

## **Emotions in Politics: A Review of Contemporary Perspectives and Trends**

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**Abstract:** This article explores the dynamics of emotions in politics, and their relationship with political structures, discourses, and contestations. Grounded in an interdisciplinary approach, this review article synthesizes diverse perspectives on the role of emotions in political interactions, emphasizing their impact on individual and collective emotions. It explores five themes, beginning with the top-down construction of emotions by states, and extending to the global politics of emotions within geopolitical frameworks to understand everyday emotional practices. By addressing the discursive dimensions of emotions in politics, this article contributes to the evolving field of research on the connection between emotions and the construction of political knowledge.

**Keywords:** emotions, politics, populism, affect, contention, resistance

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## Introduction

Emotions play a critical role in various facets of our political landscape, yet their significance is often overlooked (Wolak & Sokhey 2022). Gustafsson and Hall (2021) define emotions as “socially” recognizable “patterns of felt response and disposition” (974). Emotions transcend individual experiences, being understood within the societal context where recognizable feelings such as anger, sadness, or fear are acknowledged. Each emotion possesses a “logic” dictating “when, why,” and how it is felt and comes with associated implications (Gustafsson & Hall 2021: 974). Politics is inherently intertwined with human emotions. Consider, for instance, the impassioned speeches delivered by charismatic leaders or the reactions of citizens in response to significant events; emotions are an integral thread in the fabric of politics. Consequently, emotions are closely connected to partisan polarization, the formation of political attitudes, and public opinion (Webster & Albertson 2022). Understanding the intricate relationship between emotions and politics is essential to comprehending the dynamics of contemporary societies.

Emotions, once excluded from Western discourse, are now a legitimate subject of political study (Beattie et al. 2019). A vast body of literature has explored how emotions influence political perceptions and behavior, and how both domestic and international players can strategically harness or manipulate emotions to advance their political goals. It is therefore worthwhile to reflect on the interrelatedness of emotions and politics (Jones 2020).

This trends article synthesizes the diverse approaches and perspectives to understanding emotions in politics and offers a comprehensive review structured around five distinct themes. It draws on a selection of articles published in political science journals worldwide between 2019 and 2022. Such an interdisciplinary review of emotions in politics enriches the field and promotes discussions on the best methods for studying emotions and the intricate connection between feelings and the construction of political knowledge. The first section provides an overview of the space within which emotions interact with politics – *the everyday* – their mechanism, processes, and consequences. The second section explores the *construction* of emotions by the state as a top-down process. This is followed by individual and group emotions, resistance, and contention. This discussion is followed by an exploration of the global politics of emotions and how they unfold within the broader geopolitical and geo-cultural framework. The discussion points to recent advances in the field of political sociology of emotions among other research trends. The conclusion also suggests avenues for future research.

## The *Everyday* in Emotions in Politics

Emotions in the *everyday* or the “micropolitical” world of global politics are often ambivalent and complex (Schick 2019: 261; Gustafsson & Hall 2021). This ambivalence revolves around the generation of emotions and their interplay within domestic and international political frameworks, contributing to the formation of “geopolitical subjects” (Schick 2019: 261) or what Zhang (2022) aptly refers to as “geopolitical imaginaries.” There is a growing emphasis on the non-linear characteristics inherent in the analysis of emotions (Heaney 2019; Beattie et al. 2019). It involves a complex, multi-layered process in which interactions at various levels either strengthen or limit specific emotional narratives and understandings. Emotions are integral to our “common-sense structures” (Beattie et al. 2019: 138) and significantly shape our perception of the world.

There is also a shift away from a simplistic perspective that reduces identification solely to the national imaginations of political elites. Instead, there is a move toward engaging in a deeper self-reflective examination of both the self and the other. This approach aims to cultivate an imagination wherein emotions intertwine with political realities, ultimately facilitating an alternative comprehension of a political community (Zhang 2022; Schick 2022). Everyday culture plays a crucial role in shaping these emotional narratives of citizens toward the state, influencing their affective engagement with politics (Wolak & Sokhey 2022), or even resisting dominant structures by establishing “sites of contestation” (Koschut 2019; Adler-Nissen et al. 2020; Bilgic & Gkouti 2021).

Indirect forms of resistance, through actions, expressions, and responses, are manifest within the everyday realm of emotional politics. Here, individuals, groups, and institutions, often considered peripheral to global politics, exert their agency (Schick 2019). Agency constitutes individual and collective emotions, which are interconnected with the established systems of political authority and control (Sadl 2021). At the basic individual level, emotions are the subjective, conscious reactions to specific circumstances, projected outward as personal feelings. Beattie et al. (2019) contend that the examination of physical bodies is crucial in the study of emotions in International Relations (IR). Such an interpretation of bodies also involves understanding the role of embodiment (Karl 2019), such as through role-play, in the creation of knowledge (Beattie et al. 2019). Bodies have a substantial influence on the generation and collaborative development of narratives within the political sphere.

Considering the many ways emotions are expressed and practiced, their impacts and contestation in micro- and macro-political contexts appear to revolve around the *negotiation* of emotions (Beattie et al. 2019). In the political sphere, there exists a continuous interplay between the state's dominant emotional narratives and persistent efforts of the masses to emancipate themselves from emotional sway. This struggle involves individuals or groups striving to liberate themselves from the emotional control imposed by the state's prevailing narratives (Koschut 2019). Consequently, the everyday expressions of emotions in politics enable us to understand which emotions and feelings are considered legitimate or not, desirable or undesirable, as well as how they circulate and under what circumstances.

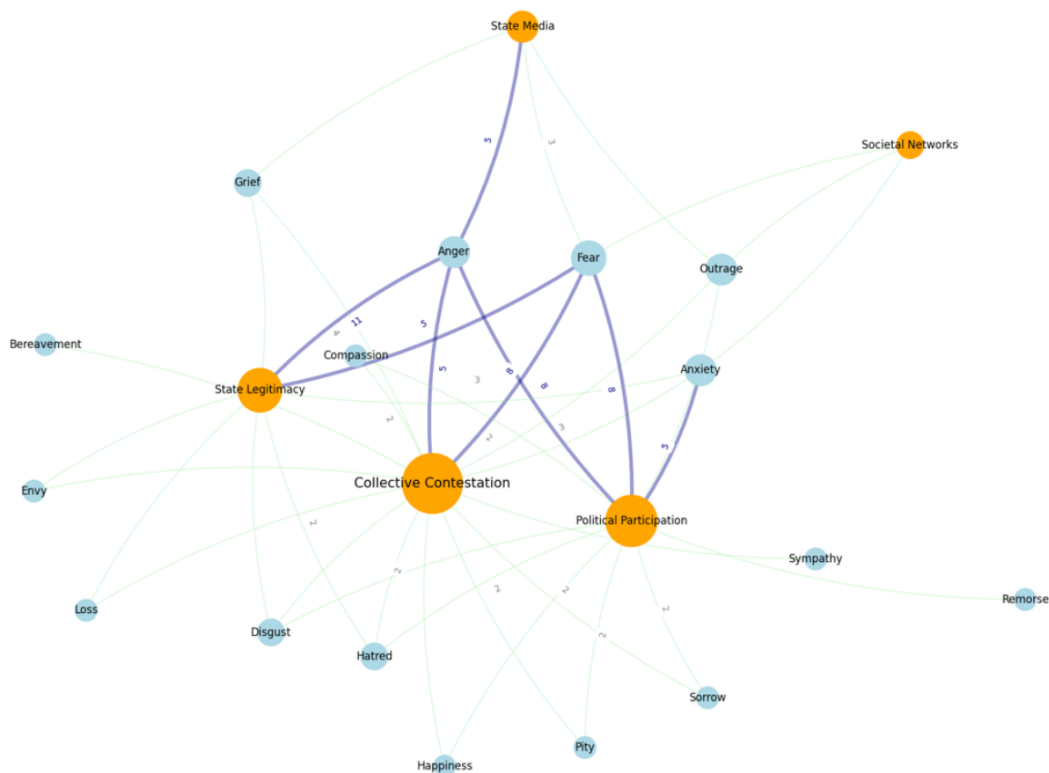
To make emotions relevant in IR, it is essential to understand their collective dimension. Scholars have long acknowledged the significance of theorizing the collective experience of emotions rather than concentrating solely on the emotional interactions between individuals and the state (Sadl 2021; Zhang 2022). Individual emotions transform into a collective only through "representation" (Gustafsson & Hall 2021: 974). Emotions function as "objects" of contention and negotiation with political regimes through representation. It is through this process of representation that we gain access to emotions as a collective experience encompassing "expressions, practices, discourses" (Gustafsson & Hall 2021: 974), since direct access to the true feelings and experiences of an individual is not always possible. The internal cognitive process involves deconstructing "meanings into smaller frames before aggregating them" into more comprehensive "master frames" (Gustafsson & Hall 2021: 974). Our understanding of these emotions is derived from their outward manifestations – expressions, verbal cues, actions, and practices – serving as representations of their emotional states, which are then reflected in the collective. Similar frames of reference are also employed in deconstructing sovereignty. Menshaw (2021) introduces the "sovereignty alignment process" aimed at clarifying interpretations of sovereignty through "interpretive schemata" (2816) and organizing principles. Internally, this process deconstructs meanings into frames, integrating them into a master frame, allowing for the identification and categorization of conflicting sovereignty frames. It also explores external interactions of these meanings, enhancing actors' understanding of sovereignty. Notably, political leaders strategically leverage emotional reactions, like sacrifice, to consolidate their legitimacy and intertwine themselves as integral elements within the state and its territory (Menshaw 2021: 2813).

Equally significant is recognizing the interconnectedness between affect and emotions and their influence on our way of learning and understanding the world. This is known as their "epistemological" implications (Beattie et al. 2019: 137), or the impact of these emotional connections on our ways of knowing and learning about the world around us. The "relational aspect" of emotions in the everyday occurs as an "encounter or a site of contact between two entities" (Beattie et al. 2019: 138), rather than imagining the existence of emotions either internally (here) or externally (there). Our feelings, emotions, and attitudes find expression within the context of society, conveyed through a language and culture that can be comprehended by others.

The multi-layered process of emotions in the *everyday* is depicted through a network of interconnected nodes and relationships across four dominant themes: collective contestation, political participation, state legitimacy, and state use of media to project a certain emotion (Graph

1). Using NetworkX, a Python package for graphing networks, the dominant themes were modeled using a force-directed layout weighted by the frequency of emotions discussed in the 36 review articles. An undirected weighted graph was created using nodes computed from each emotion and theme and weighted by the effect size. A Kamada Kawai layout was used to plot the relationships between the dominant themes and emotions. This layout leverages the geometric distance between two vertices in the graph and converts it to the graph theoretic distance creating a spring algorithm for a good symmetric structure with relatively small edge crossings in an otherwise highly connected graph. Emotions, embodied within individuals and collectively held, weave through the nodes of societal structures, affecting perceptions, and actions within global politics. The arches represent the number of articles that explore specific emotions, such as anger, reflecting the prevalence of certain emotions within each theme.

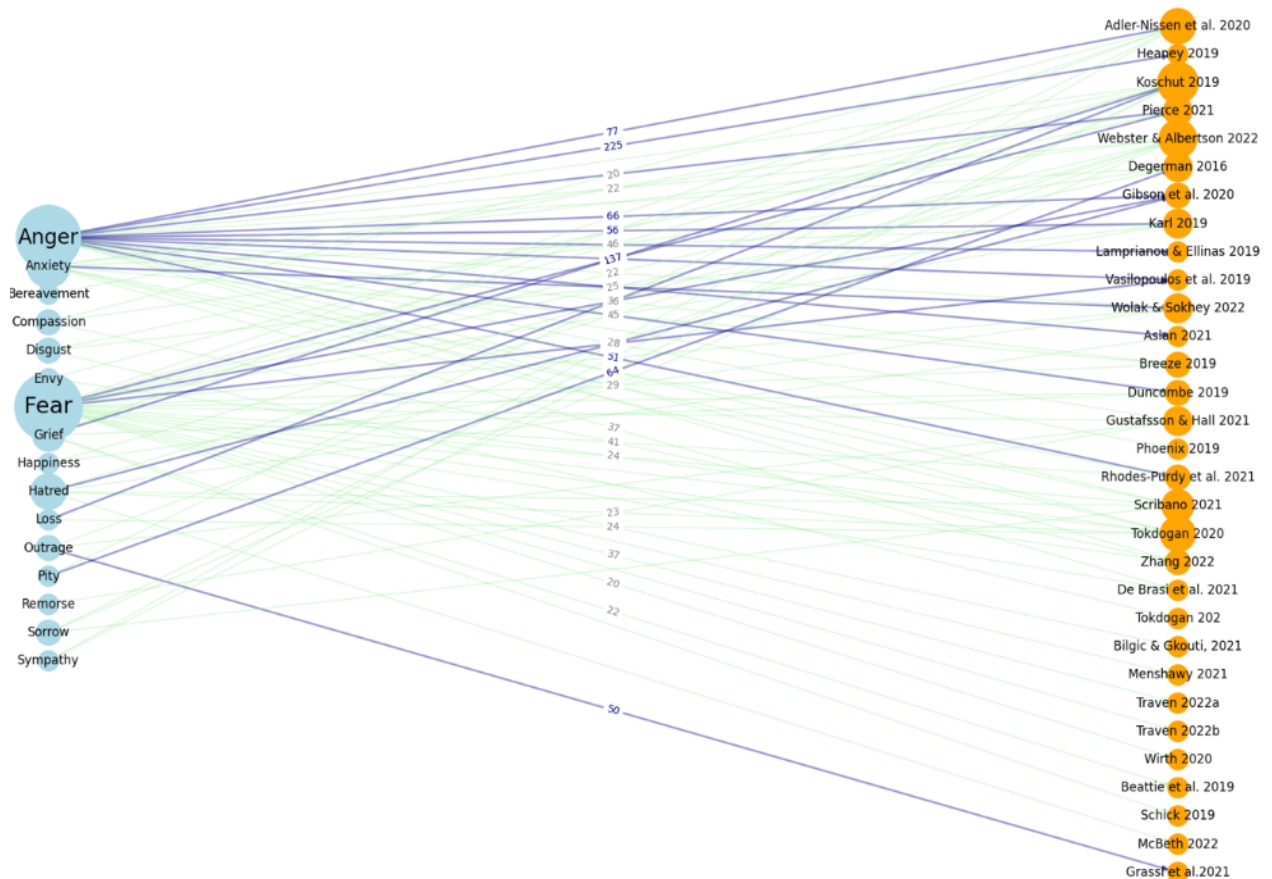
Graph 1: Emotional Agency Network Map



The second analysis was run for keyword occurrences using NVivo to evaluate the prevalence of emotions within the dominant themes across the studies. Then using NetworkX, a model was constructed that emphasized the dominant themes, considering the effect sizes of each coded emotion within these themes (Graph 2). This directed weighted graph comprised nodes representing each study connected to specific emotions, with the connections weighted by the effect sizes – combining word counts with contextual weighting. A multipartite layout was used to visually highlight the relationship between dominant emotions and the studies discussing them. This layout accentuated the prominence of certain emotions on one side while showcasing the specific studies discussing these emotions, both weighted by their contextually computed effect sizes. One notable example illustrating the application of this methodology is found in Heaney's (2019) article, which provides a robust theoretical framework for comprehending emotions and

their role within the political sphere. The effect size attributed to Heaney's work reflects the frequency and depth of references made to the specific context of politics and the role emotions play within this domain. This inclusion helps us to contextualize the significance and influence of individual studies within the broader network of emotions in political discourse.

Graph 2: Emotional Agency Literature Density Network Map



## Navigating the Everyday in Politics

The political landscape uses images and visual elements (Zhang 2022; Adler-Nissen et al. 2020) and narratives of victimhood (Tokdogan 2020) to evoke specific emotional responses among the masses, making them intentional performances. Exploring the case of Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian boy whose lifeless body was discovered on a Turkish beach while his family attempted to reach the Greek island of Kos, shows a connection between images, emotions, and politics surrounding immigration. Kurdi's case created an emotional context of pity, sympathy, and compassion that was directly linked to significant policy changes, such as joining the European Union (EU) relocation scheme (Adler-Nissen et al. 2020). Other policy changes included a revision of the asylum legislation and the implementation of stricter border controls in Austria, Slovakia, and the Netherlands. Additionally, similar border checks were established along the southwestern frontier of Germany. Kurdi's case was also actively employed in implementing the EU-Turkey agreement, which, in exchange for Turkey's aid in controlling

migrant flows through the Aegean Sea, included the potential for visa-free travel for Turkish citizens.

Kurdi's case exemplifies how the utilization of images and visuals evoked a variety of emotions, which were combined and collectively expressed as one emotion. This phenomenon, referred to as "emotional bundling" (Adler-Nissen et al. 2020), contributes to the formation of political identities and perspectives. It simultaneously fosters and inhabits political engagement and interest. These interactions and emotional experiences are collectively "lived" and "socially learned" (Scribano 2021: 491) within specific political and cultural interpretations and emotional practices. Images evolve into "objects of interpretation and contestation" (Adler-Nissen et al. 2020: 75; Gustafsson & Hall 2021), rendering them social constructs rather than mere products of individual feelings. Emotional bundling serves as a powerful tool for political elites, allowing them to publicly express their feelings, subsequently shaping the shared emotions of the masses and consolidating the elites' authority and legitimacy. This strategy often intertwines with the cultivation of legitimacy through the "victimhood narrative" (Tokdogan 2020). Frequent appeals to emotions such as anxiety, hatred, anger, and envy, along with allusions to past experiences of victimization (including trauma and loss), effectively mobilize emotions among the masses. However, the amalgamation of various emotions diminishes the distinctiveness of each emotion, leading to diverse responses. Either way, such bundling generates mass support since individuals can identify with a particular emotion they may be experiencing internally (Adler-Nissen et al. 2020).

Emotions also do not exist in isolation; instead, they operate within a broader geopolitical and geocultural framework (Schick 2019), dependent upon spatial and temporal conditions that shape their interpretation and identification. Within this context, Scribano (2021) asserts that exploring "sensibilities and emotions" is basic to understanding societies. To understand the intersection of emotions and sensibilities, Scribano (2021) introduces the concept of "*emotional ecology*" (496) delineating its three characteristics: collective emotions stemming from shared similarities, a "reference system" linked to each emotion imparting a distinct meaning, and clusters of emotional practices (496). The different aspects combine to facilitate the construction of experiences and social interactions, imparting significance to feelings and their outcomes, akin to emotional bundling. Both concepts of emotional bundling and emotional ecology hold relevance in comprehending the dynamics of fear and anxiety within the context of war zones, human rights violations, human trafficking, healthcare disparities, and racial and ethnic discrimination (Traven 2022a; 2022b).

Emotions play a crucial role in legitimizing policy responses (Bilgic & Gkouti 2021; Pierce 2021), as in Kurdi's case, which served as a justification for closing the migration pathway from Turkey to the Greek islands (Adler-Nissen et al. 2020). Emotional bundling introduces an element of ambiguity in this context, as various emotional responses attributed to an image might lend support to a "call for action" (Adler-Nissen et al. 2020: 77), while frequently leaving the precise nature of the action indeterminate. Empathy as an emotion also figures prominently in literature. Schick (2019) suggests empathy means "to feel into" (265), which involves an imagining of what it is like to be in another person's place and comprises being aware of other people's feelings. Empathy is depicted as both emancipatory and harboring a "dark side." While it can manifest as positive qualities such as "solidarity, love, and community" (Schick 2019: 267), it also encompasses negative aspects such as emotional exhaustion, empathetic distress, or biases that constrain understanding and action (Webster & Albertson 2022; Wirth, 2020). This dual nature imparts an ambivalence to this emotion.

The idea of emotions possessing a dark side deserves further elaboration, including a discussion of Hannah Arendt's description of emotions. For Arendt, the heart that holds emotions is a place of darkness. However, as Degerman (2019) demonstrates, this idea is often misunderstood. This so-called darkness of the heart should be understood in terms of the unsettled nature of emotions, changing often rather than in terms of "devaluation" (153). Despite this uncertainty, Arendt identified the constructive role of emotions in politics. Compassion, for instance, is a form of emotional response that can bridge the gap between our thoughts and our actions, allowing us to connect with others on a deeper level (Adler-Nissen et al. 2020). This

observation is relevant in contemporary society, where the advent of social media has provided people with a platform for the commemoration of collective tragedies and the sharing of personal narratives. The resulting surge of sorrow and compassion deepens societal connections, thus engendering a collective consciousness marked by a “community of shared vulnerabilities” (Zhang 2022: 229).

However, if a person’s entire being is consumed by compassion, it could limit their political engagement (Degerman 2019). It is difficult for such individuals to shift their focus beyond their object of compassion, almost disconnecting from the outside world. According to Arendt, such a person’s life would be limited because they would be unable to participate in political activities. While they might deserve support and assistance out of solidarity, enabling them to enter the public sphere, their temporary absence from politics while they attend to their compassionate duties would not pose a threat to the collective actions within the realm of politics. This is also the reason why De Brasi et al. (2021) argue that emotions often diverge from rationality, leading individuals to frequently succumb to “cognitive deficiencies” (1) characterized by biases and misinformation. It is the state of anxiety that permits an individual to engage in meaningful and intentional thinking, thus effectively managing their emotions. In essence, feeling compassion, though incredibly meaningful and powerful, is a temporary deviation from political engagement when individuals are drawn to attend to specific aspects of their lives where compassion is required (Degerman 2019).

### **Emotions in Political Mobilization**

At a structural level, the state’s ability to incite specific emotions in the masses can deeply influence and solidify their allegiance to political elites and national interests (Beattie et al. 2019). Various strategies are employed by the state to achieve this goal. Breeze (2019) delves into the populist style, arguing that populists “exploit” (25) divisions between the masses and political elites/opponents. Exploring the “affective-discursive practices” (25) of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the Labour Party, Breeze (2019) argues that populists rely on specific emotional responses such as fear, anger, and anxiety to *condition* responses, reactions, and choices from the public, to *construct* emotional practices.

Constructed emotions are “broad categorical concepts” (Pierce 2021: 599), rather than fixed or isolated entities. Since emotions are not easily defined and emerge from the broader realm of affect and feelings, signifying their complex and interconnected nature is a challenge. This perspective offers a critique of the prevailing approach of treating emotions as one-dimensional (Beattie et al. 2019). To address this limitation, Pierce (2021) recommends integrating key categories of emotions such as “enthusiasm, anger, and fear” (599) into the study of policy processes. These emotions influence individual and collective participation in politics and serve as valuable tools for understanding the complexities of an individual’s thought process. Emotional practices are conditioned through the interactions between the social structure and societal relations, and their reconfiguration. People have access to emotions that align with the socially agreed-upon standards and expectations, often referred to as “feeling rules” (Gustafsson & Hall 2021: 974). In essence, society shapes how emotions are expressed and the norms surrounding them.

By using the case of Turkey’s politics as an example, Tokdogan (2020) argues that the display of emotions such as anger, humiliation, envy, and anxiety by political elites, generates an “emotional mobilization of the nation” (De Brasi et al. 2021: 388). Crucially, these emotional mobilizations are rooted in narratives of victimhood from Turkey’s historical past. The legitimacy of this victimhood narrative relies on the pre-existing emotions of the masses, which are stirred and provoked through the speeches and behaviors of political elites (Tokdogan 2020). A continual emphasis on historical emotions tied to the nation’s past fosters a sense of renewed “national mood and identity” (Tokdogan 2020: 403) to retain political control. Consequently, a narrative of victimhood evolves into one of triumph and grandeur for the political leaders.

Additionally, Osnabrügge et al.’s (2021) empirical research adds another layer to the politics of emotions – the strategic use of emotions by politicians in legislatures and parliamentary speeches. Legislatures serve as “forums” where politicians’ emotional narratives are publicly

available to their voters (Osnabrügge et al. 2021: 885). Analyzing the parliamentary speeches held in the United Kingdom House of Commons, Osnabrügge et al. (2021) argue that legislators tend to use emotional language and persuasive techniques to appeal to a larger audience compared to a smaller electoral audience. Such “emotive rhetoric” would employ a specific “tone” and “style” by politicians to communicate their messages (Osnabrügge et al. 2021: 885). This strategic deployment of emotions showcases how emotional narratives play a crucial role in engaging wider segments of society and influencing political perceptions beyond the traditional electorate.

Similar explorations on populist affective practices have been conducted by Aslan (2021). Populism, defined as “movements” unified against corrupt political elites, positions populists as “representatives of a unified people” opposing corruption (Rhodes-Purdy et al. 2021: 1561; Campanella & Dassù 2019). The affective practice of public weeping by politicians in Turkey and its publicization by the media is particularly relevant (Aslan 2021). Even though public crying or weeping is perceived as indicative of weakness, vulnerability, or a lack of self-control, it serves as a potent instrument for the state. In his analysis of the prevalence of Recep Tayyip Erdogan's display of tears in public, Aslan (2021) asserts that public weeping functions as a “populist performative act of legitimization and mobilization” (4). Such emotional displays signal the reinforcement of identity and solidarity with the people, creating an impression of authenticity to build public support. They can be effective in legitimizing authoritarian practices while claiming to rule and govern as per popular power (Aslan 2019).

Most research tends to view emotions and their practices as primarily state-related issues, often failing to acknowledge their close entanglement with the exercise of political power. A theoretical limitation, as highlighted by Heaney (2019), is that in many discussions about emotions in politics, emotions are treated as separate or “other” when compared to everyday political processes. There is a separation rather than an embodiment of emotions in everyday politics. Heaney (2019) advances the growing field of political sociology of emotions by suggesting that *emotional capital* is deployed strategically within the political sphere rather than being based on rational calculations. Emotional capital is defined as the mobilization of support and resources through social processes, encompassing cultural aspects, such as prestige. Heaney (2019) further elaborates on this concept as an “embodied ‘feel for the game’ and practical sense” (24) possessed by skilled players of the political arena, distinguishing them from less proficient participants.

### **Media, Emotions, and Political Responses**

The evolving digital media landscape makes frequent political weeping less taboo, although it also highlights how this emotion is manufactured and employed by the media. In the case of Turkey's Erdogan, the media's production and dissemination of images featuring public weeping are often deliberate, aiming to convey a specific image. Public weeping is used to emphasize the key elements of populist rhetoric, which include highlighting the adversarial gap between the common people and the elite, asserting the role of representing the victimized people in society, and invoking a sense of crisis (Aslan 2019). Such manipulation of emotions in media representation intersects with how consumers perceive political news and respond to scandals. Grassl et al. (2021) investigated the impact of scandal severity on consumer reactions, revealing intriguing patterns. Mild scandals prompt critical scrutiny and consideration of the news' appropriateness and trustworthiness. However, more severe scandals seem to evade such scrutiny, paradoxically diminishing trust not just in the news reported but also in news reporting. This phenomenon, termed the “persuasive quality of scandalization,” underscores how emotionally charged language used by journalists influences public perception and trust in media (Grassl et al. 2019: 2569). Moreover, Karl's (2021) findings on “self-reported disgust” (702) correlating with positive political attitudes further accentuate the complex role emotions play in shaping public opinion.

On the flip side, Duncombe (2019) offers a timely exploration of how political leaders and governments communicate on everyday issues using Twitter to “represent” or “provoke” (409), which ultimately influences conflict resolution. Online political debates sway offline discussions



and opinions, sometimes leading to the spread of disinformation. “Digital Diplomacy” (Duncombe 2019: 425) emerges as an instrument for the state’s negotiation strategies on critical matters. Despite the considerable influence of social media, it is imperative to pivot toward researching the emotional impact of digital imagery, as it holds implications for offline political engagement (Zhang 2022).

While populists often unite against corrupt elites, their approach, driven by strong emotional undercurrents, has the potential to deepen societal divisions and exacerbate political tensions (Aslan 2019; Rhodes-Purdy et al. 2021). As highlighted by Rhodes-Purdy et al. (2021), these “aggressive and vindictive” (1570) behaviors underscore the emotional sway within populist movements, a factor that can significantly influence political behaviors across the spectrum. While populists are not inherently more emotional than others, emotions have the potential to influence political behaviors. Using survey data, Rhodes-Purdy et al. (2021) argue that populist attitudes can be triggered by economic crises, leading to emotional reactions in politics. They term this phenomenon the “affective political economy” (1560). An economic crisis can evoke “anxiety and anger” (Rhodes-Purdy et al. 2021: 1560; Webster & Albertson 2022) and foster a culture of blame. Expanding beyond the scope of economic factors in shaping political attitudes, Rhodes-Purdy et al. (2021) propose a compelling theory suggesting that economic events not only fuel “cultural resentments and populist antagonisms” (1560) but also foster broader cultural discontent. This cultural discontent, as an overarching sentiment, bolsters the ascent and support of populist ideologies and movements.

Gustafsson and Hall (2021) shift attention from the affective construction of emotions to the “distributive politics of emotion” (973), which assumes three forms: emotional obligations or duties to feel a type of emotion, emotional entitlements as a right to feel specific emotions, and “hierarchies of emotional deference” concerning whose felt emotions deserve consideration (973). The authors present a unique perspective on how emotions permeate politics using the case of the Sino-Japanese history dispute. They shift focus from how politics constructs emotions for the people to how political disputes take place *over* emotions related to historical issues and contexts. Emotions acquire a political dimension when disagreements and competition arise regarding the implementation of the rules governing emotions (Koschut 2019), as well as in determining which emotions are given greater importance or prioritized, thus producing “feelings of insecurity” (Bilgic & Gkouti 2021). This differentiation implies that certain emotions are considered legitimate or valid, while others are not. When individuals internalize these expectations, they also influence how they try to evoke or suppress emotions within themselves. Compared to Beattie et al. (2019), Gustafsson and Hall (2021) propose a macro-political approach that examines interactions between states and collective groups on a global level.

### **Emotions in a Global Context**

This section highlights the hierarchical nature of global politics and its impact on the expression and suppression of emotions across different geopolitical landscapes. Wirth (2020) underscores the Euro-Atlantic-centric focus and hierarchical structure inherent in global politics, often prioritizing Western developed and democratic nations. This dynamic restricts non-Western underdeveloped nations from expressing and sharing grief from past violent events, leading to emotional suppression, and impeding the formation of new identities in response to historical traumas. Using China as a case study, Wirth (2020) argues that persistent historical trauma deepens China’s ideological isolation from the global community, blurring the lines between the external world and internal emotions. This environment motivates China’s pursuit of national rejuvenation, paradoxically reviving the memories and emotions of national humiliation it aims to overcome, potentially leading to confrontational outcomes. This approach is particularly effective in understanding complex phenomena such as colonialism or civil wars, elucidating who experiences shame, fear, and anger, and how they create sites of commemoration (Lamprianou & Ellinas 2019).

Recent American politics has witnessed a surge in anger, characterized by a desire for “retribution” and strong adherence to existing beliefs (Phoenix 2019: 639). The surge in anger within American politics can be primarily attributed to the proliferation of partisan media, racism,

and the dissemination of disinformation via online media sources (Phoenix 2019). This selective information sharing has a detrimental impact on public trust in government and adherence to societal norms of tolerance. Similarly, Vasilopoulos et al. (2019) argue that anger, rather than fear, is the predominant motivator behind the endorsement of far-right political parties. The occurrence of terrorist attacks instinctively evokes feelings of anger, which in turn plays a crucial role in rallying support for the far-right political movement. In contrast, anxiety tends to undermine the propensity to vote for far-right ideologies.

State media also utilizes disasters and crises to promote national unity and legitimize the ruling regime through the application of “disaster nationalism.” This concept refers to the utilization of significant disasters or crises to strengthen national identity and enhance the perceived legitimacy of the government. (Zhang 2022: 222). Sribano (2021) lends support to this notion by emphasizing the role of emotions as narratives that encompass a range of historical elements, perceptions of happiness, colonial influences, and the impact of modernity on customs, all of which also shape both individuals and societies. Consequently, the state capitalizes on the shared experience of a disaster to foster a sense of national belonging and garner support for the government.

Differing emotional narratives (Sribano 2021) and “alternative” expressions of grief, anger, and local memory (Zhang 2022: 219) persist that do not align with the official state narrative. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chinese government employed the crisis as an opportunity to demonstrate the strength and unity of the country. The state emphasized the notion of a shared national identity. However, emotions and narratives related to the pandemic, both official and popular, have further highlighted the differences between China and the West. Additionally, emotions and stories play crucial roles in shaping the perceptions and portrayals of China and the West within the global context (Zhang 2022). Here, Traven’s (2022a) perspective provides a complementary insight into the influence of shared emotional responses such as horror and death as contributors to these restrictions. Traven (2022a) emphasizes that these moral codes are not solely socially constructed but ingrained within our consciousness through societal evolution. Furthermore, in related work, Traven (2022b) explores the genesis and evolution of similar international norms in moral values associated with warfare. To deepen this understanding, Traven (2022b) suggests integrating this concept with theories arguing in favor of “universal and inherent” moral intuitions (702).

### **Emotions as Sites of Contestations**

Emotions in politics are also “affective sites of contestation” (Koschut 2019: 148), where people openly resist, contest, and challenge to redefine the emotional dynamics between the state and the masses. The defining of emotions by the state, emotional manipulation, and the continual redefining and resistance against such emotional manipulation from below is what gives rise to debates and disputes in the realm of world politics (Sadl 2021). This suggests that emotions, their definitions, and their significance can be a source of contention and disagreement among various actors in international politics. Collective emotions of the people have the power to “transgress... and shape” (166) political norms and priorities. Therefore, everyday politics is a space where affective practices play out and the emotional manipulations of the state are contested by the people. When delving into the role of national grief, Koschut (2019) argues that collective emotions of grief have the power to contest the “constructed” (149) emotional narratives put forth by the state.

In their research, Wolak and Sokhey (2022) address a limitation in Webster and Albertson’s (2022) study, which focuses on the negative effects of societal anger, including non-political anger. They delve into the dynamics of emotions such as anger, anxiety, embarrassment, and enthusiasm within informal political communication networks. Their study reveals that intense sensations and anger do not dissuade people from participating in contentious topics; instead, they lead to increased engagement in political discourse. Individuals experiencing anger tend to avoid confrontations with those holding opposing views. Conversely, feelings of embarrassment during campaigns make individuals more likely to engage in discussions with those with differing opinions. Informal conversations at the everyday social level

serve as an “outlet” (Wolak & Sokhey 2022: 196) for the expression of emotions. The increase in emotional discussions and political engagement is not driven by the intention to persuade or influence others. Instead, the primary objective is to connect with individuals who validate existing beliefs rather than challenge them (Wolak & Sokhey 2022: 196). Although their study provides valuable insights into the influence of emotions on discourse, it may oversimplify the motivations behind participation by emphasizing validation-seeking connections over the potential for constructive dialogue or learning. Combining these perspectives could offer a more comprehensive understanding of how emotions such as anger operate within political landscapes, considering both macro-level governance impacts and micro-level communication dynamics (Karl 2021).

The micro-level allows for an exploration of the enactment of elitist policies and the making of resistance and confrontation. Specifically, such enactment carries two specific emotions with it that are experienced (“lived, practiced, and felt”) in our routinized lives: security and insecurity – or “everyday security” (Bilgic & Gkouti 2021: 486). Another related aspect of resistance and confrontation is political tolerance, a factor that has been observed to differ across generations. McBeth (2022) discovered that Generation Z displays greater tolerance for progressive speeches, books, and teachers, and an intolerance to ideas with which they disagree. While the connection between emotions and political intolerance remains somewhat limited, it is important to recognize that political intolerance can indeed trigger emotions like anger, hatred, and fear in individuals (Gibson et al. 2020). This suggests that when people harbor negative emotions or a general aversion toward an out-group, it magnifies their intolerance level directed at those groups.

Jones (2020) makes an unconventional contribution by exploring the interrelatedness of contraceptive politics and emotions in Britain. Jones (2020) argues that the “Men Too” movement was responsible for generating emotional political engagement among men’s groups and anti-sexist publications such as *Achilles Heel*, which was active from 1978 to 1981. They addressed the emotional disconnect that men experienced and aimed to promote emotional transformation as one of their central objectives. The mention of “emotional change” (Jones 2020: 59) as a key aim of these groups highlights how emotional transformation is a political goal. This suggests that reshaping emotional norms and behaviors is viewed as a way to challenge and change power dynamics in society, which is a central theme in the field of political emotions. A related and significant indicator of political participation is “psychological arousal,” defined as an “unconscious response” (Karl 2021: 688). While Jones focuses on the emotional aspect and its political implications within specific social movements, Karl’s notion of psychological arousal adds another layer by suggesting an unconscious yet influential response that plays a role in political engagement, possibly intersecting with the emotional transformations Jones discusses. Both perspectives contribute to comprehending the multifaceted relationship between emotions, activism, and political participation.

## **Conclusion**

In recent years, research on emotions in politics has grown past the dimensional model to include complex categories and explanations. This review explores key themes to show that emotions permeate everyday experiences of individuals and nations, deeply entwined with power dynamics, public perceptions, and societal structures (Beattie et al. 2019). Emotions in everyday politics serve as both tools for resistance and mechanisms that reinforce dominant narratives, illustrating their multifaceted role in shaping societal dynamics (Bilgic & Gkouti 2021; Koschut 2019). From the state’s strategic construction of emotions to the contestations arising from grassroots movements, the impact of emotions on political discourse is undeniable (Gustafsson & Hall 2021; Schick 2019; Menshawy 2021; Traven 2022a; 2022b). Moreover, the global politics of emotions, influenced by cultural and geopolitical factors, underscore the significance of context in shaping emotional experiences.

Meanwhile, research by Adler-Nissen et al. (2020), Tokdogan (2020), and Duncombe (2019) highlights the role of emotions in state crafting, emphasizing how images, disasters, and digital diplomacy evoke collective emotions and influence public sentiments, thereby

consolidating national unity or mobilizing societal emotions for political leverage. Everyday experiences, including political intolerance and emotional responses to crises and controversies, exemplify the deeply rooted emotional connections that shape societal discourses and political engagements (McBeth 2022; Gibson et al. 2020; Jones 2020). Furthermore, the micro-political realm, as discussed by Beattie et al. (2019), Schick (2019), and Gustafsson and Hall (2021), serves as a fertile ground for emotions to manifest, with individual and collective emotions often challenging state-driven narratives, fostering contestation, and redefining societal norms.

Future explorations in this field could delve deeper into several areas. First, investigating the interactions between emotions, rather than relying solely on a single emotional aspect, would be a significant step forward in comprehending the complexities of politics (Webster & Albertson 2022). In the everyday, individuals experience and express a spectrum of emotions, often simultaneously. Understanding how these multiple emotions interact and influence political attitudes and perceptions presents a promising research avenue for scholars. Second, researchers could also explore the intersectionality of emotions. The interplay between various social identities such as race, class, gender, and emotions in political contexts requires further research. Third, there is a need for cross-cultural and cross-national comparative studies that explore how emotions influence politics across different societies, cultures, and political systems. Fourth, and equally important, is exploring the emotional dimensions of environmental issues. Investigating how emotions like fear, hope, or apathy impact public perceptions, policymaking, and collective action concerning climate change or ecological concerns deserves further attention. Finally, the article reveals that while scholars have understood the role of emotions in civil wars, there is a need for more research on how emotions influence conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and negotiation processes. Understanding how emotions influence reconciliation efforts and peace agreements holds the potential for enhancing conflict resolution strategies. Emotions in politics remain an evolving area of study, offering a rich landscape for interdisciplinary research and continued exploration into the intricate interplay between feelings, power, and societal dynamics.

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