

Crisis politics and authoritarianism of the 'good and the true'

Status and perspectives of research

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Summary / Abstract

In the state of emergency of the "Corona crisis," political power was concentrated in the executive branch of government, and democratic rights to freedom and participation, as well as controls under the rule of law, were massively restricted or suspended. In the process, a new kind of crisis-induced technocratic authoritarianism is emerging, politically not (as traditionally) from the right, but rather from the left, under the banner of the supposedly 'good' and 'true.' This type of authoritarianism is poorly researched scientifically, both in terms of conceptualization and measurement, and in terms of occurrence, development, and background. The 'Corona crisis' culminated a long-standing crisis policy of supposed 'lack of alternatives', with the erosion of democracy and division of society along 'symbolic capital'. In the face of ever new constructions of crisis such as the 'climate crisis' and the popularity of technocratic-authoritarian attitudes, research on this is also called for in terms of democratic theory. In the article, the development of crisis-related authoritarianism in the 'Corona crisis' is first recapitulated in cursory fashion. This is followed by reflections on the concept of the little-researched left-wing technocratic authoritarianism, the relevance of which is underscored by the studies on the background of authoritarian tendencies in the 'Corona Crisis' that are referred to thereafter. Finally, a conclusion with an outlook on further research follows.

1. Technocratic Crisis Policy in the 'Corona Crisis'.

In retrospect, one can first observe a tendency in many democracies toward technocratic crisis politics and the use of crises and states of emergency as increasingly normal means of government, with openly or covertly authoritarian structures, that has persisted for decades (cf. Agamben 2004; Förster 2017; Roth 2021; Séville 2017).. In this respect, the 'erosion' of democracy' only briefly sketched here should be taken into account as background in the following analytical look at the 'Corona crisis' (cf. Roth 2021). At the argumentative center of technocratic crisis politics (of center-right as well as center-left governments) is a supposed 'lack of alternatives' for political decisions in the face of 'constraints' such as 'globalization', etc., with the result that social inequality and the division of society continue to increase (Elsässer, Hense 2021). (Elsässer, Hense, and Schäfer 2018; Piketty 2019; Schäfer 2008).. As a result, political disenchantment has been rampant for some time among the 'common people,' who increasingly tend to the right in protest, and whose background (including the complicity of the 'Brahminical left') is mostly unrecognized (Amable and Darcillon 2020; Piketty 2018; Roth 2020)..

In any case, the 'Corona crisis' of the years 2020-2022 encounters long-established patterns of technocratic crisis policy and erosion of democracy. In this respect, it is no coincidence that the political handling of the Corona crisis - for all their overall similarity - also reveals *differences* within democracies. Overall, democracies that were already functioning relatively well before the crisis, such as Sweden or Switzerland, showed conspicuously fewer authoritarian tendencies and fewer restrictions on civil liberties than those states that had a poorer quality of democracy before the Corona crisis. (cf. Engler et al. 2021)..¹ In this respect, it is fitting that Italy's technocratic Draghi government, as a European pioneer, imposed a relatively strict 'lock down' with curfews, etc., on March 8, 2020, a country that has been registering a strongly eroding democracy for quite some time and vacillates between technocracy and 'populism'² (cf. Bruno and Cozzolino 2022)..³ As a further pioneer, French President Macron on 15.3.2020 even quickly declared a "war" against an "invisible enemy,"⁴ with which he

¹ Most commonly, the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT) is used for measurement. (Hale et al. 2021). However, it is striking that, for example, Sweden, which primarily relied on recommendations and voluntarism, shows surprisingly high values (e.g., beginning of April 2020: 64.81, scale 0, no restrictions to 100, complete restrictions), while for Germany, with a relatively hard lockdown, only the value 76.85 is shown.

² The term 'populism' is problematic and double-edged because it carries a pejorative connotation, which places the 'populus' in the vicinity of the 'rabble' as opposed to the 'reasonable' elite. In this way, the partly justified displeasure about a lack of consideration of the interests of the 'common people' is misjudged. At the same time, however, xenophobic and racist attitudes classified as populist and related political movements are not to be legitimized here.

³ According to the Democracy Barometer (see http://www.democracybarometer.org/concept_de.html), Italy had a score of 53.3 (2016, scale 0 to 100) and, for example, about 85% of citizens saw no or very little popular political influence (European Social Survey 2018).

⁴ Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland, 16.3.2020: <https://www.rnd.de/politik/sind-im-krieg-frankreich-verhangt-ausgangssperre-im-kampf-gegen-coronavirus-OAGQAFXXE7IPEUI224KHWPVEA4.html>

justified restrictions on freedoms that had previously hardly been considered possible. In doing so, he tied in with the fatal choice of words of U.S. President Bush and his "war on terror," which ex-post in sober analysis must be seen even more as an expression of an exuberant authoritarian etatism or 'security state' (Hirsch), and with which the legitimization of a state of emergency and constitutional abysses took place (cf. Förster 2017). Incidentally, according to the Democracy Barometer and surveys, France, too, has long shown a severely eroded quality of democracy, so that here (similar to Italy) one can in fact speak of a 'defective' or only halfway functioning democracy.⁵ In this respect, the erosion or "crisis" of democracy, which has been discussed for some time, threatens to intensify further.⁶ However, little research has been done on the background and context of this technocratic crisis policy.

As a result of fear and the resulting public pressure, a kind of political 'chain reaction' developed with a political *state of emergency unheard of in 'Western' democracies since World War II* and at least temporarily more or less *authoritarian* policies (Hase and Engelke 2022; Maurer, Reinemann, and Kruschinski 2021; Meyen 2021a, 2021b; Rieg 2020; von Rossum 2020). In Germany, too, those in power or with political responsibility, who initially tended to appease, were increasingly drawn into the maelstrom of crisis perceptions. Driven by media reports, scientific scare scenarios, and authoritarian forerunners such as China, but also Italy and France, the German government soon also announced a 'lock down,' with severe restrictions on civil liberties and democracy, but without a formal declaration of a state of emergency and without reference to the emergency regulations of the Basic Law; rather, simple legal foundations of the Infection Protection Act and ordinances apparently seemed sufficient (Lucenti 2023). To this end, both the legislative and judicial branches quickly and willingly subordinated themselves to the executive branch (Kneip and Merkel 2022; Merkel 2020).. From then on, the political power center was formed by an *informal* round of federal and state governments, not provided for in the constitution, in which the chancellor and the federal minister of health, together with the scientific institutes, advisors and consultants subordinate to her and selected by her, set the tenor, which was also largely followed by the state governments and the media, especially at the beginning. The constitution thus remained largely unnoticed, as is typical of a crisis (similar to the situation in the USA after '9-11'), at least in the short term (J. Hirsch 2020; Knieps 2020).

⁵ According to the Democracy Barometer, France's quality of democracy, with a score of 46.3, was below that of Hungary (50.5) and thus below the middle of the 0-100 scale; according to the European Social Survey (ESS), only 31.5% in France were still satisfied with the functioning of their democracy (scores 6-10, scale 0-10), in Sweden it was 69.1%, in Switzerland 87.2%, and in Germany it was still 60.2% in 2018 and 57.3% in 2020 (ESS).

⁶ The extent to which a 'crisis' of democracy already existed before the 'Corona crisis' is the subject of controversial academic debate and also depends on claims as well as the understanding of democracy (Merkel and Kneip 2018). Meanwhile, in a 2022 survey, over 31% of the citizens surveyed thought that there was a 'sham democracy' in Germany ([Allensbach Institute for Public Opinion Research 2022](#)) and according to the European Social Survey (2018), only 13.2% of respondents affirmed that the political system in this country allows citizens to influence politics (over half denied this).

This concentration of power in government apparatuses (executive branch), which can be observed in many countries, represents *the* defining characteristic of a political state of emergency (Lemke 2017). Especially in the early days of the crisis, not only in Germany, almost all political institutions and actors, legislature as well as judiciary, almost all political parties and especially the '4th estate' of media willingly subordinated themselves to (cf. Kneip and Merkel 2022; Merkel 2020).. At least temporarily, an *authoritarian-technocratic* course dominated more or less unanimously, which was demanded and legitimized or accepted by a large majority of the public.⁷ The political public, media or polls tended to criticize a lack of rigor and scope of 'measures' or the 'lax' handling of 'corona dangers,' which is why the authoritarian and technocratic politicians who particularly urged caution and rigor were rewarded in polls and elections (see Amat, Arenas, and Falcó 2020; Cena and Rocco 2023; Giommoni and Loumeau 2020; Lavezzolo, Ramiro, and Fernández-Vázquez 2022; Rocco et al. 2021)..

A central role in 'corona crisis politics' is played by the *media* and *academia* in the context of a competition for attention (Meyen 2015, 2021b, 2022; Roth 2021).. Thus, 'Western' *leading media* began to report astonishingly intensively from the Chinese megacity of Wuhan as early as January 2020, with impressive, fear-inducing images and reports from a sealed-off city in a state of emergency, which quickly escalated into a kind of 'war coverage' (Hofbauer and Kraft 2020; Meyen 2021a). It was shown how the autocratic regime imposed a state of emergency to combat what was described as a novel disease with corona viruses (Sars-Cov-2/ Covid-19) and brought all public life to a standstill with curfews ('lock down'), with eerily empty streets, hygiene squads in protective clothing, and lots of police or military; it was also reported on the rigid surveillance and segregation of infected or sick people (Hofbauer and Kraft 2020). In the weeks and months that followed, the corona virus spread rapidly to Europe, and the horror news and images accumulated here as well. Every day, the mass media reported *numbers of* positively tested persons, illnesses and deaths as "top news" or in special broadcasts, although a differentiated, soberly weighing classification was usually omitted: For example, "Corona deaths" were spoken of as soon as a positive test result of the highly sensitive test was available for the deceased, even if the causes of death, in the case of the mostly very old, multimorbid deceased, usually remained unclear.⁸ In addition to the typical excited media reports, fear-inducing scientific *model calculations* and strict recommendations

⁷ Technocracy means that political decisions are perceived or shaped by 'experts', supposedly neutral or 'depoliticized' (cf. Sánchez-Cuenca 2017). This is based on the assumption that socially relevant decisions could be apolitical and ultimately shows a distrust or tendential rejection of democracy and 'vox populus'.

⁸ After an initial period of uncertainty, the following was soon evident. (cf. Ioannidis 2020; Ioannidis, Cripps, and Tanner 2020; Jefferson and others 2020; Pollock and Lancaster 2020; Sönnichsen 2020): 1. Sars-Cov-2/Covid-19 was primarily life-threatening to highly elderly, multimorbid people, although 2. it remained mostly unclear whether people died causally from Covid-19 or only *with* a positive test result because 3. the highly sensitive PCR test identifies minute amounts of virus without symptoms or illness, giving rise to the paradoxical term 'asymptomatically ill'; 4. the PCR test was not used to identify viruses in the presence of symptoms. While it cannot be ruled out that 'asymptomatic' cases spread virus, it is rare and insignificant (see as a summary e.g.: <https://www.cicero.de/kultur/stellungnahme-sokrates-corona-pandemie-schrappe-antes>; <https://swprs.org/covid19-facts/>; <https://wiges.org>).

of selected experts based on their justified crisis perceptions and resulting political 'measures', whereby it was noticeable that the particularly drastic warning voices, such as those of the 'Imperial College London' around Neil Ferguson, dominated, even if their claims were soon proven to be incorrect (cf. Ioannidis, Cripps, and Tanner 2020; Joffe 2021).. As a result, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a "pandemic" due to coronavirus disease (SARS-Cov-2/COVID-19), which was contrary to previous pandemic plans and definitions, but followed typical *crisis-related group thinking* ('group think') (Joffe 2021).⁹

2. Crisis-induced authoritarianism of the 'good and true': A little-researched phenomenon

Authoritarianism today is generally regarded first as a context-dependent, fundamentally variable type of attitude and no longer as a fixed personality structure (as was still the case in the days of Adorno and Horkheimer), with three *subcategories* being distinguished: 1. the willingness or demand for subordination to hierarchies and group norms (*submission*), 2. the advocacy of strict social controls and punishments in the face of deviations from social norms (*aggression*), and thirdly, the demand for conformity to norms, values, and moral concepts (*conventionalism*) (cf. Filsinger and Freitag 2022, 420).. Authoritarianism thus expresses itself in a kind of moral absolutism, with dogmatism, intolerance, and rigid, aggressive willingness to 'harshly', punitively enforce norms, beliefs, values, ways of life, or forms of social organization, regardless of individual desires for self-determination and freedom, and neglecting human or social costs (cf. Duckitt, n. Wüstner 2022)..

In principle, authoritarianism can thus not only occur or be associated with politically right-wing attitudes and ideologies, as is usually assumed, but can also be fed by left-wing ideologies. The latter was particularly evident in the times of the Corona crisis, in that a new kind of technocratic left-wing authoritarianism, or authoritarianism under the signs of the 'good and true,' became apparent. This kind of a 'new' authoritarianism today increasingly feeds not on classical forms of political right-wing authoritarianism, but on *left-wing* political ideologies, which, however, express themselves just as much (albeit with different substantive grounds than right-wing authoritarianism) in dogmatism and rejection, combating and persecuting dissenters, and are accompanied by calls for state promotion and enforcement of the favored norms and values (see Conway III et al. 2018, 2023; M. Hirsch 2022; Manson 2020; Peng 2022)..

From an ideological point of view, this fits in with the fact that the political left traditionally tends more toward welfare state interventionism and regulation. By contrast, conservatives and liberals traditionally prefer less 'state intervention' with regard to the market and the fami-

⁹ On the WHO and its funding, organization, and pandemic policy, see critically: Beigbeder 2012; Doshi 2011; Meisterhans 2020.

ly and emphasize private responsibility and freedom. However, there are also contradictory aspects of the political-ideological background, because the political right is in itself traditionally much more strongly associated with demands of subjugation, aggression and conventionalism in the sense of 'law and order', while the political left is in itself traditionally more strongly associated with demands of participatory democracy, civil rights and libertarian attitudes.

Research and measurement approaches regarding 'left-wing authoritarianism' are still underdeveloped and controversial, with some declaring the phenomenon a myth altogether (cf. Conway III et al. 2018, 2023).. Moreover, when measuring authoritarianism (even when targeting left-wing authoritarianism), questions about attitudes regarding 'leaders' or leadership often continue to be asked primarily or solely (cf. Beierlein et al. 2014; M. Hirsch 2022).. This, however, hardly fits in with the political left and its demands for equality and participation, even though in the radical left (see Marxism and communism) a cult of leadership with veneration and almost blind allegiance to leading figures did occur, just as the merciless fight against and persecution of 'deviants' or 'class enemies' has a tradition in left-wing political groups (not only in authoritarian state socialism).

Notwithstanding such conceptual ambiguity, current measurement approaches to left authoritarianism proposed by Costello et al. (2023) propose the following subcategories: Anti-hierarchical Aggression, Left-wing Conventionalism, and Prohibition of Protected Speech. At first glance, however, it remains unclear to what extent "anti-hierarchical aggression" should be understood as "authoritarian," which seems contradictory, at least ad hoc, because it can also be associated with more anti-authoritarian, libertarian attitudes, which in themselves form the antithesis of authoritarianism (which is also confirmed empirically in the attitudes in the Corona crisis, because libertarians were the most strongly opposed to authoritarian measures; cf. Peng 2022). Also, the authors' explanation that "anti-hierarchical aggression" "...reflects the belief that individuals currently in power should be punished, the established order should be overthrown, and extreme actions, such as political violence, are justifiable to achieve these aims" (Costello and Patrick 2023, 189), is hardly convincing. Rather, what seems decisive to me is a dogmatic and aggressively combative, illiberal attitude, regardless of what ideology this is based on and regardless of what it is directed against. In this respect, those measurement approaches and items also fit for left-wing authoritarianism that - detached from political content - focus on attitudes such as *dogmatism*, the demand for *conformity* and *suppression*, with the readiness to *aggression*, *persecution* and *punishment of dissenters or deviants*.

Finally, however, it must also be taken into account that the Corona crisis revealed a kind of well-meaning '*technocratic authoritarianism*,'¹⁰ expressed in the apodictic appeal to 'follow

¹⁰ Which is expressed, for example, in the famous slogan and technocratic argument 'there is no alternative...' of former British Prime Minister Thatcher and adopted by many other politicians, both left and right (cf. Sévillle 2017)

the science,' to which the political left seems particularly receptive (Manson 2020; Peng 2022). Incidentally, scientific findings were received or accepted in a conspicuously selective manner, in that selected experts, mostly close to the government, dominated, but this was claimed as a scientific 'consensus' without even allowing a free and open scientific debate to even begin. The call to 'follow the science' thus expresses in itself a dogmatic, anti-scientific attitude. For, as is well known, the essence of science consists first of all in openly and plural, controversial assumptions and hypotheses, to question them, to examine them critically and to discuss them freely, undogmatically.

3. Background of the crisis-induced authoritarianism

Notwithstanding the measurement concepts of novel forms of crisis-related 'technocratic' authoritarianism or 'left-wing authoritarianism' that still need to be further developed, empirical studies on the background of the authoritarianism emerging in the 'Corona crisis' will be reported below, which make it clear that this phenomenon is by no means a 'chimera'. First, various studies (both cross-sectional and longitudinal) underscore the enormous *increase in* authoritarian attitudes (however measured) in most countries, coupled with the strong growth in support for technocratic forms of decision-making (Amat, Arenas, and Falcó 2020; Filsinger and Freitag 2022; M. Hirsch 2022; Maher et al. 2022; Wüstner 2022; Lavezzolo, Ramiro, and Fernández-Vázquez 2022; Cena and Roccato 2023).. Incidentally, respondents in Germany even showed the strongest tendencies toward crisis-related authoritarianism compared with five European countries (France, Great Britain, Italy, Spain, Switzerland) (Filsinger and Freitag 2022).

A primary *cause for* the grown authoritarian attitudes is first of all the (medially mediated and constructed) *fear* regarding Covid-19, which was confirmed to be a strong promoting influence across all three subdimensions of authoritarianism (submission, aggression, and conformity) (cf. Filsinger and Freitag 2022).. Presumably, in crisis situations perceived as existentially threatening, a generally human (evolutionarily based) impulse and appeal to cohesion, discipline, and readiness to fight against external as well as internal enemies becomes effective in order to survive as a group, which is expressed as rallying behind governments ('rally round the flag') and occurs especially in war situations (Baekgaard et al. 2020; Giommoni and Loumeau 2020)..¹¹ In this context, mutual reinforcements between crisis-induced national identification and rallying and authoritarianism were observed in the Corona crisis (cf. Maher et al. 2022).. At the same time, this apparently tended to mask or temporarily override political and ideological antagonisms in the 'Corona crisis,' so that authoritarian concepts

¹¹ However, external shocks such as natural disasters and crises also put governments under pressure, and this can also foster discontent or rebellion, so that, especially in autocratic forms of rule, pressure can arise in favor of democratization (see Amat, Arenas, and Falcó 2020, 5)..

and rigid state interventions in freedom, controls, punishments and surveillance were suddenly supported by a large majority in the population.

Despite the general, fear- and crisis-driven tendency toward authoritarianism in the Corona crisis, however, factors such as *education* and *political-ideological orientations* (right-left opposites) continue to show themselves to be effective, and these influences do not disappear completely. In this context, although initially in a cross-sectional view, respondents with lower education and more right-wing political attitudes reveal *more* authoritarian attitudes (cf. Filsinger and Freitag 2022).. But when the *tendencies* and the *increase in* authoritarian attitudes during the crisis are considered, a completely different picture emerges, because those who normally or per se show less inclination toward authoritarianism (at least in the classical conception) reveal¹² a strikingly stronger increase in authoritarian attitudes as a result of crisis perceptions (Covid-19 and 'climate change' were asked). In contrast, those who generally or intrinsically tend more toward authoritarianism showed no further crisis-related increase in authoritarian attitudes (cf. M. Hirsch 2022).¹³

Similar findings are provided by surveys and analyses from the U.S., where in particular people who are close to the Democrats and intrinsically more liberal or left-wing tended significantly toward national rallying and authoritarianism as a result of Covid-19 (cf. Maher et al. 2022, 10). Other analyses of Corona politics also underscore the finding that politically *left-leaning* forces and governments generally tended to take *stricter* measures during the 'Corona crisis' (cf. Jahn 2022). At the same time, this makes it clear that the influence of party differences with the left-right divide did not completely disappear in the 'Corona crisis' either, despite the aforementioned tendency toward cross-party authoritarian, technocratic collection, which entailed a masking or temporary receding of party conflicts. Overall, it is also supported by further survey and micro-level analysis that respondents with left-wing political authoritarianism perceived significantly stronger fears of Covid-19, showed greater affinity for vaccination, showed stronger support for mandatory vaccination, and tended more strongly to punish unvaccinated people (Peng 2022).

In contrast, respondents with *libertarian* political attitudes, in particular, show significantly less fear of Covid-19, less affinity for vaccination, a negative attitude toward mandatory vaccination, and also toward punishing unvaccinated people (Peng 2022). The latter finding underscores that the logical counterpart to authoritarianism (whether from the right or the left) is to be found in *libertarian* political attitudes, which is why a construction of a 'libertarian authoritarianism' (Amlinger and Nachtwey 2022) as a contradiction in terms, seems arbitrary and

¹² However, the above-mentioned questioning must also be taken into account here, which, for example, with questions on attitudes regarding 'leadership' is oriented toward classic right-wing authoritarianism and does not capture 'left-wing authoritarianism' well.

¹³ This was an experimental survey, asking the above mentioned KSA-3 short scale of authoritarianism and additionally to three subgroups different questions about authoritarianism, linked to Covid-19 and climate change or without such additions.

aberrant.¹⁴ Also according to other comparative analyses, people with left-wing authoritarian attitudes advocated to a significantly greater extent strict rules of 'social distancing', censorship of dissenting views (which was often discounted as 'disinformation' without comprehensive examination), harsh punishments of violations of 'corona rules', and the shift of decision-making authority to experts in the field of health (which right-wing authoritarians tended to reject); in addition, there were other aspects where the demands of left-wing authoritarians were more far-reaching (government support for business, restrictions through executive orders, Covid 19 testing obligations) (Manson 2020).¹⁵

The crisis-induced impulses toward authoritarian submission, conformity, and aggression were expressed in the Corona crisis not least in a hitherto scarcely thought possible willingness and tendency to *discriminate*, especially against unvaccinated people, which could be observed in most countries according to surveys (exceptions are countries such as Hungary and Romania) (see Bor, Jørgensen, and Petersen 2023; Wüstner 2022).. These people were devalued as dangerous, lacking solidarity, and incompetent, and the devaluations were stronger than toward "immigrants from Middle Eastern countries" according to surveys in various countries (see Bor, Jørgensen, and Petersen 2023).¹⁶ Hatred and discrimination against unvaccinated people are evidenced, for example, in Germany by many statements by prominent media figures, politicians, intellectuals, etc., including, piquantly, conspicuously many who otherwise speak out so vehemently against discrimination, hatred, and violence (cf. Klöckner and Wernicke 2022; <https://ich-habe-mitgemacht.de>). Incidentally, in the course of the crisis-induced national rallying and authoritarian upsurges, all scholars, including many serious ones, who deviated from the governmental doctrine and its interpretive sovereignty tended to be discredited, censored, reprimanded, or dismissed, often as 'swindlers,' 'covid-iots,' and so on (cf. Furkert 2022; Hofbauer 2022; Roth 2023; Shir-Raz et al. 2022; Waldhaus 2021)..

In addition, the in-depth analyses on the background of the willingness to discriminate against non-vaccinated people show that this was on the one hand strongly associated with fear, as expected, but also follows social *norms of* solidarity and cooperation, whereby *higher* educated (as well as richer and older) significantly *more often* expressed discriminatory attitudes towards non-vaccinated people because they see this as a violation of solidarity norms

¹⁴ A similar misrecognition of the Corona protests is also shown by Grande et al. (2021) who interpret the heterogeneous movement, which is difficult to classify ideologically, as right-wing (cf. Roth 2023).

¹⁵ In addition, there were expectedly strong differences in political-ideological issues clearly assigned to the left and right, such as abortion bans, gun bans or bans on immigration (cf. *ibid.* Table S6).

¹⁶ The phrase "immigrated from the Middle East" was intended to avoid the term "Muslim" or "Muslim" (Bor, Jørgensen, and Petersen 2023, 711) However, it was probably more implicitly meant to refer to immigrants of Arab origin with an Islamic background and not, for example, those from Israel.

(Bor, Jørgensen, and Petersen 2023).¹⁷ This is probably why the factually undeniable discrimination of non-vaccinated people or people not following corona rules was not even perceived as such and denied.

Contributing in no small part to the crisis-induced growth of authoritarianism was 'faith' in or trust in *'the'* science (see Cena and Roccato 2023; M. Hirsch 2022; Lavezzolo, Ramiro, and Fernández-Vázquez 2022; Peng 2022).. To this end, multivariate analyses show that positive attitudes toward vaccination against covid-19 associated with trust in science are even more likely to promote willingness to punish unvaccinated people than that this was induced by fears of covid-19 (Peng 2022, 4). In this respect, fear as an explanatory factor for crisis-induced authoritarianism is also only one among others. At the same time, as one of the few studies on left-wing authoritarianism shows, a highly *anti-scientific*, conformist attitude seems to be widespread especially among young scientists and academics: Thus, in a survey, only 25% of respondents affirmed the statement that dissenting scientists should also be heard, only 27% affirmed that viewpoints or physicians with critical views of vaccinations should be heard, the statement that media should also address controversial content was affirmed by only 21%, that critical content should not be censored in public debate was even supported by only 12% (cf. Wüstner 2022). The fact that students accounted for 71% of this sample gives rise to serious concern and further research regarding the future of freedom of expression and academic freedom as well as democracy.¹⁸ In this respect, the novel type of crisis-induced 'technocratic authoritarianism' evident in the Corona crisis should urgently be further investigated, also against the background of research on the 'disintegration of democracy' that has long given rise to concern (cf. (Mounk 2018)).¹⁹

4. Conclusion and outlook

The 'Corona crisis' culminated in a new type of technocratic authoritarianism, which, in contrast to traditional forms, tended to come from the political left. The crisis-related authoritarianism of the 'Corona crisis' is to be understood against the backdrop of a decades-long tendency toward technocratic crisis politics with the erosion of democracy, for which the famous slogan 'there is no alternative' is characteristic. In the "Corona period" there was a strong tendency toward authoritarian subjugation, aggression and conformity, with a readiness to

¹⁷ Similar correlations are suggested by the survey of Wüstner (2022) suggest, especially given the sample of 71% students: According to this, it was important for 76% of respondents that everyone show solidarity and for 70% that everyone follow the Corona rules; only 12% found it important that critical information in media should not be censored and only 22.8% that people around them also accept controversial opinions. In addition, about 40-45% called for relatively far-reaching punishments and restrictions of freedoms for people who are not vaccinated or do not follow the Corona Rules.

¹⁸ On the growing 'cancel culture' and narrowing of what can be said and thought at universities, see, e.g. Revers and Traunmüller 2020.

¹⁹ Mounk points out that many younger people in the U.S. in particular exhibit indifferent and dismissive attitudes toward democracy and a surprising level of endorsement of authoritarianism.

discriminate against all those who deviated from the supposedly "good and true". The analyses of this 'leaden' time are, however, pending, whereby the 'return of the repressed' seems inevitable. However, further research is urgently needed on the emerging 'technocratic left-wing authoritarianism', especially since the constructs, as well as the background and contexts, are still unclear. In doing so, it is first necessary to further develop the outdated, inappropriate measurement approaches to authoritarianism that focus primarily on 'leaders' or 'leadership' in order to more closely capture the specifically technocratic, leftist, or 'modern' rationale of an authoritarianism of the 'good and true.' For new crisis scenarios such as the 'climate crisis' are already virulent, further fuelling technocratic-autocratic impulses and likely increasing conflicts over the 'liberal-democratic basic order'. This could also further exacerbate the erosion of democracy that has long been virulent due to a division and lack of representation along educational or 'symbolic capital' lines.

5. Literature

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