

‘Left-Wing Authoritarianism’ as Situated Rhetoric: Delegitimizing the Political Left in Statements of Greek Right-Wing Politicians on ‘X’

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Journal of Social and Political Psychology, 2026, Vol. 14(1), 221–247, <https://doi.org/10.5964/jsp.20061>

Received: 2025-09-30 • **Accepted:** 2026-05-04 • **Published (VoR):** 2026-07-09

Handling Editor: Inari Sakki, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

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Supplementary Materials: Materials [see [Index of Supplementary Materials](#)]



Abstract

Soon after the publication of *The Authoritarian Personality*, scholars advanced the argument that authoritarianism may also be encountered in the political left, fueling a scientific debate that is far from resolved. Adopting a critical discursive social psychology perspective, we analyzed 3,500 X posts shared by Nea Dimokratia (ND) MPs (Greek political right) between 2018–2024, documenting how conservative politicians mobilize a Left-Wing Authoritarianism (LWA) interpretative repertoire. This repertoire is built around the representational modalities of ‘localized political exceptionalism’, ‘extended ideological contamination’, and ‘state authoritarianism in practice’ and informs three argumentative lines. In the first, the Greek political left is constructed as a local exception to the universal left-wing ideology by, allegedly, adopting practices that deviate from democratic values. The second draws upon a broader representation of LWA, associating the Greek political left with international political figures and practices constructed as prototypical left-wing authoritarian examples. The third equates the 2015–2019 left-wing-led SYRIZA-ANEL coalition government with authoritarian deep-state practices, constructing SYRIZA as a persistent threat to democratic norms, while positioning ND as the defender of institutional integrity. The flexible construction of the Greek political left as both aligning with and deviating from generic left-wing



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ideology works in the direction of delegitimizing the political left locally and globally. Through such constructions, the SYRIZA-ANEL government is portrayed as emblematic of authoritarianism, while ND is positioned as a sound anti-extremist democratic force. The paper discusses how LWA repertoire functions rhetorically and ideologically to police democratic boundaries, delegitimize political adversaries, and justify socio-exclusionary politics as depoliticized.

Keywords

Nea Dimokratia, SYRIZA-ANEL, social media, critical discursive social psychology, political discourse

Within the authoritarianism research paradigm, the concept has been treated as a personality type or a set of personal attitudes and beliefs. In this paper, we adopt a largely overlooked perspective, conceptualizing authoritarianism as a rhetorical phenomenon that is socially constructed and rhetorically malleable. Specifically, we examine the discursive construction of authoritarianism as a situated political practice, strategically mobilized by political actors. This approach emphasizes authoritarianism as a flexible representational resource, deployed by social and political actors to construct social and political realities, thereby enabling a multilevel analysis of its rhetorical and ideological functions within situated political conflicts (see, [Gray & Durrheim, 2013](#)). Specifically, our goal is to examine the rhetorical-ideological resources underpinning arguments concerning Left-Wing Authoritarianism (hereafter, LWA) and explore their direct and indirect rhetorical-ideological implications.

The Beginnings of the Authoritarian Personality

According to [Adorno et al.’s \(1950\) *The Authoritarian Personality*](#), fascism drew support by appealing to people’s subjective needs. Understanding its rise therefore requires examining how social conditions interacted with individual personality and consciousness ([Billig, 1982](#); [Samelson, 1986](#)). A central claim was that authoritarianism grows from deep-rooted emotional needs shaped largely by early childhood experiences. Under certain economic and political conditions, strict child rearing practices may produce personalities especially susceptible to authoritarian, anti-democratic ideologies and propaganda. This personality type is argued to include intolerance of ambiguity, submissiveness, an obsession with order, obedience to authority, mental rigidity, moralistic and hypocritical preoccupation with sex, hostility, cynicism, and a tendency to seek strong leaders, among others ([Billig, 1976, 1982](#); [Nilsson, 2024](#)).

Although the theory sought to explain the emotional and personality dynamics behind the rise of Nazism, the use of attitude scale technology and the shift from the World War II context to the Cold War era opened the way for the concept of left-wing authoritarianism to emerge ([Samelson, 1986](#)). Inner tensions¹ within the theory of *The Authoritarian Personality* contributed to this shift and led to attempts to dissociate inter-

nal cognitive structure from specific ideological content (Eysenck, 1954; Rokeach, 1960; see, Conway et al., 2023; Rokeach & Hanley, 1956; Van Hiel et al., 2006). The emphasis on cognitive rigidity and personality opened the way to dissociate authoritarianism from the specific social and political context that gave rise to Nazism and account for its ascendance by means of abstract psychological processes (Durrheim, 1997a; Figgou, 2002; Figgou & Condor, 2006). Altemeyer (1981, 1988), seeking to address the psychometric and conceptual problems identified in the psychological literature regarding Adorno et al.'s F-scale, developed the Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scale. He based this on the original F-scale while conceptualizing RWA as a personality type. In his work, Altemeyer argued and empirically demonstrated that this personality type consisted of three traits: authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism.

A departure from the model of authoritarianism as a personality type is marked by Duckitt's approach to RWA (Duckitt & Bizumic, 2013; Duckitt et al., 2010). Duckitt identified as the foundation of authoritarianism a more general value or motive of retaining collective security in the face of uncertainty and insecurity. This general motive or value is broken down into three more specific motives or values to maintain collective security and are expressed in social attitudinal terms: authoritarianism, conservatism and traditionalism. Authoritarianism refers to attitudinal beliefs regarding strict and harsh measures of social control *versus* leniency and softness when social rules are violated. Conservatism involves the attitudinal expression of beliefs regarding the need for social unity, cohesion and harmony. Traditionalism is expressed through attitudes that favor traditional values and morality. However, since Duckitt's approach treats RWA as a set of values expressed through social attitudes and methodologically relies on attitude scales, it is open to the extensive critique of the attitude construct and its measurement developed within the discourse analytic paradigm in social psychology (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, 1988).

A Discursive Turn to the Study of Left-Wing Authoritarianism

Currently, apart from contributions by Durrheim and colleagues (Durrheim, 1997a, 1997b; Gray & Durrheim, 2013), there is an empirical lacuna in the discursive social psychological study of authoritarianism. These studies focus explicitly on authoritarianism, thereby clearly delineating the scope for future discourse analytic work in this field. Important insights can also be gained from earlier social psychological studies that, while located within the discursive psychology tradition, do not focus exclusively on authoritarianism. One fundamental idea, which became the focal point of critique

1) These tensions relate to *The Authoritarian Personality's* proclaimed endeavor to integrate supposedly universal, stable cognitive processes and structures—particularly, rigid dichotomous/categorical thinking—with historically contingent and situationally dependent ideological components that manifest within particular socio-political contexts (Durrheim, 1997a).

from a discourse analytic perspective, is the supposed mental rigidity and intolerance of ambiguity thought to dominate the authoritarian individual’s thinking. Billig (1982), examining interview data from *The Authoritarian Personality*, argues that high-scoring individuals often demonstrate ambivalence in their talk. Talking about minority groups, they attempt to downgrade the possible racist connotations of their arguments. Billig, in his later work (1988; Billig et al., 1988), also argues that people may simultaneously adhere to both prejudiced and tolerant values, treating this ambivalence as more than simple lip service to the norm against prejudice. According to the *Ideological Dilemmas* thesis, societies provide their members with values and beliefs that, in certain contexts, may collide, leading people to demonstrate ambivalence in discourse (Billig et al., 1988). Thus, trying to operationalize and link cognitive styles with personality types or a universal cognitive functioning, while dissociating them from specific contents of beliefs, is a fallacy and cannot provide a solid basis for ideological critique (see also, Durrheim, 1997a).

This critique relates to another central point formulated within the discursive turn in social psychology. For discursive psychology, constructs such as ‘authoritarianism’ should not be treated as mental entities residing within individuals’ minds but rather as rhetorical resources and accomplishments enacted in talk-in-interaction and oriented towards specific interactional ends (Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996). Thus, rather than examining personality types linked to attitudes or values, authoritarianism can be seen as rhetorically occasioned. Consequently, a discursive psychological approach to authoritarianism directs analytic attention to the local context in which authoritarianism is instantiated for interactants, to the rhetorical techniques used to construct such accounts as factual, or more generally to how accountability is managed. While discursive psychology emphasizes a fine-grained analysis of talk or text in interaction, Critical Discursive Social Psychology (hereafter CDSP), most commonly associated with Wetherell’s (1998) work (see also, Edley, 2001), orients analytic attention also to the wider ideological implications that people’s constructions may effect.

Gray and Durrheim’s (2013) study is located within the CDSP strand of work. The authors argue that participants, when discussing topics related to authoritarianism, drew on a broader ideological dilemma juxtaposing societal order and individual freedom. As their analysis demonstrates, participants managed this tension by constructing diverse versions of collective or personal threat. Extant research in the Nordic context examines how politicians (Sakki & Pettersson, 2016) and lay people (Tormis et al., 2024) mobilize versions of populism to construct the unreasonableness of left-wing supporters and populist rhetoric as deviant and serving their own ends. Our study examines how right-wing politicians mobilize an interpretative repertoire of left-wing authoritarianism to render the left-wing SYRIZA party accountable for its politics, especially during its time in power, and delegitimize it in general, while positioning the ND party in contrast as embodying democratic and reasonable governance. At a macro-social level, we aim to

demonstrate the ideological consequences that these constructions have for the left-right divide of the political spectrum.

Political Context

Greece has experienced significant political changes over the past fifteen years. In the aftermath of the 2009 financial crisis and the imposition of strict austerity measures, a coalition government was formed in 2015 by SYRIZA², a left-wing party led by Alexis Tsipras, and ANEL, a small conservative right-wing party. This coalition governed for four years, a period marked by intense socio-economic challenges and international pressures. In 2019, Nea Dimokratia (hereafter ND), Greece's principal right-wing party, won the national elections and has since maintained a stable parliamentary majority.

Another important aspect of recent Greek politics is the rise in electoral prominence, in the early 2010s, of the neo-Nazi group Golden Dawn, which was eventually dismantled in the early 2020s, following the conviction of its leaders for forming a criminal organization. Since the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2009 and throughout the subsequent turbulent political period, a particular 'centrist' representational and argumentative trope has been widely circulated in mainstream Greek media, conflating the far-right with the far-left, and associating what are treated as the opposing extremes of the political spectrum with political violence (Vasilaki & Souvlis, 2021). This polarized political and media milieu provides a suitable context for examining how a notion of Left-Wing Authoritarianism may be constructed and mobilized in a platform for political debate such as X.

Method

Data Collection

Our analytic material consists of 3,500 posts³ shared by seventeen (17) accounts held by prominent ND politicians on the platform X between 2018 and 2024⁴. Our study aims to document constructions of Left-Wing Authoritarianism (LWA) in the argumentation of the currently ruling right-wing party. Account selection was informed by institutional

2) SYRIZA's name (full name: 'SYRIZA-PROODEFTIKI SYMMACHIA') constitutes an acronym that stands for 'Coalition of the Radical Left – Progressive Alliance'.

3) This is a data subset focused on ND for the purposes of the present paper. It is drawn from a broader data-corpus of 40 politicians' accounts across seven parties, proportionally selected based on the distribution of parliamentary seats among the political spectrum, justifying the overall inclusion of 17 accounts for the ruling party of ND (see ESM).

4) Since (July) 2019, ND serves as the ruling party, whereas during the preceding parliamentary term, including 2018, it held the position of the main opposition party.

rank and active presence on X, consistent posting during the study period (2018–2024), and included influential figures such as the Prime Minister and cabinet ministers. Posts were retrieved from each account via advanced keyword searches available on X, using three central thematic nodes corresponding to key issue areas or clusters of socio-political topics. The nodes originated from the broader research project, Authoritarianism in Lay, Political and Institutional Discourse (project acronym: ALPIS), of which the present study is part. They refer to recent events and developments in domestic and global politics which have sparked heated socio-political debates regarding their authoritarian implications, the alleged retreat of democratic institutions, and political repression. These nodes are: i) the COVID-19 pandemic governance; ii) the Russian invasion in Ukraine; and iii) developments in Greek governmental politics (e.g., a wiretapping scandal and the ruling party’s decision to institute a new police corps with the mandate to police university sites and campuses). The data collection strategy, including the original Greek keywords associated to each node and their English translations, is provided in the [Electronic Supplementary Materials \(ESM\)](#).

Data collection on X can be influenced by the platform’s technical and algorithmic affordances, which may limit the scope of retrieved posts (Álvarez-Peralta et al., 2023). Rather than aiming for an exhaustive corpus representative of Greek MPs’ discourse on X, we focus on documenting dominant arguments utilized by prominent ND politicians. While this approach limits generalizability, it enables the analysis of central rhetorical and ideological patterns, remaining consistent with the aims of Critical Discursive Social Psychology (CDSP).

Analytical Procedure

Analysis commenced with systematic readings of the 3,500 ND posts. In this stage, approximately 1,500 meaning units—clause(s), phrase(s) or sentence(s) that involve a specific idea, claim or position—were documented and coded (e.g., one post could yield multiple coded units like ‘dogmatic adherence’ and ‘international contrast’), with qualitative data analysis software (ATLAS.ti 24) employed to refine this process. Grouping meaning units by common thematic orientation, we identified three preliminary recurring categories (i.e., ‘*trust, danger, and the limits of freedom during the pandemic*’, ‘*national resilience and Greece as an exemplar of progress*’ and ‘*institutional reform and democratic legitimacy*’). This procedure provided the grounds for identifying a broader content-level pattern, namely ‘*relations between authoritarianism and the political left*’, involving shared tropes of authoritarianism, democracy, and political stagnation and deviance across the three themes/categories. This constituted the initial step that guided the detailed documentation of a broader *interpretative repertoire* (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Grounded in the aforementioned content-level pattern, we then documented a wider *interpretative repertoire* (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) in order to regiment the argumentative resources underpinning the documented thematic pattern and to analyze the potential

functions of LWA, whether explicitly invoked or rhetorically operative. We formed the LWA repertoire by abstracting the dominant tropes of the content pattern into culturally specific constellations of recurring proxy terms and concepts (e.g., dogmatic/doctrine, association with authoritarian figures/regimes, (un)democratic practices, and the deep-state), which constitute shared resources for LWA-related censures. The LWA repertoire operates as an overarching rhetorical-ideological setting-baseline that both facilitates and delimits the scope of potential argumentative patterns (see also, Gibson, 2009). Our goal was to systematically map MPs' diverse mobilization of argumentative patterns oriented towards (de-)legitimizing political positions and accounting for the casting of the political left as authoritarian, thereby providing an organizing framework for the subsequent stages of analysis.

The deployment of the interpretative repertoire analytic concept locates our approach within Critical Discursive Social Psychology (CDSP) (Wetherell, 1998). Substantiating further the synthesis of *micro*- and *macro*-analytic priorities that characterizes CDSP⁵, we utilize three additional analytic concepts from CDSP, and the discursive turn in social psychology more generally, in order to explore LWA constructions in the discourse of ND politicians: i) *argumentative lines* (Billig, 1991, pp. 43-45, 137), ii) (self-/other-) *positioning* (Wetherell, 1998), and iii) *accountability management* and *fact construction* (Edwards & Potter, 1992). With the combined use of these analytic concepts, we foreground the disentanglement of the dilemmatic, argumentative fabric that enables constructions of sociopolitical life and its events.

First, we traced central argumentative lines (Billig, 1991, pp. 43-45, 137), which encapsulate the rhetorical-ideological organization of MPs' ways of accounting, identifying recurring argumentative resources (e.g., cultural commonplaces, including dominant axioms and dilemmas) around which MPs structure their positions within the LWA repertoire. Argumentative lines were further examined through the rhetorical association or differentiation of 'the political left' and 'authoritarianism', as MPs justified their positions while preventing and/or undermining counter-arguments (Billig, 1991, pp. 120-121). Subsequently, we focused on how right-wing political actors position themselves and their adversaries. We treat positioning (Davies & Harré, 1990; Wetherell, 1998) as an analytic concept that synthesizes the *micro*-analytic priority of disentangling interactionally occasioned selves / identities (e.g., Potter, 1996) with the *macro*-analytic concern of locating these selves / identities within the wider ideological, political, and socio-cultural contexts within which they operate (e.g., Edley, 2001).

5) Our analysis shares its epistemological and methodological principles with Critical Discursive Psychology (CDP), eclectically combining micro- and macro-social analytical levels. Despite CDP constituting a frequently referred term, we opt for the term Critical Discursive Social Psychology (CDSP), as introduced by Wetherell (1998), and utilized by other scholars (e.g., Anderson & Gibson, 2020), explicitly situating our research objectives as inherently socio-psychological phenomena.

Finally, we analyzed MPs’ management of accountability and orientation to fact construction as central to the (de-)legitimization of political positions (Edwards & Potter, 1992), documenting discursive devices oriented towards representing political decisions as credible, authoritative, or impartial, and/or attributing or deflecting agency. By eclectically combining our analytic tools and concepts, we foreground the interplay between rhetorical/ideological action and complex political identity work, identifying LWA-related constructions situated within the online rhetorical context of X and the broader Greek socio-political context.

The analysis includes Greek-to-English translated posts, selected to reflect the diversity of documented argumentative lines. All analyzed data were publicly available posts shared by public ND political figures, constituting online political discourse on a popular social media platform.

Analysis

Our analysis identifies a broader ‘Left-Wing Authoritarianism (LWA)’ interpretative repertoire mobilized within the politicians’ online posts we examine. The mobilization of this repertoire, with or without the explicit use of the term ‘authoritarianism’, performs important rhetorical and ideological work in the discourse of ND politicians. Oriented towards censuring the Greek political left, the LWA repertoire interweaves three distinct representational modalities, meaning the thematic registers through which LWA is represented as factual in the discourse of ND MPs, which, taken together, capture the semantic field of the term ‘authoritarianism’ as it is pragmatically instantiated within our data corpus. These representational modalities are: *localized political exceptionalism* (domestic differentiation from universal norms of democratic governance); *extended ideological contamination* (association with international discredited doctrines and figures); and *state authoritarianism in practice* (abuse of state power, undermining democracy). To capture the action-orientation of the LWA repertoire, the analysis is organized around three central argumentative lines, differentially shaped by these representational modalities and collectively working towards the delegitimization of SYRIZA by associating it with authoritarian politics, while affirming ND’s democratic credentials.

The ‘Heretical’ Local Political Left as an Absurd Exception to International ‘Prototypical Representatives’ of Left Ideology

The first argumentative line is deployed within a heated—at the time—Greek public debate regarding the introduction of a legislative framework for the creation and operation of private universities and police intervention in public universities. This argumentative line involves the mobilization of cultural hierarchies in the form of the juxtaposition of occidental progress with what is presented as the exceptional backwardness of the

local left (Bozatzis, 2014). Drawing on the representational modality of *localized political exceptionalism*, MPs construct the local political left’s ‘dogmatic’ adherence to outdated policies as an axiomatic infringement of ‘self-evident’, universalized democratic standards. In doing so, they position SYRIZA as an isolated, irrational outlier, contrasting its stance with that of a comparatively more rational and pragmatic international political left.

The first extract challenges SYRIZA’s insistence on banning private universities. Its author is Kostis Hatzidakis, a long-standing figure in both the Greek and European arenas, currently serving as Deputy Prime Minister and Vice President of both ND and the European People’s Party. At the time of the post (February 2019), Alexis Tsipras was leading the SYRIZA-ANEL coalition government.

Extract 1

1	<i>In 2009 only 4 countries banned #private_universities: North Korea, Bhutan, Cuba</i>
2	<i>and Greece. Today only in Greece they insist on this ban. Even #Maduro ended up</i>
3	<i>outflanking you on the right*, gentlemen and ladies of #SYRIZA! #Parliament #vouli</i>

(February 12, 2019, Kostis Hatzidakis @K_Hatzidakis)

This formulation carries an ironic tone and goes beyond its literal meaning, using a spatial metaphor (‘on the right’*) to represent political ideology, suggesting that Nicolas Maduro, known as a prominent left-wing figure, has shifted ‘rightward’ on this issue, implying SYRIZA as paradoxically rigid/stubborn in comparison.

Hatzidakis deploys hierarchical cultural comparisons to delegitimize SYRIZA-led governmental decisions as permeated by outdated, dogmatic, and unrealistic ideological assumptions. This is achieved through extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986), which, first, construct a minimal group/minority that deviates from what the MP implies are universal and reasonable norms of governance (*‘only 4 countries’*, Line 1), and, then, particularize by positioning Greece (*‘only in Greece’*, Line 2) as the sole contemporary exception regarding the ban on private universities, thereby rendering the claim difficult to contest. This account mobilizes seemingly factual comparative, historical, temporal, and geopolitically situated claims to position SYRIZA as politically rigid and out of touch with international developments. By aligning Greece with North Korea, Bhutan, and Cuba (Lines 1-2) – presented as prototypical authoritarian regimes and the only countries to have implemented such a ban in 2009 – Hatzidakis suggests a shared regressive, oppressive, and authoritarian orientation on this issue. Stressing SYRIZA’s insistence on ‘banning’ (Lines 1, 2) attributes an authoritarian ‘quality’ to its stance, de-politicizing the ideological basis of its position and recasting it as a hallmark of irrational governance. This, in turn, highlights SYRIZA’S – alleged – exceptionalism and constructs its policies as incompatible with international (and implicitly Western) political norms.

Hatzidakis further ideologically delegitimizes SYRIZA by contrasting its policy with that of the international left, thereby underscoring its alleged authoritarian dogmatism and conventionalism while mitigating potential accusations of partisanship through the development of a thorough argument (Edwards & Potter, 1992, p. 162). He directly invokes and ironically contrasts the figure of Nicolas Maduro, who, despite being positioned on the far left, has not maintained a ban on private higher education (Lines 2-3). The example of Venezuela undermines SYRIZA’s ideological credibility, positioning its members as defenders of an unjustified *status quo*. SYRIZA is thus constructed as rooted in the outdated ideas of a ‘traditional left’ and as impractical, supporting irrational ideas, irrelevant to contemporary liberal politics and socio-political developments. By arguing that the ‘international political left’ (using Maduro’s example) is opposed to the local political left, Hatzidakis further delegitimizes SYRIZA as excessively regressive and dogmatic, emphasizing its political isolation.

Extract 2 comes from Adonis Georgiades⁶, a Vice President of ND and current Minister of Health, often criticized for overt conservatism and excessive media presence. He mobilizes the Spanish left-wing government as an exemplary case to support ND’s orientation towards strict university policing. Georgiades invokes an incident regarding Pablo Hasél, a rapper convicted for lyrics and tweets accused of ‘*glorifying terrorism and insulting the monarchy*’, which led to his arrest by the police on the premises of the University of Lleida.

Extract 2

1	<i>In Podemos’ Spain, the Police there enter a university and arrest a person convicted</i>
2	<i>of glorifying Terrorism and insulting the Monarchy...and somewhere here the entire</i>
3	<i>discussion of last week by Syriza ended...*</i>

(February 16, 2021, Adonis Georgiades)

*SYRIZA’s opposition during that period (February 2021) focused on ND’s plan to deploy police on universities as a threat to academic freedom and campus asylum.

Georgiades references Hasél’s arrest at a Spanish university (Lines 1-2) to suggest Podemos’ tolerance, or even endorsement, of police operations in academic spaces. Strategically contrasted with SYRIZA’s opposition to police interventions, this incident is given a political twist, implying SYRIZA’s tolerance of such actions in ‘*Podemos’ Spain*’ and holding it, therefore, accountable for inconsistent politics.

6) Georgiades was formerly elected with the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS), an extreme right-wing party, founded in 2000. That party declined after 2012, and several of its members, including Georgiades, joined ND. Georgiades has held major ministerial roles in the domains of Health, Development, and Labor, after joining ND.

Police intervention within universities emerges as the main stake⁷ of Georgiades' position. In 2021, ND legislated the creation of a 'university police' force, although this policy has not been implemented. Emphasis on Hasél's charges (Line 2) serves to justify the necessity of such an institution and to legitimize broader police intervention. Podemos is constructed as a basic example of responsible governance, suggesting that even left-wing governments can translate their doctrines into concrete policies and interventions, exercising state power when necessary. Such decisions (and policies) are treated as imperative responses to disorder in contexts where security issues are at stake, thereby positioning SYRIZA's stance as more of an accountable exception rather than representative of left-wing governance.

By referencing authoritative institutions, practices and broader security concerns (i.e., 'the police', legal 'conviction', and 'terrorism', Lines 1-2), Georgiades claims legitimacy for his position while constructing an 'undeniable' link between SYRIZA and Podemos. In doing so, he indirectly castigates SYRIZA, positioning it in opposition to the international political left with which it is otherwise affiliated. By stressing the Spanish left's supposed willingness to deploy police within universities, this argument strengthens the legitimacy of ND's policies, while presenting SYRIZA as a deviant political actor, both in relation to the broader political left and to the local political right, and as departing from the supposed international principles of rational governance invoked as necessary for managing security threats, such as terrorism.

Georgiades' concluding statement ('*somewhere here the entire discussion of last week by Syriza ended*', Lines 2-3) employs an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) to further accuse SYRIZA of hypocrisy, inconsistency, or inability to pragmatically address contemporary governance challenges. His account advances a sustained critique of SYRIZA's allegedly unsubstantiated political positions, portraying it as lacking a serious political presence. He highlights a contradiction whereby the local left's vocal opposition to ND's proposed policies vanishes when similar or stricter measures are implemented by far-left political actors such as Podemos, illustrating that SYRIZA's opposition to authoritarian measures becomes selectively muted depending on who enforces them. Therefore, Georgiades' account serves a dual rhetorical purpose: not only does he undermine the legitimacy of SYRIZA's opposition, but he also enhances his party's position and policies. The alignment of ND's policy positions with Podemos' alleged practices constructs police intervention in universities as a reasonable, realistic, internationally validated, and ideologically neutral policy measure.

Georgiades manages a broader ideological dilemma regarding state power (maintaining security) *versus* institutional freedom and autonomy (see, Billig et al., 1988, pp. 34-42), as articulated in both local and international debates. The portrayal of the international

7) University asylum in Greece, established in 1982, prohibited the police from entering public university campuses without permission, symbolizing academic institutional freedom. It was repealed in 2019 by the ND government.

political left as complicit in similar practices undermines the moral authority of the Greek political left, challenging its opposition, and ultimately contributing to the construction of SYRIZA's authoritarian image.

Overall, the first argumentative line negatively links SYRIZA's politics with foreign governments and regimes constructed as ideologically rigid, thereby delegitimizing the Greek political left as an extreme exception. Occidental cultural comparisons (Bozatzi, 2009, 2014) are mobilized to deconstruct SYRIZA's policy positions, specifically its opposition to private universities and policing, as outdated and dogmatic, pointing to its alleged deviation from standard norms of Western governance. This depiction is further reinforced through the strategic use of figures such as Maduro and Podemos, who are presented as comparatively 'reasonable' and politically superior to SYRIZA. Constructing the local left as an isolated case, even in relation to international counterparts, reinforces the legitimacy of ND's position as the only realistic political alternative, entrenching a polarizing (self-/other-) positioning that legitimizes ND against what is rendered as an 'absurd local left'.

Associating SYRIZA With Authoritarian 'Others': The Local Realization of a Broader Authoritarian Paradigm Instigated by the International Political Left

The second argumentative line represents SYRIZA as the local manifestation of a broader, 'universal' authoritarian paradigm associated with the political left. By identifying SYRIZA with 'Soviet doctrines' and figures such as Maduro and Putin, it mainly deploys the representational modality of *extended ideological contamination* within the LWA repertoire to construct a picture of an underlying 'threat' to democracy. It draws extensively on geopolitical analogies and vivid metaphors to castigate SYRIZA as politically and morally alienated from modern politics through its associations with a discredited, historical and contemporary, left-wing authoritarian legacy. Political epochs, symbols, and international figures constructed as archetypal authoritarians are thus mobilized to attribute authoritarianism to the local political left. SYRIZA emerges as an ideologically backward and compromised political actor, positioned within a broader and threatening authoritarian political current.

The following post by Hatzidakis, who, as indicated above, is a prominent MP and member of ND's government, draws on (a-)historical resources and selective references to policymaking to formulate a generalized censure of left-wing ideology, accusing the local left of anchoring itself in an outdated ideological dogma.

Extract 3

1	<i>The cobweb-covered, Soviet doctrines are paralyzing the Left! They keep on</i>
2	<i>speaking disparagingly about the “Hatzidakis law”. About what exactly? About the</i>
3	<i>Digital Work Card. The increase in parental leave. The right to disconnect in</i>
4	<i>teleworking. The advanced measures against violence and harassment in workplaces.</i>
5	<i>The equalization of compensation for laborers with that of employees. Them, with the</i>
6	<i>lies and doctrines. Us, with a social policy in practice!</i>
(May 18, 2023, Kostis Hatzidakis @K_Hatzidakis)	

Hatzidakis uses a vivid metaphor (Edwards & Potter, 1992, p. 161; Potter, 1996, pp. 80-81), ‘cobweb-covered, Soviet doctrines’ (Line 1), depicting left-wing politics as inflexible and rooted in a rigid doctrine trapped in the past. This image establishes a close ideological association between Soviet-era communism and the local political left, signaling contemporary irrelevance and persistent dogmatism. His statement claims facticity by drawing on a seemingly shared socio-historical representation of the Soviet era, attributing key authoritarian features to his political opponent’s ideology. In this way, Hatzidakis emphasizes the left’s alleged doctrinal rigidity, linked to the negative connotations of the Soviet legacy, thereby reinforcing a particular ideological understanding within the broader socio-political debate.

Hatzidakis broadly delegitimizes the political left by associating it with a discredited historical era, accusing it of holding failed, insincere, and extreme ideological positions. Left-wing ideology is explicitly constituted as an outdated relic, lacking in pragmatic and social relevance for modern societies. By relating SYRIZA to the Soviet Union and, thus, to its implied authoritarianism, Hatzidakis’ argument orients, rhetorically-ideologically, to the political and cultural alienation of the left. Following this claim, a somewhat inconsistent rhetoric—based on largely unsubstantiated allegations—is articulated for partisan purposes. ND’s political opponents are portrayed as incapable of adapting to modern political challenges, with the left’s ideological basis described as ‘paralyzing’ it (Line 1), thereby generalizing and distorting the diversity of left-wing politics.

Subsequently, Hatzidakis questions the political left’s opposition to ‘Hatzidakis law’ (Line 2), selectively listing reforms as concrete evidence of ND’s progressive achievements (Lines 3-5). He constructs a stark contrast between ND’s politics, presented as genuinely emancipatory and pragmatic, and left-wing opposition, attributed to the ideological fixation on an outdated political model. The use of ‘they’/‘we’ formulations (Lines 5-6) enhances this censure, castigating the political left for ideological blindness, while claiming ND’s pragmatic orientation and moral superiority (Figgou & Andreouli, 2023). This binary positioning, rooted in partisanship, rather than engagement with SYRIZA’s policy proposals, contrasts the opponents’ alleged backwardness and unconstructive

stance with the higher-order politics of the speaker’s camp, thereby promoting ND’s socio-political legitimacy and effectiveness.

Extract 4 presents a post of Makis Voridis, a prominent Greek MP and minister, previously also affiliated with the far-right LAOS party. At the time of sharing this post, he was a senior ND politician and has since served as Minister for Migration and Asylum, as well as Minister in the Interior, Health, and Rural Development. The post was published in May 2019, while the SYRIZA-ANEL coalition, led by Tsipras, was still in government.

Extract 4

1	<i>Today, May Day, our thoughts are with the people of Venezuela, with the Freedom</i>
2	<i>Fighters who struggle against the leftist authoritarian regime of Maduro, the friend of</i>
3	<i>Alexis Tsipras.</i>
(May 1, 2019, Makis Voridis @MakisVoridis)	

Voridis leverages May Day symbolisms to project ND’s solidarity with Venezuelans’ democratic struggle against Maduro’s left-wing government (Lines 1-2), delegitimizing him as an authoritarian oppressor (cf. the first argumentative line). By instrumentalizing May Day within the particular, contemporary, culturally specific context, he shifts its meaning from working-class struggles to Venezuela’s political unrest, portraying the Venezuelan opposition as the true heirs of democracy and Maduro’s regime as ‘*leftist authoritarian*’ (Line 2). This rhetoric illustrates a flexible use of ideological symbols in order to oppose both the Venezuelan political left and the then SYRIZA-led government. Having constructed Maduro as the leader of an authoritarian regime, Voridis refers to him as ‘*the friend of Alexis Tsipras*’ (Line 3)⁸. This localizes the LWA censure through an explicitly personalized and implicitly ideological connection between SYRIZA’s leader and the Venezuelan regime (Line 3), effectively attributing guilt by association.

The invocation of a specific political date (May Day, Line 1) and the normative valorization of ‘*Freedom Fighters*’ (Lines 1-2) are utilized as indisputable facts to construct Maduro’s regime as ‘*leftist authoritarian*’, while simultaneously associating Tsipras with it. In this way, left-wing political actors are constructed as inherently interconnected and indistinguishably authoritarian. This account establishes a binary that aligns ND with democratic resistance, positioning it as the supporter of freedom struggles, while the local left is represented as sympathetic to authoritarianism. The next extract similarly aligns the local left with international authoritarian figures, further delegitimizing

8) Compare with Extracts 1 and 2, where Maduro and Podemos were constructed as SYRIZA’s pragmatic allies, in contrast to SYRIZA’s alleged irrationality and dogmatism.

SYRIZA as morally compromised and, in this case, as operating under Russia’s influence. It was posted by Miltiadis Varvitsiotis, a former politician, who, at the time, was an MP serving as Alternate Minister for Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy within an ND government.

Extract 5

1	<i>We are impressed by the fact that SYRIZA has not yet realized that this war is a</i>
2	<i>personal choice of Mr. Putin and that authoritarianism is the enemy of freedom and</i>
3	<i>democracy.</i>
4	(March 24, 2022, Varvitsiotis Miltiadis @MVarvitsiotis)

Varvitsiotis portrays SYRIZA as willfully ignorant on the particulars of Russia’s invasion in Ukraine, utilizing rhetorical incredulity and irony to castigate the left for its lack of political clarity and democratic morals. Through a ‘we’ formulation (Line 1), he positions himself and his party as informed democratic political actors, while constructing the local left as either complicit in or dangerously indifferent to authoritarianism.

The moral delegitimization of SYRIZA is advanced through an accusation of deliberate political blindness and irresponsibility (Line 1). By asserting the war is ‘*a personal choice of Mr. Putin*’ (Lines 1-2), the MP effectively constructs a self-contained (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, pp. 177, 186-187) moral narrative, holding not only Putin accountable for actions that contradict the values of democracy and freedom (as shared principles of Greece and European/Western countries), but also SYRIZA for, allegedly, tolerating them. Varvitsiotis invokes a foundational liberal-democratic *versus* authoritarian-undemocratic dichotomy, representing authoritarianism as the antithesis of universally cherished political values (Lines 2-3). The focus lies in mobilizing this authoritarian figure (Putin) to criticize the left for failing to recognize or condemn this threat to democracy and human rights, thereby questioning its ideological and political integrity. The invocation of democratic values and anti-authoritarianism provides this account with rationality through recourse to seemingly self-evident political morals. This, in turn, reinforces proximal local political boundaries between the right and the left by challenging the legitimacy and credibility of SYRIZA’s positions on international affairs, once again constructing it as sympathetic to authoritarian leaders such as Putin, in contrast to ND.

The following post also delegitimizes SYRIZA by arguing for its moral and political deviation through alleged malign economic relations with Russia. This was posted by Adonis Georgiades, who, as noted, is a prominent political figure of ND.

Extract 6

1	<i>For @syriza_gr, Putin does not commit war crimes. Of the 524 members of the</i>
2	<i>European Parliament who voted for a special court against Putin/Lukashenko, 52</i>
3	<i>abstained or voted against. Among them are also 4 SYRIZA Members of the European</i>
4	<i>Parliament! It would be worthy to, at some point, search also for the money from</i>
5	<i>Russia...</i>

(January 20, 2023, Adonis Georgiades)

Georgiades’ post is marked by ironic intent (Line 1) and is supported by the invocation of precise numerical data and references to the European Parliament (Lines 1-4). These provide facticity to his censure against SYRIZA as unethically negligent towards war crimes and cast aspersions on its alleged political corruption and complicity. His construction achieves the ideological ‘othering’ of SYRIZA while positioning himself and ND as a moral democratic political force.

Georgiades cites precise numbers of MEPs who participated in a vote concerning the establishment of a special court against Putin and Lukashenko, as well as those who abstained or voted against, indicating the presence of four SYRIZA MEPs among the latter (Lines 1-4); this citation of precise numbers enhances the projected objectivity and credibility of his argument (see, Billig, 2021). By selectively emphasizing, therefore particularizing, those Greek left-wing politicians within a broader European political group, Georgiades intensifies SYRIZA’s perceived deviance, as an unethical political exception, as a political institution that supports Putin’s regime. But Georgiades’ charge reaches further than that by suggesting, shadowy relations between them. He mobilizes suspicion through *innuendo* directed at SYRIZA and its MEPs, without, however, explicitly accusing them of being under undue financial influence from Russia (Lines 4-5); still, his account introduces distrust and positions the political left as a threat to shared democratic values and morals. This particularized focus, then, reinforces a broader narrative around SYRIZA’s allegedly questionable commitment to universal democratic and ethical principles.

Drawing on the repertoire’s representational modality of *extended ideological contamination*, the second argumentative line advances a comprehensive political censure of SYRIZA by associating it with widely discredited authoritarian international actors. Rhetorical analogies referencing Maduro’s ‘regime’ and the war actions of Putin function as strategies of blame-by-association, delegitimizing the local political left. The linkage with authoritarian figures, combined with strategic positioning, consolidates SYRIZA’s

delegitimization while promoting ND as the moral and ideological defender of democratic values.

Entrenching SYRIZA’s ‘Exceptionalism’: Authoritarian Left-Wing Governance Harboring Deep-State Structures

Invoking the interpretative repertoire’s representational modality of *state authoritarianism in practice*, the third argumentative line extends the previous ideological critique to articulate a direct LWA censure against left-wing governance. It directly equates SYRIZA’S former administration with the shadowy practices of an authoritarian deep-state⁹, stressing its alleged involvement in illegal surveillance¹⁰. By accusing SYRIZA of authoritarian practices, this argument fundamentally challenges the previous government’s integrity, entrenching the construction of the Greek political left as an *actual* authoritarian threat to democracy.

The following extract was posted by Constantinos Bogdanos, a journalist and politician who served as an ND MP from 2019 until 2021. He associates SYRIZA with authoritarianism, suggesting that left-wing governance entails overreach that leads to a crisis of democracy.

Extract 7

1

2

3

4

5

The orders to the Hellenic Police from the spouse of the office of the Minister of Citizen Protection for the arrest of journalists @KourtakisJohn and @ptzenos, their physical surveillance and everything that has been recorded, refer only to authoritarian regimes. Did Tsipras know about the actions of the deep-state? Did he harbor it?

(June 20, 2020, Constantinos Bogdanos @bogdanosk)

In this post, Bogdanos foregrounds an allegation regarding the direct involvement of a left-wing political authority in actions associated with the authoritarian suppression of dissent. His argument implicates the spouse of a central government officer command-

9) The concept of ‘deep-state’ (‘παράκρəτος’) in Greece refers to informal power networks within state institutions that act beyond democratic oversight. This concept has deep historical roots, tracing back to the post-Civil War era and the polarized political climate that followed. It involves shadowy structures within police and military bodies whose influence has been noted by scholars as a persistent feature shaping the Greek political fabric and governance (Christopoulos, 2014; Karasová, 2021; Tsoutsoumpis, 2017).

10) Since 2021, the ND government has come under intense scrutiny following claims that unauthorized surveillance operations targeted politicians, members of the press, and prominent businesspeople. It was accused of using state intelligence mechanisms and the controversial Predator spyware in monitoring activities; however, the government has rejected such accusations.

ing, allegedly, police intervention, namely the arrest of two journalists (Lines 1-2). The mention of ‘*physical surveillance and everything that has been recorded*’ (Lines 3-4), designated as practices that ‘*refer only to authoritarian regimes*’ (Line 4), mobilizes an analogical comparison between the SYRIZA-led government and broadly recognized forms of authoritarian political practice. This alleged targeting of journalists, treated here as a hallmark of authoritarianism, alludes to documented practices used to control public discourse and suppress opposition, ultimately restricting civil rights and press freedom. Thus, the delegitimization of the left-wing government is performed by positioning it far beyond the limits of acceptable democratic governance.

Even though Bogdanos implicates Tsipras’ complicity and attributes undemocratic transgressions to the local political left, he stops short of issuing a direct censure. The use of consequent rhetorical questions (Lines 4-5), together with the preceding vague formulation (Edwards & Potter, 1992, p. 162) (‘*everything...recorded*’, Line 3) allows Bogdanos to avoid direct accusations, given the lack of concrete evidence, thereby managing his accountability for the claims he advances. These rhetorical questions intensify the accusatory tone of his argument, shifting focus from a broader institutional censure regarding LWA to a more particularized and personalized accusation against Tsipras, thereby holding him personally accountable for alleged authoritarian practices. Bogdanos thus implies left-wing complicity and speculates on active support toward undemocratic, illegal deep-state structures. He consistently invokes the notion of a ‘*deep-state*’ (Line 4) amplifying a sense of subverted democratic normality and inviting audiences to question the legitimacy and integrity of Tsipras’ leadership.

Bogdanos explicitly constructs the regulation of political power as a *sine qua non* condition of modern democratic politics, establishing a normative standard against which the SYRIZA-ANEL government is evaluated and held accountable. Extract 8, below, presents a post shared by Dora Bakoyannis, a senior ND politician with longstanding influence in Greek politics, former Foreign Minister, former Mayor of Athens, and the sister of ND leader and Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

Extract 8

1	<i>There are also limits in the exercise of politics. With the revelations that have come</i>
2	<i>to light, we see that there were no boundaries for the SYRIZA-ANEL government.</i>
3	<i>There was no democratic accountability. There was a deep-state with the logic of an</i>
4	<i>authoritarian regime.</i>
(June 24, 2020, @Dora_Bakoyannis)	

Bakoyannis appeals to self-evident democratic norms (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, pp. 177, 186-187) to construct a general claim, stressing the necessity of regulating the democratic boundaries of politics, with emphasis on constraints on political power (‘*There are...polit-*

ics', Line 1). She then attributes responsibility to the former SYRIZA-ANEL government for bypassing these fundamental democratic prerequisites. She further provides facticity to this censure through the use of vagueness (Edwards & Potter, 1992, p. 162), making general references to recent revelations as indicative of LWA without specifying the allegations, thereby managing accountability (Lines 1-2). She also employs absolute expressions ('there were no....There was no...', Lines 2-3), which function as extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986), implying unchecked exercise of power. In this way, she justifies the described transgression of political 'boundaries' (Line 2), which, together with the absence of 'democratic accountability' (Line 3), portrays the SYRIZA-led government as a violator of safeguards of democracy. Bakoyannis, thus directly delegitimizes the SYRIZA-led administration as a threat to democratic order, while positioning ND as a guardian of democracy.

What follows is not merely a censure but a culmination of ND's portrayal of the SYRIZA-ANEL government as embodying both the characteristics of a 'deep-state' (Line 3) and the operational logic of an 'authoritarian regime' (Line 4). This rhetorical intensification reinforces ND's broader strategy of censure by construing the left-wing government as inherently authoritarian, rendering its political opposition to a defense of legitimate democratic order. The convergence of these charges marks a peak in the construction of SYRIZA-ANEL as a dual threat, both covertly manipulative ('deep-state') and overtly authoritarian. In contrast to the previous extract, which utilized analogies, Bakoyannis directly associates the political left with illegitimate power structures that operate outside the range of legitimate governance. In this context, Bakoyannis, through an overall vague argument (Edwards & Potter, 1992, p. 162), invokes historically and culturally entrenched resources, mainly left unspecified, to construct the political conditions shaped by the former SYRIZA-ANEL policies as an undeniable breach of essentialized democratic norms. This account is, therefore, both grounded in and simultaneously promotes a hegemonic public discourse around SYRIZA's authoritarian practices, supported by supposedly recently disclosed yet unspecified revelations. As ND had already assumed governance at the time of the post, the local political right emerges in this account as entitled to uphold and enforce necessary limits to restore and maintain democratic political order.

The final argumentative line represents a high-stakes mobilization of the LWA interpretative repertoire, centered on *state authoritarianism in practice* as evidenced in actual left-wing governance. Equating the SYRIZA-ANEL government's actions with an authoritarian 'deep-state' and criticizing, forcefully, SYRIZA for alleged involvement in illegal surveillance and the suppression of freedom of speech, ND's MPs cement SYRIZA's authoritarian depiction. This rhetorical-ideological objective is achieved through vague claims to recent 'events' and 'revelations', designed to stress the adversary's supposed democratic deficits. Subtle accountability management practices facilitate the narrative

construction of SYRIZA-led governance as a breakdown of democracy, while simultaneously validating ND’s claimed position of the sole local source of political integrity.

Discussion

This study advances social and political psychological research on authoritarianism by foregrounding its hitherto underexplored function as an argumentative resource strategically deployed to articulate political censure. To this end, we employed Critical Discursive Social Psychology (CDSP) to explore right-wing politicians’ constructions of left-wing authoritarianism (LWA) on X and the rhetorical-ideological implications of such situated discourse. Having identified LWA as an interpretative repertoire, we focused our analytic attention on three central argumentative lines deploying this repertoire to delegitimize ND’s left-wing political opponents, while bolstering its own political legitimacy in Greece and beyond. Particularly, right-wing MPs represent the political left either at the limits of, or beyond, reasonable-ness, questioning its political rationale, and/or as a strategically authoritarian political force.

As our analysis exemplifies, ND indirectly praises international political figures and governments, depicting them as prototypical examples of a pragmatic left-wing politics, but only when they are portrayed as advancing policies that resemble its own agenda. In such instances, a ‘reasonable’ international left is weaponized against SYRIZA. By asserting that left-wing ideology can be implemented in rational and practical ways, ND casts the domestic version of the left as an ‘exceptional’ and unreasonable deviation. In so doing, ND simultaneously works-up its own profile as a moderate centre(-right) political power, perhaps as the only ‘sensible’ party, capable of governing without ideological ‘fixations’. As discursive studies of political discourse have shown (Figgou & Andreouli, 2023), such positioning enables ND to justify silencing SYRIZA’s opposition or to pressure it to conform to its policies.

Conversely, ND politicians strategically invoke past political epochs and contemporary international political figures and regimes as prototypical embodiments or paradigmatic examples of left authoritarianism. Such constructions castigate the local political left through association, framing left-wing ideology as anachronistic and incompatible with contemporary Western democracies. In contrast, ND is positioned as a reasonable, reliable, and progressive political force, guided by pragmatic societal needs, projecting a democratic identity that maintains distance from political extremes. The simultaneous rise of SYRIZA and the far-right Golden Dawn, in the early 2010s, further invigorated the ‘centrist / extremist–horseshoe theory’ (see, Pavlopoulos, 2018), which frames political conflict as a battle between the ‘not-so-different’ radical left and right. In this sociopolitical context, often treated as the ‘end of Metapolitefsi’¹¹, ND’s discourse supports its self-positioning as the restorer of democracy (Vasilaki & Souvlis, 2021; Verousi et al.,

2022), while constructing the left as irrational, authoritarian, and linked to deep-state structures.

In the data analyzed, explicit accusations of authoritarianism are also directed at the local political left, resulting in a forceful denunciation of its political agenda and policy decisions. ND politicians mobilized LWA as a direct censure to morally and politically delegitimize the SYRIZA-ANEL government, both during ND's stint in opposition and after regaining power. Their discourse particularly targets SYRIZA's alleged audacity and lack of democratic accountability, portraying it as prone to centralizing state power to monitor or suppress opposition and maintain control. This censure constructs the political left as willing to violate democratic norms by exerting coercive control under a left-wing facade. This delegitimization of SYRIZA's time in government anchors a particular representation of recent political history, depicting it as an abuser of power and thereby discouraging its re-emergence, while reinforcing ND's positioning as a defender of democracy.

These ambivalent rhetorical-ideological constructions of the political left are flexibly instrumentalized, adapting ideological meanings associated with both left- and right-wing identities to serve ND's rhetorical objectives in specific contexts. ND can portray the Greek political left as unrealistic, while highlighting a perceived gap between SYRIZA and the international left. At the same time, it can undermine the moral and political credibility of both local and international left-wing actors. In this process, left-wing ideology may be acknowledged yet separated from their practices, or entirely dismissed, depending on the rhetorical context. ND politicians thus engage in a dilemmatic rhetorical management of left-wing identity, strategically re-constructing and contesting it. While left-wing identity can be presented as universally flawed, it can also be re-signified in ways that support ND's arguments. Although broadly deconstructed, left-wing identity is consistently linked to authoritarianism, while a paradoxical distinction is maintained in which SYRIZA is singled out as uniquely authoritarian. This flexibility enables a critique without overtly adopting a uniformly anti-left stance, while sustaining the portrayal of SYRIZA as a power-hungry actor.

This censure enables ND to claim the position of a universal defender of democratic values, maintaining ideological distance from political extremes and reinforcing the perceived neutrality of its critique. Right-wing ideology can thus be strategically 'reserved', avoiding explicit references to traditional right-wing principles (Ropoki & Madoglou, 2024). ND projects a 'modernized' liberal-democratic identity, distancing itself from ideological extremes, while aligning with a neoliberal agenda that masks policy decisions as rational governance (Bozatzis, 2016; Figgou & Chryssochoou, 2020; Weltman & Billig,

11) It refers to the end of the post-1974 political order established in Greece, characterized by power alternating solely between ND and the social-democratic party of PASOK, a 'destabilization' also triggered by the 2010 financial crisis.

2001). This approach enables ND to present itself as pragmatic and balanced. Policies that might otherwise appear ideologically driven or exclusionary are depoliticized by emphasizing their universal necessity and alignment with democratic accountability, particularly in contrast to the alleged authoritarianism of the political left. At the same time, this strategic distancing from ideology entails ideological dilemmas, as ND continues to promote policies that are not politically neutral (Weltman & Billig, 2001). The LWA censure thus builds on the situated contestation of political identities (Ropoki, 2025), positioning ND as an international beacon of democracy capable of bridging ideological divides. However, rather than striving to reconcile opposing ideologies, it actively and strategically condemns the local political left to expand its appeal across the political center.

While the methodological practice of analyzing keyword-filtered X posts within the Greek context may limit generalizability, the analytic deployment of CDSP enables us to map the situated argumentative resources underpinning the LWA repertoire and to move beyond universalizing and individualizing approaches to authoritarianism. Previous research has largely conceptualized LWA as a personality trait or cognitive style measured through attitude scales (for recent examples, see, Conway et al., 2023; Costello et al., 2022), mostly based on the RWA scale. By examining how the LWA repertoire is mobilized in political discourse, this study opens new vistas for research. Rather than treating authoritarianism as an internal psychological attribute, analyses, we suggest, should examine how accusations of authoritarianism are deployed in discourse to achieve interactional and ideological ends. In this way, the focus shifts from individual cognition to the social and interactional contexts in which political meanings are constructed (Gray & Durrheim, 2013). As our analysis exemplifies, the LWA repertoire was mobilized as a rhetorical resource through which ND constructs the SYRIZA-ANEL government as authoritarian. The longstanding dissociation of the construct of authoritarianism from specific ideological content (Eysenck, 1954; Rokeach, 1960; Shils, 1954) has enabled the extension of the concept to the political left. This shift resonates with the ‘radical centre’ framing of political extremes, which equates left and right as similarly authoritarian, a narrative that is also present in the Greek context. CDSP allows us to examine how such arguments are constructed, organized and mobilized for ideological purposes. In a context where political decisions can be framed as *a*-political (Figgou & Chryssochoou, 2020), the LWA repertoire further bolsters this portrayal by depicting left-wing policies as partisan, unreasonable, and authoritarian, while positioning neoliberal governance as the only reasonable—even often de-politicized—alternative.

Funding: This project is carried out within the framework of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan Greece 2.0, funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU (Implementation body: HFRI). Project acronym: ALPIS (Proposal No. 14953).

Acknowledgments: We thank the editor and the anonymous reviewers for providing constructive feedback on this work.

Competing Interests: The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Ethics Statement: The current study is part of the broader research project ALPIS, which received approval from the Research and Ethics Committees of the Democritus University of Thrace (Protocol No. DUTH/EHDE/18688/116), the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Protocol No. 308559/2023), and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Decision No. 127/2024).

Data Availability: The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Supplementary Materials

The Electronic Supplementary Materials (ESM) (Michos et al., 2026S) provide an overview of the broader data collection composition and the detailed keyword search strategy used in this study. First, "Composition of the Broader Data Corpus" details the assembly of approximately 7,500 posts from 40 X (formerly Twitter) accounts representing seven Greek political parties. This section specifies the account and post counts per party while establishing the 17 accounts from Nea Dimokratia (approx. 3,500 posts) as the exclusive focus of the current study. Second, "Keyword Search Strategy (Table S1)" presents the original Greek search terms utilized in the study along with their English translations, systematically mapping them to three primary thematic nodes: COVID-19 Governance, the Russian Invasion, and Greek Governmental Politics. To ensure comprehensive data retrieval, this strategy accounts for Greek grammatical declensions and incorporates a set of cross-node supplementary keywords tied to the study's broader theoretical background centered on authoritarianism.

Index of Supplementary Materials

Michos, I., Sapountzis, A., Karagianni, K., Bozatzis, N., Figgou, L., & Ntontis, E. (2026S).

Supplementary materials to "Left-wing authoritarianism' as situated rhetoric: Delegitimizing the political left in statements of Greek right-wing politicians on 'X'" [Additional information on data collection composition and keyword search strategy]. PsychOpen GOLD.

<https://doi.org/10.23668/psycharchives.22183>

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