Check for updates

The contestation of the sensible under populist authoritarianism: between silencing and seeking democratic rights

Çisem Gündüz Arabaci*

Independent Researcher, İzmir, Türkiye

Populist authoritarian leaders systematically undermine democratic foundations primarily through manipulating election processes and eroding the judicial institutions. Veiled in the rhetoric of "the will of the people", their ostensibly legal yet fundamentally rights-violating actions relentlessly constrict the political and social realms, forcing individuals into fierce defense of even their most basic human rights. This study employs conceptual and interpretive analysis grounded in the works of Hannah Arendt (realm of political action), Sheldon Wolin (managed democracy), Carl Schmitt (state of exception), Micheal Foucault (e.g., biopolitics), and Jacques Ranciere (e.g., "partage du sensible" (the distribution the sensible), polis order). The research examines how populist leaders leverage authoritative motives to render individuals invisible within a constructed and unjustifiable order. The study argues that social uprisings are pivotal moments in which the existing "the distribution of the sensible" is critically challenged by people's unexpected and irruptive affirmations of equal capacity. These social reactions not only complicate existing discussions concerning democratic theory but also offer a novel framework for understanding the evolving forms of political subjectification in an era of global autocratization.

KEYWORDS

populism, authoritarianism, realm of action, social uprising, distribution of sensible

1 Introduction

At a time when the current situation and future direction of democratic theory have become increasingly complicated, the contentious and arguably indispensable relationship between populism and authoritarianism remains one of the most important research topics in political science (V-Dem Institute, 2024, p. 25). Drawing on fundamental political theory, this research analyzes populist authoritarian regimes through the actions and discourses of populist leaders, thereby addressing the current crisis of legitimacy and potential future trajectories in democratic theory. The article frames populism as a political phenomenon characterized by a specific way of communication with masses (Laclau, 2005) that derives from the ideology of nationalist authoritarianism. Moreover, authoritarianism is not defined as an ideology, but rather it is framed as a manner in which power is exercised (Linz, 1975). In this study, populist authoritarianism is primarily employed as a descriptive term or attribute for observed behaviors and governance styles of leaders. A nationalist ideology might indeed form the underlying basis of these behaviors in the cases analyzed; however, this analysis specifically focuses on the populist and authoritarian manifestations of this phenomenon.

The article's research question is, "How are the actions of populist authoritarian leaders evaluated within the framework of fundamental concepts of political philosophy, and how do

these actions oblige people to interrogate the very core elements of democracy and change in the distribution of sensible?"

This article argues that, globally, there is an obvious regression on democratic gains, characterized by a rise in illiberal practices, weakening democratic institutions, restrictions on civil liberties, and a decline in the rule of law (Haggard and Kaufman, 2021; Waldner and Lust, 2018). The number of populist leaders and parties in power worldwide significantly increased 5-fold between 1990 and 2020 (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2020, p. 4). Moreover, authoritarianism goes global (Diamond et al., 2016). The rise of populist authoritarian regimes is observed across a spectrum, from established democracies experiencing populist pressures to authoritarian regimes solidifying their control. While this phenomenon is often expressed through populist rhetoric and governance style, it frequently finds its ideological grounding in the form of nationalist authoritarianism that prioritizes national unity and strength over liberal democratic norms (e.g., Müller, 2016; Snyder, 2018). Mounk (2018) points out, "Citizens have long been disillusioned with politics; now, they have grown restless, angry, even disdainful. Party systems have long seemed frozen; now, authoritarian populists are on the rise around the world" (p. 3). This regression obligates people to protect even the most basic elements of democracy and human rights.

The intertwined relationship between populist leaders' rhetoric and their authoritarian practices plays a critical role in eroding democratic norms and institutions. In her seminal article "On Democratic Backsliding," Bermeo (2016) contends that "authoritarianism occurs rather than through classic military coups or electoral fraud but through the slow and gradual weakening of institutions by elected leaders" (p. 6). In this context, the regression in democratic gains means not only quantitative losses of freedom but also qualitative deterioration of the values and functioning mechanisms underlying democratic systems (Bermeo, 2016).

To address the research question of this article, it is of paramount importance to examine the mechanisms that populist leaders use to legitimize their authoritarian motives. This study will also analyze the prospective impacts of these mechanisms on democratic institutions, the evolving social landscape, and the social reactions. Although the influence of populist authoritarian leaders' actions on democratic theory is extensive, this research, informed by established political science theories, will specifically focus on the erosion of judicial independence, the manipulation of electoral periods, and the restriction of civil and political liberties.

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing a conceptual and interpretive analysis to examine the impact of populist leaders' actions and discourses on social and political realms of society and the stance of individuals within this conjuncture. This approach builds on extensive bibliographical research and the rigorous conceptual work in political science (Sartori, 1984; Morris, 1938) to define and unpack key theoretical concepts. Furthermore, the interpretive dimension of this analysis (Yanow, 2000) allows for a deep understanding and moving beyond mere description, enabling a nuanced exploration of the complex interplay between populist communication, authoritarian practices, and democratic backsliding. This qualitative approach is particularly suited for exploring complex social phenomena where meaning and context are paramount, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the how and why behind observed political behaviors (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The

emphasis on interpretation acknowledges that political realities are socially constructed, requiring careful unpacking of discourses and symbols to reveal underlying power dynamics and subjective experiences (Geertz, 1973; Stake, 1995). This study makes a contribution to the existing literature by offering a novel, integrated theoretical framework for understanding populist authoritarianism. Moving beyond additive approaches that merely juxtapose disparate concepts, this research demonstrates how the insights of Arendt, Wolin, Schmitt, Foucault, and Ranciere interlock and mutually reinforce, providing a holistic and dynamic analytic lens to scrutinize the complex operations of populist authoritarian regimes. More specifically, Hannah Arendt's concept of "realm of political action" (1958) will be utilized to examine the restrictions on political participation in relation to the use of "will of people" discourse, which causes a legitimacy crisis. To analyze election periods, Wolin's (2004) concept of "managed democracy" will be employed in conjunction with Schmitt's (1922) "state of exception"—a framework that illuminates how democratic rights are suspended, facilitating authoritarian shifts. The concept of Foucault's (1978) "biopolitics" will be used to examine the discursive level of authoritarianism, which constructs the norms and values in society and interferes with the private realm of people. This research draws on Rancière's (2004c) concept of "partage du sensible (the distribution of the sensible)" to understand the emergence of new modes of social uprisings within structured social landscapes. While Schmitt's notion of sovereign power can explain through which political will Foucault's governmentality mechanisms can be implemented, Arendt's perception of politics reveals how this power restricts the political and social realm. Ranciere opens up discussions on the new meanings and potential of social resistance within these populist authoritarian restrictive areas. Indeed, Rancière mentions in his own words: "I wrote Ten Theses on Politics primarily to criticize Arendt's ideas of the 'determined political space' and 'the political way of life'. The Theses aimed to show that her definition of politics contained a vicious circle: Arendt identifies politics with a particular way of life" (Rancière, 2011a, p. 3). This study provides an interpretative framework that handles the populist authoritarianism not only as a political system but also as a holistic political strategy that forms the life of the population and their way of action. Rather than operating in isolation, these theories establish interconnected spheres of action, functioning simultaneously as both causes and effects, much like links in a chain that retain their distinct theoretical integrity.

In the final part, this article will mention how the deepening crisis of democratic legitimacy causes social reactions and makes the future scenarios of democratic theory more complicated; even in the literature, there are studies that argue that people become more partial to non-democratic forms of government and less fond of democratic forms when being confronted with societal threats (Van Severen et al., 2024). Foa and Mounk (2016) term this process "democratic deconsolidation," wherein citizens' commitment to democratic principles weakens, paving the way for authoritarian encroachment. The concluding section of this study will discuss how the course of deconsolidation can be altered through the changing "partage du sensible (distribution of the sensible)" in the social realm.

This research can contribute to the literature by arguing that erosion of democracy (in terms of its norms, institutions, and meaning as well) compels society to defend core human rights, and this defensive reflection paves the way for grassroots social reactions,

which can change the manner of "partage du sensible." It is surely beyond doubt that democratic erosion is not a 1-day phenomenon; it is about creating a feeling and mindset; thus, it can only occur through time. Therefore, the direction of transformation of democratic theory cannot be easily traced, but still, there is room for discussion.

2 The populist authoritarian playbook: legitimizing power through the "will of the people"

Müller (2016) articulates in "What is Populism?" that populist leaders, by claiming to represent the "single and homogenous will of the people," attempt to legitimize their authority by labeling opposition and critical voices as "enemies of the people" or "elites opposing the elected will" (p. 3). They also treat their political opponents as "enemies of the will of the people" (Müller, 2016, p. 4) and seek to exclude them altogether. Populist leaders frequently employ "will of the people" rhetoric, thereby threatening liberal democratic norms and institutions and ultimately undermining the very foundation of democratic legitimacy (Mounk, 2018).

Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) define populism as "a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people" (p. 6). Therefore, populist leaders present themselves as the sole representatives of "real people" against "corrupted elites." They contend that "the monist core of populism, and especially its notion of a 'general will,' may well lead to the support of authoritarian tendencies" (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 18). This instrumentalization of the "will of the people" by populist leaders can, as Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) highlight, often be rooted in a nationalist authoritarian understanding of popular sovereignty.

Moreover, Stanley (2018) highlights in "How Fascism Works" that this instrumental use of "us vs. them" rhetoric causes cleavages in societies, thereby stifling the very plurality. Hannah Arendt (2018) defends that "plurality is the core of political freedom" (p. 234). She argues that the essence of political action and political freedom is in the capacity of people to act and speak together (Arendt, 2018, p. 192). It is the baseline of democratic legitimacy. She posits the action, with its capacity to start something new, is inherent in human plurality. This capacity encapsulates the ability of individuals to convene in the public sphere, generate novel ideas, seek resolutions to common problems, and experience political liberty. For Arendt, "Action takes place in the public domain, establishing the political realm as a space of appearance, and the political, as the space of plurality, is forged by free and equally distinguished citizens who contribute their unique perspectives to common deeds" (Ozola, 2023, pp. 222–223). Habermas (1992) defines "public sphere" as a liberal space where people can conduct rational and critical discussions. Labeling critical opinions "as enemies of the will of the people and general will" erodes the liberal character of this space.

However, the contemporary surge of populist authoritarian regimes (by overrated will of people rhetoric and constructed social cleavages) systematically dismantled this realm of action, thereby menacing political liberty and plurality. At this point, the effacement of individuals from political and social realms begins. Authoritarian

leaders require uncontrolled space to operate, and for this reason, they narrow the "sphere of action." Consequently, the capacity for collective action, the lifeblood of democratic renewal, is systematically undermined, leading to a profound crisis of democratic legitimacy in numerous contemporary states (Fudge and Leith, 2021).

For instance, Viktor Orban portrays figures such as "Brussels elites" and "George Soros" as enemies of people hostile to Hungarian interests (Bozoki, 2018). Rupnik (2018) refers to the "captive democracy" concept while examining how Orban deploys "will of the people" rhetoric for legitimizing his authoritarian actions. Jair Bolsonaro's interventions in Brazil, on university budget cuts and the claims concerning ideological suppressions of him upon universities, can be analyzed as an erosion of the intellectual "realm of action." Moreover, the environmental policies of Bolsonaro and his discourses/stance toward the rights of indigenous people reveal how some social groups' political freedoms can be restricted (Hochstetler and Viola, 2020). In Poland and Hungary, there exist some systematic restrictions toward civil society organizations and overall political freedoms (Kelemen, 2019). The politics of the Narendra Modi government in India toward minority groups and the restrictions concerning freedom of speech display how the universal characteristic of political freedoms has become contentious (Jaffrelot, 2021). The immigrant policies of the center-right coalition under the leadership of Giorgia Meloni are another concrete example of how certain social groups' social and political rights can be damaged under populist authoritarian governments (Pirro, 2022). These examples demonstrate how certain groups are restricted from the public sphere and how the political power prevents them from hearing their noise and participating in political processes. They are all manifestations of an eroded "realm of action." Because the emphasis on "will of the people" does not mean embracing individuals with all their uniqueness, they are merely treated a part of a whole.

"Will of the people" rhetoric erodes the notion of plurality, destroys the "realm of action", and also manipulates the election processes. Because, in the semantic world of populist authoritarian leaders, the meaning of the "will of the people" gradually transforms to the "will of the people during elections" and then merely the "will of the majority".

3 Tilting the playing field: erosion of judicial independence and manipulated elections

> "A sovereign dictatorship does not suspend an existing constitution through a law based on the constitution—a constitutional law; rather it seeks to create conditions in which a constitution—a constitution that it regards as the true one—is made possible" (Schmitt, 2014, p. 119).

When populist leaders see themselves as the sole representatives of the true people, they tend to perceive constitutional institutions and minority rights as obstacles to the will of the people (Urbinati, 2019). They often invoke the principle of popular sovereignty to criticize independent constitutional institutions seeking to protect fundamental rights that are inherent to the liberal democratic model (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 81). Specifically, judicial institutions and election periods are frequently targeted by populist authoritarian ruling

parties. Democracies erode slowly in barely visible steps (Runciman, 2018). Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) emphasize in "How Democracies Die" that populist leaders often employ gradual yet insidious tactics to silence dissent and curtail civic participation, and democracies may die at the hands of elected leaders (p. 5). The tragic paradox of the electoral route to authoritarianism is that democracy's assassins use the very institutions of democracy—gradually, subtly, and even legally—to kill it (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018, p. 5).

Schmitt (1932) argues that the core of politics lies in the "friend-enemy distinction" and the legitimacy in the power to decide the norm of "state of exceptions." In this distinction, their supporters are the real people, and the opposition side is the enemies of the people (p. 5). Schmitt (1922) discusses in his work "Political Theology" the authority of decision to "state of exception" being used to suspend democratic norms and bring into practice their authoritarian tendencies. This situation leads to a deep legitimacy crisis and erosion/collapse of political freedoms.

Populist authoritarian leaders first create enemies, and then, with the help of these existing or "constructed" enemies, they incline toward severe restrictions on society by declaring a "state of emergency" in times of crisis. Especially election periods are being represented as crisis periods, given populist leaders are attaching too much importance to elections (Bernhard and Kriesi, 2019), because electoral competition masks (often, in part, to legitimize) the reality of authoritarian domination (Diamond and Lipset, 1988-1989, p. xviii).

In the post-election process, "emergency discourse," which was used frequently, and efforts to widen the realm of authority of execution are common examples of how a populist leader instrumentalized the concept of "state of exception" (Guriev and Treisman, 2022). Trump's speeches and public reveals during his first presidential period (2017–2021), especially after elections, present a prevalent example of how a populist leader instrumentalized "state of exceptions" discourse (Huq and Ginsburg, 2018).

Autocratic legalism is crucial to mention at this point. This concept refers to the systems in which leaders manipulate legal and institutional mechanisms gradually and become authoritarian by "law" rather than by military coups. Scheppele mentions that "Some constitutional democracies are being deliberately hijacked by a set of legally clever autocrats, who use constitutionalism and democracy to destroy both" (Scheppele, 2018, p. 547). Moreover, "The new autocrats gain control over their governments not with a phalanx of soldiers, but with a phalanx of lawyers. For the new autocrats, law—duly enacted law—has become the primary method for consolidating power and preventing others from acquiring or sharing it" (Scheppele, 2019, p. 467). Although laws have always been valuable tools in an autocrat's arsenal, modern authoritarians began to deploy, to a much greater extent than their historical predecessors, the same laws, and legal institutions that exist in democratic regimes for anti-democratic purposes (Varol, 2014).

According to Lane Scheppele, the erosion of the rule of law is the core element of this process. The erosion of the rule of law does not mean only violation of the law; rather, it means protection of formal elements of law (especially in terms of existence of elections) while systematically weakening the core elements of the rule of law, such as judicial independence, accountability, protection of minority rights, and equality before the law. Autocratic legalism often takes place within a legal framework adopted by an, at least formally, legitimate

majority that then uses the law to undercut central democratic institutions (Rohlfing and Wind, 2022). Populist leaders are suppressing judicial institutions politically, instrumentalizing the law and also election periods. At the end of the day, their practices are legal but not lawful (Scheppele, 2018).

The "managed democracy" concept, suggested by Wolin (2017), provides a critical framework to examine manipulative practices of populist leaders during election periods. He argues that "democracy" is redefined as "managed democracy," a political form where governments secure legitimacy through elections they meticulously control (Wolin, 2017, p. 47). Managed democracy refers to a system where elections appear free and fair yet are fundamentally designed to safeguard the interests of economic and political elites. Moreover, managed democracy means reduction of political participation to a superficial and ritualistic essence (Wolin, 2004). The concept "polyarchy" (procedural definition of democracy) emphasizes the importance of free, fair, and competitive elections but also the freedoms that make them truly meaningful (such as freedom of organization and freedom of expression), alternative sources of information and institutions to ensure that government policies depend on the votes and preferences of citizens (Diamond, 2002).

Populist leaders with their charismatic leadership and emotional rhetoric mobilize the masses while weakening real political discussions and participatory democratic mechanisms, and all these efforts are again related to the restriction of the "realm of action" in terms of political participation and plurality. "The parties that remade states and suppressed rivals were not omnipotent from the start. They exploited a historic moment to make political life impossible for their opponents" (Snyder, 2017, p. 26). Together, autocratic legalism and managed democracy reveal how these regimes effectively suppress opponents and silencing dissenting voices to consolidate their power.

In this context, populist leaders' efforts to weaken judicial independence and seize control of critical institutions significantly undermine democratic checks and balances and represent a crucial step toward authoritarianization. Populist leaders have some specific strategies to manipulate election periods, such as manipulating and controlling the media and encouraging biased reporting (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, p. 306). Changing election laws, making voting processes more difficult, and gerrymandering are also being used by populist leaders to affect election results (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018). Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) argue that, especially in countries experiencing democratic tension, populist leaders try to legitimize their discourses by referring often to "will of the people" and "maintaining stability," and they defend the changes in election rules and in judicial systems by such discourses as "preventing political instability" and "making the electoral system more representative." Because while a ruling party with authoritarian motives is creating tactics for negating genuine elections, their aim is not only to manipulate the electoral process but also to be able to claim legitimacy while doing so (Diamond et al., 2016, p. 139). When these changes involve regulations designed to benefit the incumbent political party/ parties, they inevitably raise concerns regarding the fairness of democratic competition.

Viktor Orbán's interventions in Hungary's judicial system and his rhetoric of "illiberal democracy" (for instance, his 2014 statement, "We are building a new state that is illiberal, a national foundation") provide a striking example of this process (Drinóczi and Bień-Kacała, 2020; Halmai, 2024). Similarly, the Law and

Justice party's judicial reforms in Poland are widely seen as a blatant attempt to bring the judiciary under political control (Sadurski, 2019). Sadurski (2019) mentions that the constitutional checks and balances were destroyed intentionally (p. 45). Jair Bolsonaro's constant criticism of judicial institutions in Brazil and his efforts to influence the judiciary through appointments reflect a global manifestation of this trend (Power and Jenne, 2020). Donald Trump's judicial appointments and public pressure on the judicial system in the United States can also be interpreted as a challenge to democratic norms (Tushnet, 2018). Rodrigo Duterte's harsh criticisms and dismissals of judges in the Philippines offer another example of this pattern (Heydarian, 2019).

The judicial reforms and attitudes toward Constitutional Court decisions have become subjects of severe criticism in Türkiye (Göztepe and Yılmaz, 2020). Important election law amendments were made in Türkiye in the last 5 years (2019–2024) and especially opposition parties, considered them, as intervention in the judicial system (Esen and Gumuscu, 2023). The most crucial regulation is Law No. 7393, which was entered into force in 2022 (Yılmaz, 2022). These amendments pertained to election alliances and parliamentary accounts. The most notable of these changes is reduction of the national threshold for parliamentary elections from 10 to 7% (Bozkurt, 2023). At first consideration, it may seem like an advantage for small parties, but it makes things harder for small parties that are not part of the alliance.

Another important change is the method of appointing ballot box committee members. While in the previous system political parties had the right to propose ballot box committee members, the changes have given the district election board chairman the authority to appoint ballot box committee chairmen from among public servants. Opposition parties regarding the independence and impartiality of ballot box committees (Esen, 2025) have met this situation with concern. Öniş (2019) argues that, even though the presidential system in Türkiye damaged the principle of separation of powers and even the suppression of the executive power upon the judiciary increased authoritarian tendencies of the regimes, there are still some places for civil society and opposition in Türkiye.

Election campaigns increasingly rely on identity politics and the fabrication of enemies, eschewing rational argumentation. For instance, in Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro insisted on conservatism and its values during the election in 2022 while labeling Lula Silva (his socialist rival) as "immoral," "communist," and "traitor" (Hunter, 2023). Trump used identity politics during elections by labeling immigrants, Muslims, and his political rivals as a threat to the country (Shear and Kaplan, 2020). The speeches after the election results of Erdoğan (2023a, 2023b) make emphasis on the concept of "will of people" by saying, "The will of the people appeared, and our people have decided." Especially after the debated election results, this emphasis becomes more obvious, and the objections of opposition parties are labeled as disrespectful toward "the will of the people" (Erdoğan, 2023a, 2023b).

All these attempts aim at tilting the playing field because authoritarianism often occurs not through a sudden coup but gradually and insidiously, from within democratic institutions (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018). Changing the election rules and making judicial system amendments cannot be perceived as random authoritarian tactics. They are concrete manifestations of the managed democracy concept, which provides leaders to represent themselves as the sole voice of the people and render invisible all voices and actions that go beyond that "governed order".

Beyond the aforementioned restrictions on political and social rights enforced through "will of the people" rhetoric—which manifest as the erosion of judicial institutions and electoral manipulations inherent in managed democracy—authoritarian discursive practices also prove critical. These interventions, particularly those infringing upon private lives, consequently precipitate social reactions and uprisings.

Populist authoritarian regimes often transform the "people" into a demographic-biological entity, a shift Giorgio Agamben identifies in Carl Schmitt's political thought. Referencing Schmitt's 1933 essay, Agamben points to the "movement" as the political dynamism that vitalizes the static state and politicizes the people, whose growth it must protect. The crucial implication is the people's transition from a constitutive political body to a mere population—a key biopolitical concept. This dynamic shows how sovereign power instrumentalizes the people as a biopolitical subject making their biological existence and growth central to the regime's political project (Luisetti, 2011).

4 Beyond the visible hand: discursive power and biopolitical control

Political power is not only a restrictive power but also is a network that creates norms, shapes behaviors, and defines the boundary between "true" and "false" (Foucault, 2008). This reveals that the dichotomy continues at the normative level as well. For this reason, it is important to examine discourse, knowledge generation, and discipline mechanisms in accordance with the top-down pressure of political power. This discursive level examination analyzes how individuals are personally affected by the actions of populist leaders, and they are reduced to mere objects of policy within constructed social landscapes.

Creating enemy images and common narratives to hold together their supporters are in populist leaders' rhetorical repertoires, which display how their power operates at the discursive level. Controlling the media, the disinformation campaigns through social media platforms, and the efforts to create alternative truths display how power can be constructed by knowledge and discourse (Foucault, 1978). "The population" emerged as the key object of knowledge production and political intervention (Villadsen and Wahlberg, 2015).

Indeed, it was at this same moment that governmentality emerged as an "ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power" that took the population as its main object (Foucault, 1978, p. 108). Moreover, populist authoritarian regimes frame the economic achievements as a matter of national security and transform economic politics to a bio-political manner of government. This tendency reveals that economic politics are perceived as a tool of power (Brown, 2015). In Foucault's bio-politics, power operates not solely through specific technologies of knowledge, but also, decisively, through practices of security underwriting a distinct political economy. This perspective demonstrates that power functions less through direct coercion or strict regulation, more as an art of governmentality, enabling certain types of circulation and recognizing freedom itself as a crucial terrain of rule (Means, 2021). In the context of populist authoritarian regimes,

this Foucaultian understanding is critically enabled and complemented by Carl Schmitt's concept of a strong, decisive state. This sovereign authority provides the necessary political ground for such regimes to effectively implement and legitimate a biopolitical governmentality. Thus, populist authoritarians blend overt, Schmittian decisionism with subtle Foucaultian governance, utilizing economic flows and the population's very existence as tools to consolidate their power. Populist leaders frequently integrate economic policies—such as promoting domestic production and safeguarding national assets—with overarching discourse of patriotism and national identity. The strategy effectively extends the Schmittian "friend/enemy" distinction in the economic sphere, framing economic actions as crucial for national solidarity and often demonizing external or internal actors as threats to the national economy (Schmitt, 1996).

Biopolitics, as initially conceived by Foucault, operated at the level of the population and hence was complementary to already existing disciplinary practices and institutions that targeted the human body. Biopower refers to a set of procedures, or relations, that manipulate the biological features (for example, birth rate, fertility) of the human species into a political strategy for governing an entire population (Sokhi-Bulley, 2014).

According to Foucault, biopolitics refers to the processes by which human life, at the level of the population, emerged as a distinct political problem in Western societies (Means, 2021). Whereas sovereign power is fundamentally characterized by the right to "take life or let live," and disciplinary power focuses on training or optimizing individual bodies, biopolitics emerges as a distinct form of power concerned with the strategic management and optimization of an entire population's life processes (Means, 2021).

Biopolitics in Foucault is a very useful concept to respond to the question "why populist leaders have demographic concerns and manipulate 'family values' discourse, declaring certain lifestyles as deviant?" Populist leaders use "family values" discourse to legitimize this biopolitical control over society by encouraging certain family structures and excluding others. For populist leaders, the family constitutes a crucial domain they seek to control through narratives aimed at reconstructing societal norms (Varghese and Chennattuserry, 2023).

The political deployment of family values operates along two central axes of populist discourse: it demonizes elites for their perceived moral decay and lack of commitment to traditional norms while simultaneously addressing demographic anxieties related to declining native birth rates and immigrant family sizes (Ben-Porat et al., 2021). According to Cohen and Arato (2021), "Populist politics also needs a convincing moral claim to trigger the self-righteous indignation necessary to construct, define, and mobilize the authentic 'good' people against the 'alien other'" (p. 102).

For instance, President Erdoğan (2023a, 2023b) accused the opposition of "attacking the family values of society". The adjective "sacred" used for family aims to increase social support by adding a religious dimension to the concept of family (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2021). The concept of family is used to garner support for political objectives by associating it with national strength and development (Erdoğan, 2020). Bekir Bozdağ (minister of justice of Türkiye) refers in his speech to opposition and critical voices as "those who try to destroy the family institution" and tries to stamp them as enemies of the family institution (Dumanoglu, 2022). The year 2025 has been declared a "family year" in Türkiye by President

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. This decision was made in line with the Vision Document and Action Plan for the Protection and Strengthening of the Family (2024–2028) announced in May 2024 (Ministry of Family and Social Services, 2025). With "Powerful Family, Powerful Türkiye" discourse, the family concept is used to garner support for political objectives by associating it with national strength and development, and the cleavage in society deepens as well. The very recent example of the aim of forming family structure according to government policies is the statement of the Minister of Family Affairs in Türkiye "those who do not have children cannot be a family" (T24, 2024).

Victor Orban's government is implementing policies to encourage traditional family structures and birth rates, citing demographic problems as the reason (Kováts and Põim, 2015). PiS (Law and Justice) leaders and the government in Poland have frequently articulated a mission to protect "Catholic family values" and "Polish identity." In this discourse, particularly the European Union's "gender ideology" and liberal norms are presented as a threat to Poland's traditional values; anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric have been central to the party's campaigns (Gwiazda, 2020).

The concept of "surveillance society" is also a useful tool for understanding the social control of populist authoritarian regimes (Volinz, 2025). Foucault uses the Panoptikon model as a metaphor for power relations and discipline mechanisms in modern societies. According to him, the principles of Panoptikon are pertinent not only in prisons but also in schools, hospitals, workplaces, and, moreover, in the whole society (Foucault, 1977). The Panoptikon model can be reinterpreted by mass data collection and facial recognition systems, which are used by contemporary populist authoritarian regimes. Populist leaders are justifying such surveillance mechanisms by invoking security discourse and targeting opposite voices and certain groups in society, presenting the invisible and prevalent control of power over individuals. Some facial recognition systems are being used in current social protests. For instance, LGBTI+ Pride was banned in 2024 in Hungary, and some legal arrangements to use AI-powered facial recognition technology to identify protesters were discussed by political powers. These tendencies have drawn criticism from the European Union and display how mass surveillance of protesters for security reasons is being legitimized as a form of biopolitical control (Haeck and Körömi, 2025).

Amnesty International (2024) report has stated that the use of disproportionate force and unlawful surveillance practices against protesters is increasing in Europe. This report highlights that facial recognition technology is being used or is planned to be used by law enforcement agencies in many European countries. The report said that facial recognition technology could also be used, which has a "chilling effect" on the right to protest (Amnesty International, 2024). The perception of protests as a security risk and the subsequent use of surveillance technologies are examples of biopolitics at work. The European Parliament report (2024) expressed concerns that some law enforcement agencies in EU member states were using facial recognition technology at political protests, which it said could have a chilling effect on freedom of assembly (European Parliament, 2024). In a decision made by the European Court of Human Rights against Russia in 2023, it was stated that the arrest of a protester in the Moscow metro by using facial recognition technology violated the right to freedom of expression and respect for private life. This decision draws attention to the potential human rights violations of

the use of facial recognition in protests (European Court of Human Rights, 2023).

It can be interpreted as quite normal to be under control of political power in the streets while you are under surveillance about your family structure and your children's number. How do people react to the actions of populist leaders upon their private realm and whether they have already accepted the way of "distribution of sensible" in society via constructed deep social cleavages are the questions that the final section will discuss.

5 Searching ways for protecting democratic gains: "change in partage du sensible"

> "Politics is reorganization of 'partage du sensible.'"
> Jacques Rancière.

In this final section, the concept of "partage du sensible" (the distribution of the sensible) will be utilized to examine how people—living under populist authoritarian regimes—react to these actions and how they question the current order. "The distribution of the sensible" can be defined as an implicit order or frame that determines what can be visible and invisible, audible and inaudible in a society, and therefore what can become the object of political discussion and consideration (Rancière, 2004c). The distribution of the sensible means segmentation of the world and human beings. This segmentation must be understood in the dual sense of the word: On the one hand, it separates and excludes, while on the other, it enables participation (Rancière, 2010). Rancière's approach stands on two axes: "The Politics of Aesthetics" and "The Aesthetics of Politics". The Politics of Aesthetics refers to the specific links that exist between forms of aesthetics regimes (for instance, the propaganda and imagery employed by populist authoritarian regimes) and modern forms of politics. On the other hand, "The Aesthetics of Politics" points to the conflicts regarding what is visible, what is sayable, who is deemed capable of speaking and acting, and who is not, as well as the new fields of visibility that these conflicts create in the public sphere (Rancière, 2009, p. 121). This re-arrangement of "the distribution of the sensible" is precisely how emancipation (the affirmation of equality by those without a recognized place) occurs (Panagia, 2010).

Furthermore, this concept can put on the table that populist authoritarian practices define "what people can experience" and "how they can express themselves" as well. In this context, the crisis of democratic legitimacy is not only an institutional and judicial problem; it is also about the reconstruction of an unjustifiable order. Thus, this concept can be used in the analysis of democratic resistance events against populist authoritarian regimes that reduce individuals to mere voters, framing them under the guise of "will of the people". Crucially, as Rancière asserts, the political subject itself does not exist prior to action (Ruby, 2007). It is through uprising and disengagement that one becomes a political subject. This process is defined as "subjectification", which is not mere "coming to consciousness" of a preexisting identity but rather an unexpected and irruptive affirmation of equality: "I am capable" (Ruby, 2007, p. 174).

Erkmen (2025) suggest that the process of autocratization affects protests through multiple mechanisms that have conflicting effects. While repression from autocratization generally stifles protest by increasing participation and coordination costs, its uneven application can also provoke new grievances that spur targeted groups to resist. Authoritarian regimes create new grievances through both repressive policies and broader policy choices and that oppositional actors contest the regime's hegemonic project, not just its authoritarian turn (Erkmen, 2025).

Rancière (1995) emphasizes that democratic resistance should be in a manner that can create new forms of sensibilities and pave the way for invisibles to be visible and unheard people to be heard by shaking the existing inequitable order. According to Rancière, politics is intervening in the "partage du sensible" and reconstructing it again. This concept refers to implicit regulations that determine who counts as existing in the common world. Whose are visible and invisible; whose are heard and unheard in societies. Social uprisings occur as efforts to question and reorganize this distribution of the sensible.

At this point, it is important to distinguish the concept polis order from politics (la politique) in Rancière's literature. The concept of "polis order" is beyond the traditional "police" concept. In Rancière (2004a, 2004b), the polis refers to a form of government that encompasses all structures and discourses aimed at maintaining order in society and reproducing existing hierarchies and roles (pp. 12–13). Police politics establishes an often implicit and unquestioned order that determines who stands where, what they do, and what they can say. This order fixes the existing distribution of the sensible, makes some voices audible, and reduces others to noise. The police define what should be and perceive any intervention that goes beyond these boundaries as a disorder or a threat and try to suppress it. The establishment of a "police order" aligns with Schmitt's concerns about the strong will of the state and Arendt's concerns about the restriction of political space.

The death of Amini after being detained caused massive social protests against the oppressive regime in Iran (Human Rights Watch, 2022). These protests not only created a counter-discourse against political order but also created a new "mode of sensing," which provides women and young people with visibility of their demands and experiences. The protests of women who let their hair down, sing, and dance in the streets triggered the "rigid order of the distribution of the sensible," and they ask for a new order in which they could have a chance to become visible. In a similar manner, the political crisis and protests in Peru after the removal of the former President Pedro Castillo can be analyzed by the concept of "distribution of the sensible". Especially the voices of protesters from rural areas and indigenous communities, which were left on the margins of central politics, have become more visible (Human Rights Watch, 2024; Cultural Survival, 2023; Dejusticia, 2025).

The social uprisings that started in Türkiye (on 19 March 2025) after the arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu (the mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality) should not be understood as merely political demands of people, especially young people. Instead, these uprisings challenge the current existing "partage du sensible" by prompting young people (often labeled as a-political) to make themselves visible in the public sphere against the order that pushes them to silence. During protests, ordinary people literally took the rally areas and seized the microphone, making their voices heard. A farmer came forward and expressed himself directly

at one of the gatherings (Eskiköy, 2025). These new forms of expression are crucial to altering the "partage du sensible." Moreover, a verification [of equality] becomes "social," causing equality to have a real social effect, only when it mobilizes an obligation to hear (Rancière, 2004a, 2004b). A social movement "is only political if it is 'spontaneous' in the strict sense of the word" (Rancière, 2011a, 2011b, p. 250). Authors define "politics" as the redrawing of the boundaries of the common world and the social uprisings representing these "political" moments (Rancière et al., 2001).

Rancière argues that authentic political action, rather than merely demanding a right, proceeds from the presupposition of one's existing equality, thereby disrupting the prevailing unequal distribution of the sensible (i.e., police order), making the invisible consequently constituting a new political subject (May, 2008, pp. 50–51). These uprisings stem not merely from political demands, but also from new visual and auditory expressions that shake the existing emotional regimes. Social movements can be a way to create such an obligation to hear. Research on electoral and closed autocracies reveals that protests may continue to pose challenges to authoritarian rule and facilitate democratic recovery even after democratic breakdown (Della Porta, 2014).

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, earning democratic gains was a process, and maintaining them is another process. Moreover, different countries have different stories in terms of democratic consolidation. Therefore, coping with populist authoritarian tendencies will not occur in the same line in all societies. But there are dynamics that are common in populist authoritarian regimes: the realm of actions is being restricted, civil and political freedoms are under pressure, and even the very core human rights that are protected under democratic regimes are in danger. These common points oblige people to protect their democratic rights by themselves and become visible again in society by social reactions. These new modes of sensing are important because they complicate the effect of populist authoritarian regimes on the transformation of democracies. This dynamic may constitute an obstacle to democracies turning completely authoritarian and may also indicate a long and difficult process of struggle. Human action, a core component of human rights, necessitates a liberal civil and political sphere for plurality to thrive. Consequently, democratic legitimacy is unsustainable without truly free elections and independent judicial institutions, as the essence of democracy dissolves within structured unequal order. Individuals seek new manifestations of "the distribution of the sensible" to safeguard their own realm of action. While such reconfigurations of "the distribution of the sensible" do not directly dismantle the authoritarian core of a regime, these demands fundamentally challenge the ostensibly legal yet intrinsically right-violating structures that underpin managed democracy.

This study has demonstrated, through a Rancièran perspective, that populist authoritarian regimes are not merely political systems but rather holistic political strategies that profoundly shape the lives and modes of action of the population. Despite the restrictive motives of these regimes upon civil and political realms and even jeopardizing fundamental human rights, this research revealed the emergence of

unexpected moments of resistance and new forms of the "distribution of the sensible". The uprisings examined illustrate how these movements disrupt the existing police order, creating moments of "subjectification" where the excluded, defined by Ranciere as the "part of no part", actively affirm their own equality. These novel "modes of sensing" are not merely political demands; they tangibly underscore the emancipatory potential of Ranciere's philosophy and the importance of reconceptualizing the model of democratic governance in the face of contemporary intellectual sterility. Consequently, the sustenance of democratic legitimacy is not solely dependent on institutional safeguards but is also intimately linked to the continuous efforts of the excluded to reconfigure the aesthetic and sensible dimensions of politics.

Data availability statement

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

Author contributions

ÇG: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft.

Funding

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Generative AI statement

The author declares that Gen AI was used in the creation of this manuscript. Gen AI was used for linguistic and grammatical refinement of manuscript, improving clarity and conciseness of the academic prose, and ensuring consistent adherence to Harvard referencing style for in-text citations and the final bibliography.

Publisher's note

References

Amnesty International. (2024) *Protect the protest: human rights at risk in Europe as police clamp down on protests*. [report, POL 10/7200/2024]. Available online at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/7200/2024/en/ (Accessed June 5, 2025).

Arendt, H. (2018). The human condition. *2nd* Edn. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ben-Porat, G., Filc, D., Ozturk, A. E., and Ozzano, L. (2021). Populism, religion and family values policies in Israel, Italy and Turkey. *Mediterr. Polit.* 26, 1–23. doi: 10.1080/13629395.2021.1901484

Bermeo, N. (2016). On democratic backsliding. *J. Democr.* 27, 5–19. doi: 10.1353/jod.2016.0012

Bernhard, L., and Kriesi, H. (2019). Populism in election times: a comparative analysis of 11 countries in Western Europe. *West Eur. Polit.* 42, 1188–1208. doi: 10.1080/01402382.2019.1596694

Brown, W. (2015). Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism' Stealth Revolution. New York: Zone Books.

Bozkurt, B. (2023). The impact of Turkey's recent amendments to the electoral laws on fundamental freedoms and electoral integrity. [policy brief, no:5]. Washington, D.C: Freedom House, 3–5. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9558.2018.851006.x

Bozoki, A. (2018). Populism in Hungary: from 1989 to 2018. *Soc. Res. Int. Q.* 85, 743–772.

Cohen, J. L., and Arato, A. (2021). Populism and civil society: The challenge to constitutional democracy. New York: Oxford University Press.

Creswell, J. W., and Creswell, J. D. (2018). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. *5th* Edn. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Cultural Survival. (2023) 'Indigenous peoples' protests in Perú are a way to claim their existence and struggles', cultural survival, 3 March. Available online at: https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/indigenous-peoples-protests-peru-are-way-claim-their-existence-and-struggles (Accessed June 7, 2025).

Dejusticia. (2025) 'The right to protest under threat: the situation in Peru', Dejusticia, 6 March. Available online at: https://www.dejusticia.org/en/the-right-to-protest-under-threat-the-situation-in-peru/ (Accessed June 7, 2025).

Della Porta, D. (2014). Mobilizing for democracy. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Diamond, L. (2002). Elections without democracy: thinking about hybrid regimes. *J. Democr.* 13, 21–35. doi: 10.1353/jod.2002.0025

Diamond, L., and Lipset, S. M. (Eds.) (1988-1989). Democracy in developing countries. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Diamond, L., Plattner, M. F., and Walker, C. (Eds.) (2016). Authoritarianism goes global: The challenge to democracy. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Drinóczi, T., and Bień-Kacała, A. (Eds.) (2020). Rule of law, common values, and illiberal constitutionalism: Poland and Hungary within the European Union (comparative constitutional change). London: Routledge.

Dumanoglu, D. (2022) 'Son Dakika: Adalet Bakanı Bekir Bozdağ A Haber'de', A Haber, 11 April. Available online at: https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2022/04/11/son-dakika-adalet-bakani-bekir-bozdag-a-haberde (Accessed May 5, 2025).

Erdoğan, R. T. (2020). 'President Erdoğan's speech on international women's day', 8 March. Presidency of the Republic of Turkey Directorate of Communications. Available online at: https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/english/haberler/detay/president-erdogans-message-on-march-8-international-womens-day (Accessed June 1, 2025).

Erdoğan, R .T. (2023a) '15 Mayıs'a 'Türkiye Yüzyılı' muştusuyla 'merhaba' diyeceğiz', 7 May. Presidency's Directorate of Communications. Available online at: https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-15-mayisa-turkiye-yuzyili-mustusuyla-merhaba-diyecegiz (Accessed June 5, 2025).

Erdoğan, R. T. (2023b) 'Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'dan seçim sonuçlarına itiraz eden muhalefete tepki: Halkın iradesine saygı duyun', Anadolu Ajansı, 1 June. Available online at: https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/secimler/cumhurbaskani-erdogandan-secim-sonuclarina-itiraz-eden-muhalefete-tepki-halkin-iradesine-saygi-duyun/2912443 (Accessed June 5, 2025).

Erkmen, T. D. (2025). "Traitors, terrorists, & *Çapulcus*: protests and the limits of democratic politics in Turkey's first century and beyond" in The republic of Turkey and its unresolved issues. eds. P. Dinç and O. S. Hünler (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan).

Esen, B. (2025). Judicial transformation in a competitive authoritarian regime: evidence from the Turkish case. *Law Policy* 47:e12250. doi: 10.1111/lapo.12250

Esen, B., and Gumuscu, S. (2023). How Erdogan's populism won again. *J. Democr.* 34, 21–32. doi: 10.1353/jod.2023.a900430

Eskiköy, G. (2025). 'CHP mitinginde çiftçi isyan etti: Mazot yok, traktör damda yatıyor'. *Son Mühür, 3 May*. Available at: https://www.sonmuhur.com/chp-mitinginde-ciftci-isyan-etti-mazot-yok-traktor-damda-yatiyor (Accessed: 7 May 2025).

European Court of Human Rights. (2023) 'Use of facial-recognition technology breached rights of Moscow underground protestor' [Press Release/Factsheet, ECHR 206 (2023)], 4 July. Available online at: https://www.echr.coe.int/w/judgment-concerning-the-russian-federation-6 (Accessed June 5, 2025).

European Parliament. (2024) Facial recognition technology in political protests. [Briefing, EXPO_IDA(2024)754450_EN]. Available online at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2024/754450/EXPO_IDA(2024)754450_EN.pdf (Accessed June 5, 2025).

Foa, R. S., and Mounk, Y. (2016). The danger of deconsolidation. *J. Democr.* 27, 5–17. doi: 10.1353/jod.2016.0049

Foucault, M. (1977). Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison. New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. (1978). The history of sexuality, vol. 1, an introduction, Translated by R. Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. (2008). The birth of biopolitics: lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979. Translated by G. Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fudge, M., and Leith, P. (2021). Rethinking participation in commons governance: political representation and participation. *Soc. Nat. Resour.* 34, 1038–1055. doi: 10.1080/08941920.2021.1931592

Geertz, C. (1973). The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays. New York: Basic Books.

Göztepe, E.ve Yılmaz A. (2020). *A'dan Z'ye Türk Yargı Reformu. İstanbul: Daha İyi Yargı Derneği*.

Guriev, S., and Treisman, D. (2022). Spin dictators: The changing face of tyranny in the 21st century. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gwiazda, A. (2020). Right-wing populism and feminist politics: the case of law and justice in Poland. *Int. Polit. Rev.* 41, 1–16.

Habermas, J. (1992). The structural transformation of the public sphere. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Haeck, P., and Körömi, C. (2025) 'Hungary on EU watchlist over surveillance at pride', Politico.eu, 25 April. Available online at: https://www.politico.eu/article/hungary-eu-watchlist-facial-recognition-surveillance-lgbtq-pride/ (Accessed June 5, 2025).

Haggard, S., and Kaufman, R. (2021). The anatomy of democratic backsliding. *J. Democr.* 32, 27–41. doi: 10.1353/jod.2021.0050

Halmai, G. (2024). Rule of law backsliding and memory politics in Hungary. *Eur. Const. Law Rev.* 20, 129–148. doi: 10.1017/s1574019624000109

Herman, E. S., and Chomsky, N. (1988). Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media. New York: Pantheon Books.

Heydarian, R. J. (2019). The rise of Duterte: A populist revolt against elite democracy. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hochstetler, K., and Viola, E. (2020). Brazil's environmental politics: From Lula to Bolsonaro and beyond. London: Routledge.

Human Rights Watch. (2022) 'Iran: investigate woman's death in morality police custody' [News Release], 22 September. Available online at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/09/16/woman-dies-custody-irans-morality-police (Accessed May 18, 2025).

Human Rights Watch. (2024) World report 2024: Peru. Available online at: https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/peru (Accessed June 7, 2025).

Hunter, W. (2023). The 2022 Brazilian election: a test of democratic resilience. *J. Democr.* 34, 118–132. doi: 10.1353/jod.2023.0006

Huq, A. Z., and Ginsburg, T. (2018). How to save a constitutional democracy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jaffrelot, C. (2021). Modi's India: Hindu nationalism and the rise of ethnic democracy. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kelemen, R. D. (2019). Europe's other democratic problem: Hungary under Orban. *J. Democr.* 30, 23–37. doi: 10.1353/jod.2019.0002

Kováts, E., and Põim, M. (2015) 'The rainbow strikes back: anti-gender movements in central and Eastern Europe', openDemocracy, 2 December. Available online at: https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/populism/rainbow-strikes-back-anti-gender-movements-central-eastern-europ/ (Accessed June 5, 2025).

Laclau, E. (2005). On populist reason. London: Verso.

Levitsky, S., and Ziblatt, D. (2018). How democracies die. New York: Crown.

Linz, J. J. (1975). "Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes" in Handbook of political science, vol. 3. eds. F. I. Greenstein and N. W. Polsby (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley), 175–411.

Luisetti, F. (2011). Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben from biopolitics to political romanticism. *J. Philos. Life* 1:ss.49-58. doi: 10.22271/jofl.2011.v1.i1.a6

May, T. (2008). The political philosophy of Jacques Rancière. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Means, A. J. (2021). 'Foucault, biopolitics, and the critique of state reason'. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 54:1968–1969. doi: 10.1080/00131857.2021.1871895

Ministry of Family and Social Services. (2025) 'Aile Yılı Hakkında' [About the Family Year]. Available online at: https://www.aileyili.gov.tr/kategoriler/aile-yili-hakkinda/ (Accessed June 5, 2025).

Morris, C. (1938). *Foundations of the Theory of Signs*. University of Chicago Press.

Mounk, Y. (2018). The people vs democracy: Why our freedom is in danger and how to save it. London: Harvard University Press.

Mudde, C., and Kaltwasser, C. R. (2017). Populism: A very short introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Müller, J.-W. (2016). What is populism? Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Ozola, Z. (2023). Freedom as a mode of Thought: Hannah Arendt. *Athens Journal of Philosophy*, 2, 221–232.

Öniş, Z. (2019). Turkey's new presidential regime: fragility, resilience, reversibility. *Turk. Stud.* 20, 1–23.

Panagia, D. (2010). "'Partage du sensible' (The distribution of the sensible)" in Jacques Ranciere: Key concepts. ed. J.-P. Deranty (Durham: Acumen Publishing), 94–95.

Pirro, A. L. P. (2022). The populist radical right in Europe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Power, T. J., and Jenne, N. (2020). Populist seduction in Latin America. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Presidency of Religious Affairs (2021). Family catechism [online]. Ankara: Presidency of Religious Affairs Publications.

Rancière, J. (1995). La Mésentente: Politique et philosophie. Paris: Galilée.

Rancière, J. (2004a). Malaise dans l'esthétique. Paris: Galilée.

Rancière, J. (2004b). Siyasal'ın Kıyısında (R. Akçalı, Çev.). İstanbul: Metis Yayınları.

Rancière, J. (2004c). The politics of aesthetics: The distribution of the sensible. Translated by G. Rockhill. London: Continuum.

Rancière, J. (2009). A few remarks on the method of Jacques Rancière. *Parallax* 15, 114–123. doi: 10.1080/13534640902982983

Rancière, J. (2010). Ten theses on politics. (C.W.E. Hewett, Trans. New York: Continuum.

Rancière, J. (2011a). "The thinking of Dissensus: politics and aesthetics" in Reading Ranciere. eds. P. Bowman and R. Stamp (New York: Continuum), 3–23.

Rancière, J. (2011b). "Against an ebbing tide: an interview with Jacques Ranciere" in Reading Ranciere. eds. P. Bowman and R. Stamp (London: Continuum), 238–251.

Rancière, J., Panagia, D., and Bowlby, R. (2001). Ten theses on politics. *Theory Event* 5, 1–4. doi: 10.1353/tae.2001.0028

Rohlfing, R. H., and Wind, M. (2022). Death by a thousand cuts: measuring autocratic legalism in the European Union's rule of law conundrum. *Democratization* 30, 551–568. doi: 10.1080/13510347.2022.2149739

Ruby, C. (2007). Le sens de l'action dans la philosophie de Jacques Rancière. *Le Philosophoire* 29, 165–177.

Runciman, D. (2018). How democracy ends. New York: Basic Books.

Rupnik, J. (2018). Hungary: the triumph of captive democracy. *J. Democr.* 29, 20–33.

Sadurski, W. (2019). Poland's constitutional breakdown. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sartori, G. (Ed.) (1984) *Social science concepts: A systematic analysis*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Scheppele, K. L. (2018). Autocratic Legalism. *Univ. Chic. Law Rev.* 85, 545–584.

Scheppele, K. L. (2019). On being the subject of the rule of law. *Hague J. Rule Law* 11, 465–471. doi: 10.1007/s40803-019-00118-x

Schmitt, C. (1922). Political theology: Four chapters on the concept of sovereignty. Translated by G. Schwab. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schmitt, C. (1996) *The Concept of the Political*. Chicago: University of Cgicago Press.

Schmitt, C. (1932). The concept of the political: expanded edition. Translated by G. Schwab. Foreword by T.B. Strong and L. Strauss. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schmitt, C. (2014) Dictatorship. Translated by S. W. Holmes and J. M. I. E. Seubert. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Shear, M. D., and Kaplan, T. (2020) 'Trump's final days of campaigning center on fear and division', the New York Times, 22 October. Available online at: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/05/us/politics/trump-presidency-election-loss.html (Accessed May 4, 2025).

Snyder, T. (2017). On tyranny: Twenty lessons from the twentieth century. New York: Tim Duggan Books.

Snyder, T. (2018). The road to unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America. New York: Tim Duggan Books.

Sokhi-Bulley, B. (2014) 'Governmentality: notes on the thought of Michel Foucault', critical legal thinking, 2 December. Available online at: https://criticallegalthinking.com/2014/12/02/governmentality-notes-thought-michel-foucault/ (Accessed June 5, 2025).

Stake, R. E. (1995). The art of case study research: SAGE Publications.

Stanley, J. (2018). How fascism works: The politics of us and them. New York: Random House.

T24. (2024) 'Breaking news: minister Göktaş's controversial remarks: those who don't have children can't be a family', T24, 19 May. Available online at: https://t24.com.tr/haber/bakan-goktas-tan-tepki-ceken-sozler-cocuklari-olmayanlar-aile-olamazlar (Accessed June 5, 2025).

Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (2020). Populism in Power 2020. London: Tony Blair Institute for Global Change.

Tushnet, M. V. (2018). Taking back the constitution: activist judges and the next seven amendments. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Urbinati, N. (2019) *Me the people: How populism transforms democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Van Severen, R., Roets, A., and Meuleman, B. (2024). Democratic and authoritarian government preferences in times of crisis. *West Eur. Polit.* 47, 175–199. doi: 10.1080/01402382.2022.2131952

Varghese, A., and Chennattuserry, J. C. (2023). "Populism and family values" in Encyclopedia of new populism and responses in the 21st century. eds. J. C. Chennattuserry, M. Deshpande and P. Hong (Singapore: Springer), 608–612.

Varol, O. O. (2014) Stealth authoritarianism. Lewis & Clark law School Legal Studies Research Paper no. 2014-12. Available online at: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2428965 (Accessed May 23, 2025).

V-Dem Institute. (2024) Democracy report 2024: Defiance in the face of Autocratization. University of Gothenburg. Available online at: https://www.v-dem.net/documents/29/V-dem_democracyreport2023_lowres.pdf (Accessed May 25, 2025).

Villadsen, K., and Wahlberg, A. (2015). The government of life: managing populations, health and scarcity. *Econ. Soc.* 44, 1–17. doi: 10.1080/03085147.2014.983831

Volinz, L. (2025). Authoritarian surveillance: an introduction. *Surveillance Soc.* 23, 112–116. doi: 10.24908/ss.v23i1.18975

Waldner, D., and Lust, E. (2018). Unwelcome change: coming to terms with democratic backsliding. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 21, 93–113. doi: 10.1146/annurev-polisci-050517-114628

Wolin, S. S. (2004). Managed democracy: The new authoritarianism in America. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Wolin, S. S. (2017). Democracy incorporated: Managed democracy and the specter of inverted totalitarianism. *Revised* Edn. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Yanow, D. (2000). *Conducting Interpretive Policy Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Yılmaz, D. (2022) 'Türkiye'deki seçim kanunda yapılan değişikliklerin etkisi'. Available online at: https://tr.boell.org/tr/2022/09/13/turkiyede-secim-kanunlarinda-yapilan-degisikliklerin-etkileri (accessed May 17 2025).