

# Countering anti-democratic policies in democracies: The importance of value-oriented citizenship

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## Abstract

Living in democratic systems may lead the citizens of those countries to be less vigilant of the policies enforced by their governments, with the risk of endorsing anti-democratic measures. Rights violations can indeed occur even in a democratic country. The aim of the present research is to understand whether people tend to be more accepting of repressive police actions when they occur in a country considered democratic than when they are perpetrated in a country considered authoritarian. Results on 363 Italian participants showed that participants were less ready to condemn a violent police intervention when it occurred in a country perceived to be democratic than in one considered to be less so. Moreover, as hypothesized, this paradox is supported more by people with a low value orientation, while people with a high value orientation do not accept intervention in either context. The implication of this research was to show the importance of considering theories that focus on the legitimacy of the authority's demands. Specifically, the political orientation theory emphasizes the importance of monitoring the policies issued even by established democracies to protect from their possible degeneration into autocracies.

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## INTRODUCTION

Diaz school raid in Genoa after 3 days of protests, more than three hundred police raided a school where 93 journalists and activists were being allowed to spend the night. All of them were arrested, 82 people were injured, and 63 ended up in the hospital, three of them in a critical condition and one in a coma. This episode did not occur, contrary to expectations, in Pinochet's Chile or under the iron fist of other fascist regimes. It took place in the democratic Italy of the 2000s. More than 20 years have now passed since what is remembered each year as the worst attack suffered by a Western democracy, namely the September 11 attacks in the United States. Less remembered is another great attack on democracy, perpetrated just a few months earlier (on July 21, 2001) during the 27th G8 meeting at the "Armando Diaz" school in Genoa (Italy) by the government of a country at the expense of its own citizens (Noury, 2012). A scenario that was described by the deputy police commissioner Michelangelo Fournier as a "Mexican butchery assault" and is today recognized as one of the most serious violations of human rights in a democratic country since World War II (Palazzotto, 2020).

While the trials into those events went on for years, many ending in acquittals due to the inability to identify the perpetrators or the statute of limitations of the crimes, the episode has been relegated to the status of being a dark page of Italy's second republic (Noury, 2012). As a matter of fact, this episode did not raise deep reflections on the issue that rights violations can occur even in a democratic country and how important it is for the citizens of a country to be active in countering such episodes to protect the democratic system itself (Nemeth, 2003; Passini & Morselli, 2013). Indeed, the risk is that in a democratic system, people take it for granted that the government's actions and proposals are democratic, failing to notice the policies that counter the values of democracy per se (Cwalina & Falkowski, 2008). In line with various studies (Moghaddam, 2016; Passini, 2017b; Passini & Morselli, 2010, 2011), the aim of the present research is to understand whether people tend to be more accepting of repressive police actions when they occur in a country considered democratic than when they are perpetrated in a country considered authoritarian. This issue has been called the democratic delusion paradox (Passini & Morselli, 2023), as it identifies the tendency to assume that a state that claims to be democratic will never take anti-democratic measures. That is, that people tend to take it for granted that a democratic country always acts with democratic policies and that rights violations occur only in overtly authoritarian countries. Indeed, as shown by the political orientation theory of Kelman and Hamilton (1989), citizens tend to just focus on the legitimacy of authority (in terms of how democratic it is perceived), without considering the legitimacy of the authority's actions and policies (whether they effectively support democratic values or not). In line with this theory, it is assumed that not all people should fall into such a paradox. Those citizens who base their orientation to authority on values should avoid falling into the democratic delusion paradox because they base their relationship with the institutions on constant and critical monitoring of each and every state action and demands.

In the following paragraph, the studies on the democratic delusion paradox will be outlined. After that, the political orientation theory will be briefly presented.

### The democratic delusion paradox

Various studies (Cwalina & Falkowski, 2008; Moghaddam, 2016, 2018; Passini & Morselli, 2010, 2013), have suggested that living in democratic systems may lead their citizens to be less vigilant

to the policies enforced by their government, with the risk of endorsing anti-democratic policies, through silence and indifference (Bauman, 1989; Passini, 2017b, 2017c). Passini and Morselli (2010, 2011) have shown, for example, that people were more willing to endorse an anti-democratic policy (specifically, the pre-emptive arrest of suspected terrorists) if it was demanded by the President of the United States John Fitzgerald Kennedy or occurred in France than if it was demanded by Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu or occurred in Iran. More recently, Passini and Morselli (2023) have shown that people are more accepting of the use of controversial measures against demonstrators (specifically, the use of water cannons) if these are implemented by the Swedish rather than the Russian police. All of this research emphasizes how trust in the democratic system, if it is not accompanied by a critical and participatory evaluation of the policies enforced by the government from time to time, can result in undemocratic policies being passed, with the risk of democracy turning into an autocracy (Moghaddam, 2012). Thus, while individual freedoms and privileges can sometimes be suspended<sup>1</sup> in the case of a collective threat (as the recent COVID-19 pandemic health crisis has demonstrated), the democratic delusion paradox refers to a violation of fundamental human rights, which cannot be subordinated to collective interests, as indicated in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (United Nation General Assembly, 1948). As Moghaddam (2013) pointed out, dictatorial systems mostly arise from a degeneration of a democratic system that no longer pursues democratic values. This is why it becomes important for citizens to have a more participatory and critical orientation to authority, which is able to discern when even democratically elected governments are not pursuing the values underlying democracy itself (e.g., the protection of fundamental human rights). In this sense, while the literature has mainly focused on political trust (e.g. Freitag & Ackermann, 2015; Jäckle et al., 2022) or authoritarianism (e.g. Cohrs et al., 2005; Mallinas et al., 2020) as a variable explaining why people obey laws and accept authority's demands, it would be useful to consider Kelman and Hamilton's (1989) theory of political orientations as a theory that can distinguish a more participatory approach to the policies of the system in which one lives.

The political orientation theory bases its foundation on the consideration of the existence of two legitimacies: the legitimacy of the authority and the legitimacy of the authority's demands. While classical studies of political trust focus on the former to analyze the reasons why people abide by laws and rules (see Tyler, 2006, 2021), according to Kelman and Hamilton (1989) it is far more important to assess the latter, as only in this way will people be able to understand when an authority professing to be democratic is not promoting democratic values. Some recent historical examples may refer to the Patriot Act passed by the United States in the aftermath of 9/11. This law was criticized because it restricted citizens' privacy and freedom (see Fitzpatrick, 2003; Grayling, 2010), such as the authorization of indefinite detention without trial of alleged terrorists. Or the laws that have temporally restricted the right to demonstrate and gave police extra powers of detention and arrest in France following the Bataclan attack on November 13, 2015. The question then is to understand which citizens are able to recognize and oppose undemocratic policies (e.g., those impinging on fundamental human rights) implemented by their government and thus not fall into the aforementioned democratic delusion paradox.

According to Kelman and Hamilton (1989), there exist three orientations to authority, specifically to rules, roles, and values, which identify three different ways of conceiving expectations

<sup>1</sup> As declared by United Nations General Assembly (1948, p. 4), individual freedom is always limited and subordinate to respecting the rights and lives of others: "In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society."

about citizens' and authorities' rights and duties, and the motivations that influence people to support or protest against the political system in which they live. Specifically, rule orientation identifies a predisposition to relate to authority by giving importance to citizens' safety and the protection of their interests. In this sense, citizens primarily based on this orientation support authorities that promote such policies and protest if they feel that authority's decisions endanger them instead (e.g., a protest against the large influx of immigrants, perceived as a threat to the social order). Role orientation refers to a relationship with authority based on one's role in society and one's social status. Citizens with this orientation support the authorities when they feel they uphold the integrity of their roles and status and protest when they feel their position in society is endangered (e.g., a protest by taxi drivers against the arrival of competitors, perceived as a threat to their social status). Finally, value orientation describes a tendency to relate to authorities based on a monitoring that policies enacted by them are supportive of values of fairness and justice. Thus, this orientation identifies citizens who tend to support the authorities when they uphold such society's fundamental values, and oppose them if they violate them (e.g., a protest against the passing of a law in favor of the so-called traditional family, perceived as a threat to people's equal rights). According to Kelman and Hamilton (1989), although these three orientations are not exclusive in that they may coexist or alternate in the same individuals over time, they identify a systematic tendency of individuals to define themselves as certain types of citizens and to relate to the political system according to one of the three.

Moreover, in considering the two legitimacies of the authority and its demands, the three orientations would lead to different assessments. According to the two authors only the value orientation leads to an evaluation of the legitimacy of the authority's demands on a case-by-case basis, regardless of the perception of how legitimate the authority itself is. This is because value-oriented citizens see it as their specific duty to monitor and actively participate in the evaluation of policies issued by institutions.

## HYPOTHESES

The aim of the present research was to examine whether people tend to be more accepting of repressive police actions when they occur in a country deemed to be democratic compared to a country perceived to be less democratic (Hypothesis 1). Moreover, it is hypothesized that people with a low value orientation will fall into this democratic delusion paradox, whereas people with a high value orientation will not support these actions in either context (Hypothesis 2). The effect of value orientation will be controlled for variables analyzing ideological beliefs, such as authoritarianism and political affiliation. As various research studies have shown (e.g. Cohrs et al., 2005; Passini & Villano, 2017), both of these variables influence the passive acceptance of an authority's demands, regardless of their legitimacy.

## METHODS

### Participants

The participants were contacted online, using an Internet questionnaire constructed using Limesurvey, a survey-generating tool (<http://www.limesurvey.org>). The participants were recruited by means of a snowballing procedure. Undergraduate students from the University of Bologna were asked to recruit adult individuals. Respondents were informed that their

participation was voluntary and that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. No fee was offered. The questionnaire was drafted in Italian. The subject's IP address was monitored in order to make sure no one re-entered the survey site. The data were collected between December 2021 and February 2022.

A total of 363 Italian citizens (63.6% women) responded by accessing the website and filling out the questionnaire.<sup>2</sup> They were all born in Italy (eleven subjects were removed because they were born abroad). Participant ages ranged from 18 to 75 years ( $M = 35.15$ ,  $SD = 14.08$ ). As regards their level of education, 6.9% declared they had completed middle school, 39.2% declared they had earned a high school diploma, 48.1% had a Bachelor's degree and 5.8% a Master's or Ph.D. qualification. Job-wise, 49% stated they were white collar workers, 17.9% university students, 16.8% student worker, 8.7% self-employed, 3.6% unemployed, and, finally, 3.9% retired.

## Procedure

Participants first responded to socio-demographic questions. Then they were asked to assess the level of democracy of eight countries. Afterwards, they read a make-believe news story as if it had appeared on the website of ANSA (Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata), the leading multimedia news agency in Italy (see Appendix). Paraphrasing the text of the description of the Diaz school raid in Genoa, the news report stated that during a demonstration in which several people engaged in violent behavior, the police broke into a building where protesters were gathered and arrested them, causing numerous injuries among them. Depending on the (random) condition, the city where the news took place was Amsterdam ( $n = 73$ , 20.1%), Oslo ( $n = 103$ , 28.4%), Cairo ( $n = 92$ , 25.3%), or Teheran ( $n = 95$ , 26.2%), the first two being cities in countries usually considered democratic, and the last two less so.<sup>3</sup> It was decided to choose cities other than the places of birth of the participants (all Italians by birth) so as not to have participants evaluate a scenario in which their in-group was involved. The participants then responded to the political orientation scale and to an authoritarianism scale.

## Measures

### Demographics and political affiliation

Participants indicated their age, sex, place of birth, level of education and job. Moreover, they indicated their political affiliation (from 1 = *extreme left* to 10 = *extreme right*).

### Level of democracy

Participants were asked to assess the level of democracy of eight countries (namely Egypt, France, Hungary, Iran, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Russia) on a seven-point scale (ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*).

<sup>2</sup> This work was not preregistered. Data are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

<sup>3</sup> In accordance with freedomhouse.org, Netherlands and Norway are considered free with a score of 97 and 100 out of 100, respectively, while Egypt and Iran not free with a score of 18 and 14, respectively.

## Acceptance of the police intervention

After reading the make-believe news story regarding the police intervention, participants were asked on a seven-point scale (ranging from 1 = not at all to 7 = very much) “To what extent do you agree with the police intervention?”

## Political orientation scale

A 12-item version of the political orientation scale (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989) was used. The scale measures the three orientations each with four items on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*): rule (e.g. “All one should expect from the government is that all citizens are able to earn a living and feel safe,”  $\alpha = .51$ ); role (e.g. “The most valuable contribution each citizen can make is to actively support government policies,”  $\alpha = .78$ ); and value orientation (e.g. “The most valuable contribution each citizen can make is to maintain an active approach and always question government policies,”  $\alpha = .60$ ). This structure was upheld by a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) computed with Mplus 7.1 (Muthen & Muthen, 2012). The three-factor model fitted the data well:  $\chi^2(41) = 97.92$ ,  $CFI = .94$ ,  $TLI = .92$ ,  $RMSEA = .05$ ,  $SRMR = .05$  (see Supplemental Materials—Section 1 for all items and CFA results).

## Authoritarianism

This construct was measured by an Italian 12-item scale based on Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA, Altemeyer, 1996). The scale was constructed and validated by Passini (2017a). The subjects responded to each item on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). A sample item is “our country will be great if we do what the authorities tell us to do” (see Supplemental Materials—Section 2 for all items). A total score was computed ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

## RESULTS

As concerns the level of democracy attributed to the countries of the condition, participants attributed high scores to both Netherlands ( $M = 5.64$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ) and Norway ( $M = 5.93$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ) and low scores to both Egypt ( $M = 2.19$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ) and Iran ( $M = 1.70$ ,  $SD = .91$ ). The other countries obtained the following scores: France ( $M = 5.40$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ), Hungary ( $M = 3.40$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ), Italy ( $M = 4.94$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ), and Russia ( $M = 2.36$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ). Confirming the levels indicated by freedomhouse.org (see Note 2), participants thus recognized two different levels of democracy of the nations considered in the news story. The variable Condition was thus recoded as democratic (Amsterdam and Oslo,  $n = 176$ , value = 1) and less democratic (Cairo and Teheran,  $n = 187$ , value = 0). In line with Hypothesis 1, the level of acceptance of the police intervention was higher in the democratic ( $M = 3.15$ ) than in the less democratic contexts ( $M = 2.61$ ):  $F_{1,363} = 11.06$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ .

Bivariate correlations (see Table 1) showed that acceptance of police intervention was positively correlated to rule and role orientations, authoritarianism, and political affiliation, while negatively correlated to value orientation. Age was not significantly related with acceptance.

**TABLE 1** Means, standard deviations and Pearson correlation coefficients.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Acceptance	2.87	1.56	–						
2. Condition	.48	.50	.17***	–					
4. Rule orientation	3.20	1.08	.32***	–.05	–				
5. Role orientation	2.58	1.13	.33***	.05	.50**	–			
6. Value orientation	5.36	1.04	–.31***	–.04	–.10*	–.07	–		
7. Authoritarianism	2.70	.98	.47***	–.05	.51***	.53***	–.35***	–	
8. Political affiliation	4.04	1.95	.39***	–.07	.33***	.32***	–.29***	.62***	–
9. Age	35.15	14.08	–.02	–.02	–.09	.13*	.10	.11*	.02

Note: All the variables extended from 1 to 7 except for condition (less democratic = 0, democratic = 1), political affiliation (from 1 to 10) and age (from 18 to 75).

\* $p < .05$ .

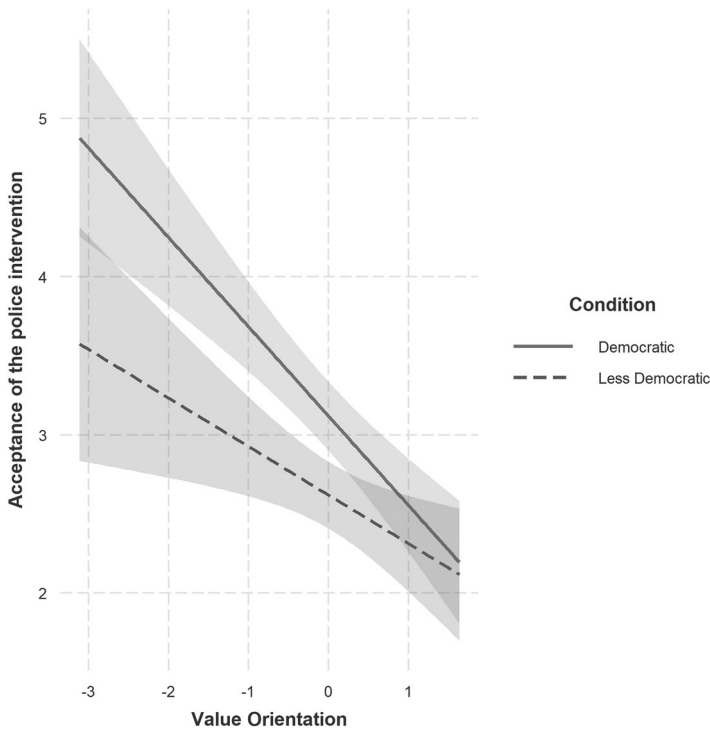
\*\* $p < .01$ .

\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

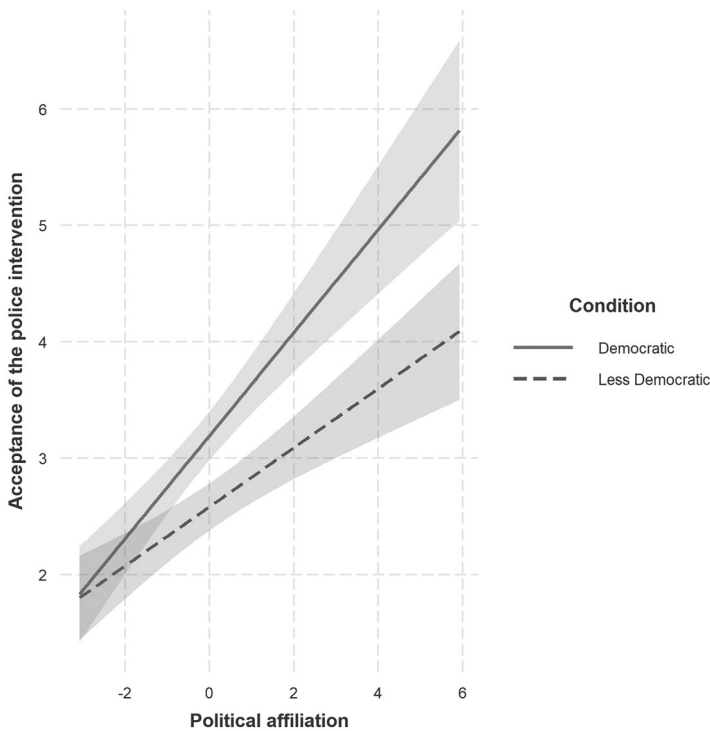
A regression analysis with condition, the political orientations, authoritarianism, political affiliation and their interactions with the condition as independent variables and acceptance as dependent variable was computed. Before performing the regression analysis, continuous variables were centered by subtracting the mean from each measured value. Moreover, a preliminary analysis was carried out to determine whether the variables under consideration satisfied the assumptions of the regression analysis. First, the distribution was examined in terms of normality (acceptable levels between  $-1.5$  and  $+1.5$ , see Tabachnick et al., 2013): the skewness values were in the range of  $-.41$  and  $.50$  and the kurtosis were between  $-.42$  and  $.07$ . Second, tolerance values were greater than  $.10$  (between  $.42$  and  $.66$ ) and variance inflation factor (VIF) values were lower than  $5$  (between  $1.52$  and  $2.39$ ), indicating no multicollinearity problem (Hair et al., 2011). Finally, the Durbin-Watson value was  $1.99$ . It was thus between values of  $1.5$  and  $2.5$  indicating no or minimal autocorrelation in the data (i.e., the correlation between residuals or errors in a regression model, Tabachnick et al., 2013).

As can be seen in Table 2, the condition was significant, that is, participants in the democratic condition accepted police intervention more than the ones in the less democratic condition. Moreover, authoritarianism was significant as well: that is the more participants were authoritarian, the more they accepted the police intervention in both conditions. As concern interactions, condition  $\times$  value orientation was significant (in line with Hypothesis 2) as well as condition  $\times$  political affiliation.

Simple slope analyses (see Figures 1 and 2) showed that participants with low scores on value orientation and high scores on political affiliation accepted the police intervention more in the democratic ( $M = 3.71$  and  $M = 4.04$ , respectively) than in the less democratic condition ( $M = 2.94$  and  $M = 3.07$ , simple slopes:  $t(359) = 3.50$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $t(352) = 4.53$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Instead, participants with high scores on value orientation and low scores on political affiliation showed no significant



**FIGURE 1** Levels of acceptance in the two conditions at high and low ends of value orientation. Shades represent 95% confidence intervals.



**FIGURE 2** Levels of acceptance in the two conditions at high and low ends of political affiliation. Shades represent 95% confidence intervals.



**TABLE 2** Linear regression on acceptance of the police intervention.

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>sr</i> <sup>2</sup>
Condition	.19***	.03
Rule orientation	.13	.00
Role orientation	−.01	.00
Value orientation	.15	.00
Authoritarianism	.57**	.01
Political affiliation	−.18	.00
Cond. × Rule orientation	−.01	.00
Cond. × Role orientation	.09	.00
Cond. × Value orientation	−.32*	.01
Cond. × Authoritarianism	−.38	.01
Cond. × Political affiliation	.36*	.01

Note: *sr*<sup>2</sup> = Squared semipartial correlation. Cond. = Condition. All the variables extended from 1 to 7 except for condition (less democratic = 0, democratic = 1) and political affiliation (from 1 to 10).

\**p* < .05.

\*\**p* < .01.

\*\*\**p* < .001.

difference in acceptance in evaluating the democratic ( $M = 2.54$  and  $M = 2.32$ , respectively) and the less democratic condition ( $M = 2.30$  and  $M = 2.08$ ):  $t(359) = 1.07$ ,  $p = .29$ ;  $t(352) = 1.13$ ,  $p = .26$ .

## DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to understand whether people living in a democratic system (e.g., Italy) might fall victim to the so-called democratic delusion paradox. That is, whether they evaluate the same action of repression carried out by the police differently, if this occurred in a country considered to be democratic or autocratic. The results in general confirm this tendency. That is, in evaluating the same action of repression—adapted from the controversial action that took place in Genoa, Italy in 2001—participants accepted it more when it took place in Norway or the Netherlands (two countries considered very free and democratic), rather than in Egypt and Iran (two countries usually depicted as not very free and democratic). This result appears as alarming for the destiny of democracies, as it shows how people tend to take it for granted that a democracy will always act in defense of democratic values. A risk, Moghaddam (2013, 2016) reminds us, that has historically led various democracies towards a road to dictatorship, without any real perception, and consequently opposition, from its citizens.

However, the consideration of the three different types of orientation to authority suggest that not all people fall into the democratic delusion paradox. People with a value orientation are those, as theorized by Kelman and Hamilton (1989), who are able to assess the legitimacy of policies on a case-by-case basis, without being deceived by the labels the authority attaches to itself and by people's shared perception of its level of democracy. This kind of more active participation in the political processes emphasizes that every democracy remains a democracy for as long as it always emanates and pursues the democratic values that make it so (Moghaddam, 2016). Instead, people with a low value orientation are those who may fall into the aforementioned paradox and,

although they are ready to condemn repressive actions in established dictatorships, they do not act in the same way when these take place in democratic countries.

Regarding the other two orientations, while no significant interactions with the condition appear, correlations suggest that participants who attach importance to rule or role orientations generally accept police actions and recognize their legitimacy regardless of the context in which they occur. As concern those with a rule orientation, this can supposedly be explained by the fact that this orientation is based on an expectation concerning the duty of the authority to defend citizens' security, at whatever cost. In the specific case analyzed, the presence of any extremist demonstrators must be repressed even if this may affect other peaceful demonstrators. In other words, as was the case with the Patriot Act and other measures in response to terrorism, the security of citizens is preserved by actually endangering the security of other citizens and certain rights (e.g. the right to a fair trial). As concerns role orientation, as specified by Kelman and Hamilton (1989), citizens who attach importance to this orientation in their relationship with authority tend to be characterized by blind trust and patriotism so that they tend to think, in this particular case, that the police acted for the best of the country in any case.

Finally, the interaction between value orientation and condition remains significant even when controlling for levels of authoritarianism and political affiliation. With regard to the former variable, as might be expected, there is a positive relationship between this and acceptance, so that authoritarian people accept reactionary action regardless of the context in which it occurs. After all, this is inherent in the concept of authoritarianism, by which it is correct to expect the authorities to use strong manners against those who (in their view) endanger national security (i.e. authoritarian aggression). As regards political affiliation, although as can be expected there is a positive correlation between this and acceptance, linear regression also showed an interaction with the condition. Specifically, people who are more politically oriented to the right are those who tend to fall into the democratic delusion paradox, whereas those who are more left-wing oriented tend to reject police action in both contexts (democratic and less democratic).

This study had some limitations which need to be addressed. Firstly, the results are limited with respect to the convenience sample and the socio-cultural context where the survey was administered (i.e. Italy). Further studies are needed to test, and eventually generalize, the democratic delusion paradox in other countries. Secondly, and related to the previous point, a limitation concerns the recruitment phase of participants. Indeed, from a statistical point of view, the snowball technique cannot be considered as representative of the Italian population, as it relies heavily on existing connections and referrals, potentially resulting in a lack of diversity in the sample. Nevertheless, the possibility of access to participants of very diverse ages and educational levels certainly made it possible to analyze the variables in question on participants with social backgrounds quite similar to the national one. Thirdly, other repressive police actions could be considered in future studies to see whether the differences in acceptance between democratic and less democratic contexts diminish or increase.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study emphasizes that in analyzing the relationship between individuals and institutions, it is relevant to consider, from a theoretical point of view, theories that focus on the legitimacy of the authority's demands and not only on that of the authority itself. Considering, for example, trust in institutions only gives us part of the explanation of the individual-authority dynamic. In terms of Kelman and Hamilton's (1989) orientations, such trust is akin to a role orientation, in which one trusts the authorities and this leads to supportive participation that is not necessarily critical. A value orientation, on the other hand, shows that for the individual-authority relationship to uphold democratic and egalitarian values, it is important that this trust should stem from constant monitoring of the actions promoted by the authority

itself. Kelman and Hamilton's theory is in this sense also useful for proposing applied interventions in schools, in which the fostering of trust in institutions goes via activities that make every citizen conscious of their duties (and not only their rights) in participating in and monitoring the actions of the state they live in (Passini, 2011). As Moghaddam (2018) pointed out, there has been a tradition of democracies that have dug their own graves. Therefore, citizens "should not be distracted by the labels political systems give themselves, because elites use ideologies to mask the true nature of continued inequalities and elite rule" (p. 7) and should "acquire in a timely manner the social and psychological skills needed to become democratic citizens" (p. 10).

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data available on request due to privacy/ethical restrictions.

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

**How to cite this article:** Passini, S. (2023). Countering anti-democratic policies in democracies: The importance of value-oriented citizenship. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/asap.12365>

## APPENDIX

The news presented to participants of the Oslo condition (the original text was in Italian).



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# Oslo, heavy-handed police raid in the night



Oslo (Norway), 18 July 2022 - Following two days of protests in which several people committed acts of violence, like smashing shop windows and setting cars on fire, yesterday the police broke into a building where protesters had gathered for the night. Several people were injured, some of seriously.

This night-time police raid further widened the rift dividing the government and the protesters. According to the Norwegian government, the vandals had hidden under the protective wing of the peace protesters. The Prime Minister also added - with regard to the raids - that he had received news from the Minister of the Interior 'making it clear that there was no distinction between the violent and the more peaceful protesters who favored and covered up their presence'. Regarding the protesters, on the other hand, the police acted using violent and repressive methods. A complete overhaul of the current training and deployment of police representatives specializing in crowd control has been called for.