with the concerns regarding inequality complicates the quest to answer these questions further. However, adopting Zaller's theory concerning the elite narrative's effects on public opinion formation, this study focuses on populist rhetoric's influence on framing inequality. Before starting the analysis, the literature on the links between inequality and right-wing populism is reviewed in the next section not to overlook the discussions about the dynamism between the two phenomena even in the absence of the framing concept.

### **2.3. Populism and Economic Inequality**

It is crucial to delve into populism's relationship with the concept and reality of economic inequality if one aims to understand the way this ideology frames the issue. While framing of inequality is neither the mirror representation of real economic indicators nor it always reflects the interests of political actors; still one should not proceed to the analysis without reviewing the literature on the link between these two phenomena.

#### **2.3.1. Left-wing Populism and Economic Inequality**

The literature on the political economy of populism consistently attribute concerns regarding economic inequality to the left-wing versions of the phenomenon. Scholars argue that left-wing populists pay extensive attention to inequality and fall back upon redistributive policies unlike right-wing parties (Cardoso & Helwege, 1991; Bittencourt, 2012; Leon, 2014; Aytaç & Öniş, 2014). This economic backlash has been especially dominant in Latin American countries which come to the forefront as exemplary cases of left-wing populism. Towards the end of the 1980s, several publications on the issue became popular as it became apparent that these countries' excessively redistributive policies led to economic crises (Sachs 1989; Dornbusch & Edwards, 1990; Kaufman & Stallings, 1991; Cardoso, 1991).

Based on the cases of Chile and Peru in 1970s, Dornbusch and Edwards (1990) argue that high levels of economic inequality coupled with a previously improved fiscal budget encourage politicians to pursue expansionary policies. While their main goal was to point out the negative consequences of such policies for their initial beneficiaries, it is also possible to follow the emergence and development of populist economic policies in both countries against their preceding disastrous economic performances. The Chilean case that they study is especially an exemplar of a political party's appeal to populist macroeconomic policies with specific attention on income redistribution following a period of economic downturn. Bittencourt (2012) focuses on governments which came to power after dictatorships in Latin American countries. Even though he predominantly aims to illuminate the political determinants of macroeconomic performance, Bittencourt's narrative of the Latin American populism still contains hints of the effects of income inequality on populist policies. His study draws attention to the post-dictatorship governments' appeal to populist economic policies in order to respond to the public's resentment concerning high levels of income inequality. According to Bittencourt, the most crucial pillar of these populist economic policies, redistributive attempts, form the first stage of the re-democratization process and lead to macroeconomic instability as a result of expansionary fiscal policies.

Left-wing populists' intense concern with economic inequality suggest that they may tend to portray distributional problems as signs of old elite's political and economic decay more frequently than right-wing populists. According to Roberts (2007), commitment to state institutions to overcome socioeconomic inequalities is one of the defining features of left-wing politics, hence of left-wing populism. Studies focusing on left-wing populist parties' rhetorical behavior also provide support for Roberts's claim. Left-wing populist political parties such as Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain have been known to accuse and distrust European elites regarding their economic ills (Della Porta, Fernández, Kouki, & Mosca, 2017). They specifically focus on economic inequalities regarding these problems (Stavrakakis, 2015). The discourse

articulated by Syriza reflects the party's position on redistribution. For example, the leader of the party, Alexis Tsipras, and other party officials frequently mentioned raising taxation on big business (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014, p. 126). As Ivaldi et al. (2017) put forward, Podemos similarly praises social justice and economic redistribution as a part of its socialist populist vision. On the other hand, populist politicians in the right-wing spectrum choose to portray the issues related with economic redistribution different than their left-wing alternatives.

### **2.3.2. Right-wing Populism and Economic Inequality**

Right-wing variants of populism are associated with neoliberalism and market-fundamentalism (Pühringer & Ötsch, 2018), authoritarianism (Peters, 2018), or anti-globalization and mercantilism (Zaslove, 2008). It is especially illuminating to understand RPGs' crinkled relationship with neoliberalism. According to Zaslove (2008), in the past, right-wing populists supported neo-liberal economic reforms such as abolishing the safety net of welfare regimes, disregarding taxation, limiting economic laws and regulations, and so on. Their earlier fascination with neoliberalism began to vanish simultaneously with their constituency's belief in the concept as of the 1990s. Today, right-wing populism is associated with mercantilism due to its ethnic-nationalist background that leads to trade protectionism. People started to demand a fair market economy. Radical right-wing populist parties associated their ethnonational concerns regarding immigration and multiculturalism with economic globalization and targeted the latter as serving the interests of corrupt elites (Mughan, Bean, & McAllister, 2003; Zaslove, 2008).

Providing empirical analysis from a different region of the world, Salehi-Isfahani (2009) argues that there is not a direct relationship between the election or the ruling of Iran's populist president and inequality levels of the country. He rather underlines the improvements in poverty reduction for the case of Iranian populism. Meanwhile, Leon (2014) attributes populism's links with redistribution to the likelihood of a coup. As such, he analytically locates left-wing populism



against neoliberalism and claims that redistribution occurs under left-wing populism when the wealth of an influential group is transferred to the poor with the fear of them having uncontrollable political influence in the future. The study again relies on Latin American versions of populism as their examples. In line with Leon, Stankov argues that income inequality does not have a significant effect on right-wing populism based on his research's findings (2018, p. 236). However, whether there is a reverse causal mechanism is still an open question.

Blaming is also a crucial factor in the relationship between populism and distribution. According to Sawyer and Laycock (2009), market populists in Australia and Canada accused politicians that have emphasized the importance of inequality as being 'elite' and silenced discussions about economic inequality via populist rhetoric. Pastor and Veronesi (2018) argue that voters of right-wing populist parties are inequality averse, and they attribute the blame of inequality on elites. Thus, anti-elitist nature of right-wing populism enters into the scene in a way one would expect to observe via the phenomenon's left-wing variant. While Pastor and Veronesi's model may explain the success of right-wing populism and its relationship with inequality in Europe, it cannot illuminate the drivers of the ongoing success of RPGs outside European or the US context. As RPGs start to remain in power for years, it should become less likely to blame previous elites for current levels of inequality. Lastly, there are recent discussions on whether populists are directly linked with inequality or with the idea of its fairness. Scholars started to make a distinction between 'fair' and 'unfair' inequalities, arguing that it is the perception of fairness rather than the inequality itself which has a close relationship with the decisions of populist actors regarding economic distribution and redistribution (Starmans, Sheskin, & Bloom, 2017; Guriev, 2018). Overall, as of 2019, right-wing populists' relationship between and approach towards economic inequality, poverty, and redistribution is more complicated and diverse than before.

One contribution of this study to the literature is illuminating the dynamics of framing economic inequality in countries that are governed by right-wing populist political parties which are paid only limited attention within the discussions of economic distribution. In line with Rode and Revuelta (2015), I also claim that the previous discussions on economic populism that were put forward by Dornbusch and Edwards (1991) and Sachs (1989) cannot fully explain the political economy of current right-wing populism around the world. Even though it is left-wing populism that is associated with an interest in economic inequality, right-wing populists also need to deal with the issue, especially when the gap between rich and poor widens. Latest studies demonstrate that less educated and working-class voters are increasingly overrepresented by right-wing populist parties (Ivarsflaten, 2005; Oesch, 2008; Rydgren, 2012). It inevitably means that RPGs appeal to the ordinary citizens at the discursive level. This citizen is usually pictured as a moral man who has been victimized by the previous political establishment. He is mentioned as poor (and probably is) but also zealous who could have achieved his goals if self-interested corrupt elites did not rule his country. The citizen that right-wing populists aim to appeal to is likely to feel more victimized in times of higher levels of economic inequality because of his likely proximity to the bottom of the distribution. Thus, even though economic inequality is not RPGs' primary concern, these political actors still need to address the issue and frame it in a certain way once in a while. However, whether they also use a reductionist Manichean discursive strategy while addressing inequality is open to question.

One of the main weaknesses of these studies which focus on economic inequality and its links with populism is their reduction of economic inequality to the discrepancies in income distribution. While this reduction has become the regular practice in the literature for years, one of the foremost reasons for this selection was the relatively better availability of the income inequality data most probably due to its advantages in calculation and traceability. Unlike previous research, this thesis also considers wealth inequality due to the recent availability of data on the issue. In an

interview, Kaltwasser (2018) said that the success of the populist right-wing party in Switzerland demonstrates the weakness of economic explanations of populism since Switzerland's inequality level is “relatively okay”. While his argument may still hold valid, the inequality that Kaltwasser mentions is reduced to the discrepancies in income distribution. However, wealth inequality in Switzerland is the highest among Western European countries. Claiming that it is the wealth gap which is one of the prominent drivers of right-wing populism would require another research project, but it is necessary not to overlook wealth inequality data as discussing the relationship between populism and economic distribution.



## CHAPTER III: HYPOTHESES, RESEARCH DESIGN, AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the hypotheses of this study are introduced, and the logic behind their construction in addition to result expectations based on them are explained first. Then, the research design is presented hand in hand with the background of each case to justify their selection for this study. India and Turkey are utilized as two right-wing populist government cases which have risen within the diverse historical, social, political, and distributional background. Since it is not possible to provide the inequality framing history of these cases due to the absence of data, both countries' economic inequality and populism backgrounds are reviewed within the research design section. Lastly, the methodology, that was selected for this study's data selection and analysis is illustrated in detail.

### 3.1. Hypotheses

This study has three main interrelated hypotheses, all of which presented and explained below.

***H1:** Right-wing populist governments utilize moral blaming frame regarding internal and external scapegoats for economic inequality.*

Right-wing populists use blaming as a discursive strategy as they refer to alleged political, cultural, and social crises. For example, they tend to inculcate ethnic minorities for increases in crime rates. However, little is known about whether they also use the same framing while addressing economic inequality and the problems related to the issue. It is also not clear when they are more likely to blame internal or external actors as scapegoats. The first hypothesis of this thesis predicts RPGs to frequently use a discourse by which they blame other political and economic actors for economic inequality within their country and aim to reduce their responsibility in the eyes of the public regarding the issue via this frame. Hence, it is expected that RPGs talk about these scapegoats as 'the enemies' whose corrupt interests conflict with 'the people' by using

blaming frame. This hypothesis will be falsified if data demonstrates that RPGs never or only rarely blame internal and external actors by keeping them morally responsible for previous and current levels of economic inequality.

This hypothesis also predicts that while RPGs mention wealthy and poor citizens, they extensively compare their moral values and establish a moral hierarchy between them by presenting poor as morally superior while addressing the issue of inequality. They may also distinguish rich and poor among themselves based on moral distinctions and create deserving and undeserving rich and poor. This hypothesis will be falsified if data shows that RPGs do not use morally relevant language while addressing rich and poor people. It would also be not fully confirmed if they do not frame rich as morally corrupt and poor as morally superior.

***H2:** Right-wing populist governments divert the public discussion from equality of outcomes to opportunities while mentioning economic inequality.*

Instead of addressing the structural drivers of economic inequality, the second hypothesis expects that RPGs individualize the responsibility for wealth and poverty in line with the dominant market economic mentality. In conjunction with this individualizing frame, this hypothesis expects RPGs to underscore the improvements that can enhance equality of opportunity as an alternative to equality of outcomes. This hypothesis will be falsified if the data shows that RPGs approach the inequality discussions from a structural perspective and emphasize the importance of the equality of outcomes rather than opportunities.

***H3:** Right-wing populist governments often suggest poverty alleviation rather than economic redistribution as a remedy for inequality.*

The third hypothesis expects RPGs to address and discuss poverty alleviation more than inequality. Mentioning inequality can also put the people on the top of the distribution in the target, which might not be probable for a right-wing government. However, RPGs' reference to poverty

alleviation might be more frequent compared to non-populist right-wing governments because of their compulsion to appeal to their disadvantaged constituency who feel like they are underrepresented by the political establishment and are likely to be at the bottom of economic distribution. This hypothesis would be falsified if it becomes apparent that RPGs do not consistently suggest poverty alleviation while addressing inequality or the analysis shows that they suggest taxation as a remedy for the economic gap.

### **3.2. Research Design and Cases**

Through this section, the dependent and independent variables of the research are introduced, and the way it utilizes them is explained briefly. Then the justification of the selection of India and Turkey as two cases of this study is provided. Following this, the background of these two cases is presented consecutively regarding economic inequality and populism to provide information for the relevant dynamics within these countries' recent pasts.

#### **3.2.1. Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable of this research is the framing of economic inequality. As indicated in the conceptual clarification chapter, the term 'framing' is used for a rhetorical presentation to display the saliency, specific definition, interpretation, and moral assessment of a problematized issue, also, to promote suggested remedies toward it (Entman, 1993). It is not a dummy or a graded variable. Rather this study operationalizes framing of economic inequality by developing several categories that capture the characteristics of the utilized rhetoric in official statements and election manifestos by RPGs with the help of content analysis. The operationalization of the variable focuses on the themes, responsible actors, and remedies that are referred to by RPGs while addressing economic inequality as well as the extent of problematization of the phenomenon. The reliability of the measurement of this study's dependent variable is ensured by following a

systematic data collection and coding that can be repeated by any researcher with references to the used keywords, policy suggestions, and mentioned actors within the selected documents.

The four categories of this research's dependent variable are developed after the first round of data review. The first one is blaming frame, which indicates that the relevant rhetoric used by the government contains implicit and explicit accusations of other political actors rather than systemic factors or themselves as responsible for higher levels of inequality. The second category is morality frame, the existence of which demonstrates discourse that distinguishes people who are at the top and bottom pilings of economic distribution over moral hierarchies. By doing so, existing gaps in income and wealth distribution are legitimized or rendered illegitimate with references to ethical and political factors. The third category of the dependent variable that is developed in this research is the individualizing frame. This category is inspired by the discussions on the structuralist and individualist approaches to inequality (Wright, 2016). As such, this category indicates the preponderance of individualist approach to inequality while addressing the issue and the presented saliency of equality of opportunity discussions over equality of outcomes. The last category is called the poverty frame, which means the dominance of the presentation of poverty alleviation throughout mentioning economic inequality. This category implies the diversion of the topic from economic inequality towards poverty as the issue of problematization. These four categories of the dependent variable are not mutually exclusive. In other words, one statement can be categorized within more than one frames.

### **3.2.2. Independent Variable**

This research utilizes the existence or absence of right-wing populist governments as its independent variable. It relies on the existing and commonly acknowledged inferences in the populism literature to determine whether a political party or a government is right-wing populist or not. Therefore, sufficient references are provided in the following section to demonstrate that

the two cases which this thesis utilizes are acknowledged in the literature as cases of right-wing populists in power.

The central assumption of this study is that right-wing populist rhetoric, especially of government, is more influential and decisive in the framing of inequality compared to alternative explanations. Economic inequality might be addressed and legitimized with a country's historical background or imperial legacy, numerical improvements in inequality and poverty level indicators, the successful economic performance of a country and the promise of its trickle-down effect, or ethnic and religious inequality within its population. This study argues that none of these alternative explanations alone can illuminate the patterns in the framing of inequality in India and Turkey without taking right-wing populist discourse into account.

### **3.2.3. Case Selection**

The two cases which are utilized for this research are BJP and its leader Narendra Modi in India and AKP with its leader Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey. These two political parties and their respective leaders are acknowledged to be right-wing populists in the populism literature. Both Modi and Erdoğan are known to use a Manichean discourse in their public statements through which they describe politics as a constant conflict between morally evil elites and pure people. They present themselves as anti-establishment political figures who claim to be the sole representatives of the interests of a homogeneous unity called 'the people'. Simultaneously with this flourishing political trend, these two countries have also been listed as two distinct cases of increasing economic inequality both in their regions and also in the world. According to the latest indicators of World Inequality Database, the national income share of the top 1% has been steadily increasing in both countries, at least since 2007. Davies et al. (2017) also mention both countries as two emerging markets with very high wealth inequality. The overlapping existence of the dominance of right-wing populist politicians in times of recent years' highest economic inequality



levels makes these two countries suitable cases to study RPGs' influence on the framing of economic inequality.

While most research in the literature focuses on the cases from Europe or the Americas to study the issue of populism, this thesis wanders from this trend by selecting two regionally distant non-Western countries as its cases. Latin America has been associated with left-wing populism while recently the US and European countries such as the UK, Italy, Hungary, and Poland have been acknowledged as the exemplars of right-wing populism. The rising academic production on European right-wing populism is not equal to the attention paid to right-wing populist parties and governments outside the continent. Existing studies are even less fruitful regarding a comparative analysis of cases from the Global South. Right-wing populist cases are also mostly reviewed as extremist political alternatives that cannot pose a valid electoral challenge to center-left and -right parties. Even though this approach has been changing with the political developments in the West with the election of Donald Trump, there is still limited research on right-wing populist cases as governing political parties and ruling leaders, again especially outside Europe and the US. This research provides a novel comparison of two RPGs and offers to bring a comparative case study from two unusual regions of populism literature by examining BJP in India and AKP in Turkey.

The number of observations can be higher concerning the political leaders' statements about inequality in times of increasing economic gap. It is an advantage to deduce more precise and correct conclusions from the findings. Therefore, selecting post-2010 cases from India and Turkey to study framing of economic inequality by RPGs provides leverage for this research due to their recent high and increased levels of inequality. While RPGs usually are more likely to abstain from referring to the issue compared to their left-wing counterparts, the assumption is that such abstention will decrease, at least slightly, as discrepancies in economic distribution are becoming increasingly significant and drawing attention following the Global Financial Crisis.

Both BJP under the leadership of Modi in India and AKP under the leadership of Erdoğan in Turkey have been described as right-wing populist political actors who are in power. Both RPGs and their respective political leaders have been studied separately and utilized as sample cases of right-wing populist discourse through populism literature. Besides this convergence and the resembling level of their economic inequality, these countries do not have much in common. On the contrary, they have very diverse social, economic, and political backgrounds.

In a period in which more variation in variables has been praised and relevantly Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD) has been preferred for its advantages to determine control variables, offer explanatory research, and usually select cases within a more limited geographical area, this thesis takes a risk by adopting a Most Different Systems Design (MDSD) approach while selecting its cases. According to this design, if there are identical relationships between independent and dependent variables within very different cases that are under scrutiny, such systemic divergences can be disregarded. In other words, MDSD “seeks maximal heterogeneity in the sample of systems, (and it) is based on a belief that despite intersystemic differentiation, the populations will differ concerning only a limited number of variables or relationships (Przeworski and Teune, 1970, p. 39). Theda Skocpol (1979) utilized the same approach to the cases of France, China, and Russia in order to illuminate the emergence of revolutions through very diverse settings.

Even though variation in explanatory and dependent variables are limited in MDSD, this research design enables the researcher to ask more general questions and engage with more universalistic theories. By underlining the parallels between very different cases, regions, and contexts, MDSD offers the researcher an opportunity to describe and speculate about globally relevant phenomena such as right-wing populism and economic inequality. Therefore, this research adopts MDSD as its research design to demonstrate the commonalities in the framing

strategies of very different right-wing populist cases such as India's BJP and Turkey's AKP in times of similarly high economic inequality.

Commonalities within their strategies of framing of economic inequality are introduced and explained in detail in the fourth and fifth chapters of this thesis. Meanwhile, the following paragraphs aim to illuminate the reasons for presenting India and Turkey as the constituents of an MDSD by narrating their different backgrounds regarding economic inequality and populism. Such background is provided to eliminate alternative explanations that can illuminate the similarities in their relationship between the framing of inequality and right-wing populist rhetoric. Besides their converging economic inequality levels, the countries' political histories, political regimes, social stratification systems, political party organizations, and poverty rates are compared and contrasted because all of these can influence the depiction of old elite, problematization of and approaches toward inequality, and the remedies offered to overcome the economic gap. The claim of this thesis is not to downplay the importance of these dynamics but to demonstrate that the most prominent variable which can explain the commonalities between the Indian and Turkish cases regarding the framing of inequality is the existence of a ruling right-wing populist political party and its rhetoric.

History determines the current scene and approaches towards economic inequality. Therefore, the historical background of British colonialism in India and such colonial past's reflections influence India's economic distribution and perception of it from the economic gap in Turkey. Different historical institutions and related policy choices can lead to the sustainment of economic outcome gaps between diverse social strata within same society. For example, India's land revenue collection system, that was placed by British colonial rulers, still affects the poor economic performance of certain regions and ethnic groups in the country (Banerjee & Iyer, 2005).

	<b>India</b>	<b>Turkey</b>
<b>Colonial history</b>	Yes	No
<b>Caste-based social stratification system</b>	Yes	No
<b>Political party organization</b>	Elite-based	Mass-based
<b>Political regime<sup>1</sup></b>	Free	Not free
<b>Poverty rates<sup>2</sup></b>	60.4%	2.4%
<b>Income inequality<sup>3</sup></b>	47.9	39.8
<b>Wealth inequality<sup>4</sup></b>	83	81.8
<b>Overall economic inequality</b>	High and increasing	High and increasing
<b>Right-wing populist government</b>	Yes	Yes

<sup>1</sup>Freedom in the World 2019, Freedom House <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/turkey> and <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/india>, Accessed on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.  
<sup>2,3,4</sup> The World Economic Forum's Inclusive Development Index 2018

**Table 1:** Political and economic differences and similarities  
between the cases of India and Turkey

According to Saberwal (1979), the colonial history deeply affected the opportunity and mobility structures of contemporary India through the remains of British colonial rule's land revenue collection and public employment strategies. However, such historical background not only influenced actual inequalities within India's national economic distribution. Since India's independence from the British Empire in 1947, colonialism is also a source of reference about the economic ills through Indian politics. On the other hand, Turkey, which has been independent for almost a century now since the fall of the Ottoman Empire, did not experience colonial rule. India's relatively fresh history of systemic colonial repression and discrimination is more likely to provide inspiration and basis for an 'Us' versus 'Them' rhetoric for inequality structures within the country, including an unequal economic distribution.

In line with the influence of colonialism, there is another characteristic of India that distinguishes Indian people's perception towards social, political, and economic discrepancies: its unique social stratification system which is called 'caste system'. Bharti (2018) argues in a recent working paper the way caste system plays an ongoing crucial role in Indian society and its economic sources' distribution. The increasing availability of relevant data demonstrate the repercussions of past discrimination towards lower castes even more in terms of income, wealth, and specifically land distribution (Bharti, 2018, p. 29). Members of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Castes are underrepresented in the top decile of wealth and consumption groups. Despite reservation policies and laws which reserve a certain percentage of seats for lower castes in government jobs and university enrollment as part of affirmative action. In India, there was even the issue of untouchability which is now prohibited constitutionally. Yet, underprivileged castes are still exposed to discrimination throughout Indian society. While there are also discriminated minorities such as Kurdish, Alawite, and LGBTI people in Turkey, regimes of social stratification are highly different between the two countries. Caste system has its peculiar and clear-cut dynamics and these dynamics again not only affect the actual distribution of economic sources but also the justification of the gaps in economic distribution. Therefore, social stratification systems of India and Turkey cannot fully explain similar inequality framing strategies of their current governments.

Identified as an elite party, the BJP has been representing the interests of the upper castes. Meanwhile, the party's and Modi's vision for the country and the messages regarding their imagination of Indian nation has known to be based extensively on Hindu nationalism. Thus, BJP's continuing electoral success as a ruling party in India is puzzling from both a class-based and ethno-religious perspective. On the contrary, AKP was formed as a political party which claims to represent the politically and economically disadvantaged Muslim people of Anatolia. Even though, the party has also had very clear economic messages that appeal to internal and external business

elites, its electoral appeal to lower-class voters has not been confusing. What is more, the early periods of the party witnessed AKP governments' inclusive political discourse towards ethnic minorities such as Kurds. That aspect also draws a distinction between AKP and BJP regarding these political parties' political backgrounds and historical public image. While there is extensive explanatory research on the puzzle of BJP's victory (Thachil, 2014; Luna, 2014), the party's popular image and Modi's political background regarding his involvement in Gujarat riots against Muslim Indians inevitably influence the construction and perception of their messages regarding economic distribution due to such political, historical, socioeconomic dynamics' association with discriminatory politics and policies. Overall, these two parties' historical political appeals and their rhetorical opportunities to mention their historical success in addressing social, political, and economic gaps within their countries are highly diverse and cannot explain the commonalities in these two parties' framing strategies of economic gap within their countries.

Besides the differences between ruling political parties' backgrounds, India and Turkey's political regime types are also dissimilar according to most popular democratic regime indexes and measurements. 'Aggregate Freedom Scores' of the two countries have been significantly different from each other according to 'Freedom House' especially since 2013. Turkey's score has been decreasing steadily since then and its category was shifted from 'partly free' to 'not free' in 2017. Meanwhile, India's aggregate score and its category as 'free' has been stable for more than a decade. The type of political regime or the level of economic, social, and political freedom influence whether certain groups are systemically favored or discriminated unfairly over others in return. There are numerous studies on the relationship between democracy and inequality, and a democratic regime's impact on perception of inequality and poverty (Gradstein, Milanovic, & Ying, 2001; Scheve & Stasavage, 2017). While findings and discussions of these studies do not directly suggest a negative relationship between democracy and inequality, they still argue that a more sustained democratic political system can have a moderating effect on the issue through

influencing people’s vision of a fair, acceptable level of discrepancy in economic distribution between different groups in a society. Thus, similar to historical background or rooted social stratification systems, political regime type can also indirectly have a crucial influence on the way politicians problematize inequality while addressing public. Therefore, political regime type also fails to explain the convergences in Indian and Turkish cases’ framing of economic inequality.

	GDP PER CAPITA, \$	MEDIAN INCOME, \$	POVERTY RATE, %	NET INCOME GINI	WEALTH GINI
Turkey	14071	13.1	2.4	39.8	81.8
India	1861	2.9	60.4	47.9	83.0

Source: The World Economic Forum's Inclusive Development Index 2018

**Table 2:** Economic indicators of India and Turkey

Poverty and inequality are two different things. A country can have high rates of poverty while experiencing low levels of inequality. In other words, everybody can be equally below the poverty line. There can be also a country with very limited population living under the poverty line but also with very unequal economic distribution. Supporting the possibility of such differences, India and Turkey have similarly high levels of inequality as well as significantly different rates of poverty as demonstrated by Table 2. Even though poverty in India is in decline, there are still many people live in it. In relation with the country’s colonial background, India experienced increasing poverty rates through the 19th and early 20th century (Roy, 2007) and these rates remained to be critically high also after the independence. Therefore, eliminating poverty has been one of the major themes through every political and electoral campaign in India. While poverty and inequality are diverse topics, pressing problems in the bottom of the economic distribution can inevitably shift discussions about inequality and change the way one economic

problem is problematized over others. Actual rates of poverty are diverse and cannot explain the convergences in Indian and Turkish cases' framing of inequality.

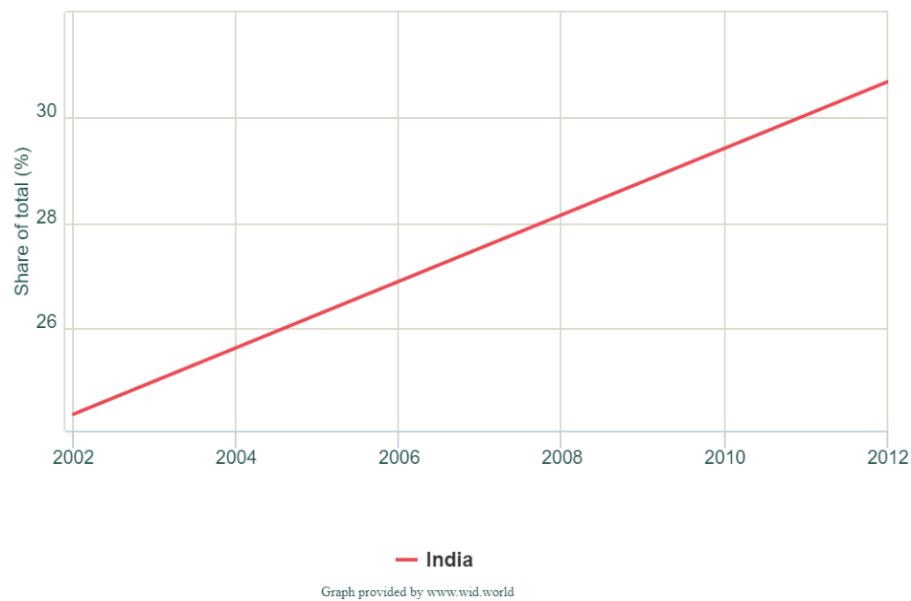
#### **3.2.4. Inequality Background in India and Turkey**

Notwithstanding their differences, both India and Turkey are among the countries which experience high levels of economic inequality regarding their both income and wealth distribution. Among 36 countries in the OECD, Turkey has been consistently one of the most unequal regarding income distribution and its Gini coefficient has been shifting toward more inequality since mid-2013. While there were slight improvements in income distribution between 2011 and 2013, the trend became reversed after that year. Meanwhile, poverty rate before and after taxes slowly but consistently decreased in line with global developments.

With the recent interest in wealth inequality levels, the long-neglected data and analysis of Turkey's household wealth distribution also began to draw attention. Credit Suisse's Global Wealth Report (2014), which is one of the prominent international sources of wealth inequality, lists Turkey as the second most unequal country after Russia based on the share of wealth by its top decile. This finding was also confirmed by Global Wealth Migration Review (2018) of New World Wealth which mentions Turkey as the fifth most unequal country worldwide, following Saudi Arabia, Russia, Nigeria, and Brazil. The same review also underlines the large outflow of high net worth individuals (people with US\$1 million or more in net assets) from the country in the past couple of years and gives Turkey as one of the recent examples of worst performing wealth markets. Torul and Öztunalı (2018) agree with the latest results that demonstrate Turkey's worsening wealth inequality estimates.



### Top 1% net personal wealth share



**Figure 1:** India's top 1% net personal wealth share between 2002 and 2012

Meanwhile, the wealthy Indians who are at the top 1% of the wealth distribution increasingly have a larger share of the total wealth of the country (See Figure 1). Similarly, other sources such as Global Wealth Migration Review (2018) and The World Economic Forum (See Table 2) also confirm the unprecedented extent of wealth gap within the country and its relative significance across other countries. The underrepresentation of lower castes and religious minorities such as Muslims within higher wealth deciles as well as within caste inequalities all add up to the current distributional problems. The rise in the discrepancies of income distribution in India was due to the opening and deregulation policies of the mid-1980s (Bharti and Chancel, 2019, pg. 1). According to the recent findings of Chancel and Piketty (2019), the top 0.1% of income earners received a higher share of total growth than the bottom 50% over the years between 1980 and 2015 in India. We do not have consistent data about inequality levels for the last couple of years, because Indian government occasionally stop publishing up to date tax statistics.

### **3.3. Methodology**

This study utilizes content analysis to examine the way RPGs address and frame economic inequality and divert the attention towards other economic concerns with populist rhetoric. Content analysis is a commonly used research method both for the studies which emphasize the cruciality of the political rhetoric in populism and the literature on framing inequality. It is a systematic research technique which strives for objectivity, reliability, and validity. This methodology is adopted to reveal the patterns and addressed categories within the official documents of the identified populist political actors. As such, it enabled this research to determine the prominent themes and issues mentioned in the targeted documents and the way RPGs frame these themes. While the content analysis can be used for both quantitative and qualitative research, this study predominantly used qualitative strategies while examining the targeted documents. After filtering the data, I reviewed the selected documents according to the themes and categories they mention and to the argumentation of their messages. Then, I associated these themes and categories with the framing strategies of this thesis's hypothesis. For that purpose, I formed separate tables on Excel spreadsheet in which I coded the date, the number of paragraphs, and the themes mentioned in a specific text under scrutiny for each topic. I also took notes for each document, when I noticed the usage of extensively populist discourse that includes the presentation of a dichotomous worldview between moral 'people' and corrupt 'elites', and claim of being the sole representative of people's interests within the statements that refer to economic inequality. This strategy enabled this study to detect the frames that are used by RPGs while addressing inequality and to analyze specific topics they suggest as solutions to the problems of distribution while diverting the discussion towards other macroeconomic issues both across countries and time.

#### **3.3.1. Content Analysis of Official Statements**

The data concerning the trends in politicians' discourse was gathered online between March 2019 and June 2019 by the author. The official websites of populist political leaders and their affiliated organizations were utilized as sources of such data since the main aim of this study is to capture the reflection of political leaders' populist discourse on the economy. For this purpose, I have filtered all speeches and statements of the politicians under scrutiny in their respective official websites. The current president of the Republic of Turkey, Tayyip Erdoğan, and the current prime minister of India, Narendra Modi, are selected as the relevant political actors who most frequently generate populist discourse in their respective countries. A similar personalistic approach has been used in other populism studies which utilize content or discourse analysis to measure the phenomenon (Hawkins, 2009; Hawkins & Silva, 2016; Erçetin & Erdoğan, 2018).

Since the aim of this research is capturing the patterns through the determined cases' framing of economic inequality, it was necessary to find the relevant speeches of Modi and Erdoğan about economic inequality first. I specified numerous keywords that can indicate a reference to not only economic inequality in general but also income and wealth gap. I decided to determine customized keywords. I used Turkish keywords such as 'eşitsizlik', 'dağılım', 'gelir', 'servet' and 'malvarlığı' for the case of Turkey and English keywords such as 'inequality', 'distribution', 'gap', 'income', and 'wealth' for the Indian case. Then, I filtered the relevant databases for each political leader's speeches and official statements and eliminated the non-relevant ones.

Regarding Turkey, the official website of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey was convenient to provide enough text-based speeches of Erdoğan. This database covers Erdoğan's all official speeches and statements since he was elected as the president of the republic in 2014. According to Öniş (2015), the incumbency of AKP can be divided into three periods and the third period, from 2011 until now, has been associated with the problems and decline concerning economy, democracy, and foreign policy. The society has become polarized and personalization

of political power deepened since then. In line with this inference, this study assumes that populism can be observed clearly only in this third period of the AKP incumbency. The discussions of populism in Turkey under the AKP governments also emerged in the third phase of their incumbency. The time limitation of this database suited the aim of this study because 2014 was the first year in which general elections were held in Turkey since 2011, the beginning of the AKP's third period of incumbency. The accelerating domination of right-wing populism through AKP's and Erdoğan's official statements, especially since 2011, facilitated analyzing the influence of right-wing populism on the framing of economic inequality in Turkey.

For the case of India, there were three possible databases for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's official statements: the official website of BJP, of the Prime Ministry of India, and of Narendra Modi. The third option was selected as the most suitable database for including a higher number of speeches that were more extensive over time. Recent discussions of populism re-emerged with the rise of BJP as the incumbent political party. While Prime Minister Modi has been considered as a populist politician for his usage of anti-elitism and anti-pluralism since the campaign period for 2014 general elections in India, some of his available speeches before the 2014 campaign period were also reviewed to complement the analysis.

After determining the relevant pool of official statements for both cases, I started to review each of these texts to ensure that they contain at least one statement about economic inequality. Most of them included one or more paragraphs about the issue. After eliminating a few irrelevant texts, I started to code the remaining ones in terms of the issues they mention about the economic distribution. I separated the statements according to their corresponding keywords, to also divergences between the framing of income and wealth gap and the economic inequality in general without specific references to its constituent. The mentioned issues within these statements are coded as themes which are either referred to as the driver of or remedy to economic inequality. Some of them can be listed as: 'fight against corruption', 'taxation', 'entrepreneurship', 'welfare

services’, and ‘investment infrastructure’. Immediately, certain patterns emerged as dominant themes for both cases. The referred unit-of-analysis regarding the discussion of inequality is also coded for each statement, whether it is global, national, or regional. Lastly, I took notes for the statements which contain intense populist discourse such as simultaneous utilization of a Manichean perspective, anti-elitism, anti-pluralism, and consistent references to the sanctity of people's will. These notes enabled this thesis to cluster the statements which manifest moral blaming frame afterward. I also clustered the coded themes to demonstrate the dominance of equality of opportunity and individualization framing and used them to understand the details of this frame and its specific practical and policy-related appeals.

Topics of Spreadsheets	# of Documents	Date Intervals
India_inequality&distribution	9	March 2011 – June 2018
India_income	123	November 2010 – March 2019
India_wealth	15	November 2014 – February 2018
<b>India total</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>2010 – 2019</b>
Turkey_inequality&distribution	35	November 2014 – March 2018
Turkey_income	21	September 2014 – January 2019
Turkey_wealth	10	October 2014 – September 2018
<b>Turkey total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>2014 – 2019</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>2010 – 2019</b>

**Table 3:** Topics, numbers, and date intervals of reviewed official statements

To conclude, this pillar of the analysis focuses on the official speeches and statements of Erdogan and Modi between 2014 and May 2019. Table 1 demonstrates the number of statements and speeches coded for each topic with the date intervals that they belonged. One hundred forty-seven speeches of Modi were coded for the case of India, and 66 speeches of Erdoğan were reviewed for the case of Turkey. The utilization of right-wing populist discourse by these political leaders and their respective political parties have been assumed beforehand based on the literature.

### **3.3.2. Content Analysis of Election Manifestos**

Election manifestos were utilized as the second pillar of this study's data to conclude about right-wing populist parties' and politicians' framing of economic inequality. The reasons for choosing election manifestos as a part of the data for this research was twofold. First, these documents provide an overview of a political party's ideas and their policy promise regarding both specific topics and in general. They are short texts that include a political party's discourse as an institution at a specific point in time. Since this study also includes an analysis of political leaders' discourse in the form of speeches, the analysis of election manifestos complements this second pillar by adding up another unit-of-analysis into the research. Secondly, this study underlines the advantage of elections manifestos for comparative content analysis in line with other studies which also utilize content analysis to focus on populism (Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011; Rooduijn, De Lange, & van der Brug, 2014; Hawkins & Silva, 2016). Election manifestos are produced for similar purposes and provide comparable data across cases and time.

In each election manifesto, there are sections devoted to economy-related topics such as macroeconomy and development. These sections tend to focus on a wide range of issues from unemployment to infrastructure investment, from fiscal policy to social assistance budgets. This study specifically focuses on these sections of BJP and AKP's election manifestos since 2000. The data for election manifestos is more compact and easier to access compared to political leaders' speeches. This characteristic of the data enables this study to cover an almost two-decade-long period. As such, it becomes possible to detect the changes in economy-related promises of these political parties and the trend in the reflection and framing of economic inequality on manifestos across time. Since this study claims that the recent relevance of populist discourse in these two countries emerged in the post-2010 period, the election manifestos published between 2000 and 2010 provide enough documents for both countries and their political parties to compare with their possibly populist post-2010 counterparts. There are two manifestos of BJP and AKP between 2000

and 2010 for 2004 and 2009 Indian general elections concerning the former and 2002 and 2007 Turkish general elections concerning the latter case. Regarding the post-2010 period, there are four manifestos of AKP (for 2011, June 2015, November 2015, and 2018 general elections) and two manifestos of BJP (for 2014 and 2019 general elections).

Content analysis of election manifestos is utilized to operationalize the changes and framing of economic inequality. References to the issue as an umbrella term are acknowledged, and the manifestos were reviewed holistically with a specific focus on their economy-related discussions and promises without filtering them by specific keywords. Rather, the focus has been on the prefaces, summaries, introductions, and subsections, which can be related to the issue of distribution, social justice, or poverty. As such, all of their subsections about macroeconomy, development, welfare, and alike have been reviewed. Subsections on national security, legal reforms, natural resource management, foreign relations, environmental policies, culture, and governance are systematically excluded for being out of the scope of this thesis's purpose. Remaining have been reviewed in detail, and each manifesto's focus of topics and themes that it mentions about economic distribution are noted to constitute a comprehensive comparative analysis. The outcome of these reviews can be observed in Table 4 and Table 5.

## **CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter includes a review of the findings concerning the way RPGs and their respective political leaders present economic inequality. The chapter starts with an overview of the outcomes regarding Narendra Modi's official statements and BJP's election manifestos. Then, the results of the case of Tayyip Erdoğan's speeches and AKP's manifestos are also provided for their framing of economic inequality in general but also the income and wealth gap for more detailed analysis. The second part of the chapter presents the analysis based on its hypotheses. First, moral blaming frame and secondly the dominance of equality of opportunity and individualizing frame are introduced, and related arguments are explained in detail with references to the findings of this research.

### **4.1. Findings**

In this section, the findings of the reviewed documents' content analysis are presented. First, the Indian case with Narendra Modi's official statements since 2014 and BJP's election manifestos since 2004 are narrated and explained. Then, the data from Turkey under the AKP governments are submitted to examination based upon the official statements of Tayyip Erdoğan since 2014 and AKP's election manifestos since 2001. Each case's subsection starts with the general framing of economic inequality by their right-wing populist political leaders. Following that, more specific mentions regarding income gap and wealth inequality are reviewed with the extent of their problematization of the topic and the suggestions they provide to compensate for the gap. Towards the end of each subsection, the same assessments from general to more specific are provided for Indian and Turkish RPGs' election manifestos concerning their presentation of economic distribution and poverty.

#### **4.1.1. Framing of Inequality by Modi and BJP**



Economic inequality has been directly referred very few by Narendra Modi in his speeches and official statements since 2014. Even when one examines his speeches before the 2014 elections as the chief minister of Gujarat (India's westernmost state), the situation remains the same. Similarly, he also does not mention economic distribution directly very often. It does not come as a surprise since as the leader of a right-wing political party it is more likely that Modi emphasizes the importance of poverty alleviation rather than economic distribution, especially considering the global attention India has been receiving as the country that had the largest population living in extreme poverty. In the limited number of speeches in which he talked about inequality, the focus of his discourse slightly shifted from good governance, democracy, inclusive growth, and inclusive development to fight against corruption, incentives for entrepreneurship, infrastructure and housing as he became the prime minister. In the course of his speeches, he contrasts the success of post-2014 years against the years under Indian National Congress (INC) regarding inclusive development, fights against corruption, and poverty alleviation. While such a dichotomous presentation can be regarded as ordinary for engaging with politics, Modi's statements occasionally tend to cross to the side of populism. For example, he draws a moral distinction between his and the previous government by referring to the sincerity of the attempts about affordable housing for the poor and middle class, and by presenting a clash of interests between previous politicians and the poor that he was once a part of are in conflict:

... A few centuries later came Mahatma Phule, Mahatma Gandhi, and Baba Saheb B. Ahmedkar. All of them showed the path to end inequality in society. ... Unfortunately, today, an attempt is made to create a platform for vested political interests who have been trying to divide the society in the name of these great souls.... These people are far away from the ground realities. ...They are not concerned about the country or society. They are concerned only and only about their own interest and the interest of their families. These people had built bungalows worth crores of rupees for themselves by betraying the poor, Dalits, backward, deprived, and exploited people. (Under our) government, a record number of houses for the poor are being constructed (June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

The moral distinction and clash of interests between a homogeneous group of disadvantaged 'people' and corrupt, self-serving elites are portrayed by Modi as he claims to serve for the best interest of the poor against the corrupt rich who cannot develop empathy towards the problems of the common man. As such, he utilizes populist discourse to frame the affordable housing schemes that were offered as compensation mechanisms for poverty but also inequality. In another statement of him on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017, he also presents the affordable housing scheme of the government (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana) as an attempt to remove inequality.

While addressing economic distribution, Modi consistently underlines the insufficiency of mere capital distribution to fight against inequality with references to the ideas of a political-historical figure called Baba Saheb Ahmedkar (March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011; January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012; March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018). Ahmedkar was a person who inspired a movement against social and economic discrimination of disadvantaged groups and castes in India in the first half of the 20th century. Legitimizing his position with regards to inequality by utilizing a political-historical figure, Modi renders supporting self-reliance among the poor as the preferred alternative to capital distribution. As such, he reinterprets the exalted ideal of economic growth's trickle-down effect as a crucial tool to enable individuals for market participation. In order to support self-reliance, he offers initiatives that encourage innovation and entrepreneurship among the poor and middle classes, the involvement of the private sector to the process of development, and he also refers to the importance of introducing sufficient infrastructure to the disadvantaged locations.

Overall, Modi rarely addresses the problem of inequality in India directly via discussions of economic distribution and the gap between rich and poor. In times of limited instances when he mentions inequality, he prefers to intertwine his rhetoric with poverty alleviation. Improvement of infrastructure, especially in rural districts; encouragement and support for innovation and entrepreneurship; and government schemes regarding affordable housing through ventures and housing loans for the poor are the three prominent suggestions about compensation for inequality,

mentioned in Modi's rhetoric as he talks about economic distribution. However, when he starts to address income and wealth distribution separately, the content of his discourse becomes more detailed, and the intertwinement of his rhetoric with populism alters. As he mentions inequalities in income and wealth distribution as well as mechanisms of compensation and drivers of such phenomena rather than addressing the concept of inequality in general, it becomes easier to understand his vision of economic gaps in India's society and the frames he proposes to address them.

Indian prime minister prefers to refer to income distribution more often compared to the overall trends in economic inequality. While he only mentioned economic inequality nine times through his official public statements in the last eight years, 123 public statement articles regarding income distribution and compensation suggestions for income gap were found and reviewed within the relevant data source for this study. Throughout the speeches, Modi consistently acknowledges and addresses the income gap within India. However, rather than focusing on the drivers of the phenomenon, he prefers to suggest compensation mechanisms to overcome the effects of the gap. Again, not surprisingly, the speeches in which he refers to the top section of income distribution is very limited. Instead, his suggestions target improvements in the lives of lower-income groups and unemployed. Thus, Modi's speeches often problematize poverty and poor citizens' lack of opportunities to generate higher income over inequality of income.

The most dominant theme that Modi mentions within his suggestions to overcome poverty is increasing incomes through alternative mechanisms such as finding additional sources of income which can complement poor people's existing limited income, embracing more sophisticated products for producers to generate more income due to higher product prices, or increasing productivity through several mechanisms. Among all sectors, Modi consistently intends to appeal farmers within these speeches. Out of 109 official statements of Modi since 2014, 56 of them underlines increasing and doubling farmers income as one of BJP's top priorities to overcome the

problems of low-income groups in India. The topic has gained even more visibility within his speeches since 2016. He proposes various incentives, offers micro-level ideas, and policies all with the idea of equality of opportunity. For example, he puts forward the improvements in transportation, irrigation, and technological infrastructure through public and private investments to increase productivity and integrate local farmers into national and global markets. Modi also emphasizes food processing and packaging as techniques for value addition, which, in return, increase the income of the farmers. Introducing new and globally demanded products to the agricultural production processes, such as honey and herbal medicines, are also encouraged with the promise of increasing farmers' global customers. Finally, the promise of higher availability of loans for farmers has been emphasized consistently to boost farmers' capital, which may generate more income for them.

Throughout Modi's speeches on income inequality, he rarely presents welfare and social security as the main remedy for the issue. There are few speeches in which he mentions the burden of health expenditures on the poor. However, he does not explain BJP's solutions to such burdens in detail. His approach is rather theoretical and moral with an emphasis on poor people's desires and capabilities if opportunities provided. He compares the old elite and governments with the BJP rule regarding poverty eradication:

If the people who deceived the poor over the past 30, 40 and 50 years had emphasized on empowering the poor instead of playing dirty politics in the name of poor, then India wouldn't have been what it is today. They had an erroneous perception of the poor. They thought that the poor always demands something. The basic mistake on their part was to believe that the poor need to be given things for free. But the extent of dignity and self-respect that the poor possess cannot ever be measured. ... I have lived in poverty. I have experienced the dignity and the self-respect of the poor. This feeling of self-respect gives the strength to deal with poverty. ... We, on the other hand, have identified the root cause of the problem. ... When a poor person gets a house, his mindset and perception changes, and when a poor mother gets a gas connection, she is confident and feels equal to the others.

The poor feel dignified when they have a bank account. They decide to save money. The poor move towards empowerment when they are vaccinated. (September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018)

With this discourse, Modi does not only shift the discussion of inequality toward poverty, but he also embraces a populist approach in which he identifies himself within the disadvantaged people by underlining his socioeconomic background, and contrasts the morality and interests of the old elites and 'the people'. Meanwhile, the availability of housing loans, infrastructure improvements, financialization, sometimes minimum healthcare are all presented as mechanisms to overcome the problems that come with poverty.

Among all speeches of Modi since his election as India's prime minister, he discusses the issue of taxation and redistribution reforms in 21 of them. Most of these speeches concentrate on the fight against corruption, money laundering, and tax evasion. The old elites of INC are referred to as morally corrupt bureaucrats who had accumulated wealth and enabled other corrupt rich people to do the same against the interest of 'the common man' of India. However, what is more interesting is the way Modi problematizes the issue of tax evasion. Rather than targeting specific groups of wealthy people who evade taxation, he consistently holds lower- and middle-income groups as responsible for the problem of tax evasion implicitly and explicitly. Linking paying taxes and disclosing one's income with patriotism, he encourages lower- and middle-income citizens to disclose their earnings. He promises to simplify bureaucratic processes, tax refunds for middle-income entrepreneurs, and tax exemptions for senior citizens. However, unlike most left-wing populist parties, he does not suggest progressive taxation that may target the income of wealthy people in India.

Under Modi government, the discourse on wealth distribution, accumulation, and gap revolve around poor Indians integration to the markets via entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, and fight against corruption. Rather than redistribution through the changes in the taxation system, the general emphasis of the BJP government has been on the importance of individual efforts that

are hopefully encouraged by the new financial opportunities provided by the incumbent government as well as new punishment mechanisms. Based on the fifteen official statements of the Prime Minister between late 2014 and early 2018 concerning wealth accumulation and distribution, the most frequently mentioned reason for an unequal wealth gap has been corruption. In this context, what is meant by corruption is tax evasion through money laundering and tax havens. In conjunction with this logic, the most prominent solution offered by Modi is the fight against such forms of corruption via more strict legal punishment arrangements and incentives that simplify processes for people and companies to formalize their accumulated wealth. Secondly, the entrepreneurial potential of lower and middle-income classes is put forward as a compensation for the wealth gap. Initiatives such as Start Up India which support lower- and middle-class entrepreneurs regarding certification and tax benefits by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry are presented as proposed remedies for wealth inequality. Hand in hand with the entrepreneurship discourse, financial inclusion of the masses under the Jan Dhan Yojana scheme has been another improvement mentioned more than once throughout the statements on wealth distribution. The easiness of opening a bank account and receiving loans in the post-2014 period has been underlined as sources of bettering the lives of poor and disadvantaged.

The statements on entrepreneurship have not contained any form of populist discourse. Modi only contrasts the developments achieved under the BJP government regarding entrepreneurship and financial inclusion with the difficulties of prior periods in these realms. Such framing is not enough to refer a political discourse as populist. However, when the focus of his speeches turns towards corruption and tax evasion, such discourse's interception with populism becomes more likely. Modi refers to the tax evaders and the people who have been engaged in money laundering as 'big sharks' that are amassing wealth which can be used in the interest of the poor that the BJP truly represents. The prime minister also accuses previous governments of not forming Special Investigation Teams because of their vested interests concerning offshore wealth.

While addressing the issue of corruption, Modi's statements portray a clear moral dichotomy between his government and the previous ones:

For the first time in the history of India, four former Chief Ministers have been declared guilty for corrupt practices by the court. Now they have to spend their lives in prison. It is our commitment. Those who have robbed the country of its wealth have to return that, and I will never step back in these efforts. I am a warrior. Therefore, today, there is an environment of honesty in the country. We are celebrating the festival of honesty. (February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018)

In addition to Modi's official statements and speeches, the election manifestos of the BJP can also illuminate the current right-wing populism's vision and framing of inequality as well as the dominance of other topics of economy and development to divert the discussion. Throughout the 2004 and 2009 election manifestos, the party devotes its central focus to India's national security and becoming a global power. Development also plays a significant role in their promises. Both 2004 and 2009 manifestos mostly focus on fulfilling the basic needs such as sanitation, drinking water, and housing of people who were in need and continue to be increasingly business-friendly and economic growth oriented. Within both manifestos, BJP claims India's urgent need for strong and decisive leadership to overcome the crisis about

<b>BJP – India</b>	<b>2004 Election Manifesto</b>	<b>2009 Election Manifesto</b>	<b>2014 Election Manifesto</b>	<b>2019 Election Manifesto</b>
<b>Main Focus</b>	Growth, national security, rural development, infrastructure, export, cultural and religious values, globalization, poverty alleviation	Economic stability, national security, strong leadership, corruption, poverty, development, hunger, employment, economic growth, infrastructure, promotion of SMEs,	Corruption, entrepreneurship, employment, middle and lower classes, growth, poverty, infrastructure	Inclusive development, doubling farmers income, inclusive growth, infrastructure investment, welfare, improvements in taxation
<b>Themes related with inequality</b>	Poverty alleviation, economic growth, hunger, unemployment, corruption, strengthening small-scale sector, urban-rural divide	Welfare, informality, poverty, hunger, taxation, agricultural income, reducing unemployment, investment	Equitable growth and development, extreme poverty alleviation, regional inequality, welfare for backward castes and minorities, equality of opportunity, infrastructure	Regional/geographical inequality (East India, Northeast), targeting the poor and backward castes & scheduled castes & OBCs, improvements in taxation

**Table 4:** Prominent topics and themes  
through election manifestos of BJP



National security and develop rapidly to ensure their place among global powers. The 2009 election manifesto contained populist discourse in terms of accusing the political elite of INC as corrupt, weak, indecisive, and "not working for the welfare of the common man" (p. 7). The party failed to spearhead the 2004 and 2009 national elections to form the government.

BJP won 282 out of 545 seats in the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha and became the new ruling party of India with 2014 general elections. The preface section of BJP's 2014 election manifesto consistently contains traces of populist rhetoric. The chairman of BJP, Manohar Joshi equates old political elites with the rule of the British and position them as 'alien to India's world-view' (p. 1). According to the article, previous governments were marked by an 'erosion of moral and societal values' and strongly linked with corruption and stagnation. The article presents a crisis scenario and a policy paralysis which requires immediate action and competent leadership for India that can be overcome by BJP and Modi who can bring 'the people's participation back into politics' (p. 2). The party's 2014 election manifesto mainly emphasizes the importance of the fight against corruption, problematizes unemployment and offers high growth with higher employment rates, encourages entrepreneurship, and tries to appeal to middle- and lower-income citizens with a focus on infrastructure and poverty alleviation.

In the 2014 election manifesto, BJP promises to be the government of the poor, marginalized and left behind and the party also identifies previous development processes as lopsided with a skewed distribution of resources (p. 15). Within the manifesto, there are sections and subsections named as "widen the platform", "bridge the gap", "social justice and empowerment". However, none of these sections target the top fragments of economic distribution, which also constitute the economic gap. The approach toward top fragments such as business class is rather encouraging with emphasis on tax reforms via bureaucratic simplifications. The party again positions itself against the UPA Government, arguing that the previous periods association with uncertainty for business and investment (p. 27).

The manifesto idealizes providing ‘equality of opportunity’ which is another subsection title in the manifesto. Themes such as inclusivity and equity of growth and development, regional inequalities, infrastructure development, poverty alleviation, and welfare services for the poor and backward castes dominate the sentences and sections that deal with the concept of economic inequality. The following paragraph from the manifesto demonstrates the way BJP problematized poverty in 2014 manifesto while economic gaps are only briefly mentioned a few times within the same document:

We will not only empower our citizens with the ability to dream; we will enable them with the capability to actualize their dreams. The real test of the success of a development process lies in the happiness of the common man. The fruits of growth and development must reach the weakest, most deprived, and remotest of people. With a firm belief in the concept of Antyodaya - uplifting the poorest of the poor - Extreme Poverty and malnutrition will be treated as a National priority and will be addressed on Mission Mode. (BJP Election Manifesto 2014, p. 15)

Similar to the 2014 version, BJP’s 2019 election manifesto also embraces inclusive growth and development as well as infrastructure investment as its main focus. Within the introduction part of the manifesto, where Modi personally appeals to the voters, improvements in infrastructure, financialization, incentives for entrepreneurship, and fight against corruption are prominent topics. However, the recent manifesto also introduces new topics to the discussion. For example, more emphasis is put on the developments in the welfare system, such as broadening health insurance and pension coverage. Regarding taxation, BJP claims that neo-middle and middle classes should be exempt from income taxation. Even more visible issue in the manifesto is the aim of increasing farmers income. In line with Modi’s official statements since 2016, the 2019 manifesto underlines the importance of doubling farmers income. As such, this aim by itself is the second subsection through the manifesto right after a subsection about national security.

Compared to 2014, the attention directly paid to poverty and its alleviation is limited in the 2019 election manifesto. Rather than using poverty- and inequality-related slogans such as "Bridge the Gap" or "Widen the Platform", reflections of economic inequality are implicitly addressed via discussions about income increase for the disadvantaged, continuing to improve infrastructure, available healthcare, and inclusive development. The subsection dedicated to development is especially illuminating to understand BJP's most recent vision of economic distribution and justice. As the manifesto mentions the problems of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes in India, the remedy is offered in the form of equality of opportunity rather than outcomes. The development has been used as an umbrella term to represent a bundle of suggestions to overcome the disadvantages that backward castes must confront. Some of such suggestions are financial inclusion, food and housing subsidies, accessible education, and employment opportunities. Lastly and very briefly, regional inequality is also addressed in the 2019 manifesto. Even though BJP also dominated the previous government between 2014 and 2019, the party still acknowledges geographical, economic discrepancies within India and promise to continue to ensure an equal distribution between diverse regions of the country.

Not surprisingly, the party does not suggest a progressive redistribution policy. In line with its neoliberal mindset, it rather promises to lower the tax rate and still claim to increase the tax base through improving compliance (p. 17). They argue that such a tax base would still be sufficient to compensate for poverty. Hand in hand with that approach, BJP also introduced a campaign called "Make in India" to appeal to global business by introducing reforms of deregulation, which covers a broader space within the manifesto compared to the taxation subsection. Similar tax exemptions promises are also promised for middle classes to encourage entrepreneurship and startups. Compared to the 2014 manifesto, less attention has been paid to corruption and money laundering in 2019. Thus, redistribution-related changes are limited and

associated with neoliberal logic while emphasis in taxation do not address or problematize existing economic gap between rich and poor in India in BJP's latest election manifesto.

Throughout the latest election, the manifesto of BJP, populist discourse still emerges sporadically. The Manichean approach, demonization of the old elite, and reduction of all citizens to the idea of 'the people', and of their will to 'the common will' manifest themselves in the preface and within the discourse on corruption and economic stagnation. The party compares political decision-making process under their rule with the previous governments' periods by describing the former as guided by "public interest of all Indians" and the latter as reflecting "the self-interest of a select few". The mantra "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" (which means "with all, development of everyone") has been emphasized since 2014 by the party and it is utilized to emphasize the importance of inclusive development as a remedy for economic gaps but it is also mentioned to underline underrepresentation of 'the people' by the old elite in the past.

#### **4.1.2. Framing of Inequality by Erdoğan and AKP**

When Erdoğan speaks of economic inequality without mentioning its constituents such as income and wealth distribution, he usually refers to the issue at the global level and compares the gap in Turkey with global inequality. 13 out of 14 of his official statements about inequality between 2014 and 2018 include and problematize global inequality as the main focus of the discussion. Within the same speeches, he emphasizes relative improvements in Turkey's income distribution. Global poverty and global development are also two other topics which he compares with changes in Turkey through his speeches about inequality. He underlies the ongoing existence of abysmal economic discrepancies between and within countries around the world and offers inclusivity, sustainability, balanced growth, increasing infrastructural investments, creating new employment opportunities, and lastly, improving equality of opportunity as remedies that can correct global inequality, poverty, and underdevelopment. However, he rarely expands on what he means by these concepts and how to achieve them in practice. Moreover, he also does not support

his arguments with additional statements. For example, he suggests increasing growth rates to overcome inequality (April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015). However, there are numerous studies which demonstrate a positive relationship between economic growth and inequality in the short run (Kuznets, 1955; Forbes, 2000). He presents discrepancies in economic and social opportunities as the main barrier to overcome the problems that inequality brings. Erdoğan also puts the responsibility on individuals regarding the issue by mentioning the importance of desire and capability to work:

We will distribute the benefits of human development level, which we will reach in 2035, between different segments of the society and regions of the country by minimizing the income gap throughout the country. We will guarantee our citizens' future, particularly concerning our youth and women, by establishing a productive employment policy which can enable everybody who has the desire and capability to work. (April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017)

Within both general statements of inequality and income gap, Erdoğan consistently underlines Turkey's recent leap in giving foreign aid, in the form of humanitarian aid. He emphasizes the exceptional increase in Turkey's humanitarian aid flows towards least developed countries through the period of AKP governments and presents this increase as an indication of Turkey's moral superiority regarding dealing with global poverty and inequality.

Concerning income, Erdoğan usually mentions relative improvements in Turkey's income gap compared to global income discrepancies. He also refers to their governments' success in increasing per capita income and national income since 2002. As he begins to narrate positive macroeconomic indicators, economic crises under previous governments, and financial crises around the world are scrutinized by him as well. The narration of success by the President is also valid for the developments in regional income distribution between the East of Turkey, where the majority of the population is Kurdish and the rest. However, the comparisons have been consistently made with 17 years earlier rather than with their more recent periods.

Since inequality has been used as an umbrella term throughout the rhetoric of Tayyip Erdoğan, problems and improvements regarding poverty and social justice are also intertwined with the discussions of economic distribution. For example, he frequently underlines the AKP's successful policies about infrastructural development and welfare with a specific focus on the healthcare system in the statements in which he presents such improvements as a step to overcome inequality:

Do not forget that this country has achieved a globally acknowledged health reform. Because we remember very well how we suffered in front of hospital doors. Right there, there was SSK Okmeydani Hospital. I went there when I was young and joined the queue. I waited in the queue to get a sequence number for my beloved deceased mother. You had to get the number and go back to your house. Back then, there were no cell phones. Then, we would get our beloved mother back to the hospital ... What comes to mind when hospitals are mentioned? Hygiene. There was no hygiene in hospitals back then (referring to the times when the main opposition party's leader was the head of the Social Security Authority of Turkey). Why? Because there is no hygiene in these people's spiritual world. (April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015)

This statement of him contains several characteristics of his right-wing populist rhetoric on the economic issue in general. First, he reminds the voters of his socio-economic background by telling a story from his youth about the difficulties of accessing healthcare for his mother. As such, he presents himself as one of 'the people' which is one of the most crucial aspects of populism. Then, he morally distinguishes himself and the people from the old elite by arguing the illness of their moral and 'spiritual' grounds.

As Erdoğan refers to the discrepancies within wealth distribution and unfair wealth accumulation through his official statements, Erdoğan occasionally refers to an unspecified group of elites who increase their wealth and capital against the interests of the common man. The wealth gap is the topic that has been frequently addressed via explicitly populist discourse in Erdoğan's speeches and statements about economic distribution. His approach to wealth inequality has been

very clear. He repetitively problematizes certain internal and external elites' wealth accumulation through speculations which only benefit them rather than 'the people' by fueling economic crises hand in hand with destabilizing exchange rates, increasing interest rates, and inflation.

Compared to Erdoğan's official statements and speeches, the election manifestos of AKP since 2002 have been predominantly focusing on income inequality rather than wealth gap or referring to economic inequality in general. The only manifesto that refers to wealth gap compares the stability of Turkey's wealth inequality to other countries in times of Global Financial Crisis as a positive development. The predominant and explicit focus on income inequality makes utilization of inequality as an umbrella term more difficult for the party because references to income inequality are rather direct through manifestos and are usually based on actual data. Still, there are various themes which are associated with economic inequality, and specific policies are rendered as remedies to overcome economic gap while they can improve solely equality of opportunity rather than outcomes.

All six election manifestos of AKP include references to and problematization of income inequality. As such, the party underlines improvements within income distribution in the country since 2002. The term 'equality of opportunity' is occasionally put forward to enhance social justice, especially regarding education. The party promises reforms within the redistribution system, usually in favor of business elites. Such promise was distinct in 2007. The 2002 manifesto differs from the rest of the documents due to its specific emphasis on the previous periods' discrepancies. It is an expected result since the party had not won an election back then. Therefore, in comparison with the old elite dominated the arguments of the 2002 manifesto, and it is the one with most promises regarding the compensation for inequality.

The 2007 document includes a very technical language and mostly addresses macroeconomic issues such as fiscal discipline, public debt, inflation, financialization, and so on

rather than economic inequality and social justice. Following that, the 2011 manifesto is based on the arguments about the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. While referring to the economic gap, it offers incentives for entrepreneurial activities and emphasizes improvements in citizens' purchasing power in addition to the more frequent themes of equality of opportunity and inclusivity of economic growth. The two election manifestos of 2015 are almost the same concerning their main economic focuses and themes about inequality. Fight against informal business and labor has been rendered as a crucial remedy to the discrepancies in economic distribution without going in detail further since 2015. The last manifesto also addresses and underlines very similar themes and just like other manifestos it also blames the old political elite who were in power before AKP as the responsible actors of previously and even currently high levels of economic inequality. Overall, there are only slight differences between the extent of problematization of economic inequality and its relevant arguments, assumptions, presented responsible actors, and remedies throughout AKP's six election manifestos spread around almost two decades. In general equality of opportunity has been in the forefront of the discussions and improvements in inclusivity through economic growth, degree of informality, investment, entrepreneurship, and infrastructural development are praised as mechanisms to limit the negative consequences of economic inequality.



<b>AKP - Turkey</b>	<b>2002 Election Manifesto</b>	<b>2007 Election Manifesto</b>	<b>2011 Election Manifesto</b>	<b>2015 Election Manifesto</b>	<b>2015 Election Manifesto (2<sup>nd</sup>)</b>	<b>2018 Election Manifesto</b>
<b>Main Focus</b>	Economic crisis of 2002, deregulation, competition, financialization, global and regional integration, fiscal discipline, interest and exchange rates, fair income distribution, export	Fiscal discipline, the economic crisis of 2002, economic growth, national income, taxation reforms, public spending, informality, fight against inflation, increasing financialization, regional integration	Sustainable economic growth, unemployment, democratic norms, 2008 global crisis, global economic developments, relative economic health, investment, innovation, entrepreneurship	Sustainable economic development, macroeconomic stability, economic growth, incentives for entrepreneurs, improvements in income inequality, increasing public spending on welfare, investment	Sustainable economic development, macroeconomic stability, economic growth, incentives for entrepreneurs, improvements in income inequality, increasing public spending on welfare, investment	Economic growth, macroeconomic stability, fiscal discipline, inflation, investment, productivity, employment, exports, financialization, technological development
<b>Themes associated with inequality</b>	Worsening national and global income inequality, equality of opportunity in education, previous income gap, poverty, social security, tax reforms, corruption	Improvements in income inequality, taxation reforms in favor of rich, improvements in public spending for social needs	Equality of opportunity, stable wealth inequality through the crisis, inclusive economic growth, improvements in purchasing power, incentives for entrepreneurs	Improvements in income inequality, fight against inflation, reforms in income taxation, fight against informality, equality of opportunity, the gender gap in employment opportunities	Improvements in income inequality, fight against inflation, reforms in income taxation, fight against informality, equality of opportunity, the gender gap in employment opportunities	Improvements in income inequality, fight against informality, public and private investments, public employment, increasing per capita income

**Table 5:** Prominent topics and themes

through the election manifestos of AKP

## **4.2. Analysis**

### **4.2.1. Moral Blaming Frame: The Evil Scapegoats of Inequality**

While the concept of blaming is not peculiar to the politics of populism only, it is well known that populist politicians often resort to this strategy, probably more than other politicians. This inclination is due to the intersecting nature of populism, which tends to emerge in times of crisis, and politicians' general motivations about blaming. Theories of blame avoidance foresee that politicians are primarily motivated to avoid accusations for unpopular actions more than they want to get credit for approved, popular ones (Weaver, 1986). Meanwhile, populism is likely to be observed after the occurrence of such unpopular actions and their consequences. According to Vasilopoulou and others (2013, p. 392), blaming is a fundamental apparatus for politicians who utilize populist rhetoric to sustain their political legitimacy in times of crises. As the inflated distinction between 'us' versus 'them' is one of the building blocks of populist politics, blame-shifting becomes an even more efficient tool for such political actors to deny responsibility and accuse the established elite of crises starkly without sharing any liability on behalf of themselves or of 'the people' whom they claim to represent truly.

However, the shifting of responsibility towards 'the others' does not portray populism's link with blaming by itself. The critical feature of such strategy is that more often than not populist blaming is based on moral criteria (Mudde, 2004; Taggart, 2000; De la Torre, 2000; Hameleers, Bos, & de Vreese, 2017). As such, populists aim to evaluate certain groups as evil while others as good. More specifically, they identify themselves with the masses, 'the people' who are presented within populist discourse as pure and dignified. Simultaneously, they refer to the elites who are associated with the old establishment as the nemesis of 'the people', corrupt, and evil. When this logic is applied to the discussions of economic inequality, one expectedly observes blame-shifting towards self-interested old and rich elite and victimization of 'the people' and the populist political actor in the face of such corruption.

Discussions about the relationship between economic inequality and populism include an ideological angle as well. Hood and others (2009) distinguish politicians' options into three in times of public discussions about a problem. According to them, politicians can either deny the problem altogether; admit there is a problem but deny the responsibility for it; or they can both admit the existence of it and its responsibility. The general understanding through populism literature is that left-wing populists usually admit and address the problem of economic inequality while they deny the responsibility, right-wing populists are known for denying the existence of inequality as a problem in the first place. Against this perception within populism studies, this research demonstrates occasional admission of economic inequality as a problem by RPGs and their denial of responsibility for the issue, similar to their left-wing counterparts. While this similarity has been mostly overlooked prior to this study, the intention here is not to claim that the existing typologies of populism are dysfunctional in terms of their approaches towards economic inequality. There are still differences between right- and left-wing versions of the phenomenon regardless of the analogous ways they use to address and problematize the issue. Right-wing populists address the problem less than their left counterparts and do not offer redistribution as the remedy.

While acknowledging RPGs limited concern over the issue of unequal economic distribution, there are still specific patterns of framing within their narrow approach that suggest differences with left-wing populism. The first divergence is the utilization of the concept of inequality by RPGs. Both in Modi and Erdoğan's official statements, the issue of inequality has been used as an umbrella term to indicate not only the economic gap between rich and poor, but also poverty, any point of unfairness within the economic system, and social injustice in general. In other words, it is not that these right-wing populist political leaders do not ever address the issue, but they usually utilize the term to mention other problems related with a fair and equal economic distribution more than directly problematizing economic gap. This approach provides

them leverage to present themselves as ‘the people's real and dignified representatives who protect the interest of the masses by managing to overcome difficulties related with poverty, economic opportunities, and social services rather than the distribution of economic outcomes in terms of income and wealth. Meanwhile, they also find a room for maneuver to blame the old elite, who have been associated with the establishment, both for the discrepancies in economic distribution and for other experienced economic difficulties which they demonstrated success to overcome. All in all, the findings of this thesis provide examples of moral blaming regarding economic inequality under RPGs' rule in India and Turkey. The way RPGs utilize inequality as an umbrella term serve them a rhetorical freedom to frequently shift the discussion from inequality to poverty and social injustice in favor of their interests as they manage to take credit for improvements in one realm while shifting the blame for the disturbances in another one.

Contrary to the common belief, this thesis shows that RPGs also address and problematize the issue of economic inequality occasionally even though the frequency is less than their left-wing counterparts. When the level of economic inequality increases concerning either income or wealth distribution under the rule of a right-wing populist political party, this inevitably leads to a dilemma for RPGs. Even though they may usually achieve to overlook the problem altogether, higher levels of economic gap can put pressure on them to address the issue once in a while. When RPGs address inequality either because of actual levels of discrepancies in the distribution or for another reason, they become selective and prefer to discuss inequality at certain levels while neglecting other versions to utilize blame-shifting strategies. For example, Tayyip Erdoğan mostly refers to global inequality throughout his speeches about economic distribution since he and his party cannot be blamed for that global phenomenon. Shifting the level of analysis provides him rhetorical advantages to present his party and policies as moral and concerned for the unequal distribution of sources and opportunities around the world as well as the ills of underdevelopment and poverty. Throughout these discussions he consistently blames the US and European countries

as the responsible actors of the phenomenon, victimizes least developed countries' citizens and presents them as dignified, and positions himself alongside of these disadvantaged countries by insisting to underline the financial support in the form of humanitarian aid that Turkey provides to them beyond its actual global economic power:

Turkey has been listed as the third among countries which financially aid the most internationally ... This is our humanitarian and conscientious responsibility; we have to do that. We have to continue doing that with more determination each passing day. As I walk around African countries and see sorrowful scenes, I say that our responsibility is even larger. Our humanitarian aid outweighs our economic growth significantly. The US is first; the UK is second; we are the third. Can you believe this? Whereas around the world, there are countries which are much bigger than us (November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

As Erdoğan usually targets external political and economic elites as the sources of global economic injustices, both him and Modi also accuse internal political elites as responsible for their countries' past troubles about unequal economic distribution. Not only the populist political leaders but BJP in India and AKP in Turkey also rhetorically condemn old elites (of INC in the case of India and RPP for Turkey) as being corrupt and self-interested.

Another difference between the blaming strategies of RPGs and left-wing populists regarding the issue of economic distribution is the target and intensity of blaming. Besides acknowledging RPGs' occasional references to economic inequality and their problematization of the issue when blame-shifting is possible, it is not possible to offer a proper analysis of RPGs' framing of economic inequality without emphasizing their organic ties with wealthy business elites. While left-wing populist politicians are known for their targeting of global business and economic elite for the ills of inequality, the same does not apply to right-wing populist parties, especially not to RPGs. Unlike their left-wing counterparts, RPGs are more likely to refer to the bottom of the economic distribution rather than aiming to problematize the top range due to the

intrinsic nature of their ideological appeal as neoliberal politicians who are supposed to favor open-market economy, deregulation, limited state intervention, and capitalist competition.

Regarding redistribution, both leaders and their respective political parties seldom suggest or favor progressive taxation against the interests of the rich. Within their official statements as well as manifestos, they rather always portray their country as a business-friendly environment with tax exemptions, affordable labor, and incentives for entrepreneurship. Speeches of Narendra Modi embody such promises and messages. The leader consistently tries to appeal the global capital and also overseas Indian capital by promoting his party's schemes such as StartUp India, Stand Up India, or by emphasizing improvements in infrastructure. The accusation of rich and the 'us' versus 'them' rhetoric in India only applies to the issue of corruption and tax evasion. Even then, the discussions of these issues also target the middle and lower classes for disclosing their incomes with almost the same frequency. Still, Modi occasionally morally blame the old political elite and the related corrupt rich as harming the interests of the masses within his official statements about income and wealth distribution:

This government has launched a massive battle against corruption and black money with this kind of commitment towards honesty. Those people who did not pay tax to the government despite earning crores of rupees, those who amassed wealth on other's name, those who floated fake companies, those who deal in black money, now these big sharks are being probed by the government (February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

While the approach of the AKP can also be evaluated as business-friendly and neoliberal at its core, official statements of Tayyip Erdoğan concerning blaming certain business elites have been erratic in the past couple of years in parallel with the political instabilities of the country. Similar to Modi, within his speeches and statements, he also aims to render Turkey as an investment-friendly market in which there are improvements in the ease of doing business and eagerness to develop global economic cooperation. These messages do not contain any moral basis; they are technical as can be expected. However, the populist leader also occasionally

deviates from this amoral discourse and resorts to moral blame-shifting against the global and national business elite who do not strike a pro-government attitude. For example, towards the end of 2017, he accused some Turkish businesspeople who were taking their wealth abroad for "being traitor" and underlined his disapproval for actions of "transferring the benefits to abroad while earning money in this country."<sup>4</sup> Lastly, Erdoğan consistently blames external and internal financial elites for accumulating wealth through speculations and therefore fueling economic crises within the country. However, the actual targets of these blaming attempts are never explicit. Members of 'the other' within financial business remains to be vague. Populist discourse explicitly manifests itself within such statements:

People who are standing guard to seize 'people's will' will always be disappointed. Some people pray for economic crisis, do you know that? The brokers who get used to doubling their wealth through speculation will not find what they are looking for ... Because we are taking our power from God and the masses, that is our difference. Because we have people with us. Hundreds of millions of oppressed, victimized, and poor people support us with their hearts and prayers. Can there be stronger power than this? (May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016).

Such accusations have not been publicly supported by politicians within the AKP and the party's ministers. These people rather try to compensate for the rhetorical outbursts of Erdoğan by clarifying or correcting his statements about the party's overall stance, especially towards global investors and financial elite. Therefore, while the RPG in Turkey cannot be categorized as anti-rich, oppositional tendencies against Erdoğan's worsening distance from democratic norms and values within global and national business elite sometimes take its toll of his frequent utilization of moral blaming within his populist rhetorical appeal to the masses. This aspect of the Turkish case diverges from the overall approach of BJP towards economic elites.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/erdogan-bazi-is-adamlarinin-varliklarini-yurt-disina-kacirdiklarini-duyuyorum-40666579>

Meanwhile, victimization and moral praising of the poor is more widespread within both populist typologies. One alteration in this regard can be the possible adoption of deservingness perspective by RPGs. In other words, RPGs are likely to discriminate certain disadvantaged groups and minorities over the idea of deserving poverty and negative consequences of inequality for their alleged deviations from the concept of the desired citizen, the common man, ‘the people’.

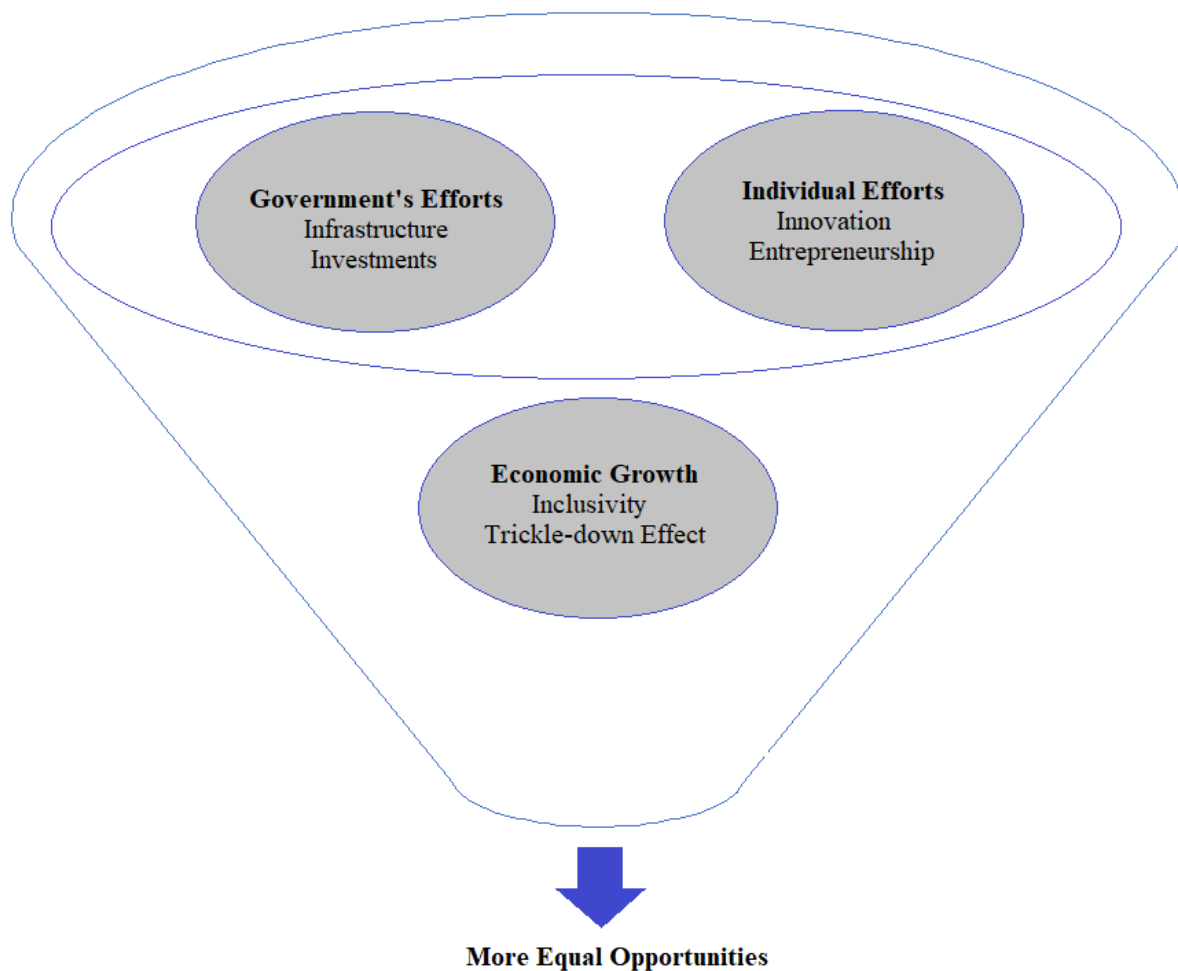
#### **4.2.2. Equality of Opportunity and Individualizing Frame**

As indicated in the section that includes the discussions on the approaches to and framing of inequality, Wright (2016) argues that there is a normative distinction between equality of outcomes and equality of opportunities perspectives to the issue of economic gap. Findings of this thesis demonstrate that both the Indian and the Turkish case analyzed in this study adopt the latter perspective towards economic inequality as expected. In other words, rather than problematizing the unequal distribution of outcomes and the result, these political actors are more concerned with imbalances at the time of the starting point and the discussions on equality of opportunity. Even when they occasionally refer to inequality of outcomes, the remedies that they suggest for the issue still target the balance of opportunity distribution. Such inconsistency between the addressed problem and the remedy suggested has been rendered less apparent for RPGs success in utilizing economic inequality as an umbrella term through their official statements.

There are important implications of caring about equality of opportunity rather than outcomes. While the remedy is redistribution, overcoming the problem is mostly incumbent on the government through policymaking and implementation as well as on the rich because they have to pay more taxes by percentage. However, the equality of opportunity perspective of RPGs removes the burden from the rich. It rather problematizes poverty rather than extreme wealth or the gap between rich and poor. As such, this perspective expects lower- and middle-income citizens to



make individual efforts to elude from poverty or economic bottlenecks while government removes specific barriers for them to achieve this without ever harming the interests of economically advantaged. This approach can be observed throughout the official statements and election manifestos of both cases since the beginning of their rule, and it affects the way these political actors problematize the components of inequality in addition to their imagination of possible relief points to overcome each relevant problem.



**Figure 2:** RPGs' framing of equality of opportunities

The funnel graphic above summarizes RPGs' overall suggestion to overcome inequalities concerning opportunities. First and foremost, these political parties encourage individuals to come to the fore concerning entrepreneurship and innovation. Individuals are always emboldened by the

BJP and Modi about being more diligent, active, and finding innovative solutions to carve out new mechanisms which alleviate their disadvantage without changing the existing system. Eagerness to be integrated into national and global markets is praised, and self-sufficiency is idealized throughout RPG's discourse in India. The remedies offered also reflect their perception of the problem. In other words, these solutions imply economically disadvantaged individuals' responsibility in their socio-economic circumstances and claim their lack of effort, inventiveness, and entrepreneurial attempts to be among the drivers of the problem.

Besides expectations from individuals, RPGs also discuss the importance of investment and infrastructure, which can enable economically disadvantaged people to pursue their goals. Right-wing populist parties such as BJP and AKP emphasize the need for more investment regarding education, technology, and infrastructure, all of which can incite development in favor of lower- and middle-income citizens. Not only public sector, but also the private sector is also persuaded to invest in development processes with the appeal to gain financial benefits for big business. Infrastructure has been the most prominent pillar of all these encouraging investment categories for it offers the fastest profits and revives job market among all other options. The general message through the official statements of Modi and Erdoğan is that equality of opportunity will be ensured, and poverty will be decreased as the necessary infrastructure is provided to disadvantaged regions and people of the country. Transportation infrastructure has been an exemplar of this logic for it is always promoted as a tool to integrate previously disconnected disadvantaged individuals to the markets which have more opportunities.

India and Turkey's populist political leaders consistently mention inclusive economic growth and inclusive development while addressing economic inequality in their official statements. The concept of inclusivity appears in these texts as a suggested solution to overcome inequality. The term inclusivity indicates that, at the discursive level, these leaders acknowledge the inadequacy of mere growth and development to improve the lives of the poor who are at the

bottom of economic distribution. Rather than only encouraging economic growth and arguing for its trickle-down effect, they increasingly appeal to individuals from lower- and middle-income groups to make an effort to involve in the labor market.

All in all, BJP and AKP with their respective political leaders care about equality of opportunity rather than outcomes. Therefore, their discussions about economic inequality do not revolve around improvements within the redistribution system. Instead, they address and offer remedies to overcome imbalances through opportunities that are provided to disadvantaged groups within their statements and manifesto articles about economic inequality. Within these statements, they especially emphasize the responsibility of disadvantaged individuals and the importance of their efforts to overcome economic gaps between them and the rich through becoming more innovative and entrepreneurial. Meanwhile, RPGs present the liability of governments as improving infrastructure and education through both public and private investments to enable the attempts of individuals. Lastly, the third ingredient towards achieving an equal opportunity structure is described by them as economic growth. While they claim this, they have been increasingly expanding on the idea by underlining the cruciality of inclusivity and assurance of the trickle-down effect.

### **4.3. Conclusion**

Following the presentation of the findings of this research both for the case of BJP and Modi as well as the AKP and Erdoğan regarding the way they present and emphasize certain aspects of income, wealth, and economic inequality in general over others, this thesis manages to test its three hypotheses with references to these results. It has been revealed that RPGs consistently utilize moral blaming frame and blame-shifting strategies to accuse certain internal and external elites for the discrepancies in economic distribution and for other relevant economic ills that are gathered under the umbrella term inequality. Meanwhile, the study demonstrated that the alteration

of dynamics, intensity, and targets of moral blaming based on the context. The second hypothesis is also affirmed by the results of this research, which claims RPGs concern and problematization of equality of opportunity rather than equality of outcomes. Hand in hand with this conclusion, the research also demonstrated the inevitable reflections of this approach in the form of individualization and the evolvment of ideal solutions and responsibilities concerning the problematized version of economic inequality. Lastly, all findings support the third hypothesis, which expected more attention devoted by RPGs to poverty alleviation rather than economic inequality. While this conclusion is not surprising, it still complements the first two conclusions of this research and supports the RPGs' association with neoliberalism. Overall, all three hypotheses have been confirmed with the collected data. More importantly, details are demonstrated through the analysis of this thesis about RPGs' framing of economic inequality, and these can fuel new discussions and future research on the issue.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The last chapter begins with a discussion of the convergence and divergences between the two cases under scrutiny regarding their framing of inequality and other related factors such as the background of the political parties and leaders, countries, and policies which may affect such framing. Then, the contribution of the findings and this research in general to the right-wing populism and inequality framing pieces of literature are clarified and reviewed. The chapter ends with the acknowledgment of the limitations and with the suggestion of further research that can be built on this study.

### 5.1. Commonalities and Differences between the Cases

One of the most crucial common characteristics of the two cases of this research is the way inequality is utilized within populist political rhetoric. Both Narendra Modi and Tayyip Erdoğan in their official statements, as well as BJP and AKP in their election manifestos, usually use the concept of inequality as an umbrella term. Rather than directly indicating the gap of income or wealth between rich and poor, these political actors intertwine discussions of poverty, social justice, and inequality by using these terms interchangeably. Such an approach renders separately analyzing the framing of inequality more difficult. It also complicates the separation of the premises, assumptions, arguments, responsible actors, and suggestions for these diverse economic issues.

Secondly, the framing of inequality has been influenced by neoliberal and monocultural mindset in both contemporary India and Turkey. Both political parties are positioned on the right of the ideological spectrum. Overall, they have organic relations with the private sector and encourage private ownership of capital, deregulation, and laissez-faire economy in line with neoliberalism. This attitude *ipso facto* shapes their perspective on economic inequality, whether they problematize it, and the remedies they suggest dealing with the issue. Since both BJP and

AKP are favorable towards neoliberal economic policies, this means they are likely to detain from intervening in inequality as an economic problem. In addition to neoliberalism, what these two cases share is their idealization of monocultural nationhood and society, which in return results in an increasingly polarized political discourse. Concerning India, the BJP has been known to be a political party which appraises and favors Hindu nationalism, and its leader Modi's roots are within a conservative Hindu movement dominated by men.

Meanwhile, the AKP, under the leadership of Erdoğan, favors Sunni Islamism over other sects and religious beliefs. Rights of ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities have been increasingly under attack through the AKP governments in Turkey. The degree and intensity of polarization may differ between India and Turkey. However, nation, ethnicity, and religious sect-based symbolic divisions that are embraced by the political elite can easily influence the way economic inequality is problematized and legitimized between acceptable and unpalatable citizens of society. In other words, the economic gap between a Hindu and a Muslim in India or a Turkish and a Kurdish person in Turkey can be more likely to be framed as deserved as the degree of polarization increases in these countries, which seems to be the case.

The third commonality between the framing of inequality within these two right-wing populist cases is their rhetorical emphasis on the comparison of their respective countries' political and economic elites. Both Modi and Erdoğan, as well as their respective political parties, distinguish themselves and the old political elites of their countries while ostracizing them and their interests from the society which has been imagined and presented as dignified and homogeneous by these RPGs. The category of a corrupt old elite that they utilize within their populist discourse is functional in terms of its flexibility, which enables to imply and locate various people within the same evil group. Despite this flexibility and permeability of the concept, both RPGs also have their established elite adversaries who are the old and new members of the RPP and the staunch Kemalists of previous periods in Turkey for AKP, and the old and new members

of the INC in India for BJP. These specified antagonistic elite imagery of these political parties and leaders constitute the essence of their right-wing populist rhetoric and its reflections on the framing of economic inequality.

In addition to the dynamics which are directly shaped by these two political parties and their respective populist leaders, there are also structural factors that affect the BJP and the AKP's approaches towards unequal economic distribution within their respective countries and across the world. Alongside governments, there are also international political and transnational economic actors that can influence authorities' decisions about economic redistribution and the degree that they problematize the issue of inequality. Poverty and inequality are increasingly studied at the global scale and economically vulnerable classes share similar problems more than ever across the world. Increased mobility of capital puts pressure on governments to lure transnational corporations (TNCs) and other forms of foreign investments into their countries by reducing legal barriers, easing legal frameworks, and revising taxation at the expense of their economically disadvantaged labor force. The BJP in India and the AKP in Turkey are not exceptions to that rule. Governments aim to invent new mechanisms to maintain a more flexible labor stock while reducing taxes on global capital to create globally competitive tax havens.

The multidimensionality of economic inequality also reflects itself across relationships between governments and international organizations such as the UN, the IMF, and World Bank. Conditionalities that these organizations impose on the countries to which they provide financial support in return are usually restrictive concerning redistributive policies. All in all, structural factors are also influential regarding populist governments' rhetorical behavior and policy decisions about economic distribution and redistribution. Governments both can affect international structures as independent actors to varying degrees and they are affected by these same structures. In addition to the BJP and the AKP's convergences in their framing of economic

inequality as independent political parties, these political actors are also bounded by the structural factors which they are influenced by and born into.

Besides their commonalities, the two cases of this study also have specific differences which can, directly and indirectly, affect their framing of economic distribution. The aggression in foreign political behaviors and foreign policy decisions, as well as the degree of antagonism they show towards other countries, differences between these two countries and their respective governments. It seems to influence their blaming strategies regarding the unequal distribution of both global and national economic resources in return. In other words, the AKP and Erdoğan's increasingly dominant anti-Western political attitude since the party's third term has been in line with their blame-shifting strategies through the official statements about global inequality. Conversely, this research does not find any statement which problematizes global inequality and accuses international powers of the issue by Modi or BJP. It is still too early to discuss the same for Modi and BJP under the term 'anti-Westernism', even though there have been studies on the changes and discussions about Modi's reimagination of India's foreign policy (Chaulia, 2016; Plagemann & Destradi, 2019; Pant, 2019).

While it is illuminating to compare the cases of BJP and AKP, one should not forget that these two political parties are going through different phases regarding their political evolution and governance. AKP has been a ruling political party in Turkey since 2002, one year after it was founded. Meanwhile, BJP came to power five years ago in 2014, and it just recently won the majority to form a government for the second time in 2019. It can be an essential difference between the two cases regarding their approaches especially towards taxation and investment because of its possible effects on the duration and depth of these parties' vested interests with the prominent business within and outside their countries. Relations between political and economic elites may become more dependent and solidified, or the balance of power may alter excessively in favor of the former as a political party remains in government for consecutive terms. Such



difference between these two parties' and their respective political leaders' is also reflected on their diverse abilities to dominate public discussions and opinion about the legitimacy of existing economic distribution.

## **5.2. Contributions of the Study**

Regarding the theoretical discussions on the approaches to economic inequality, this research affirms that RPGs adopt the perspective of equality of opportunities rather than equality of outcomes. In other words, right-wing populist rhetoric in India and Turkey is more likely to problematize discrepancies in their countries' opportunity structures and poverty. Besides the findings and analysis, one possibly useful suggestion that this thesis makes is to discern right-wing populist rhetoric's effects on the framing of economic distribution by keeping populist discourse's peculiar persuasiveness in mind. Thus, inviting us to think about the importance of the issue considering populist framing's foreseeable and robust influence on the public's perception regarding the fairness and legitimacy of economic distribution.

This study confirms the common understanding in the literature about RPGs' limited concern regarding economic distribution and redistribution. Both reviewing official statements of populist leaders such as Modi and Erdoğan as well as economy-related sections of election manifestos showed the resistance of RPGs to problematize and prioritize the issue of economic inequality compared to left-wing populists. As it seems, the right-wing characteristics of RPGs outweigh populism's claim to appeal to the disadvantaged masses under the umbrella term, 'the people'. Even though a country experiences very high levels of inequality, RPGs may still opt to address the issue with only generic terms without suggesting any concrete solutions or to divert the discussion from inequality of outcomes to inequality of opportunities and poverty. Not surprisingly, RPGs' connections with business elites also reflect on their choices of redistribution, which is not progressive but again limited.

However, this study contributes to the discussions on right-wing populism and economic inequality by providing findings which demonstrate the complexity of the limited relationship between these two phenomena. Populism literature usually attributes concerns about economic inequality to the left-wing version of the phenomenon. Rather than simply claiming the lack of concern of RPGs for any form of an economic gap, this study suggests a nuanced approach to the way right-wing populist parties are addressing different types of economic inequalities. The unit of analysis of inequality may have an impact on whether RPGs address economic gaps or not. In other words, these organizations can distinguish between global, national, and regional economic gaps, and prefer to problematize some of them while overlooking others. For example, RPGs can frequently mention and challenge global inequality as a phenomenon by blaming global economic elite and other countries. They can also address and present regional inequality when they can transfer responsibility to other political actors. However, the frequency may decrease significantly when the level of analysis is the country. Their behavior and approach towards inequality may also alter based on the time of the issue. Recent gaps may be overlooked while they can consistently emphasize the past levels of economic inequality comparatively. Therefore, this study contributes to the populism literature by offering a more detailed analysis of RPGs' perspective on economic inequality.

Another conclusion which can be drawn based on this research is that the right-wing neoliberal characteristics seem to outweigh the populist agenda of RPGs. The global prevalence of right-wing populism is usually attributed to its appeal in times of pressing cultural grievances. However, people who complain about cultural and economic crises do not always belong to mutually exclusive groups. Sometimes some people perceive cultural and economic threats simultaneously. India and Turkey presented two such possible scenarios in which economic inequality is extremely high even though there were right-wing populist political parties in their governments rather than left-wing. The research question of this thesis compelled us to understand

the way RPGs address, sustain, and deal with the crisis of inequality as an economic threat. As expected, this study shows that RPGs do not incline to problematize the issue but rather overlook the existing levels of discrepancies between the rich and the poor. When they begin to address inequality, they either tend to divert discussions of inequality towards poverty and equality of opportunities, using it as an umbrella term for almost any form of social injustice or they address inequality in different levels.

In addition to its contributions to the framing of inequality literature, findings and conclusions of this thesis are substantial for comparing and analyzing two populist governments outside Europe, the US, or Latin America. Majority of populism studies utilize cases within these three central regions while overlooking the phenomenon's manifestations around Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. In general, left-wing populism has been associated with Latin American countries since the 1980s and the recent developments in Europe and the US have been acknowledged as the most prominent exemplars of right-wing populism. However, right-wing populism has been increasing its influence on politics and leading governments outside the West. Existing research focusing on such countries are mostly limited to single case studies which usually only focus on the populist political leader rather than the political parties. By analyzing BJP in India and AKP in Turkey as cases of RPG, this thesis provides new information and comparative analysis from highly diverse regions outside of the literature's traditional interests.

Besides the contributions mentioned above, this thesis overall confirms some of the characteristics that are attributed to right-wing populism such as its close relations with business and the way it favors neoliberal policies even under high levels of inequality that can put pressure on the populist political elite. In the meantime, it also complicates the defined distinction between right and left-wing typologies of the phenomenon since the former is known to be negligent about inequality while this thesis demonstrates that this assumption might be falling into the trap of not distinguishing between different levels of inequality. Overall, it shows that RPGs address and

problematize economic inequality under certain circumstances. Aiming to measure the genuineness of such attempts are beyond the goals of this research.

### **5.3. Limitations and Further Research**

Analyzing Turkey and India's respective political leaders' speeches and political parties' election manifests, this research aims to interpret the political framing of an economic predicament. Elections manifestos helped this study to illuminate the right-wing populist political parties' promises concerning economic inequality with a specific focus on wealth distribution. Examining the public speeches of political leaders enabled this research to capture the political framing of this phenomenon beyond policy promises. The two pillars of this research complemented each other in two ways. First, focusing on both political parties and political leaders increased the diversity of unit-of-analysis. Second, while elections manifestos represent a snapshot of a political parties' program and promise at a specific time, political leaders' speeches extend over time and can illuminate the dynamics between elections. Since the primary goal of this research is to focus on the political framing of wealth inequality, analysis of parliamentary debates related to wealth distribution is not included in this analysis. However, further research can be conducted to integrate the actual policymaking processes into this research by examining parliamentary records. Such research can illuminate the extent of overlap between populist policy promises and actual policymaking processes under right-wing populist governments. It can also further our knowledge about the effect of this extent of overlap on the perceptions of inequality and populist appeal in general.

As mentioned above, RPGs can differentiate, and frame diverse types of economic inequality differently based on the variations in unit-of-analysis and time. This introduced aspect of RPGs can also generate new discussions about the possible differences among various its example across region and time regarding the way they frame economic distribution within their limited framing. Future studies can explain the effect of populism's intensity and duration of a

populist government on the framing of inequality. They can also take regional characteristics into account to distinguish certain right-wing populisms from others and aim to understand differences in RPGs' framing of the issue based on this variation. Overall, both the dependent and independent variable of this research offers possible variations within themselves, which can enable a comparison of cases for future research.

Further research can be conducted to illuminate the effect of economic inequality level on right-wing populists' framing of and the frequency they address the issue. While this research predominantly focuses on the way political actors present the dynamics of economic inequality, statistical variation in economic distribution rather than its perception may also influence the rhetorical behavior of populist politicians. It is reasonable to assume that populist politicians, just like their non-populist counterparts, are also taking real levels of inequality into account as they address public or in the process of policymaking. However, the extent and significance of this information on their discourse, or at least the correlation between them are unknown. Scholars interested in this uncertainty can compare right-wing populist cases which exist in countries with different economic inequality levels. Right-wing populist parties such as Fidesz with Viktor Orbán in Hungary and Law and Justice Party with Jaroslaw Kaczynski in Poland can be utilized as cases of relatively lower economic inequality compared to BJP in India and AKP in Turkey, where economic inequality is globally higher.

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## APPENDIX

<b>Analysis of the News About Economic Inequality in Turkey - Keyword "eşitsizlik"</b>			
Date of the Article	# of paragraphs	Correlated Topic	Populism
28.11.2014	3	global income inequality, humanitarian/foreign aid, global poverty, global migration	1
30.03.2015	1	inclusive and sustainable growth, global inequality, improvements in inequality in Turkey, SMEs integration to global economy	0
31.03.2015	2	global development, improvements in inequality in Turkey, humanitarian/foreign aid	0
01.04.2015	3	global inequality, humanitarian/foreign aid, SMEs integration to global economy, growth that can decrease inequality, improvements in inequality in Turkey	0
16.04.2015	2	SMEs integration to global economy, sustainable and inclusive growth, improvements in inequality in Turkey, global gap in infrastructure investment	1
25.04.2015	3	social assistance policies, improvements in income inequality in Turkey, economic growth, humanitarian/foreign aid	1
03.09.2015	2	inclusive growth, global inequality, youth and women's inclusion to labour markets	0
02.10.2015	1	inclusive growth, disadvantaged groups' increasing share of welfare	0
15.11.2015	1	inclusive and sustainable growth, qualified employment, disadvantaged groups' increasing share of welfare	0
16.11.2015	3	inclusive and sustainable growth, investments, employment, disadvantaged groups' increasing share of welfare	0
15.06.2016	2	humanitarian/foreign aid, global inequality	0
24.04.2017	1	per capita income, education level, sectoral and regional inequalities, employment policies, human development	0
22.05.2017	1	sustainable development, global inequality, global poverty	0
08.03.2018	1	educational opportunity inequality	0
<i>Total #: 14</i>			

<b>Dominance and Relevance of the Topic - Keyword "eşitsizlik"</b>		
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Inclusive and sustainable economic growth	9	64%
Global inequality (income or general)	7	50%
Humanitarian/foreign aid	5	36%
Improvements in income inequality in Turkey	5	36%
SMEs integration to global economy	3	21%
Inclusive and qualified employment	3	21%
Inclusive welfare	3	21%
Global poverty	2	14%
Investments	2	14%
Education level	2	14%
Global migration	1	7%
Global development	1	7%
Global gap in infrastructure investment	1	7%
Social assistance policies	1	7%
Per capita income	1	7%
Sectoral and regional inequalities	1	7%
Human development	1	7%
Sustainable development	1	7%

<b>Analysis of the News about Economic Distribution with a Focus on Income Gap in Turkey - Keywords "dağılım" &amp; "gelir dağılımı"</b>			
<b>Date of the Article</b>	<b># of paragraphs</b>	<b>Correlated Topic</b>	<b>Populism</b>
28.09.2014	1	global economic crises, global income inequality, global poverty	0
27.11.2014	1	regional inequality (poverty and income inequality in Middle East)	1
28.11.2014	1	global migration, global poverty, global income inequality, humanitarian/foreign aid	0
12.02.2015	1	global inclusivity, investment, humanitarian/foreign aid, low development, global income inequality	0
25.04.2015	1	improvements in income inequality in Turkey, humanitarian/foreign aid, increases in minimum wage and pensions, improvements in welfare services, inclusive welfare	1
01.05.2015	1	improvements in income inequality in Turkey, inclusive development	0
04.05.2015	1	low development, poverty, and income inequality before AKP	1
16.09.2015	2	income inequality, religious and ethnic discrimination	1
19.11.2015	1	global economic crises, global poverty, global income inequality, global migration	0
04.02.2016	2	global poverty, global income inequality	0
25.03.2016	1	national income, per capita income, economic dependency(industrial), increasing export, current account deficit, income inequality and poverty reduction	0
29.11.2016	1	life quality gap between rich and poor due to technological shift in labour markets	0
21.02.2018	1	poverty reduction, improvements in income inequality, social assistance, social services	0
21.02.2018	2	life quality gap due to technological shift in labour markets, poverty, welfare, income inequality	0
10.04.2018	5	development, humanitarian/foreign aid, global income inequality	1
24.05.2018	1	inclusive economic growth, fair distribution, income inequality, regional inequality, human development	0
09.06.2018	1	income inequality, social justice, welfare system	1
14.12.2018	1	regional inequality (poverty and income inequality in Middle East)	0
26.12.2018	1	global inequality (structural and with a purpose), global poverty, economic dependency, regional inequality (poverty and income inequality in Middle East)	1
05.01.2019	1	investment environment, economic growth, national income, per capita income, improvements in income inequality, social assistance	0
31.01.2019	1	urban-rural gap, global income inequality	0
<b>Total #: 21</b>			

<b>Dominance and Relevance of the Topic - Keywords "<i>dağılım</i>" &amp; "<i>gelir dağılımı</i>"</b>		
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
income inequality (within Turkey)	10	48%
global income inequality	6	29%
global poverty	5	24%
development	4	19%
humanitarian/foreign aid	4	19%
poverty	4	19%
regional inequality	4	19%
social services & welfare	4	19%
human development & life quality	3	14%
inclusivity	3	14%
income inequality in Middle East	3	14%
economic dependency	2	10%
economic growth	2	10%
global economic crises	2	10%
global migration	2	10%
investment	2	10%
national income	2	10%
per capita income	2	10%
social assistance	2	10%
social justice & fairness	2	10%
technological shift in labour markets	2	10%
current account deficit	1	5%
exports	1	5%
religious and ethnic discrimination	1	5%
urban-rural gap	1	5%

<b>Analysis of the News about Wealth Distribution and Ownership in Turkey - Keyword "servet" &amp; "mal varlığı"</b>			
<b>Date of the Article</b>	<b># of paragraphs</b>	<b>Correlated Topic</b>	<b>Populism</b>
10.10.2014	1	rent lobby, interest lobby, old Turkey, wealth accumulation through higher interest rates	1
12.12.2014	1	regional inequality, wealth inequality, poverty, equality of rights, interest rates, inflation, economic crisis	1
06.01.2015	1	corruption, interest rate (comparison with past), inflation (comparison with past), shrinking economy and exports (comparison with past), evil rich (comparison with past)	1
28.05.2015	1	confiscation of personal property	0
07.05.2016	1	corruption, interest rates, wealth accumulation through lobbies	1
07.06.2016	1	expectations of economic crisis, wealth accumulation through speculations	1
04.12.2017	5	migration of wealth and rich, foreign and national investments, global integration to neoliberal markets, exports, central bank reserves	1
25.09.2018	1	global wealth inequality, global wealth distribution structure, obesity versus hunger, migration and refugees, life expectancy in Africa	0
<b>Total #: 8</b>			

<b>Analysis of the News about Economic Inequality in India - Keywords "inequality" &amp; "gap"</b>			
<b>Date of the Article</b>	<b># of paragraphs</b>	<b>Correlated Topic</b>	<b>Populism</b>
18.03.201 1	3	global economic integration, democracy, fight against corruption	0
27.06.201 3	1	good governance	0
30.06.201 7	1	standardization of taxation	0
07.12.201 7	2	infrastructure, interest subsidy on housing loans	0
28.06.201 8	4	cheap housing	1

<b>Analysis of the News about Economic Distribution in India - Keywords "distribution" and "unequal"</b>			
<b>Date of the Article</b>	<b># of paragraphs</b>	<b>Correlated Topic</b>	<b>Populism</b>

18.03.2011	2	development, society's involvement in development	0
09.01.2012	1	society's involvement in development, inclusive growth	0
03.03.2015	1	fight against corruption	0
25.03.2018	1	innovation and entrepreneurship	0

<b>Analysis of the News about Income Distribution and Inequality in India - Keywords "<i>income</i>" &amp; "<i>income gap</i>" &amp; "<i>income inequality</i>"</b>			
<b>Date of the Article</b>	<b># of paragraphs</b>	<b>Correlated Topic</b>	<b>Populism</b>
18.11.2010	1	per capita income	0
23.11.2010	1	per capita income	0
12.01.2011	1	per capita income	0
18.03.2011	1	agricultural export, global integration, additional income sources	0
18.03.2011	1	per capita income	0
12.11.2011	1	per capita income	0
20.11.2011	1	additional income via women's economic integration	0
26.12.2011	1	income increase through rise in product price, self-reliance	0
14.01.2012	1	income increase through agricultural education	0
12.02.2012	1	income increase through technological developments in agriculture	0
20.05.2012	2	rural development, income increase through technological developments in agriculture	0
11.01.2013	1	income increase through technological developments in agriculture, infrastructure (roads, pipelines, Wi-Fi connectivity and so on)	0
17.08.2013	1	income increase through investment in villages	0
17.11.2013	1	income increase through food price decrease	1
11.01.2015	2	inclusive development	0
22.01.2015	1	social security	0
27.02.2015	2	income increase through productivity via more education, infrastructure, income increase through technological developments in agriculture	0
02.04.2015	2	debt reduction, changes in banking system, regional inequality, development	0
26.05.2015	1	income increase through multi-utilization in agriculture	0
25.07.2015	2	income increase through targeted agricultural export and farmers' integration to global markets, agricultural innovation and productivity	0
07.08.2015	1	social security schemes, income increase through financial assistance	0
15.08.2015	1	fight against corruption	0

11.09.2015	1	income increase through infrastructure (transportation)	0
11.10.2015	1	income increase through targeted agricultural export and farmers' integration to global markets	0
18.11.2015	2	fight against corruption (confiscation of private property)	0
22.11.2015	1	universal financialization, insurance, education, entrepreneurship	0
24.11.2015	2	income increase through agro-infrastructure, industrial infrastructure, financial assistance, social security	0
10.12.2015	2	income increase through deregulation and financialization	0
29.01.2016	2	subsidies for poor and farmers	0
18.02.2016	1	doubling farmers income	0
29.02.2016	2	greed as the source of income inequality	0
09.03.2016	6	doubling farmers income, income increase through agricultural transformation by lowering input price and increasing the productivity of the soil, education, agreements with TNCs to sell local products, additional income through targeting global markets (beekeeping)	0
12.03.2016	1	income increase in agriculture through infrastructure, productivity, marketing, reducing middlemen	0
19.03.2016	6	doubling farmers income, income increase through technology, value addition, food processing, subsidies for fertilizers	0
28.03.2016	5	doubling farmers income, increase in income by productivity, insurance, subsidies	0
14.04.2016	2	doubling farmers income, increasing PP of rural areas	0
14.04.2016	2	doubling farmers income	0
01.05.2016	1	increasing minimum income, increasing bonuses	0
27.05.2016	1	doubling farmers income, integration into markets, regional inequality	0
26.06.2016	5	tax evasion, taxation of the rich	1
31.07.2016	1	new source of income, import substitution	0
15.08.2016	3	doubling farmers income through insurance of agricultural land, investment in agriculture, emphasis on food processing, and making taxation easier for the middle class	0
26.09.2016	1	doubling farmers income through crop variation	0
16.12.2016	2	fight against corruption (black money and tax evasion)	1
24.12.2016	2	fight against corruption (black money and tax evasion)	1
31.12.2016	4	wealth of the rich, fight against corruption (black money and tax evasion), tax relief for small businesses	1
10.01.2017	1	inclusive growth with better job opportunities	0
01.02.2017	3	increasing farmers income, budget allocation for farmers, poor, Dalit, tax reforms, creating job opportunities, reduction of personal income tax and small-scale industries tax, fight against corruption (black money), increasing PP of middle class	0



07.02.2017	1	additional tax (%1) on expensive cars	0
08.02.2017	2	crop insurance of farmers, selling goods at higher price due to technology, food processing	0
01.03.2017	1	doubling farmers income	0
03.03.2017	2	doubling farmers income	0
18.03.2017	2	doubling farmers income	0
12.05.2017	1	greed as the source of income inequality	0
15.05.2017	1	doubling farmers income	0
19.05.2017	2	food processing, food packaging, crop variation, productivity, value addition	0
26.05.2017	4	doubling farmers income, food processing and value addition, increased taxation for pro-poor and pro-people policies, fight against corruption (tax evasion)	0
27.06.2017	1	product price, crop variation	0
01.07.2017	2	fight against corruption (black money and tax evasion)	0
05.07.2017	2	doubling farmers income through infrastructure, technology, e-markets, easier loans, insurance, food processing	0
30.07.2017	1	increasing poor's income through tourism (festivals)	0
15.08.2017	2	fight against corruption (black money and tax evasion)	0
22.08.2017	4	doubling farmers income through planting timber, import substitution, value addition, exporting to global markets, food processing, infrastructure	0
24.08.2017	6	doubling farmers income through technology, organic agriculture, crop diversification, low interest rate loans, beekeeping, recycling; increasing fishermen's income	0
29.08.2017	3	doubling farmers income through infrastructure, tourism	0
06.09.2017	2	doubling farmers income through insurance, infrastructure, beekeeping, fight against corruption (money laundering and tax evasion)	0
17.09.2017	5	increasing farmers income through beekeeping, infrastructure, technology, productivity, new product (timber)	0
21.09.2017	3	doubling farmers income, urban-rural opportunity gap, beekeeping, cooperatives, food processing	0
23.09.2017	2	increasing farmers income through increase in product price	0
07.10.2017	1	doubling farmers income through technology, infrastructure	0
11.10.2017	2	increasing farmers income through reducing input prices, technology, productivity, beekeeping	0
17.10.2017	2	increasing farmers income through encouraging herbal medicines	0
29.10.2017	1	increasing farmers income through productivity, herbal medicines	0
03.11.2017	3	doubling farmers income through food processing, export, beekeeping	0
04.11.2017	1	deregulation in taxation	0

11.11.2017	1	increasing farmers income through technology, productivity	0
13.11.2017	1	fight against corruption (black money and tax evasion)	0
26.11.2017	1	increasing farmers income through technology, productivity	0
26.11.2017	1	deregulation in taxation	0
30.11.2017	2	infrastructure, tax refunds	0
07.12.2017	1	affordable housing, interest subsidy on housing loans	0
16.12.2017	1	doubling farmers income through less regulation on products	0
01.02.2018	3	increasing farmers income through budget allocation, infrastructure, housing, food processing, storage, exemption from paying income tax through cooperatives, accessible loans, exemptions from income tax	0
03.02.2018	5	welfare: free health treatment up to a limit, employment opportunity, increasing farmers income through reducing input costs and higher product prices, e-markets for agriculture, income tax relief for companies, efficient and transparent taxation	0
07.02.2018	2	formalization of informal sector, entrepreneurship, loans, employment, Direct Benefit Transfer for the poor, fight against middlemen	1
07.02.2018	7	welfare (health), health insurance scheme, doubling farmers income, agro-technology, infrastructure, income through agricultural waste, value addition, reduction of input costs, deregulation, beekeeping	0
20.02.2018	3	increasing farmers income through solar energy, higher production, targeted production, self-reliance	0
21.02.2018	3	increasing incomes through export, food processing, doubling farmers income through waste recycling	0
23.02.2018	2	doubling farmers income	0
25.02.2018	2	increasing farmers income through waste recycling, employment, self-reliance	0
17.03.2018	9	doubling farmers income, reducing farming costs, minimum support price, exemption from income tax for farmer organizations, loans, infrastructure, waste recycling	0
25.03.2018	1	infrastructure for farming, increasing production	0
14.04.2018	3	regional inequality, infrastructure, increasing income of tribal people through education, development	0
24.04.2018	3	increasing income of tribal people and farmers, deregulation, beekeeping	0
11.05.2018	2	poor getting same opportunity for development, health and education, fight against corruption (black money and tax evasion), export	0
19.05.2018	7	doubling farmers income, infrastructure, employment, crop diversification, organic and targeted products, loans, waste by recycling	0

19.05.2018	1	increasing Jammu Kashmir's income through tourism, regional inequality	0
14.06.2018	3	spending budget on regional infrastructure for Chhattisgarh, increasing agricultural income by deregulation	0
20.06.2018	5	doubling farmers income, through infrastructure, decrease input cost, increase price of products, social security insurance schemes	0
22.06.2018	2	per capita income, global economic integration, employment, import substitution	0
23.06.2018	1	doubling farmers income	0
24.06.2018	1	cooperation between sectors and agriculture	0
26.06.2018	1	per capita income	0
27.06.2018	2	tax exemptions for senior citizens	0
07.07.2018	1	doubling farmers income	0
11.07.2018	4	increasing farmers income, insurance, productivity, additional income through beekeeping	0
15.07.2018	4	increasing farmers income, fight against poverty through infrastructure, welfare	0
10.08.2018	7	increasing farmers income by biofuels, employment, waste recycling for farmers and tribals	0
15.08.2018	3	doubling farmers income, agricultural, export, new crops, welfare (health)	0
18.09.2018	3	increasing farmers income through value addition by storage, also beekeeping	0
23.09.2018	1	welfare (health)	0
24.09.2018	1	income increase by infrastructure (airport)	0
09.10.2018	3	increasing farmers income by guaranteed minimum prices for products and health	0
26.10.2018	4	increasing farmers income by value addition, guaranteed minimum prices, food processing, technology	0
19.11.2018	2	infrastructure, employment, per capita income, faster tax refunds	0
18.12.2018	4	reduced interest rates on home loans, infrastructure, employment	0
18.01.2019	1	infrastructure, inflation rate	0
13.02.2019	4	loans for housing to middle class, exemption from income tax	0
19.02.2019	2	development, employment for youth, health welfare, infrastructure, tax exemption for middle class, fight against corruption (tax evasion)	1
23.02.2019	1	exemption from income tax for businesses	0
24.02.2019	5	doubling farmers income, non-traditional farming with beekeeping, organic farming and so on, support price, deregulation	0
02.03.2019	1	reforms in income tax, reduced housing prices, exemption from capital tax for houses	0
04.03.2019	1	exemption from income tax for middle classes	0

Total #: 123

<b>Dominance and Relevance of the Topic - Keywords "income" &amp; "income gap" &amp; "income inequality"</b>		
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
agricultural income	61	50%
additional income sources (value addition, new products, and so on)	39	32%
infrastructure	26	21%
global economic integration & exports	20	16%
taxation (exemptions, reforms, refunds, reliefs)	15	12%
income increase through technology	15	12%
price controls	14	11%
productivity	11	9%
subsidies	9	7%
welfare	9	7%
fight against corruption	8	7%
financialization	8	7%
employment	7	6%
deregulation	7	6%
per capita income	6	5%
development	6	5%
regional inequality	5	4%
insurance	5	4%
social security	3	2%
investment	3	2%
tourism	3	2%
self-reliance	3	2%
moral deprivation (greed)	2	2%
import substitution	2	2%
poverty	1	1%
inclusivity	1	1%
innovation	1	1%
minimum income	1	1%
urban-rural gap	1	1%